

Welcome to Amalgus

*Three ghostly moons hang in a sky of deep-sea blue. A gigantic airwhale, the size of a city bus, crests the low-lying cloud banks, and **you're** standing on its back, battling fiercely against a squad of sinister soldiers dressed in crimson armor. You leapt after them onto the airwhale as their flying battleship crashed into the ocean, and you must defeat them to reach their captain, a mysterious masked woman who wields a ship's anchor as a weapon. In her other hand she still holds the item that you've spent three years chasing, and as the last of her soldiers falls to your attack, you stride silently toward her, vowing that you won't let it slip away again. She smirks and readies her anchor for combat. Welcome to Amalgus!*

What You Need to Play

To play Amalgus, you will need at least 2 players, one of which will be the "Game Moderator" (GM), who sets the scene for the game and plays the parts of characters who the other players meet and interact with, and the rest of whom will play only one or two individual characters, the "heroes" of the game. In addition to these rules, you will need somewhere between ten and twenty 6-sided dice (those are the "normal" dice found in just about any boardgame or dice game). Also recommended but not mandatory are:

- A hex grid, with 1"-2" hexes, at least 10 hexes in diameter. This will make combat much easier, since distances are measured in hexes, and everyone will have a very clear indication of where their characters are on the battlefield. Even if you choose to use the "freeform" method of combat (detailed later) you should still keep a hex grid on hand in case situations come up that can be explained much better visually.
- A "miniature" for each player's character, and a few miniatures to represent monsters and other non-player characters (NPCs). Miniatures in this case can be anything ranging from a perfect replica of your character, to a symbolic representation of your character (a thimble to represent a character named "Velveteen the Battle Seamstress", for example), to just a little piece of cardboard with your character's name or face on it. Miniatures need to be small enough to fit within the hexes on the grid listed above.
- About ten 20-sided dice.
- A set of "sheet protectors" (the clear plastic bags that are exactly the size of a sheet of paper that you usually use for really impressive-looking reports) and a set of overhead-projector markers. This will let you write temporary notes all over your character sheet that you can later just wipe off when they're no longer applicable.

The Ubiquitous "What is Roleplaying?" and The Standard Disclaimers

If you bought this game because you are intrigued by its claim of being "the unplugged console RPG", then you probably already know RPGs (Roleplaying games) pretty well. Console RPGs (i.e. roleplaying video games) have a certain feel to them that Amalgus aspires to reproduce, from the fantastic worlds in which they're set, to things like "combos", "super moves", "boss monsters", and even "save points". Console RPGs are all **very** math-heavy in their gameplay mechanics, but it's all processed by the machine so you don't have to worry about it. Since there is no machine in a game of Amalgus, the math is much simpler, so you still won't have to worry about it, but it's simplified in ways that allow Amalgus to retain the feel of a console-style game. There are other things that Amalgus can do that a console game can't; you can sidestep "railroading" and solve problems the way **you** want to and not the way the game designer

decided you should, you can interact with the NPCs you meet in much more depth (since they'll be played by the GM and not a computer with two options for dialogue, one of which just repeats the question), you can try to talk your way out of a fight or fight your way out of a conversation, and your actions can make lasting impressions on the game world, for better or for worse. Amalgus also doesn't have to end just because you've beaten the "final boss". There are always more adventures to be had, stronger monsters to fight, and stranger countries to explore. You could retire after your first major victory, resting on your laurels and taking in the sweet life, but why would you want to?

If you bought this game because you thought the cover looked cool, or you stood in the middle of a game store and spun around with your eyes closed and picked up the first book you knocked off a shelf, or if this game was given to you by some strange and eccentric relative who mistook it for an oven-mitt, then you might not know too much about roleplaying games. Here's the scoop. Put simply, a roleplaying game is an interactive story; the Game Moderator tells the players generally what's going on ("you're walking down the path when you turn a corner and find a giant chasm spreading across the road.") and the players each tell what a specific character is doing ("I leap across it" says the player playing the lion. "I cut down the nearest tree so that it falls across the gap and makes a bridge" says the player playing the woodsman). The characters are free to interact with each other and their environment however they want to, and the GM plays the part of the director, describing scenes to the players and playing the bit characters for which there aren't any players (called NPCs for "non-player characters", and ranging from kings to shopkeepers to monsters). If there is a challenge between two characters, whether it's a fist-fight, a game of tennis, or haggling over the price of a bucket of beans, there are rules to decide the outcome, as well as rules to determine how much of an advantage a black-belt tennis-pro bean-farmer would have over her opponent. There's usually an adventure with a straight-forward goal, which the GM can either make up, or buy pre-written at a game store, or create by combining a pre-written adventure with his own ideas. If someone's character gets squashed flat by a falling piano, or just calls it quits, they can make up another character and rely on the GM to work that new character into the story. Unlike other games, the players in a roleplaying game aren't competing with each other, but working together to solve the puzzles and win the battles that arise as the story progresses. Even the GM is working with the players rather than against them, since if all the characters end up dead or stuck somewhere the story can't continue and nobody wins. And when the adventure is over and the players' characters have won the day, they can start a new adventure, using their same characters if they want to, travelling on to greater glory and bigger challenges.

Little Gray Boxes...

...just like this one are used throughout this book for notes and comments. The text in them is not necessary to play the game, but they contain alternate ways of doing things, suggestions, and other bits of semi-useful information.

Here Come the Disclaimers

The words "he" and "she" are used interchangeably throughout these rules, pretty much at random. The word "you" is used throughout these rules to refer to both you as a player and you as the character you're playing, and which one it refers to should be clear from the context. Obviously, in real life, you are whoever you are, and you are not "Velveteen the Battle Seamstress" or whoever else you pretend to be when you play this game. If you lose touch with reality and your parents catch you trying to make magical weapons with a needle, some thread, and lots and lots of pink flannel, it's not our fault, just like it's not that other company's fault if

you start buying up major city streets and building little green hotels on them just because you played their game too much.

Enough of this babble. On with the game!

The Physics of Amalgus

On Amalgus, basic laws of physics function much as they do on Earth, with a few important exceptions. First of all, the air is much thicker. Everything moves slower as a result, but you won't notice because you'll be moving at the same speed as everything else. What you will notice, however, is that guns are significantly less effective on Amalgus than they are on Earth because bullets travel much more slowly. This means that although Amalgus technology is capable of producing firearms, they're no more effective than bows, slings, or any other projectile weapons, and thus usually not worth the cost.

Gravity is also quite a bit lower on Amalgus than it is on earth, meaning that weight is less of a consideration, and with proper training you can jump much higher than would be physically possible otherwise. Very heavy things are still very heavy things, however, so while you shouldn't be surprised to see a little girl carrying around a gigantic sword, you should be surprised to see a little girl carrying around a gigantic house.

The high air density and low gravity on Amalgus also means that terminal velocity is very low, so regardless of how far you fall, you won't suffer anything worse than a sprained ankle, and that's only if you're not paying attention when you land. Of course, falling into an active volcano or onto pointy spikes is going to hurt quite a bit, but not from the fall itself. As a result, Amalgus is home to many types of aircraft that would be suicidally stupid to pilot on Earth, because even if you don't bother to jump out to safety at the first sign of trouble, you probably won't be hurt much in the crash.

Another important factor of Amalgus physics is that the subatomic particles that Earth science hasn't discovered yet that keep reality in place on Earth are present in much lower quantities on Amalgus. Not only does this mean that fantastic monsters and people with amazing powers are common, but it also means that gateways to other worlds periodically appear and disappear at random locations across the planet. Conveniently, almost everything that comes through these portals is perfectly suited to living on Amalgus, and the few things that aren't quickly die out or go back the way they came.

Finally, as opposed to Earth physics where energy is measured in joules, on Amalgus all energy is measured in jools.

What the heck are Jools??

Roleplaying games are notorious for having multitudes of fluctuating scores, including Hit Points, Magic Points, Experience Points, Gold Pieces, etc., all of which must be tracked simultaneously and separately. Amalgus just has jools. In game terms, jools are one-inch-square transparent yellow gems, flat on the top and bottom but faceted around the edges, that each weigh about an ounce. Hold ten yellow jools together in your hand, think of the color orange, and the ten yellow jools congeal into one orange jool, exactly the same size and weight of one yellow jool, but orange. Hold ten orange jools in your hand and think of the color red, and you get one red jool worth 100 yellow jools. This process also works in reverse, turning one orange jool into ten yellow jools, or turning one red jool into ten orange jools or even a hundred yellow jools (you'd better have big hands if you don't expect to drop any). The colors go up past red, to single jools worth a million or even a billion yellow jools (see the table below), but so far Amalgus science has yet to find a jool color lower than yellow. Different colored jools also have

distinctly different shapes, so if you're looking for jools in the dark (or in your purse) you can tell how much they're worth just by touching them.

Since jools are the universal currency of all the lands of Amalgus, this means that you could fit enough money to buy a house in your front pocket. But that's only the beginning of it. In Amalgus, jools are also the root of all power, including life itself. Eating one yellow jool is enough sustenance to last you a day without going hungry. Your body just automatically metabolizes it into the things you need, regardless of what kind of body you have. If you eat more than one, then your body stores the extra jools until you use them up or will them out of your system. If one living thing eats another, then it adds the jools stored by its food to its own. If a living thing dies without being eaten by something else, then eventually it decays into a pile of jools. This rate of decay can be sped up or slowed down at the will of other living things, so that once you've killed a powerful monster it can be reduced to a pile of jools in a matter of seconds, but if your friend falls in combat you can keep her from decaying until you can feed her enough jools to revive her.

With the proper training, you can also learn to channel the power of stored jools into various aspects of your body, mind, and spirit; to increase the amount of damage you can take in a fight before being knocked out, wield amazing powers to smite your enemies or protect your friends, or heighten your senses to achieve results beyond your skills. Large enough quantities of stored jools can even be used to permanently improve aspects of your being, making you stronger, faster, or smarter.

The powers that jools unleash can be applied to non-living matter as well; a craftsperson with the proper skills can use jools to make brooms that sweep by themselves, pots that cook food without fire, and weapons that fight on their own or discharge electricity when they strike.

Since jools are all exactly the same size and weight, they also serve as Amalgus's universal system of measurements. Ten jools laid end-to-end or the weight or volume of ten jools is called a "decajool", or "dex" (a little less than one foot), and a hundred jools laid end-to-end or the weight or volume of a hundred jools is called a "hectajool", or "hex" (about eight feet). Most distances in Amalgus are measured in hexes.

Even More Measurements

In case it ever comes up, the unit for a thousand jools is called a kilojool or "kex", the unit for a million jools is called a megajool or "mex", the unit for a billion jools is called a gigajool or "gex", and the unit for a trillion jools is called a terajool or "tex".

Mechanics-wise, jools serve two purposes: They consolidate the numerous point systems common to roleplaying games down into just one score, and they create a convenient solution to the boring details and absurd conveniences that detract from the fun of roleplaying games – finding food in a forgotten cavern miles below ground, worrying about encumbrance and exchange rates of the various types of currencies you find, wondering why a giant flesh-eating grasshopper is carrying around a treasure chest full of money or how a master painter has so many ranks in painting when she's never killed a monster, etc.

Oh, and in case you're wondering, jools taste just like jelly beans, they don't get you high, and one yellow jool is about equal in worth to one American dollar.

Converting Your Jools:

Color:	Worth:
Yellow	1
Orange	10

Red	100
Purple	1,000

Blue	10,000
Green	100,000
Copper	10 ⁶

Silver	10 ⁷
Gold	10 ⁸

White	10 ⁹
Gray	10 ¹⁰

Black	10 ¹¹
Clear	10 ¹²
???????	???????

The difference between Characters, People and Monsters

Over a thousand years ago, Amalgus was ravaged by a terrible catastrophe remembered simply as “The Great War”. As nations’ populations dwindled, artificial soldiers were designed and created to fight for them. Some of these soldiers were mechanical robots, while others were genetically engineered monstrosities, and still others were simply whatever household items people could find and imbue with the semblance of life. When the Great War drew to a close and peace finally returned to Amalgus after decades of bloodshed, artificial soldiers still littered the battlefields, some of which had evolved into mindless killing machines, but others of which had developed personalities and independent thought, and wanted to contribute to the reconstruction effort. Debates waged for months over what to do with these creatures, and eventually the “Personality Test” was created to discern which of these creatures were mindless monsters, and which had personality; the facilities for independent thought, and the general ability to become contributing members of society.

Those who passed the test were labeled “people” and granted citizenship. Those who did not pass were labeled “monsters” and deemed unable to contribute to society. Some monsters were kept in civilized areas as beasts of burden, while the more vicious types were exiled from society. The Personality Test has been revised many times over the centuries, and any monster who expresses a desire to take it may do so in order to prove that he or she actually has personality. It has been accepted by all the nations of Amalgus, and overall it remains extremely fair, just, and accurate. The modern Personality Test is little more than a formality; any creature competent enough to request it is clearly capable of and interested in joining civilized society, and the current test consists mostly of making sure that the creature is more than just an automaton programmed to request the test over and over again.

In game terms, a person refers to something that can be reasoned with, talked to, or otherwise peacefully interacted with (although some people are only interested in knocking you out and taking your valuables), and a monster refers to something that is really only interested in eating you. “Character” is a general term which can mean either a person or a monster.

The Flow of the Game

Like most roleplaying games, Amalgus splits up the time it takes to play the game into Campaigns, Adventures, and Sessions. A Campaign is the absolute entirety of a story, like an entire video game or anime series, starting from your group’s first adventure all the way until all of the players’ characters have retired from adventuring. Just as video games and anime series can have sequels, you can continue where you left off even if you complete a Campaign, bringing your characters out of retirement to save the world, playing as their children, or whatever else you want to do. Adventures are complete plots that all combine to form a campaign, like missions or quests in a video game or episodes of an anime series. There are usually recurring characters between Adventures, and not all plot developments need to be tied up by the end of the Adventure, but for the most part they have a beginning, a middle, and a clear and satisfying end. Just like video game quests and series episodes, time usually passes more quickly between Adventures than it does during an Adventure. Sessions are more a constraint of time in real life; from the time you all sit down and start playing to the time that you stop for the day or night. Sometimes an entire Adventure is finished over the course of a Session, sometimes not. Sessions generally tend to run for about 3 to 5 hours each (this time limit is only imposed by

the fact that after 3 to 5 hours of continuous playing everyone will probably be hungry and need to break for food). If everyone still wants to keep on playing when a Session would normally end, then the GM can begin a new Session (resetting things like Lucky Dice that replenish at the start of each Session) and pick up where the game left off.

Creating Your Character

Character creation in Amalgus is actually very simple. It begins with a concept: Who is your character? What is your character? Where did your character come from, and where does your character want to go? What does your character do for a living? What's your character's family like? You don't have to answer all or any of these questions to create a character, but having the answers does help you get an idea of what defines your character. Remember that in Amalgus anyone or anything can become a hero with enough motivation and the right opportunities, as the wide variety of example characters has already shown. You could also play as your favorite video game or anime character, or a character that you've played in another roleplaying game. If you're totally lacking for a concept for your character, then why not base your character on yourself? What would you do if you were suddenly and unexplainably transported to Amalgus? Would you want to go back home? Would you want to found an empire? Daydreaming is the core of roleplaying, so the more you imagine about your character's past and personality, the more you will be able to "bring to the table" when you play Amalgus with friends.

Once you have an idea for your character, get a character sheet (there's one you can copy in the back of this book, or you can just hand-copy the information from it onto notebook paper), fill in the "Name", write a "100" in the "Loose Jools" slot, and write a "1" in each of the **Vitality**, **Speed**, and **Luck** slots. Next, read the following section on skills, and pick the **four** simple skills that you feel are most appropriate to your character, one of which should be (but doesn't have to be) either **Melee Attack** or **Ranged Attack**, and record them on your character sheet, all at rank 1. After you're done, decide which **one** of those seven skills (the four you picked from the list, along with **Vitality**, **Speed**, and **Luck**) your character excels at more than any other, and change its rank to "2".

Congratulations! You've designed a character. Wasn't hard at all, was it? If you imagined your character as being much more powerful than what your starting skills say, just remember that even the most powerful video game and anime characters often appear weak at the beginning, slowly revealing more and more of the powers they've had all along as the story progresses. You can do the same thing, "revealing" powers you've "had all along" as you buy new skills and improve your old skills. If you create a character with wings, for instance, you could make up a dramatic reason for keeping them hidden, or they could be injured, or you could simply not remember how to use them until you buy your first rank of the **Fly** skill.

Come back and read this after you've read about Levels and Complex Skills:

The arrangement of skill ranks above is the best one for beginning players. You can try other combinations to make characters who are more diversified or more focussed, as long as your character starts exactly at Level 1, with no remainder to round down. You can even forgo the automatic skills, although a Speed or Vitality of zero would make you completely useless in combat. The sample characters you'll run across throughout this book have a variety of different skill arrangements, but are all designed to be Level 1 starting characters.

You may also create starting characters with complex skills as long as they also meet all of the requirements. For instance, you can create a starting character with the Crush skill as long as she also has 2 or more ranks of Grab.

Skills and How to Use Them

Popping Dice

“Popping Dice” should be explained briefly before moving on to skills: When you roll a 6 on **any** die, you may “pop” that die by rolling it again and adding 5 to the result. If the die rolls 6 twice in a row, you may pop it again, roll again and add another 5, and so on. (For instance, if a die you roll comes up a 6, you can pop it and roll it again. If it comes up a 6 the second time, you can pop it again, and if it comes up a 4 the third time then your total roll for that one die is a 14: 5+5+4) Regardless of how many times a die pops, the final number it generates is considered to have come from only that one die. Dice only pop on a “natural” 6, meaning that the die itself must roll a 6 to pop, and if a die’s roll is increased to 6 by a bonus or some other modifier it does not pop. If you are using a skill that requires you to pay jools for every die you roll, you do not have to pay to re-roll a die that has popped. Depending on the skill being used, sometimes popping dice produce different effects from their normal use. In these cases, follow the special instructions instead of re-rolling the die.

Skills Overview

In Amalgus, anything your character can do is called a skill. Skills come in three categories: “automatic”, “simple”, and “complex”. Every character begins the game with 1 rank in each of the three automatic skills (**Vitality**, **Speed**, and **Luck**), and three of the simple skills. By eating enough jools, you can learn new skills or increase the ranks of the skills you already have, making them more effective. Some of the more powerful skills also require you to spend additional jools every time you use them.

Recording & Customizing Skills:

The slots for recording simple skills each have four sections: Base Skill, Type, Skill Name, and Rank.

- *Base Skill* is the name of the skill as listed here in the rules.
- *Type* is a symbol which indicates how a skill is used. For instance, attack skills have this type: ⚔, movement skills have this type: ➡, and defense skills have this type: ⚡. All of the skills listed below have their types listed with them.
- *Skill Name* is where customization comes in, and can be anything you want. For instance, a chef’s **Melee Attack** could be called “Mighty Cleaver”, while a kung-fu master might have a **Melee Attack** called “Punishing Fist”. Both of these attacks do exactly the same thing mechanics-wise, but the names create distinctly different images of their effects. Since skill names have no real bearing on the game, feel free to change them whenever you wish, or leave them blank until you decide what to call them. Also, don’t let your skill names limit you; even if the kung-fu master’s **Melee Attack** is called “Punishing Fist” there’s nothing stopping him from using a roundhouse kick or a head-butt instead.
- *Rank* is the level of proficiency your character has in a skill. As your rank goes up, you can perform skills more easily and more powerfully.

Unless specifically stated in a skill’s description, you can only take each skill once, so if you already have the **Melee Attack** skill at rank 4, you can’t buy another **Melee Attack** at rank 1 and put it in a separate slot. You can, however, buy new skills and raise the skills you already have as high as you want, provided you have enough jools.

Buying & Improving Skills:

New skills can be bought, and previously bought skills can be improved at any time during the game, even in the middle of combat (although doing so during combat costs you an action). To buy a new simple skill, simply consume 100 jools, and then write the skill on your character sheet, with a rank of 1. To improve any skill, you need to consume a number of jools equal to the next rank squared times 100 (so, for instance, to improve a skill from rank 1 to rank 2 you'd need 400 jools, to improve a skill from rank 2 to rank 3 you'd need 900 jools, and to improve a skill directly from rank 1 to rank 3 you'd need 1,300 jools – 400 to raise it from 1 to 2, and then 900 to raise it from 2 to 3).

Buying complex skills works exactly the same way as buying simple skills, except that you must fulfill the prerequisites of a complex skill before you can buy it. For instance, the prerequisites for **Dash Attack** are **Melee Attack 3** and **Dash 3**, meaning that both your **Melee Attack** and **Dash** skills must both be at least rank 3 before you can buy your first rank of **Dash Attack**. You can only buy complex skills that you meet the requirements for on your own, not through the use of a Special Item or any other means that artificially increases your rank in a skill.

Depending on the circumstances, the GM will probably require you to “justify” buying or improving a skill. For instance, if DJ Eggman wanted to buy a rank or two in the Heal skill, he could tell the GM that he's been experimenting with music in his spare time and has developed some “soothing vibes”, or that he's seen Velveteen the Battle Seamstress use her Heal skill enough times in combat that he's figured out how it works, or that Velveteen has been teaching him how to use it directly when they have free time. Some skills are easier to justify than others; you can usually justify raising your Melee Attack skill by simply noting that you've used it dozens of times in combat, whereas you'll probably need to put a little more thought into your justification for buying Pilot Air while adventuring through underground caverns. Overall, however, skill justification is really just a formality that helps the players develop and understand their characters better and keeps the whole story of the game cohesive, and your GM should let you buy or improve a skill regardless of how simple or bizarre your justification is.

Level:

A character's level is simply each of the character's skill ranks squared, all added together and divided by 10 (rounded down). Level gives a rough estimate of how experienced a character is, and among other things it helps to determine what kinds of adventures that character is capable of, and the strength of that character's will. Starting characters have a Level of 1. Your enemies will all have Levels too, and Levels also determine how many Jools an enemy turns into after you've defeated him in combat.

Some Quick Math:

A starting character, for instance, has one skill at rank 2, and six skills at rank 1; her level, therefore is:
 $2^2 + 1^2 + 1^2 + 1^2 + 1^2 + 1^2 + 1^2 / 10 = 4 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 / 10 = 10 / 10 = 1$

Here's a brief list of ranks and their squared values, in case you don't remember them from math class:

Rank	Squared	Rank	Squared	Rank	Squared	Rank	Squared
1	1	6	36	11	121	16	256
2	4	7	49	12	144	17	289
3	9	8	64	13	169	18	324
4	16	9	81	14	196	19	361
5	25	10	100	15	225	20	400

Size:

Some of the monsters you encounter will be significantly larger than you are, and this is reflected by a “Size” rating. Player characters and almost all people are size 1. Every time you gain another level past level 5 you may choose to increase your size by one rank, up to a number of ranks equal to one-fifth your current level (rounded up). However, once you grow beyond size 1 you will be unable to pilot any vehicles that aren’t specially made for someone your size, and will be unable to fit in any buildings that aren’t specially designed to accommodate larger people. Returning to a lower size is a long and painful process that costs 1,000 jools for every rank of size you lose, and can only be performed in special clinics in Sikla and Omniport. Overall, it’s best to stay at size 1 unless you have a very important reason for being bigger.

Although size is ranked, it is not a skill; it can not be bought with jools and it doesn’t contribute to your level. Other benefits and hazards of size are covered later in the Combat section.

Automatic, Simple & Complex Skills:

There are three automatic skills: **Vitality**, **Speed**, and **Luck**. When you create a new character, all three of these skills automatically start at rank 1 or better. Automatic skills are all automatically on your character sheet, and all have the type ⊖.

Simple skills cover the vast majority of the things your character can do. Types of movement, attacks, defense, social skills, and physical and mental abilities all fall under simple skills. Complex skills are things your character can’t learn until she’s become fairly proficient in other skills. Since starting characters have one skill at rank 2, it is possible to start out with complex skills (by taking 2 ranks in **Grab** and 1 rank in **Crush**, for instance). The type symbols for complex skills all have a vertical line through them, like this: ⊕.

Skill Checks and Versus Rolls:

In addition to their normal functions, all Skills can also be used to make “Skill Checks” (some skills, such as Awareness and Knowledge, have no other function than Skill Checks). When the GM asks you to make a Skill Check, she will specify which skill you should use for the check; **roll a number of dice equal to your rank in that skill, then add your Level**. If your roll is equal to or higher than a target number specified by the GM, then you succeed at your Skill Check, otherwise the check fails. The GM may choose to either tell you the target number or keep it secret. The result of succeeding or failing at a Skill Check is entirely dependant on the circumstances.

When the GM asks you to make a skill check, it’s called a “passive” check. You can also specifically ask the GM to let you make a skill check when you feel it’s appropriate; this is called an “active” check. For instance, if it’s possible that the High Plains Toaster might notice that a hot-dog vendor is wearing the exact same shoes as the master of disguise that the Toaster is trying to find, the GM would ask the Toaster to make a passive Awareness check. On the other hand, if the Toaster is specifically searching a crowd of people for someone with purple shoes, the Toaster’s player could request an active Awareness check. Passive checks never require an action to perform during combat, but active checks usually do.

If a character has no time limit, and is under no pressure to perform a skill check (for example, if DJ Eggman is searching a crime scene for clues, or Velveteen is knitting a sweater), that character can make an “extended” skill check, by continuously making active skill checks and adding together their results until she reaches the target number. Each of the active skill checks in an extended skill check represents an hour spent performing that skill (so, if it takes DJ

Eggman 3 Awareness rolls to reach the target number, it means that after 3 hours of searching he's found the clue he was looking for).

Unless the GM specifies otherwise, multiple characters can roll for the same active or extended skill check, comparing their cumulative results to the target number. Passive checks, however, are usually limited to one character, because that character is often not even consciously aware that she's making the check, and thus wouldn't think to ask for help.

If two characters are trying to perform contradictory actions (for example, if a spy is trying to sneak past Regretta while Regretta is making an effort to catch anyone trying to sneak past, or Orlando is trying to out-run a Gorgling outside of combat), they need to make a "Versus Roll", which means that they both roll a Skill Check with their appropriate skills, and whoever has the highest Skill Check wins. If the Versus Roll is a tie, both characters roll again. If more than two characters are all trying to perform contradictory actions (if four different people are all trying to grab the last bowl of oatmeal at the same time, for instance), then they all make Versus Rolls, and if any of them tie then they all roll again. If two or more characters making the same Versus Roll are trying to do the same thing (if there are two spies trying to sneak past Regretta, for instance) they must only compare their Versus Rolls to their mutual opponent's roll, and any who succeed at the roll succeed individually.

Skill Listings:

The terms "friend" and "enemy" are interchangeable in the following descriptions. For simplicity's sake, enemy is used when referring to generally harmful things, and friend is used to refer to helpful things. However, if you want to help your enemies or hurt your friends, or better yet if you want to do something like heal a weird enemy who is hurt by healing powers or bop your friends on the heads with a special club you found somewhere that makes them stronger instead of hurting them, you can do that too.

"Action" in the following descriptions always refers to an action in combat. If you are performing an action that requires a roll, you must always declare what the action is before you roll. Unless a skill specifically states that it can only be used during combat, you can use it outside of combat in the same way that you'd use it during combat, spending loose jools instead of V jools when appropriate. Attacking another character, however, can only be done during combat (with the sole exception of the Knockout skill, described below).

Distances **do not** have to be measured in a straight line; you can perform a Ranged Attack or a Dash that weaves between and around obstructions just as easily as you can perform those skills in a straight line.

Something is in an "adjacent hex" to you if it is one hex away or closer, in any direction including directly above or directly below you. Unless specifically stated otherwise, you may always choose to use a skill as if you had less ranks in it than you do (i.e. if you have 5 ranks of Dash, you may choose to move 3 hexes instead of the full 5, but those extra 2 hexes of movement are lost).

Key:

⊖ Always Active

⊖ Attack Action

⊖ Misc. Action

⊖ Move Action

⊖ Defense Action

⊖ Out of Combat

Automatic:

⊖ Luck

⊖ Speed

⊖ Vitality

Simple:

- ⊖ Awareness
- ⊖ Catch
- ⊖ Charge
- ⊖ Climb
- ⊖ Convince
- ⊖ Dash
- ⊖ Defend
- ⊖ Dodge
- ⊖ Elemental Attack
- ⊖ Elemental Resistance

- ⊖ Grab
- ⊖ Heal
- ⊖ Hinder
- ⊖ Jump
- ⊗ Job
- ⊖ Knowledge
- ⊖ Language
- ⊖ Melee Attack
- ⊖ Pilot Air / Land / Water
- ⊖ Pilot Zodian

- ⊙ Pull
- ⊖ Ranged Attack
- ⊖ Ready
- ⊙ Repair
- ⊖ Rest
- ⊖ Sneak
- ⊙ Summon
- ⊖ Swim
- ⊙ Throw

Complex:

- ⊕ Counterattack
 - Melee Attack 4
- ⊕ Cover
 - Defend 4
- ⊖ Crush
 - Grab 2
- ⊖ Dash Attack
 - Melee Attack 3
 - Dash 3
- ⊖ Drag
 - Dash 3
 - Grab 3
- ⊖ Drain
 - Melee Attack 3
 - Metabolize 3

- ⊖ Elemental Effect
 - Elemental Attack 1
 - Elemental Resistance 1
- ⊖ Explode
 - Melee Attack 3
 - Ranged Attack 3
- ⊖ Fly
 - Jump 5
- ⊗ Imbue
 - Job 3
- ⊗ Joolcraft
 - Job 3
- ⊗ Knockout
 - Melee Attack 4
 - Sneak 4

- ⊖ Launch
 - Melee Attack 3
 - Throw 3
- ⊕ Metabolize
 - Rest 3
- ⊕ Regenerate
 - Rest 5
- ⊕ Ricochet
 - Ranged Attack 5
- ⊖ Signature Move
 - Melee Attack 5
 - **or** Ranged Attack 5
- ⊖ Team Attack
 - Melee Attack 3

Automatic Skills:

⊖ Luck

Can't say I've ever done that before. Can't say I'll ever do it again, either.

At the beginning of each session, set aside a number of dice equal to your Luck rank. These are your "Lucky Dice", and can be used to improve your other skills. You may choose to either add the value of a Lucky Die to the value of a single die you have rolled, or spend one Lucky Die to add one rank to any skill you already have at least one rank in for one use only. You may choose to use as many of your Lucky Dice as you want for any given roll, and you may choose to add Lucky Dice to rolls after you have rolled other dice. Unused Lucky Dice are lost at the end of each session.

⊖ Speed

One second he was standing next to me, and the next second he was at the other end of the clearing, sliding his sword back into its sheath. All at once, the two dozen gorglings in the field between us split in half. I've never seen anyone move that fast, and his casual air told me that this wasn't even a tenth of his true power.

Every round of combat, roll a number of dice equal to your Speed rank. Each of these dice is called an “action die” and their total is called your “initiative”. The combatant with the highest initiative acts first and then removes her lowest action die, creating a new, lower initiative designating when she will get to act again, then the combatant with the next highest initiative acts and removes an action die, and so on. If multiple combatants have the same initiative, the combatant who has acted **least** recently goes first, and if this still doesn’t resolve the issue then the GM decides who goes first. When none of the combatants have any action dice left, everyone rolls again for the next round.

⊖ Vitality

Why... aren't... you... dying!!!

When combat begins, you gain a number of “V jools” equal to 20 times your Vitality rank. V jools are subtracted from your supply of “loose jools” and are used to heal injuries (all damage you take is subtracted from your supply of V jools), power special attacks, and perform other amazing feats. If you are reduced to less than zero V jools you fall unconscious, and are out of combat unless someone heals you. Any V jools left over after combat return to your loose jools. If you don’t have enough loose jools to gain your full number of V jools at the beginning of combat, you only gain a number of V jools equal to your loose jools. You can not use skills that consume more V jools than you currently have. If you take damage or use a skill that normally consumes V jools outside of combat, it will subtract loose jools instead.

Simple Skills:

⊖ Awareness

Well, he was whispering the combination to his henchman at the other end of a crowded street, and there were lots of fireworks going off, but I'm pretty sure I heard... <click!> Yep, that's the right one!

When there is something important nearby that you might not notice, the GM may call for an Awareness skill check. If you succeed at the check, you notice whatever it is. Situations where the Awareness skill are applicable include seeing enemies who are trying to hide from you, finding hidden switches and secret passageways, avoiding traps, etc. You may also make an active Awareness skill check if you are searching for something, or scrutinizing something or someone very closely.

⊖ Catch

I believe this grenade is yours.

You may catch things that are Thrown at you or to you, without spending an action to do so, if the item is Thrown a number of hexes equal to or less than your Catch rank plus your Level. If the combatant Throwing the item doesn’t want you to Catch it, you can only Catch it on a successful Catch roll versus your enemy’s Throw roll. If you fail to Catch something Thrown to you by a friend, you can spend an action to pick it up, as long as you’re in the hex that it was Thrown into. If you fail to Catch something Thrown at you by an enemy, you will probably take damage from it hitting you. The damage dealt by having something Thrown at you by an enemy is covered in the Special Weapons section (p. @@). You can not Catch an enemy’s attack (Ranged, Elemental, or otherwise). Even if you don’t have the Catch skill, you can still Catch something Thrown to you a number of hexes equal to your level, and an enemy still has to beat your level with his Throw roll.

Alternately, the GM may call for a Catch skill check when something is falling or flying toward you outside of combat.

⊖ Charge

These big guys don't scare me. What scares me is that little guy in the back who hasn't lifted a finger yet the entire time we've been fighting.

You may choose to keep a number of unused action dice equal to your Charge rank instead of losing them the next round. Kept dice each give you an action and count toward your initiative total for the next round, but do not subtract from the number of dice you roll at the beginning of each round.

⊗ Climb

You can take the stairs. I'm taking the wall.

As an action, you may move a number of hexes along a wall or ceiling equal to your Climb rank. You can not Climb through enemies or other obstructions that you could not move through normally.

⊖ Convince

Let me get this straight; you're telling me that an army of giant invisible teddy bears are on their way right now to destroy the city and steal all of our candy, and the only way you can stop them is to borrow my Zodian?? Here are the keys.

When someone doesn't believe what you're saying, either because it's an outright lie or the truth is just too outrageous, you can make a Convince skill check to convince them that you're telling the truth. If you succeed at the check, your target immediately believes what you've just told them, but further Convince checks might be necessary to make them believe further lies or bizarre truths. The GM may apply your target's level as a penalty or a bonus to your roll depending on whether you are lying or telling the truth.

⊗ Dash

When the guard returns to his post, I'll have about a quarter of a second to sprint across the courtyard and slip through the gate behind him, so I'll probably only be able to carry two of you.

As an action, you may move a number of hexes along the ground equal to your Dash rank. You can not Dash into or through enemies or other obstructions that you could not move through normally, and some obstructions (such as thick vegetation, deep mud, etc.) may slow your movement more than usual, at the GM's discretion.

⊗ Defend

Why do I wear metal gloves? To catch your bullets, of course!

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Defend rank. The total of these dice is your "Defend number". Until the next time you take an action that is not a ⊗ (Move) action, any damage you take is subtracted from your Defend number instead of your V jools, until your Defend number reaches zero. Damage taken in excess of your Defend number is subtracted from your V jools (for example, if your Defend number is 3 and you take 10 points of damage, your Defend number drops to zero and you also lose 7 V jools).

Immediately before your next action that is not a ⊗ action, your Defend number resets to zero, even if your next action is to Defend again.

⊖ Dodge

Those were supposed to be homing missiles? I hope you kept the receipt.

You may reduce the damage you take from any attack by your Dodge rank. You can only Dodge once per attack, and you can not use Dodge to avoid paying V jools for the use of skills that require them, or for any other loss of V jools that is not the direct result of being attacked.

Limit: You can not raise Dodge higher than your Speed rank.

⊖ Elemental Attack (Can be taken once for each element)

Not bad for an amateur... Now try my Earthquake Stomp!!

When you take your first rank of an Elemental Attack skill, you must choose one of the elements from the table below as its base skill. As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Elemental Attack rank, and spend 2 V jools for every die you rolled. If any of these dice roll equal to or greater than the distance in hexes between you and an enemy minus your Elemental Attack rank, they succeed. Every die that succeeds deals an amount of damage equal to its value to that enemy. If you are hitting multiple enemies with a single Elemental Attack, you must assign the damage from each die to one of the enemies; you can not split a single die between multiple enemies.

You can aim an Elemental Attack in any direction, including directly above you.

⊖ Elemental Resistance (Can be taken once for each element)

Ha! You'll need more than a puny flame-thrower to defeat me!

When you take your first rank of an Elemental Resistance skill, you must choose one of the elements from the table below as its base skill. When you are the target of an Elemental Attack of the same element as your Elemental Resistance, you are not damaged by a number of dice equal to your Elemental Resistance, starting with the lowest die.

Elemental Type List:

<i>Element</i>	<i>Strong vs.</i>	<i>Weak vs.</i>
Earth	Air, Electric	Water
Air	Water	Earth
Water	Fire, Earth	Air, Ice, Electric
Fire	Ice	Water
Ice	Water	Fire
Electric	Water	Earth
Normal*	Light	Decay
Decay	Normal	Light
Light	Decay	Normal

*Any character that doesn't have a stated elemental type has the Normal elemental type. This includes the players' characters. Normal can not be chosen as the element for Elemental Attack or Elemental Resistance.

When you use an Elemental Attack against someone with an elemental type that is weak versus your attack, you may add your level as a bonus to each of the dice that target that opponent.

When you are attacked by an Elemental Attack that your elemental type is strong versus, you can add your level to your Elemental Resistance rank for that element.

⊖ Grab

Shall we dance?

As an action, you may attempt to Grab an enemy in an adjacent hex by rolling your Grab versus that enemy's Grab. If you are successful, you have Grabbed your enemy, and have him in a wrestling lock or something similar. While you have an enemy in a Grab, you and that enemy are considered to be occupying the same hex, and you are unable to perform any actions besides skills that specifically say that they can be used during a Grab in their descriptions (such as Throw or Crush). The enemy that you are Grabbing can not perform any normal actions, but can attempt to escape your Grab by spending one or more actions to roll a number of dice equal to the number of actions he spent added to his Grab rank versus your Grab rank. If the roll is successful he has escaped your Grab but stays in the same hex as you until he moves. You may release an enemy you have Grabbed at any time without using an action to do so, and may choose to either keep him in the same hex as you or push him into any empty adjacent hex. Enemies in the same hex as you are considered to be zero hexes away, and you may use **any** skill that targets combatants in adjacent hexes on combatants in the same hex as you.

⑦ Heal

Now hold your arm up against your shoulder and don't let go until I'm done sewing.

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Heal rank. If any of these dice roll equal to or greater than the distance in hexes between you and a friend, you may spend a number of V jools up to the total value of the dice that succeed at the range check to give that friend an equal number of V jools. If you are hitting multiple friends with a single Heal, you must assign the healing from each die to one of the friends; you can not split a single die between multiple friends.

⑧ Hinder

I... can't... move!!!

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Hinder rank, choose an enemy adjacent to you, and name a skill. You must spend 2 V jools for each die you roll. For every 5 points by which the total number you rolled exceeds that enemy's level, that enemy loses one rank in the skill that you named until the end of combat (for instance, if you rolled a 14 and the enemy has 3 levels, the enemy loses two ranks in the named skill). Skills can not be dropped below zero ranks in this way.

Limit: Hinder can not target Luck or Vitality.

⑨ Jump

Well, my record on Earth was four meters, and that chasm looks like about ten. Here goes nothing!

As an action, you may vertically jump a number of hexes equal to your Jump rank. You may also combine this skill with Dash to jump over a number of hexes equal to your Jump rank as you dash as one action, as long as you land in an empty hex on the other side. You may use this second use to jump over pits and other hazardous terrain, or to jump over enemies or obstructions whose size is less than or equal to your Jump rank. You always land from a Jump before the beginning of the next round, but if you have additional actions in the same round that you jumped you may choose to use them either in mid-air or after you land. You can Jump multiple times in the same round, but you must be touching something (the ground, a wall, an enemy, something thrown into the air by another combatant, etc.) at the beginning of each Jump, and you can not jump off the same object (the same wall, for instance) twice in a row.

⊗ Job

I'm a saucier, I cook sauces. Sauces for beef, sauces for chicken, sauces that eat through metal, sauces that turn you invisible. All kinds of sauces.

This is what you do for a living. If you spend a full day performing your Job in a city, town, settlement, etc., you may roll a number of dice equal to your Job rank, and receive a number of jools equal to 10 times your total roll.

⊖ Knowledge

I took a correspondence course on Aztec death-traps a few years ago, and I don't know what an Aztec temple is doing on Amalgus, but those markings most definitely tell us we want to go left.

When you encounter something that your character might have prior knowledge of, your GM may ask you to make a Knowledge skill check. If your roll is successful, the GM will tell you what your character remembers. Situations where the Knowledge skill is applicable include figuring out a monster's weakness, determining the value of an item or how it was made, reading something written in a foreign language, etc. You may also request a Knowledge roll if you think your character would know something about the situation at hand.

⊖ Language

Yes, he does look just like a giant gopher, but his Italian is impeccable!

When you are trying to understand a foreign language, either spoken or written, or when trying to speak or write in a foreign language, your GM will probably ask you to make a Language skill check. The difficulty of the skill check will depend on how different the language is from your native language; someone who speaks Spanish would have little trouble communicating with someone who speaks Portuguese, but would have a considerable amount of trouble communicating with someone from another planet. Check with your GM before taking this skill; while some GMs love the dramatic tension that language barriers can create, others view it as a nuisance and will simply have everyone on Amalgus speak and understand the exact same language regardless of where they're from.

⊖ Melee Attack

What do you mean "he only has a sword"? Last week I saw an old woman slaughter an entire army with a wooden spoon!

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Melee Attack rank and distribute their values as damage to enemies in adjacent hexes. If you are hitting multiple enemies with a single Melee Attack, you must assign the damage from each die to one of the enemies; you can not split a single die between multiple enemies.

⊖ Pilot Air

⊖ Pilot Land

⊖ Pilot Water

Don't worry, it's just like driving a car, that can fly, and goes underwater, and has a large glowing sphere instead of a steering wheel, and a set of seven knobs instead of pedals.

Actually, come to think of it, it's not like driving a car at all. Scoot over.

As an action, you may use a Pilot skill to pilot a vehicle of the appropriate type a number of hexes equal to twice your applicable Pilot rank or the Speed of the vehicle, whichever is less. A list of vehicles can be found on page @@.

⊖ Pilot Zodian

All systems engaged. Let's go dragon hunting.

While piloting a Zodian, you may use that Zodian's skills at a rank equal to twice your Pilot Zodian rank, or the rank of the Zodian's skill, whichever is less. More information on Zodians can be found on page @@.

⊙ Pull

My friends say I have a magnetic personality. My ex-girlfriends call me "Black-hole Boy".

As an action, you may spend 2 V jools to roll one die and add your Pull rank. If this number is equal to or greater than the distance in hexes between you and an enemy plus that enemy's level, you may "pull" that enemy toward you a number of hexes equal to or less than your Pull rank. You can not Pull enemies through walls or other obstructions. If the enemy you're Pulling has a higher size rank than you have, you can only Pull him a number of hexes equal to your Pull rank times your size divided by the enemy's size (rounded down). If you are using Pull on a willing friend instead of an enemy, you do not have to add that friend's level to the distance between you. You may also use Pull on any object that you could lift (with the target number being only the distance between you and the object) at the GM's discretion.

⊖ Ranged Attack

Hmmm, she hasn't noticed. Maybe shooting the cherry off the top of her sundae from across the plaza was too subtle a warning shot. I'll just shoot her spoon in half this time. Hand me another pebble.

As an action, you may roll one die and add your Ranged Attack rank to its value. If this number is equal to or greater than the distance in hexes between you and an enemy, you may deal an amount of damage equal to that number to that enemy.

You can aim a Ranged Attack in any direction, including directly above you.

⊖ Ready

A little flick of the wrist, and a sword pops out of my sleeve. Another flick, and it's a gun. I also have a fork, a lighter, a toothbrush, and twenty feet of rope. Would you like to see my collection of scout badges?

At the beginning of each session, set aside a number of "ready tokens" equal to your Ready rank. Immediately after you roll initiative at the beginning of a combat round, you may spend any number of ready tokens to change the values of an equal number of action dice to 6s.

Dice changed into 6s by the use of ready tokens do not pop.

Limit: You can not have more ranks in Ready than you have in Luck.

⊙ Repair

Well, it's broken into fifty-three different pieces, and I don't even know what it was to begin with. This'll take at least an hour, maybe even two.

You can fix just about anything given enough time. The GM will set a target number for the repair of each broken object. In combat, you may spend an action to roll a number of dice equal to your Repair rank, spend a number of loose jools or V jools (or a combination of both) equal to their total, and subtract the total from the target number. Once the target number is reduced to zero, the object is repaired.

Outside of combat, if you spend a full day repairing an object you may roll a number of dice equal to your Repair rank, multiply their total by ten, spend a number of jools equal to their

total, and subtract that number from the target number. Once the target number is reduced to zero, the object is repaired.

Both in and out of combat, multiple characters can repair a single object, each subtracting her result from the target number.

The Repair skill can also be used in exactly the same way to “disarm” or “sabotage” something. In this case, your target number indicates how much work it will take for you to break something instead of fix it, and you do not have to spend jools to do so.

⊙ Rest

This giant hole in my chest? Don't worry, it just knocked the wind out of me.

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Rest rank and convert a number of loose jools equal to or less than the total value of your roll to V jools.

⊖ Sneak

First of all, that purse is empty. Second, in the time it took you to swipe it I tied your shoes together. Just give me everything you've stolen from people so far today and I might not cut you in half.

When you want to move or do anything else without attracting attention, roll a number of dice equal to your Sneak rank plus your level. This is your “Sneak number”, and anyone you sneak past or are trying to hide your actions from must roll equal to or higher than your Sneak number on an Awareness roll to see you. Alternately, the GM may ask you to make a single Sneak skill check to sneak by or hide from a group of enemies, and if your Sneak check is successful then none of them notice you.

⊙ Summon

Cloud Shark! I choose you!

When you defeat a monster, instead of reducing it to jools after combat, you can turn it into a “summoning stone”. (Exactly what form the summoning stone takes is up to your imagination.) As an action, you may spend 2 V jools to summon a monster for which you have a summoning stone. When you summon a monster, you may immediately spend any number of loose jools to give him an equal number of V jools up to 20 times his Vitality. Summoned monsters do not roll initiative until the beginning of the next round after they are Summoned. You control any monsters you summon, but otherwise they function as completely separate combatants from you. If a summoned monster is defeated or when combat ends, he disappears and does not leave any jools behind. Monsters Summoned outside of combat disappear after one hour, or earlier if you want them to.

Summoning stones are reusable, and otherwise function like Special Items (see the Special Items section on page @@ for more information on Special Items). You can only turn an enemy into a summoning stone if his level is lower than your Summon rank, and you can destroy your unwanted summoning stones at any time outside of combat (destroyed summoning stones evaporate, and **do not** turn into jools). The combined levels of all summoned monsters you have in combat simultaneously can not exceed your level. Due to a strange phenomenon that Amalgus's scientists are still working to understand, you can not turn anyone who has enough cognizance to pass the personality test into a summoning stone.

⊙ Swim

The entire undersea base is flooded, this is the third floor, and the item we need is locked in a safe in the sub-basement? I'll be back in half-an-hour.

As an action, you may swim through water or any other liquid a number of hexes equal to your Swim rank. You may swim either across the surface of the liquid or below the surface in any direction.

⊙ Throw

Hey! You guys forgot your bombs! Catch!

As an action, you may throw something a number of hexes equal to your Throw rank plus your Level. If you are throwing something to a friend and you want them to catch it, that friend can catch it if her Level plus her Catch rank is equal to or greater than the number of hexes the item was thrown. If you are throwing something at an enemy, the enemy can catch the object on a successful Catch roll versus your Throw. If your target does not Catch the item, or if you Throw something into an empty hex, a character may spend an action to pick the item up if they are in the same hex as it. You can Throw anything you can carry, within reason (the GM has final call on what is reasonable). The effect of Throwing a Special Item specifically designed to be Thrown at an enemy is covered in the Special Items section (p. @@). Throwing anything else deals one die of damage to the enemy it hits and to the object being thrown.

Alternately, when you have an enemy in a Grab, you may spend an action to Throw that enemy a number of hexes equal to your Throw rank. Once you Throw an enemy you are no longer Grabbing him, but if you Throw him to a friend and she Catches him, she can attempt to Grab him without spending an action to do so. If the enemy you're Throwing has a higher size rank than you have, you can only Throw him a number of hexes equal to your Throw rank times your size divided by the enemy's size (rounded down).

You can aim a Throw in any direction, including directly above you. Even if you don't have the Throw skill, you can still Throw something a number of hexes equal to your level, or directly at your feet (effectively zero hexes away).

Complex Skills:

⊕ Counterattack

You know, you'd think it would be pretty obvious that you shouldn't punch a guy covered in porcupine quills.

Requirements: Melee Attack 4

Whenever you are damaged by a Melee Attack, roll a number of dice equal to your Counterattack rank. If any of these dice pop, deal an amount of damage to the enemy who attacked you equal to the damage you took from the attack. You may only use Counterattack once for every Melee Attack that damages you, and may only use it against Melee Attacks. You may use Counterattack against Melee Attack damage that you take from Covering, or damage that you absorbed (partially or fully) with a Defend, but not damage that you Dodge.

⊕ Cover

Ha! You'll have to get through me first!

Requirements: Defend 4

When a friend in a hex adjacent to you takes damage, you may choose to take a number of dice of damage equal to your Cover rank in her stead. You may choose which dice you wish to Cover after damage has been rolled. You may not Dodge damage that you take from Covering, but you may use other defensive skills against it as applicable (Defend and Elemental Resistance, for instance).

④ Crush

A double spinning piledriver with a reverse atomic suplex? Let me demonstrate.

Requirements: Grab 2

When you have an enemy in a Grab, you may spend an action to roll a number of dice equal to your Crush rank and deal an amount of damage equal to their total to the enemy you are Grabbing. After you Crush an enemy you may continue to Grab him. Crush can not be used outside of a Grab, and can not be Dodged.

④ Dash Attack

Mwa ha ha!! You'll never get here in ti – Ow! You just kicked me in the ear!

Requirements: Melee Attack 3, Dash 3

As an action, you may move a number of hexes up to your Dash Attack rank as if Dashing, and then perform a Melee Attack against a single enemy at a rank equal to the number of hexes you have moved. You may use the Jump skill with Dash Attack just as you would use it with Dash. When using a Dash Attack, you must move at least one hex, and you must attack after you move.

④ Drag

Dead or alive, you're coming with us. Now stop squirming.

Requirements: Grab 3, Dash 3

While you have an enemy in a Grab, you may spend an action to move a number of hexes equal to your Drag rank while carrying that enemy with you. If you have the Swim skill, you may Drag an enemy through liquid a number of hexes equal to whichever is lower of your Swim or Drag ranks, and if you have the Fly skill you may carry an enemy through the air a number of hexes equal to whichever is lower of your Fly or Drag ranks. If the enemy you're Dragging has a higher size rank than you have, you can only Drag him a number of hexes equal to your Drag rank times your size divided by the enemy's size (rounded down). After you Drag an enemy you may continue to Grab him. Drag can not be used outside of a Grab.

Limit: You can not have more ranks in Drag than you have in Dash.

④ Drain

I never drink... soda.

Requirements: Melee Attack 3, Metabolize 3

As an action, you may perform a Melee Attack using your Drain rank instead of your Melee Attack rank. You must spend 2 V jools for every die you roll, but you then gain a number of V jools equal to the total damage you inflicted with that attack. You can not use Drain on an enemy with less than 0 V jools, and if the damage from a Drain would drop an enemy below 0 V jools, it only does enough damage to drop the enemy to -1 V jools.

④ Elemental Effect (Can be taken once for each element)

Who needs matches? We've got Dave.

Requirements: Elemental Attack 1 and Elemental Resistance 1 in the same element

When you take your first rank of an Elemental Effect skill, you must choose one of the elements from the table on page @@ as its base skill. As an action, you may spend a number of V jools equal to twice your Elemental Effect rank to create an effect as listed below.

Unless otherwise specified, you must be touching whatever you wish to use the Elemental Effect on.

Limit: You may not have more ranks in Elemental Effect for a specific element than the sum of your Elemental Attack and Elemental Defense ranks for that element.

Specific Elemental Effects:

- **Earth:** If you are standing outside on natural dirt, sand, or stone (not stone that has been used for pavement or to build a building), you may raise or lower one hex of ground one hex of elevation for every rank you have in Elemental Effect: Earth. This effect is instantaneous, but the ground will gradually return to normal over the next hour. This effect compresses or expands the ground you are standing on, so it can not be used to dig underground. You may choose to make the surrounding terrain slope to accommodate the change in elevation, or leave a shear boundary between the affected ground and the surrounding terrain.
- **Air:** You may create an area of complete stillness, like the eye of a hurricane, around you with a size rating equal to your rank in Elemental Effect: Air. Any smoke, mist, or unwanted gasses in the area are pushed out of it instantaneously. This effect gradually subsides over the next hour, and will move with you if you want it to. You may also use this skill to create a sudden gust of wind by succeeding at a skill check determined by the size and duration of the gust, at the GM's discretion.
- **Fire:** You may create a fire one dex in diameter. Unless the fire finds another fuel source, it will burn out after a number of minutes equal to your Elemental Effect: Fire rank. If a character catches on fire, refer to the Elemental Extreme Damage section on page @@.

- **Water:** You may create one dex volume of water or one hex volume of mist for every rank you have in Elemental Effect: Water. Mist created this way appears in the hex you're in and dissipates after about 5 minutes. If you create mist this way during combat it will last until the end of combat, and anyone standing inside the mist doubles her die roll to attempt to escape from combat. Water created this way can be created up to a number of hexes away from you equal to your Elemental Effect: Water rank, is permanent, and acts exactly like normal water in every way.
- **Ice:** You may freeze one dex volume of water, or one hex volume of molten metal or stone for every rank you have in Elemental Effect: Ice. You may freeze larger areas of liquid with a higher freezing temperature or smaller areas of liquid with a lower freezing temperature at the GM's discretion. Liquids frozen this way thaw to the ambient temperature at the normal rate. Liquid characters can not be frozen in this way.
- **Electric:** You may cause any number of electric machines a number of hexes away from you equal to your Elemental Effect: Electric rank to immediately stop working until the end of combat (or for an hour outside of combat). You may also use Elemental Effect: Electric to power the same kinds of electric machines, at the GM's discretion. Electric characters are not affected by this skill.
- **Normal:** Normal can not be used as the element for Elemental Effect.
- **Light:** You may create a sphere of light one dex in diameter that either stays in place or moves with you and illuminates an area with a diameter in hexes equal to your Elemental Effect: Light rank as well as sunlight. This light also functions exactly the way sunlight does; nurturing plants, powering solar-powered devices, damaging certain types of monsters, etc. Every hour the diameter the sphere illuminates gradually shrinks by one hex, until the diameter reaches zero and the sphere disappears. You may spend an action and touch the sphere to increase the diameter of the illuminated area by one hex for every 2 V jools you spend, up to a total diameter equal to your Elemental Effect: Light rank.
- **Decay:** You may rot one dex mass of dead organic material (food, wood, etc.) or turn to dust one jool mass of dead organic material for every rank you have in Elemental Effect: Decay. You may not use this effect on things that have been Imbued, characters, or things that are part of another character's personal equipment (at the GM's discretion).

⊕ Explode

3...2...1... Well, it's been nice knowing you. Kaboom!!

Requirements: Melee Attack 3, Ranged Attack 3

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Explode rank. For each die that rolls equal to or higher than the distance in hexes between you and an enemy, you may inflict damage to that enemy equal to the value of the die times your level. You may distribute the dice you roll between multiple enemies, but can not split the damage dealt by a single die between multiple enemies. Immediately after performing this skill you are reduced to a pile of jools, exactly as if you had been dropped below 0 V jools and been turned into jools by an enemy after combat. This effect can not be avoided or reversed. If you have multiple consecutive actions, you may Explode with all of them, and only turn into jools after the completion of the last one.

⊕ Fly

Wings? No thanks. I'm a rocket-boots man, myself.

Requirements: Jump 5

As an action, you may move a number of hexes equal to your Fly rank, across any terrain as long as you land on a safe, empty hex on the other side. You can not Fly through obstructions, but you can Fly over, under, or around them. If you Fly during combat, roll a number of dice equal to your Fly rank. The value of the die that rolls the lowest number is your “Flying penalty”, and must be applied to every roll you make while Flying until the end of combat.

Outside of combat, you can Fly for an unlimited amount of time as long as you have at least one rank of Fly, although if you lose consciousness or fall asleep while flying you will stop flying and fall. Outside of combat you must roll for a new Flying penalty every time you begin Flying (although you don’t need to roll until just before you use your first skill of that flight). Outside of combat you can also carry one character with you while Flying, but only if they are willing to be carried.

⊗ Imbue

There, all finished. Now your sword is twice as powerful as before, shoots flames, and it’s minty-fresh!

Requirements: Job 3

Imbue lets you use jools to give special properties to otherwise normal objects. You can not use Imbue during combat, and you can only Imbue objects that are already made or while they are being made (Imbue does not create the objects it Imbues). See the Special Items section beginning on page @@ for information on what kinds of enhancements can be created with Imbue.

Limit: You can not have more ranks in Imbue than you have in Job.

⊗ Joolcraft

Just a handful of jools, and presto! It’s a flower! Now it’s a duck! Now it’s a poodle! Now it’s a dagger pointed at your throat! Where are you holding the prince?

Requirements: Job 3

Joolcraft is the ability to create something entirely out of jools, by turning a single jool of one color into a larger object of a lower color. It can not be used during combat. You can only convert jools a number of steps equal to your Joolcraft rank; at rank 1, for instance, you can turn an orange jool into an object with 10 jools of volume made from a single large yellow jool or you can turn a red jool into an object with 10 jools of volume made from a single orange jool, and at rank 2 you can turn a red jool into an object with 100 jools of volume made from a single giant yellow jool. You can not use Joolcraft on yellow jools, and Joolcrafted items can not be Imbued.

You can make anything from jools that you could make from an equal amount of clay, without limits to form because you are sculpting it with your will instead of your hands. Joolcrafting takes one minute per every jool of volume of the final product, and requires total concentration. If your Joolcrafting is interrupted, the jool immediately reverts to its original form and you have to start all over again. Although jools have the consistency of very soft clay while they are being Joolcrafted (and thus you can wrap them around or between other things), the final product is always a single solid object with the consistency of glass, so you could not make a functioning bow, rope, or chain from a jool, but you could make an arrow or a ladder. A Joolcrafted object can not be turned back into a single jool or consumed except by its creator, who can do so almost instantly. Any pieces broken off a Joolcrafted object immediately evaporate. If a Joolcrafted object is broken into pieces to the point where none

of the pieces are more than half the volume of the original object, the largest piece turns back into the single jool used to create the object, and all of the other pieces evaporate.

Limit: You can not have more ranks in Joolcraft than **one-third** your Job rank (rounded down).

⊗ Knockout

Gettin' paid to guard the back door of a hidden fortress nobody even knows exists. Man, this sure beats the last job I had flipping burg – Ack! Thud.

Requirements: Melee Attack 4, Sneak 4

Outside of combat you can try to knock another character unconscious by catching him unaware and attacking him before he has time to generate V jools. Roll your Knockout rank versus your enemy's Awareness rank. If you succeed, that enemy drops to -1 V jools and falls unconscious. Because generating V jools is an instantaneous, instinctive action, your target must have no idea that you're there and must be relaxed; anyone who is "on their guard" can't be knocked out, but a city guard who has stood the same watch for 2 years without any disturbance could be. In most circumstances, who can or can't be knocked out is at the GM's discretion. Knocked out enemies can not be turned into jools the way defeated enemies can, and if a knocked out character is returned to 0 or more V jools during combat or has any further damage dealt to him, he immediately turns loose jools into V jools the way he normally would have at the beginning of combat. You can try to steal a knocked out enemy's loose jools to keep him from turning them into V jools when he wakes up, but most characters keep their loose jools inside their bodies, only generating them when they need to pay for something. A character you knock out will automatically return to 0 V jools after a number of hours equal to your Knockout rank.

Knockout can not be used during combat.

⊕ Launch

Hmmm... fire monsters don't like water, and there's a lake about 6 hexes that way. A nine-iron should do the trick.

Requirements: Melee Attack 3, Throw 3

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Launch rank, apply the total of those dice as damage to a single enemy, and move that enemy a number of hexes equal to the damage dealt divided by 5 times that enemy's size (rounded down). You may Launch an enemy in any direction, including straight up, as long as there are no obstructions preventing the enemy from moving in that direction.

⊕ Metabolize

I like to use up my spare change throwing freezing blasts at my enemies, pretending to get weaker and weaker as I go, then letting them really have it when they try to close in for the kill. That's how I crushed all your little friends. And now that you know my secret, I'm going to have to crush you too.

Requirements: Rest 3

At the beginning of combat, roll a number of dice equal to your Metabolize rank. The total of these dice is your "metabolize number". When using skills that require you to expend V jools, you may instead expend loose jools, until you have expended a total number of loose jools equal to your metabolize number. You can not use Metabolize to pay for damage taken with loose jools.

⊕ Regenerate

Requirements: Rest 5

At the end of each round of combat, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Regenerate rank and convert a number of loose jools equal to their total to V jools. You can not use this skill if you have less than zero V jools.

Limit: You can not have more ranks in Regenerate than **half** your Rest rank.

⊕ Ricochet

Through the Gorgling, off the Starrhanas, around the Dingoat and over the Zombling. Nothin' but net.

Requirements: Ranged Attack 5

If you damage an enemy with a Ranged Attack, you may immediately perform another Ranged Attack without spending an action to do so. You may repeat this process as many times as you have ranks in Ricochet, or until an attack fails to deal damage. (For instance, at rank 1 you may perform a second Ranged Attack if the first Ranged Attack dealt damage, at rank 2 you may perform up to three Ranged Attacks if both of the first two dealt damage, etc.). While using Ricochet, you may not target the same enemy twice in a row.

Limit: You may not have more ranks in Ricochet than **half** your Ranged Attack rank.

⊕ Signature Move

Super Infinity Hyper Judgment Blast!!

Requirements: Melee Attack 5 **or** Ranged Attack 5

Whenever you pop a die while rolling a Melee Attack or Ranged Attack, you may choose to gain a “signature token” instead of re-rolling the die. You can not have more signature tokens than you have ranks in Signature Move. As an action, you may spend any number of signature tokens to perform a special Melee Attack or Ranged Attack with a rank equal to the number of signature tokens you spent. This special attack functions exactly like a normal Melee Attack or Ranged Attack, but its damage can not be avoided by the use of Dodge or Defend. At the end of combat, all unused signature tokens are lost.

Limit: You can not raise Signature Move higher than your Melee Attack skill or your Ranged Attack skill, whichever is greater.

⊕ Team Attack

Wow, that was insane! It was like doubles tennis but with explosions everywhere!

Requirements: Melee Attack 3

If you and at least one friend with the Team Attack skill have an action at the same time, you may all simultaneously perform a Melee Attack against the same enemy(s), each using the combined total of your Team Attack ranks instead of your Melee Attack rank. You must all be adjacent to the enemy(s) you are using Team Attack against.

Limit: You can not raise Team Attack higher than your Melee Attack skill.

Path Skills

Path Skills are a special subset of skills that all fit the same basic mold: they include one skill called a “Path”, which is usually a simple skill with no intrinsic effects, and a set of complex skills called “Steps”, one or more of which has each rank of the Path as a requirement. Path Skills are grouped by Path with a list of each Path’s Steps numbered by the rank that they require. (The skill “Illusion: Disguise”, for instance, has a **Requirement** of Illusion 2.)

Path Skill Listings:

⊖ Illusion	⊖ Mind	⊖ Nature	⊖ Premonition	⊖ SpaceTime
1. ⊕ Vanish	1. ⊕ Distract	1. ⊗ Hibernate	1. ⊕ Sense	1. ⊕ Haste
2. ⊕ Disguise	2. ⊕ Telepathy	2. ⊕ Wilt	2. ⊕ Scope	1. ⊕ Slow
3. ⊕ Invisibility	3. ⊕ Sleep	3. ⊕ Grow	3. ⊕ Dowse	2. ⊕ Teleport
4. ⊕ Decoy	4. ⊕ Confuse	4. ⊕ Commune	4. ⊕ Warning	3. ⊕ Switch
5. ⊕ Mirage	5. ⊕ Control	5. ⊗ Alter	5. ⊕ Predict	4. ⊕ Blink
5. ⊕ Shatter Illusion				5. ⊕ Split

⊖ Illusion

A true magician never reveals her secrets.

The Illusion path involves tricking your enemies into seeing things that aren't there or not seeing things that are there. You can use the first 3 Illusion steps (Vanish, Disguise, and Invisibility) on your friends instead of yourself if your Illusion rank is higher than the rank necessary for the step.

1. ⊕ Vanish

Actually, I've been standing here the entire time. Would you care to repeat what you just called me?

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Vanish rank and become invisible until the next time you use an action to perform a skill. The total number you rolled is your "illusion number" and you must spend 2 V jools for every die you rolled. Enemies that were in combat when you used Vanish will remember where you are, but if they try to attack you they must succeed at an Illusion skill check or an Awareness skill check (whichever is higher) with your illusion number as the target. Enemies that come into combat after you Vanish must succeed at an Illusion or Awareness skill check without adding their Level to see you.

Outside of combat, Vanish takes about 5 seconds to perform, during which time anyone watching will know that you're Vanishing. Once you reach 5 ranks of Vanish, however, you can Vanish instantaneously outside of combat, and only enemies who are closely watching you will notice that you've Vanished.

2. ⊕ Disguise

Well, you look like a duck, walk like a duck, and quack like a duck... let her in, boys!

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Disguise rank to disguise yourself as one of your enemies until the next time you attack. You do not look like a specific one of your enemies; your enemies simply think you are one of them. You may also use Disguise to simply look "harmless", or like a random passer-by until the next time you attack. The total number you rolled to Disguise yourself is your "illusion number" and you must spend 2 V jools for every die you rolled. Every time an enemy has an action, he can make an Illusion or Awareness skill check (whichever is higher), with your illusion number as the target, before taking his action. If he succeeds, he sees through your Disguise for the rest of the combat. If you attack an enemy, all of your enemies immediately see through your Disguise.

Outside of combat, Disguise takes about 5 seconds to perform, during which time anyone watching will know that you're disguising yourself. Once you reach 5 ranks of Disguise, however, you can disguise yourself instantaneously outside of combat, and only enemies who are closely watching you will notice that you've disguised yourself. Once you are disguised

outside of combat, enemies can only roll to see through your disguise if you do something suspicious, like fail to know a routine password or mention that the food could use some ketchup while dining with your “fellow” giant carnivorous tomatoes.

3. ④ Invisibility

Every guard post is on triple-duty, and nothing gets past my boys. Rest assured, Professor, nobody’s gonna lay a hand on your precious... hey, where did it go?

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Invisibility rank to become invisible until the next time you attack. The total number you rolled is your “illusion number” and you must spend 2 V jools for every die you rolled. Every time an enemy has an action, he can make an Illusion or Awareness skill check (whichever is higher), with your illusion number as the target, before taking his action. If he succeeds, he sees through your Invisibility for the rest of the combat. If you attack an enemy, you immediately become visible again.

Outside of combat, Invisibility takes about 5 seconds to perform, during which time anyone watching will know that you’re becoming invisible. Once you reach 5 ranks of Invisibility, however, you can become invisible instantaneously outside of combat, and only enemies who are closely watching you will notice that you’ve become invisible. Once you’ve become invisible outside of combat, enemies can only roll to see you if you make a loud noise, knock something over, or otherwise attract attention.

4. ④ Decoy

Useful in combat? Huh, I hadn’t really thought of that. I mostly just use it to make my own chorus-line.

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Decoy rank to create a decoy of yourself. The total number you rolled is your “illusion number” and you must spend 2 V jools for every die you rolled. All of your decoy’s skills are equal to your own, and it gets an action after each of your actions (including the action that you used to create it) but can only use ☉ (move) actions. If your decoy takes any amount of damage, it is immediately destroyed. You can have any number of Decoys in play simultaneously, but they must all be created as separate actions, and your illusion number is always the last illusion number you rolled. Every time an enemy has an action, he can make an Illusion or Awareness skill check (whichever is higher), with your illusion number as the target, before taking his action. If he succeeds, he figures out which of you is real.

Outside of combat, each Decoy takes about 5 seconds to create, during which time anyone watching will know that you’re creating one. When you reach 5 ranks of Decoy, you can create decoys instantaneously outside of combat. Since the decoys you create start out in exactly the same place and position that you are in, it will be difficult for enemies to immediately tell which of you is which, although it will be obvious to them that one of you is a decoy.

Decoys can talk and make noise, but they have no substance, can’t interact with objects (move things, flip levers, etc.) or use any skills except ☉, and you can’t see through their eyes. If anyone except you touches one of your decoys, it immediately dissipates, although your friends can carefully pretend to touch your decoys to confuse your enemies.

5. ④ Mirage

Fine! If you’re so sure there’s not really a raging fire there then you walk through it!

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Mirage rank to create an illusion of anything you want, as long as it has no more than a hex of volume for every rank you have in Mirage. The total number you rolled is your “illusion number” and you must spend 2 V jools for every die you rolled. Every time an enemy has an action, he can make an Illusion or Awareness skill check (whichever is higher), with your illusion number as the target, before taking his action. If he succeeds, he sees through the Mirage. You can only create one Mirage at a time, although you may change the appearance of your Mirage as much as you want as long as it fits within the size constraints. Mirage can also be used to conceal objects that fit inside its boundaries, or create illusory pits, caves, etc. (however, a Mirage of a pit won’t reveal what’s underneath the floor, it will just look like whatever you want it to look like). Outside of combat, each Mirage takes about 5 seconds to create, during which time anyone watching will know that you’re creating one. When you reach 5 ranks of Mirage, you can create mirages instantaneously outside of combat, and only enemies who are closely watching you will notice that you’ve created a Mirage.

Like decoys, mirages can talk and make noise, but they have no substance, they can’t interact with objects (move things, flip levers, etc.) and you can’t see through their eyes (if they even have eyes). If anyone except you touches one of your mirages, it immediately dissipates, although your friends can carefully pretend to touch your mirages to confuse your enemies.

5. ⑤ Shatter Illusion

Ha! Your petty conjuror’s tricks won’t work on me, old man!

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Shatter Illusion rank. You must spend 2 V jools for every die you rolled. If the total number you rolled plus your Level plus your Illusion rank is equal to or higher than any of your enemies’ illusion numbers, their illusions are immediately shattered; vanished and invisible enemies immediately become visible, and disguises, decoys and mirages are destroyed. This affects all of the enemies currently in combat with you, but does not affect your friends (you may choose who to affect and who not to affect). Shatter Illusion also destroys other illusions in the vicinity (at the GM’s discretion).

Outside of combat, Shatter Illusion affects all illusions up to a number of hexes away from you equal to ten times your Shatter Illusion rank.

⊖ Mind

No, no, no. We are your friends, and they are your enemies. Don’t you remember?

The Mind path allows you to lock, trick, and ultimately control the minds of your enemies.

The Mind path also helps you resist the effects of Mind path skills; you may add your rank in Mind to the distance in hexes between you and an enemy using a Mind path skill.

1. ① Distract

Hey! Over here!!

As an action, you may roll one die and add your Distract rank to the value. If this number is equal to or greater than the distance in hexes between you and an enemy plus that enemy’s level, that enemy loses his next action.

2. ⊕ Telepathy

If you watch my lips you’ll see that I’m saying something completely different from what you’re hearing. Just smile and nod.

You can communicate without speaking with anyone up to a number of hexes away from you equal to your Telepathy rank. The character you're communicating with can't communicate back unless she also has Telepathy and you are within her range. Using Telepathy does not require an action. You can only communicate telepathically with characters you have met before, and they will instinctively know it is you who is communicating with them.

3. ☯ Sleep

Gaze into my eyes... now sleeeep!

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Sleep rank and add your Mind rank as a bonus to each of them. You must spend 2 V jools for every die you roll. For every die that rolls greater than the distance in hexes between you and an enemy plus that enemy's level, that enemy falls asleep for one action. Every time a sleeping enemy would normally have an action, he may roll a number of dice equal to his level; if any of those dice pop, the enemy wakes up and may immediately take his action, otherwise the enemy remains asleep and the action is lost. You may only use Sleep on one enemy per action. If the sleeping enemy is damaged, he immediately wakes up, and begins to take actions normally. A friend in an adjacent hex can also spend an action to wake up a sleeping combatant. Sleep can not be used on an enemy who is already asleep.

4. ☯ Confuse

Is the enemy of my enemy my enemy, or is the enemy of my enemy an anemone? Forget this! I'm just gonna start attacking!

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Confuse rank and add your Mind rank as a bonus to each of them. You must spend 2 V jools for every die you roll. For every die that rolls greater than the distance in hexes between you and an enemy plus that enemy's level, that enemy is confused for one round. Confused combatants always attack the nearest combatant, whether friend or enemy, with their strongest available attack. You may only use Confuse on one enemy per action. If the confused enemy is damaged or affected by another Confuse, his confusion immediately ends.

5. ☯ Control

I know we've been friends for as long as either of us can remember, but the great Mesmo says I have to beat you senseless and steal the Oracle Stone from you now. Please don't take it personally.

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Control rank and add your Mind rank as a bonus to each of them. You must spend 2 V jools for every die you roll. Every die that rolls greater than the distance in hexes between you and an enemy plus that enemy's level succeeds; if the number of dice that succeed are equal to or greater than that enemy's level, you may control that enemy's next action.

You may only use Control on one enemy per action. You can not use Control in this way outside of combat.

Outside of combat, you may use Control to control an enemy for a number of days equal to your Control rank minus that enemy's level. You must be in direct physical contact with an enemy for at least one full hour before you can Control him, during which time that enemy will be aware of the fact that you're trying to Control him (and thus probably try to escape). While controlling an enemy, your own body falls unconscious, and you perceive things through that enemy's senses. You retain your own level and skills while controlling an

enemy, and can not use any skills that that enemy has and you do not. If either the enemy or your unconscious body is damaged, the Control immediately ends.

⊖ Nature

Sure it's nice that all the little woodland creatures are always gathered around me, giving me berries and garlands of flowers, but sometimes a girl wants a little privacy, you know??

The Nature path helps you adapt to and eventually manipulate the wild, untamed, and undeveloped areas of Amalgus. You may add your Nature rank to your Sneak, Awareness, and Swim skills while you are outside, in an undeveloped area.

1. ⊗ Hibernate

Wake me when it's over. All of it.

You may hibernate for up to a number of months equal to your Hibernate rank. While you are hibernating, you do not take damage from environmental conditions (like being underwater or in the middle of a fire), and only take half damage (rounded down) from being attacked. While hibernating, you also have a very limited awareness of what's going on around you, akin to being unconscious (at the GM's discretion), and waking up takes a few minutes outside of combat. You can not begin hibernating during combat, and waking up from hibernation during combat takes one full round.

2. ⊕ Wilt

He touched his hand to the wall of thorns and the branches parted, revealing a path. As soon as they were through the branches closed again, and there remained no way for us to follow except to scale the writhing brambles.

As an action, you may decrease the size of a living, non-sentient plant by a number of ranks equal to your Grow rank. You must spend 5 V jools for every rank of size that you wilt the plant, and after one hour (or less, if you want) the change in size wears off and the plant returns to its normal size. You can not use Wilt on plants that are considered characters.

3. ⊕ Grow

This is a banana? I thought it was a canoe! What the heck are you using for fertilizer?

As an action, you may increase the size of a living, non-sentient plant by a number of ranks equal to your Grow rank. You must spend 5 V jools for every rank of size that you grow the plant, and after one hour (or less, if you want) the change in size wears off and the plant returns to its normal size. You can not use Grow on plants that are considered characters. If the plant is confined to a fragile space (like a clay flower pot) it will probably break out (at the GM's discretion), and if the plant is confined to a sturdy space (like a stone courtyard) it will grow to fill the space but not break it.

4. ⊕ Commune

They say "three creatures, northwest, yesterday, sunshine good".

Every day, you may ask a living, non-sentient plant or group of living, non-sentient plants one yes or no question for every rank you have in Commune. The plant will do its best to answer truthfully, but keep in mind that plants have limited awareness of their surroundings (only slightly better than an unconscious person) and are very, very stupid. You can not commune with plants who are monsters, and can usually just talk normally with plants who are people.

5. ⊗ Alter

Now your body burns with the elemental power of fire. Try to stay out of the rain.

Outside of combat, you may spend 100 jools to permanently change the elemental type of one willing friend (including yourself) whose level is equal to or lower than your Alter rank to any one of the elemental types listed on page @@. This process takes a few minutes to complete, and can not be performed during combat.

⊖ Premonition

Remember what happened the last time I had a bad feeling and you guys didn't listen to me? We spent a week trudging through the Omniport sewers. Trust me this time, OK?

The Premonition path allows you to see things you could not normally see, including things far away from you, things hidden from your vision, and things that have not yet happened. When you become skilled enough in interpreting your premonitions you can eventually learn to use your foresight to get the jump on enemies.

Periodically the GM may ask you to make a Premonition skill check. If you succeed, you receive a cryptic vision of something that happened long ago, is happening far away, or is going to happen in the future.

1. ⊕ Sense

He was lying about the castle. It's actually to the southwest. He was, however, being sincere when he complimented you on your boots.

Whenever a character answers a question you have asked him, you may roll Sense versus that character's Convince, subtract the number of hexes between you and that character from your roll, and spend 5 jools for every die you rolled. If you succeed, you can tell whether or not the character's answer is a lie, and if you succeed by 10 or more you get a vague sense of what the truth really is. You do not have to declare that you are using Sense until after the character has answered your question, but you must use it before the character answers a different question or otherwise changes the topic, since you're only sensing what he's thinking at that exact moment.

2. ⊕ Scope

Wait a minute, he looks like he's made of stone, but he's really weak against electricity! Everyone! Aim for the crystal in the middle of his chest!

As an action, you may roll Scope versus an enemy's Level plus the number of hexes between you and the enemy, and name a skill. If you succeed, the GM must tell you the enemy's name (or the type of monster the enemy is if it has no name), exactly how many V jools that enemy has left, any elemental type that that enemy has, and the enemy's rank in the named skill. You may use Scope any number of times against the same enemy, but each attempt requires an action and a separate roll.

3. ⊕ Dowse

Her pendant spun lazily at the end of its chain, then suddenly lurched forward, almost dragging her off her feet. She opened her eyes and said, "That way. They took my husband west through the Ivory Marsh."

As an action, you may roll a number of dice equal to your Dowse rank. If any of those dice pop, you will know the exact direction but not the distance from you of something you can not see or which is obscured (an invisible enemy, the real enemy between an enemy and a Decoy, an enemy in Disguise, an object hidden in a secret compartment, etc.). You have to

specify what you are dowsing for, and you can only Dowse for things you have seen before (so, for instance, you couldn't Dowse for "something invisible nearby", but you could Dowse for "that guy in the green jacket who turned invisible at the beginning of combat").

Outside of combat, Dowsing works more like Repair. The GM will assign you a target number, and every hour spent Dowsing you may roll a number of dice equal to your Dowse rank and subtract the total from your target number. Once the target number reaches zero, you have found the exact location of what you have been Dowsing for (both direction and distance). Dowsing outside of combat still requires that you have seen what you are Dowsing for before.

4. ⊕ Warning

Invisible or not, your presence ripples through my mind like a large house dropped out of the sky ripples the surface of a pond. Oaf!

When you roll initiative for the first round of a combat, roll an additional number of action dice equal to your Warning rank.

Outside of combat, when you are trying to avoid a trap that has been sprung or some other type of imminent danger, you may add your Warning rank to whatever skill is applicable to the situation before making your skill check. Once you have taken your first rank of Warning you can no longer be targeted by the Knockout skill.

Limit: You can not raise Warning higher than **half** your Speed skill.

5. ⊕ Predict

Yes, yes, your sword is really a gun and you intentionally missed because your bullet is actually a robot spider that's going to attack me from behind so I don't see it coming. Talk about obvious!

When you are the target or one of the targets of an attack action, you may roll one die. If this die pops, you take no damage from the attack. You may only attempt this roll once per attack action that targets you. Once you have successfully made this roll a number of times in a single combat equal to your Predict rank, you may not attempt the roll again until the next combat.

⊖ SpaceTime

Time waits for no man. Well, no man except me and a few others.

The SpaceTime path gives you greater understanding of the way space and time work, allowing you to move freely through them in ways that would otherwise seem impossible. Once you take your first rank of SpaceTime, you will always know exactly what time it is.

1. ⊕ Haste

I once kept this up for a straight 72 hours. After that I slept through April.

As an action, you may turn a number of your action dice or a friend's action dice (or a combination of both) equal to your Haste rank to 6s. You must spend 2 V jools for each die you change, and dice changed this way do not pop.

1. ⊕ Slow

You... will... never... escape... from... my... deadly... hey, where did they go?

As an action, you may roll one die and add your SpaceTime rank to the result. If this number is equal to or higher than the distance in hexes between you and an enemy plus that enemy's level, you may turn a number of that enemy's action dice equal to you Slow rank to 1s. If

there are multiple enemies within range of your roll, you may distribute your Slow ranks between them. You must spend 2 V jools for each die you change.

2. ④ Teleport

House keys? What are those?

As an action, you may instantaneously teleport yourself a number of hexes equal to your Teleport rank, disappearing from your original location and reappearing in a new one. You must spend a number of V jools equal to twice the number of hexes you Teleport. You must be able to see the location you are teleporting to, or have seen the location previously and know exactly where it is in relation to your current position.

3. ④ Switch

Then right as they all closed in, I switched places with the Bomblin I'd summoned earlier. You should've seen the looks on what was left of their faces!

As an action, you may instantaneously switch places with a willing friend who is a number of hexes away from you equal to your Switch rank. You must spend a number of V jools equal to 5 times the number of hexes between you. You must be able to see the friend you are switching places with, or know exactly where they are (either by seeing them previously or by them telling you) in relation to your current position. You may also use Switch to switch places with decoys of yourself created by the Illusion: Decoy skill, but not with decoys of other characters.

4. ④ Blink

Sorry I missed the big explosion, guys. Guys? Where'd everybody go?

As an action, you may spend 2 V jools to Blink out of combat, disappearing completely and then immediately reappearing in the exact same spot at the beginning of the next round.

While you are blinked, you can not interact in any way with anyone else, friend or enemy, nor can they interact with you, and any actions you had remaining in the current round are forfeited. If another character is occupying the same space that you were when you blink back in, you reappear right next to him, in the same hex. You may Blink a number of times equal to your Blink rank during each combat.

5. ④ Split

Geez, and I thought one of you was bad enough!

As an action, you may create a “duplicate” of yourself in the same hex that you occupy by spending 2 V jools. You can create a total number of duplicates at one time equal to your Split rank, but creating each one requires a separate action. Treat each duplicate simply as if you were in multiple places at once; you can perform actions with any of your selves, but can not split a single action between multiple selves, and any damage any of your selves takes is subtracted from your V jools. You can not use multiple selves to perform actions that require multiple combatants working together, like Team Attack. If any of your selves escape from combat, the rest remain, and you can not create an additional self to replace her. If two or more of your selves occupy the same hex, you can merge them into one self without needing to spend an action. There is no “original” self; all of your selves are you, and if you drop below 0 V jools during combat all of your selves disappear except the one who was last damaged, who falls unconscious.

Outside of combat, if any of your selves are further away from each other than 10 times your Split rank in hexes, one of them evaporates (you may choose which one).

Limit: You can not have more ranks in Split than **half** your level.

Skills and Jools

As you may have already gathered from the skill descriptions, using jools, either to improve a skill or to activate the effect of a skill, bends reality to your will, to a certain extent. For instance, when you perform a Melee Attack, the damage it deals is caused more by the jools you spent to buy the skill than the attack itself, and the weapon you're using to perform the attack is superfluous, except for the fact that it acts as a "channel" for your attack. This is why a kung-fu master's punch, a baseball player's bat, or a master chef's frying pan deal damage in exactly the same way when used for a Melee Attack; because the damage is really being done by the character's will, and any physical action the character performs to accompany that damage is just icing on the cake. Theoretically, a character with a deep enough understanding of exactly how jools allow him to affect reality could perform a Melee Attack standing perfectly still, using only his raw will to inflict damage, but such a character would have to be exceedingly powerful and exceedingly rare, since just knowing that it's possible doesn't mean that you can do it, just like you can't do that cartwheel-handspring-backflip thing just because you've seen cheerleaders do it a few times.

Bonuses

When you perform skills either in or out of combat, there are several things that you can do to improve your chances of success. Depending on circumstances, how well you describe your action, and how well your action fits the general concept of your character, the GM may apply a bonus or a penalty to any roll you make. For instance, a character who's a lumberjack would probably be granted a significant Bonus to her Job roll if she is in a city bordering on a huge forest, but would probably take a severe Penalty for trying to perform her Job in the middle of a desert. If you receive a bonus on a skill that requires you to roll only one die, you may simply add that bonus to whatever number the die rolls. If you receive a bonus on a skill that uses multiple dice, you may add the bonus to only one die or divide the bonus between several of the dice after you roll them. The same goes for penalties. For more details on Bonuses and Penalties, read page @@ in the GM's section of this book.

Description Bonus

The most common bonus is the "Description Bonus", which you can get by describing your action in an exciting way. The more creative you are with your description, the higher your bonus will probably be. However, being too long-winded about your description to the point that it detracts from everyone else's enjoyment of the game will actually subtract from your bonus instead of building on it. The GM is free to assign whatever bonus he sees fit to a description, and there are detailed guidelines in the GM's section of this book to help him decide. Normally, your Description Bonus will be based on your level, along the following lines:

Bonus	Description	Example
0	Very minimal	<i>"I attack the gorgling with my sword." "I jump up to the window."</i>
level	Quick, cool, and to the point	<i>"I run up the wall right next to me, flip in mid-air, and plant both feet in the soldier's face, knocking him to the ground."</i>

level x 2	Something incredibly dramatic, especially if it reveals something totally new about the character	<i>"I unwrap the mysterious bundle I always carry to reveal the sword of my ancestors. Lifting it with trembling hands I shout, 'I have waited 14 years for this moment. Behold the vengeance of the Clan of the Wind!' as I swing the sword in a mighty burning arc and cut in two the man who killed my family."</i>
-----------	---	--

Note that originality is a major factor in Description Bonuses, so while the last example would be worth a big bonus the first time it was used, it would quickly dwindle and stop giving any bonus at all if the player used it every time she attacked. More information on descriptions and what you can do with them can be found in the Roleplaying Tips section on page @@.

Self-Limitation Bonus

In the last example above, the player is receiving a Description Bonus for bringing new information about her character into the story, namely that the big bundle she always carries is a sword, and that her family was killed by the enemy the players are currently fighting. If she has never revealed to anyone that she has the sword, if she has never even used the Melee Attack skill before, and especially if she has inconvenienced herself by not doing so (i.e. if she's been in several situations where a Melee Attack would have been the best option, but chose not to because "the time was not right"), she should also gain a significant Self-Limitation Bonus on top of the Description Bonus. If she concludes the fight by wrapping the sword back up, and continues to refuse to use it except to punish her family's killers, then she should continue to get Self-Limitation Bonuses not only on the rare occasions when she uses the sword, but also every time she would be best-served using a Melee Attack but is compelled to avoid doing so by her vendetta (especially if she describes such situations well). On the other hand, if she keeps the sword out and starts using it for Melee Attacks all the time, then she will lose her Self-Limitation Bonus (but gain the freedom to perform Melee Attacks).

The Ultimate Move

The dwindling power of once-amazing descriptions is akin to the convention in anime where a character discovers "the ultimate move"; the first time the character performs it, it has an amazingly powerful devastating effect, and if the character continues to use it only in very special circumstances, it continues to have the same effect. On the other hand, if the character starts using "the ultimate move" constantly, then in the interest of keeping the story going the enemies gradually build up an immunity to it to the point that it only does as much as the character's normal attacks did before.

Self-Limitation Bonuses are more open to interpretation than Description Bonuses, but you will probably never receive more than three times your level in combined bonuses no matter how well you describe your action.

Combo Bonus

Combo Bonuses occur when you perform multiple actions, each immediately following the previous one, during combat. They are explained below in the Combat section.

Combat

Just like in most roleplaying video games, combat in Amalgus takes place on a different time scale from the rest of the action. When combat begins, the GM will tell the players to roll their

initiative. The GM will also roll initiative for all of the enemies and friendly NPCs involved in the battle. Everyone in the area will be involved in combat to begin with, but bystanders will usually quickly get out of the way. Once everyone has rolled initiative, the GM will announce the beginning of the first round, and the character with the highest initiative will act, followed by the character with the next highest initiative, and so on, until all of the characters with actions this round have taken or forfeited their actions. The GM then declares the beginning of the next round, everyone rolls initiative and takes their actions, and so on until combat is over. If two characters have the same initiative at any time, the character who had an action the **least** recently goes first. If none of the characters with the same initiative have had an action yet during the current combat, the GM decides who goes first. Combat ends when one side or the other has been defeated or escaped, or all of the remaining combatants no longer wish to fight. Once combat is over, every defeated enemy can be turned into a number of jools equal to 100 times his level squared.

The Flow of Combat

Exactly how initiative works is broken up quite a bit between several different sections. Here it is all in one place:

- At the very beginning of combat, a number of loose jools equal to 20 times your Vitality rank turns into V jools. V jools primarily affect how much damage you can withstand before you lose consciousness, but are also used to power special skills like Elemental Attack. If you don't have enough loose jools to gain your full number of V jools, then all of the loose jools that you do have turn into V jools.
- When the GM declares the start of a new round (including the very first round), roll a number of dice equal to your Speed rank. Each of these dice is an "action die", and each gives you an action this round. The total of all your action dice is your "initiative", and whoever has the highest initiative gets the next action. As you spend your action dice to perform actions, you discard them and recalculate your initiative, and when your new initiative comes up you get another action. Once your initiative reaches zero, you have no more actions in the current round.
- Once everyone in a combat has taken or forfeited all of their actions, the GM declares the start of a new round, and everyone rolls for initiative and takes their actions (exactly as described in the previous step). This cycle continues until one side or the other has been defeated or escaped, or all of the remaining combatants no longer wish to fight.
- If a combatant drops below 0 V jools, she falls unconscious, and is out until someone else restores her to 0 or more V jools through the use of a skill like Heal or an item that restores V jools. Outside of combat, an unconscious character's friends have the option of simply feeding her enough loose jools to raise her V jools to 0.
- When combat is over, the remaining combatants may turn each unconscious enemy into a number of jools equal to 100 times that enemy's level squared, or leave that enemy alive but unconscious.
- Any afflictions gained during combat (like Sleep, Confusion, etc.) immediately end when combat is over, and all of your remaining V jools turn back into loose jools.
- The actions that are permissible during combat are detailed below.

There are 3 possible ways to run a combat:

- **Standard** – Combat is resolved on a hex-grid map. The GM places miniatures representing the players' characters and the NPCs on the map at the beginning of combat, and draws or places any important terrain features (like walls, doors, and pits) on the map as well. Characters with more than 1 rank in size are represented by miniatures that cover a number of clustered hexes equal to their size. The miniatures move around the map as the combatants move, so that everyone can keep constant track of where the characters are in relation to each other. When measuring distances, the number of "hexes" between two points is literally the number of hexes between those two points. This is the most common and easiest method of

running combat, since distances can be gauged exactly, and no measuring or guesswork is involved.

- **Loose** – Loose combat works exactly the same as Standard combat, except that there is no hex grid. In Loose combat, a hex is equal to 2 inches for purposes of measuring distances (rounded up), and your group will need at least one short measuring tape. Loose combat can accommodate 3D terrain better than Standard combat, and has a “looser” feel to it since combatants can move and attack in any direction and aren’t restricted to hexes. Loose combat is, however, significantly slower than Standard combat, since all distances have to be measured out. For this reason, an optional rule to Loose combat is to declare an action first, before measuring, and then measure afterwards. This rule will speed things up a bit since the players can’t measure and re-measure to figure out exactly what the best move is, but can give an unfair advantage to those who are better at gauging distances at a glance. Of course, this optional rule isn’t necessary for Standard combat, since the grid is already laid out and you can judge distances all you want while you’re waiting for the other combatants to take their turns.
- **Freeform** – Freeform combat does away completely with maps and miniatures, and runs the entire combat in the GM’s and players’ heads. Players may ask the GM for specific distances (such as “from me to the gorgling with the axe” or “from me to the door to the bathroom”) before declaring their actions, and everyone needs to describe their actions in much better detail than they would in the other two combat methods so that all the players have a clear idea of how the scene is currently laid out. The Freeform method is recommended only for experienced players with very good memories, since everyone must keep constant track in their heads of exactly where everything is, and indeed all the players (and the GM especially) are encouraged to keep their own notes and sketches to help them remember. On the other hand, Freeform combat is much more lenient than the other two methods, and most importantly it can be integrated much more smoothly into play since the action doesn’t have to stop for maps, terrain, and miniatures to be arranged.

Obviously, everyone in a battle must be using the same method of combat, since letting one combatant use Loose combat while everyone else is using Standard combat would create all kinds of messes, and letting someone else use Freeform combat would cause even more confusion. Keep in mind that whatever method of combat you’re using, being descriptive is always an important factor; a Melee Attack action described as “I point to the guard’s feet, telling him his shoe is untied, and while he looks down I smack him in the side of the head with my shovel!” contributes much more to the game than “I hit the guy in front of me”, and will probably get you a description bonus from the GM to boot.

As an action during combat, you may:

- Perform any skill that’s description says it can be done as an action
- Buy a skill at any rank or raise a skill by consuming enough loose jools
- Make an active skill check (most of the time)
- Use an item
- Pick up something in the same hex as you or adjacent to you, including an unconscious character.
- Activate a switch, or unlock and open something for which you have the key
- Get into or onto an adjacent vehicle
- Deal 1 V jool of damage to an adjacent enemy, even if you have no Attack skills

- Forfeit an action by discarding an action die and doing nothing
- Attempt to escape by rolling one die. If the die rolls lower than the number of hexes between you and the nearest enemy, you escape combat. If you are using the standard or loose method of combat, remove your miniature from the map. You can not re-enter a combat once you escape from it, or take any actions, or interact with any of the remaining combatants in any way except to talk to them, but any future combats affect you normally. The GM may declare that certain combats can not be escaped from.

At any time during combat, without requiring an action, you may:

- Talk (Keep in mind that combat will continue normally while you are talking)
- Make a passive skill check
- Stop using a skill or item with a continuous effect
- Drop something you're carrying
- Open an adjacent, unlocked door
- Get out of or off of a vehicle
- Move up to one hex along the ground. This can only be done immediately before **or** immediately after performing an action (but not both). If you have more than one rank in Size, you may move a number of hexes up to your Size rank for this free move. If you have at least one rank of Swim, you may move in any direction through water for this free move, and if you have at least one rank in Fly, you may move in any direction through the air for this free move.
- Delay using an action. You can use delayed actions just like normal actions at any time before the end of the round, including immediately after someone else has taken their action (but not immediately before), or immediately after something specific happens, such as "I'll attack him if he attacks me" or "I'm going to move into the room as soon as the door opens". If the event that you're waiting for doesn't happen by the end of the round, you are allowed to use your delayed action(s) for something else before the round ends, after which point any unspent actions are lost.

Surprise

If you're trying to get the jump on your enemies and attack them before they even know you're there, you can try to surprise them by rolling the combined Sneak ranks of everyone attacking versus the combined Awareness ranks of your enemies. If you succeed, everyone attacking gets a number of action dice equal to **twice** her Speed rank for the first round of combat (and only the first round). If you fail to surprise your enemies, combat begins normally. Keep in mind that crafty enemies are likely to try to surprise you as well. If you have any ranks in Premonition, you may add them to your Awareness rank when rolling to avoid surprise.

Combos

If you delay using an action until the next time you have an action, you can use both of those actions simultaneously to perform a "combo". If you have more actions later in the same round, you can continue to delay and add those actions to your combo. Generally speaking, in Amalgus a combo is simply a sequence of actions, each performed immediately after the previous one. Each action in a combo will give you a "combo bonus" on your next action, equal to the number of actions you've taken so far in the combo, in addition to any other bonuses you receive. You are not required to spend all of your delayed actions in a single combo; you can save some of them to use separately or for another combo later in the round. If an enemy has stated that he is

delaying until you perform a specific action that is part of your combo, he can use his delayed action to “interrupt” your combo, perform his action, and reset your combo bonus to zero, at which point you may continue your combo or hold any further delayed actions until later. In any other situation, however, delayed actions can not be used during another character’s combo. Combos can not be used outside of combat.

The Basic Combo Trick

One of the most effective uses of combos comes when you use a protective skill like Defend or Illusion: Vanish **before** you start the combo, and then end the combo with another protective skill or a movement skill to get out of your enemy’s reach. This way, you remain almost completely protected, and are only vulnerable to an attack that interrupts your combo.

Damage, Death, and Decay

The jools that you’ve consumed, either to buy skills or to create V jools for use during combat, are constantly circulating through your body, intermingling with every fiber of your being. When you get hurt, your V jools immediately rush to the damaged area and heal it back to normal. This can create spectacular effects in combat, and you shouldn’t worry about describing actions in combat like cutting monsters in half or hacking off their limbs, because their V jools will just mend the two halves together again or cause a severed limb to disintegrate in mid-air while a new one grows in its place, as long as your enemy has V jools to spare.

When you’ve run out of V jools, you will no longer be able to heal your wounds, and if you drop below zero V jools your body will make one last attempt to stay in one piece, and you’ll fall unconscious; you’ll look horribly battered, and for all extents and purposes you’ll be dead. At this point, a flicker of life still remains inside you, and if a friend feeds you jools after the combat is over you’ll be able to gradually use them like you normally use V jools, to heal your wounds until you’re raised to zero V jools and become revitalized. Once revitalized, you can start using your own loose jools to create V jools as normal, but while your V jools are below zero you lack the strength of will to metabolize loose jools on your own and must be fed them by someone else.

If you are not fed jools after combat when you drop unconscious, an enemy may turn you into a pile of jools. Since the jools you turn into come from the jools you spent on skills, and those jools are still circulating throughout your body, the process causes your physical body to evaporate, leaving only a clean pile of jools in its place. Most monsters are too stupid to understand enough about how jools work to perform this transformation, so they simply eat you and let their stomachs handle the conversion from physical form to energy. On the other hand, if you are left unconscious for 24-hours or more, the jools in your body stop moving around and settle in one place, at which time someone else may extract your jools but leave your body intact (the extracted jools simply rise out of your body, so no cutting-open is required). If left for long enough, your body will gradually decay, and at a natural rate, while your jools slowly rise to the surface on their own. This is how wood, vegetables, and meat are produced on Amalgus; once harvested, the product is “cured” for 24-hours, after which time its jools are extracted and the product is left intact. (Often, the product is later imbued with jools again, to keep it from decaying, improve its flavor, or make it more durable.) The process of turning a character or other living thing into a pile of jools can not be reversed.

While you’re unconscious, you remain tentatively aware of your surroundings; you can vaguely, but not clearly, hear sounds and see movement around you. (Exactly how much you’re able to perceive is up to the GM.) You may also choose, at any time while unconscious, to “extinguish” the flicker of life left inside you and reduce yourself to a pile of jools or a corpse (depending on how much time has passed) at will. This probably doesn’t seem like a valuable option, until you

remember that as long as you have an account at a Save Bank anywhere on Amalgus you will pop back into existence there, many jools poorer but at least better off than trapped, lifeless, at the bottom of a lake of lava or far out in the middle of a desert. You will find that most of your more impressive enemies will perform this trick too; escaping capture and interrogation to return, refreshed, to fight another day. More information on Save Banks can be found on page @@.

When a denizen of Amalgus dies of old age, her flicker of life gradually fades out over the course of the next few days, producing either a pile of jools immediately upon death if she wills it, or a corpse and jools if she lets her life gradually dwindle away. A character who has died of old age can not be revived by being fed jools, no matter how many, and can not re-appear at a Save Bank; she is gone forever.

Elemental Extreme Damage

Being in an extreme elemental condition (on fire, electrocuted, drowning, buried alive, frozen solid, etc.) deals 5 V jools of damage each round during combat, or 5 jools of damage every minute outside of combat. If your elemental type is weak versus the extreme element, that damage is doubled, and if your elemental type is strong versus, or the same as the extreme element, the damage is negated. Every rank you have in Elemental Resistance for the extreme element will also reduce the damage you take each round / minute by one jool.

Breakin' Stuff

Anything that's not alive (bottles, tables, walls, etc.) and not part of another character's personal equipment has a "durability" score based on what it's made of. Once something takes an amount of damage greater than or equal to its durability score, it is suddenly and completely destroyed. Anything that has taken less damage than its durability score will appear damaged, but will still hold together and perform any and all normal functions. Per dex of volume, fragile things (glass, paper, pottery, etc.) have a durability score of 1, tough things (wood, plastic, leather, etc.) have a durability score of 10, and hard things (stone, metal, ice, etc.) have a durability score of 100. You may choose how much of something you want to damage when you attack it, knocking a small hole through a stone wall (which would only require a few hundred points of damage) rather than trying to destroy the whole thing (which would require tens of thousands of points of damage), for instance. Repairing something that has been damaged in this way but not completely destroyed requires use of the Repair skill with a target number equal to the amount of damage that's been dealt to the object. Things that have been completely destroyed in this way can not be repaired.

The People and Nations of Amalgus

Here are some insights into the ways, customs, and interactions of a few of the peoples and nations of Amalgus. This list represents less than a tenth of the larger and better-known populated areas of the planet; there are tens of thousands of smaller cities scattered across the globe, and dozens of unique cultures not covered in this cursory synopsis. Also keep in mind that these descriptions are all generalizations; not every Derg lives underground, and not every Mortan is an undertaker, just as not every American drives an SUV and wears cowboy boots.

The Forgotten Ruins

Scattered across the face of Amalgus, without any identifiable pattern, lie the ruins of cities that had fallen even before the memory of those who waged the great war. While some of them lie dormant, most of them spontaneously shoot geysers of light skyward from time to time, summoning down creatures from other worlds. Most of the time each ruin calls the same general

type of creatures; The New Milwaukee-Kobe area, for instance, is inhabited primarily by people and animals from all eras of Earth's history, although not all of them remember history the same way. High walls have been built around many of the ruins that generate only vicious, dangerous monsters, and some of Amalgus's bravest characters make a full-time job out of guarding these ruins and slaying anything that comes out. Past attempts to tear down some of the more hazardous ruins have met with horrible failure, as the ruins have rebuilt themselves overnight, piece by piece, amidst a flurry of monstrous summonings. The Forgotten Ruins are not the only places where things from other worlds suddenly appear, but they are the most common places. Also, not all of the ruins seem to function in the same ways; some ruins summon just creatures, while others kidnap portions of the surrounding landscape as well, often resulting in strange cross-sections of buildings and other structures, most of which topple as soon as the summoning completes, and some ruins summon with a clap of thunder, the scent of ozone, or no announcement at all in lieu of the geysers of light. The methods of summoning also differ widely from creature to creature; while most summoned creatures find themselves suddenly and randomly snatched from their own world to Amalgus, some creatures transport themselves to Amalgus on purpose (whether or not their intention was to end up exactly on Amalgus), some people remember dying, and thus think Amalgus is the afterlife, and still other people simply say that they are dreaming and expect to wake up back on their home worlds at any moment. Indeed, "reverse" summonings do sometimes occur, where a creature returns to its homeworld as suddenly as it came, either by its own volition or as randomly as it arrived. Whether or not these creatures will pay Amalgus a return visit in the future is anyone's guess, although people who have come to Amalgus, returned home, then come back again often report strange fluctuations in time; a few days spent on Amalgus will equal weeks or months of home world time, or a person will disappear after breakfast, spend a decade on Amalgus, then reappear back home in time for lunch.

Exactly why the ruins exist remains one of Amalgus's great mysteries, although many theories have been raised. Some scientists believe that Amalgus is based on a fundament of conservation of energy, and that as energy leaks away from the planet or is consumed by its inhabitants, Amalgus naturally replenishes its resources by randomly "stealing" from other planets. The fact that no other planet behaves this way, however, stands as a stumbling-block for this theory. Others believe that there is some higher purpose for the summonings, and that those summoned contribute distinctly to the greater destiny of Amalgus. What this purpose is, however, no-one can seem to agree on, but the most popular theories are that they will be the founders of an interplanetary peace, or that they will begin the war that destroys the universe. Still others hold to the idea that Amalgus is a great ark, collecting species from other planets, either for the purpose of preservation, cataloguing, or some other, long-forgotten reason. Scattered among these various theories are those that believe that, before the summonings began, Amalgus was completely barren, and that everything on the face of the planet today was pirated from other worlds. Most people, however, find all of these notions ridiculous.

The Boiling Sea and the Skylands

The Boiling Sea is actually not a sea at all, nor is it boiling. Rather, it is a tremendous, single organism, vaguely akin to a vast amoeba, that continuously undulates and blisters, giving the impression of boiling. Covering an area roughly the size of Nevada, the Sea is more or less centered on a large and active forgotten ruin that provides the Sea with the majority of its sustenance via its frequent summonings. Anything summoned by the ruins that can not be digested, the Sea imbues with flight, allowing the refuse to float up out of its body, and thus excreting it. This behavior, culminated over the millenia that the Boiling Sea has been in

existence, has created a wondrous archipelago of floating islands, some of which bear partial, and even fully-intact buildings and fortresses from alien worlds. All of these islands have been scoured clean of life by the Sea, but some have become re-inhabited by everything from plants whose seeds have been blown in from beyond the Sea, to entire communities of people who have arrived by airship or other means of flight, and have dubbed the area “the Skylands”. Some of the Skylands’ most enterprising inhabitants have affixed sails and other means of propulsion to their islands, and many of Amalgus’s mightiest airships are build around Skylands. One of Amalgus’s most fearsome villains, Captain Bloodbeard, prowls the skies with his crew in the Thunderhead, a floating fortress salvaged entirely intact from the Skylands, and retrofitted with steam-propulsion engines and great grappling hooks on chains designed to lay siege to cities from above, where their defenses are weakest. Most of the Skylands’ inhabitants are much more hospitable, however, leading fairly normal lives and creating an economy based on catching and selling the smaller pieces that float up from the Boiling Sea. The predominant species of people in the Skylands call themselves “Wind Children”, and resemble bipedal dogs with oversized heads and severely oversized ears. Adult Wind Children can even use their tremendous ears to glide for short periods of time, making travel between the Skylands a simple matter. The peace-loving Wind Children consider themselves natives of the Skylands, which was the destination of their mass-exodus centuries ago when their mountaintop homeland was overrun by dingoes.

In addition to the pirate raids and other problems that trouble any community, the Skylands are also plagued by Float Spiders; large arachnids that weave tremendous webs between the Skylands to catch whatever flying monsters or people they can. Fire destroys their webs fairly efficiently, but the Float Spiders can move very quickly and jump vast distances, instinctively attacking anyone who strays too close to their webs with an open flame. A council has recently been formed in Uptown, one of the larger and more prominent Skylands, to determine whether the Float Spiders are beneficial to the Skylands in any way or if they’re simply a nuisance that should be eradicated before they harm any more citizens. The council’s studies and debates continue to this day, with no clear solution in sight.

Junkyard Junction and Underland

When the last truce was signed and the great war finally came to an end, the battlefields, oceans, and city streets of Amalgus were littered with derelict war machines, some of which still bore a semblance of life. After much deliberation and discussion, it was finally agreed that, instead of punishing the losers of the war by turning their nations into dumps, the junk would be piled in a far, inhospitable corner of Amalgus that no-one was interested in settling. Gradually more of Amalgus’s trash was discarded to the site, and because of its inaccessible location, very few of Amalgus’s people were aware of the society that was being formed there by the intelligent machines and animated objects that inhabited the area. As luck would have it, just as the junkyard was beginning to form its own society and had begun to consider forms of government, an entire frontier town from late-1800’s America was whisked off the map and deposited in the middle of the heap. Most of the town’s original inhabitants didn’t stay long; some wandered off to find other humans while many simply wasted away, unable to cope with the shock of the abrupt change of environment. Those who did stick around, however, imparted the notions of frontier law to the machines and things in the junkyard, helping them build homes, create an economy, and fend off the frequent attacks by the Dergs, a mole-like race who had inhabited the area before the heap was created, and who had developed their own society alongside the things in the junkyard, who they viewed as interlopers.

Aside from Old Man White and Old Man Hayes, two ancient, crazy hermits who live at opposite ends of the heap and still carry on a family feud that began long before their town came

to Amalgus, the Chestnut family were the last humans left in Junkyard Junction (as the area came to be called). The Chestnut family bloodline ended with an entire generation of girls, and the few who didn't leave the junkyard lived out their days there. One of them, a Hillary Chestnut, helped forge a treaty between the people of Junkyard Junction and a few of the Derg tribes, which is still honored to this day. In memory of the Junction's founders, the area has retained the values, styles, and laws of the American Old West, despite the fact that trade-routes have been opened with the rest of Amalgus, bringing with it the usual exchange of cultures. Junkyard Junction's inhabitants range from old robots and animated things that still dimly remember the great war, to creations born in the heap, constructed from whatever was lying about by older machines, to creatures of flesh and blood, brought to the area by trade, curiosity, or other interests. Junkyard Junction primarily produces imbued items for trade, created by intelligent machines that are mostly imbued items themselves, and the younger robots they have trained. The human settlers also brought a fair number of cattle with them, and although the humans have moved on the cattle are still tended, bred and raised by mechanical ranchers who sell their valuable milk and meat to those outside the Junction who enjoy such things. Those who trade with Junkyard Junction are often pleased to discover that what they most want are the things most people consider junk; rusted pots and pans, broken housewares, run-down vehicles, and the like. The people of the heap value this garbage very highly, however, as they are constantly using it to repair themselves and to construct new citizens. Trade with the Junction is not easy, however, as caravans are often beset by rust rustlers; loosely-knit bands of outlaw machines who dwell on the outskirts of the heap and are determined to maintain their rapidly-decaying bodies by whatever means necessary.

Little is known about the Dergs, the creatures who lived in the area before it was filled with garbage and they were forced underground. Through brief interactions with the Blue Tusk Clan, one of the few Derg tribes who maintain a fragile peace with the Junction, Hillary Chestnut learned and recorded that they farm luminescent mushrooms (which serve them as a source of both food and light) and earthworm-like creatures the size of pigs. Despite differences in custom, beliefs, and especially opinion on the surface-dwellers, the various Derg tribes are rarely at war with each other, and coexist in Underland, the vast expanse of caves which honeycomb the earth beneath Junkyard Junction. Contrary to the "wild west" society of Junkyard Junction, Derg culture has much more in common stylistically with Earth's Zulu and Rastafarian cultures than with Native American cultures. Most Dergs seem resigned to, and comfortable with life underground, but many Derg extremists feel that they were forced underground unfairly when the dump was created in their homeland, despite the fact that at the time Dergs had not even developed opposable thumbs or the capacity for language. Derg raids and guerilla strikes are common, although perhaps because of a lingering trait from their rodent-like heritage Derg raiders usually seem more interested in plundering shiny objects than in killing the surface-dwellers. Even so, though a Derg's claws and tusks are virtually useless against the ancient war machines that were first deposited in the heap, they pose a tremendous threat to the more fragile things who were created in the Junction and designed for civilized society rather than global warfare, and who many Dergs consider little more than large, shiny trinkets. Many of the Junction's buildings have floors reinforced with metal and concrete, although even these precautions yield quickly to the strong, burrowing claws of the Dergs, who pop up without warning beneath tables or beds, disappearing back into the ground with a shiny new mechanical child, or perhaps just some pretty jewelry. Of course, many Derg clans, including all of those who have kept treaties with the surface-dwellers, refuse to join in these raids, despite the fact that the raiders have long, rationalized justifications for their actions, most of which boil down to the

presumption that since the lands were originally theirs, everything that exists on that land also belongs to them.

The Siklans

Siklans do not know why they are forced to reincarnate over and over again, keeping the same consciousness and memories across hundreds of lifetimes. The search for that answer is what has divided the nation of Sikla for centuries between those who believe that their endless lives are a punishment for some long-forgotten crime, and those who believe that it is a blessing bestowed on them by the planet itself in exchange for some long-forgotten favor. Whatever the case, every few years a child is born with the memories of countless other lives, who promptly thanks its parents for the ordeal of labor, then wanders off on its own to rejoin its people. Most of the time Siklans are reborn within the borders of Sikla, but from time to time they “pop-up” in other nations, sometimes even on the other side of the globe. Those who view their fate as a blessing cite the Siklan general who died on the battlefield, was reborn as his enemy’s princess, then escaped back to Sikla ten years later to lead her country on to a victory fueled by a decade of espionage. Their detractors, on the other hand, cite the growing number of madhouses in the country, as more and more Siklans’ minds simply snap after centuries of use. There’s nothing that Amalgus’s expectant parents fear more than the prospect of a gibbering mad Siklan baby. When they die, Siklans’ bodies evaporate completely over the next 24-hours, leaving nothing to mark his passing but a pile of jools. Occasionally however, a Siklan will leave his body behind, a sure sign that he has “escaped” and will not be reincarnated. This “escape” seems to occur totally at random, and despite their most scrupulous research into the subject, Siklan science is unable to discover any determining factors.

Despite their forgotten origins, however, Siklans remain Amalgus’s most intellectually advanced people. Some of the oldest Siklans have harnessed the powers of their minds to perform amazing feats, and Sikla remains Amalgus’s center for the study of science, engineering, and magical research. Siklan society follows a very corporate structure; newborn Siklan citizens who either don’t remember who they are, have been demoted for criminal activity, or truly are “new born” to Sikla begin at the bottom of the social ladder in public services; farming, cooking, waste management, mass-manufacture, and other types of physical labor. Machines located in public buildings across the country can be used to accelerate growth, developing a newborn child into a productive adult in a matter of days. After a few lifetimes these laborers move up to management, and from there to positions of greater responsibility and privilege. Prestige and rank are the most valuable assets in Siklan society, and elaborate rituals and mechanisms exist to determine whether a newborn really is who she says she is (through methods usually designed by that Siklan herself). Any lineages or nobility that might have once existed in Sikla are now forgotten, and Siklan “families” are only comprised of a loving couple; childbirth is viewed simply as a duty to one’s nation (and more importantly, as a means of receiving a tidy pay bonus), and parental instincts have faded from the minds of the vast majority of Siklans. Since the mind is immortal, the health of the body is unimportant, so Siklans’ bodies are usually tailored by their growth machines to their stations in life (physical laborers become hulking brutes while research scientists develop refined sensory organs and brains capable of incredible calculation), and very little thought is given to pursuits such as fitness or diet.

Sikla is by no means a totalitarian nation, however. Arts and culture abound, and many Siklans have left the path of government hierarchy to found universities, trade centers, and all manner of entertainment industries (albeit all with their own ingrained hierarchical structures). Siklan entertainment runs a broad spectrum, from the aristocratic, high-minded pursuits that one would expect from a people with such incredible intellects to the horribly dangerous thrill-

seeking adventures and bizarre body-modification that one would expect from a people with no concern for their physical well-being. Of course, many Siklans actually **do** appreciate their current bodies, and will at least make some effort to keep them out of harm's way. Some Siklans view each new body they are born into as a turning point in their lives, changing their mannerisms, their attitudes and sometimes even their jobs and general outlooks on life each time they are reborn. Other Siklans simply view each body as a suit of clothing that wears out and has to be replaced every few decades. Most Siklans fall somewhere in between.

At first glance, Sikla appears to be a land of incredible racial and cultural diversity with all manner of people and even some monsters living together in harmony. Closer inspection, however, reveals that virtually everyone in Sikla is actually a Siklan, and the physical diversity is merely a byproduct of being reborn into such a wide range of bodies. Indeed, the original, "true" Siklan form has been lost in history, and even their most ancient texts contain only crude depictions of vaguely humanoid forms. Sikla's current ruler, a wise and ancient mind named Kulka Gunda, currently resides in the body of a deep-sea creature, and as such his offices and apartments have been converted into pressurized aquariums where he swims about in thought, conversing telepathically with his aides and ministers.

Taphos: The Province of Tombs

Even in a world where the most egregious injuries can be healed by a handful of jools, and characters who fall in combat can be resurrected far away with the necessary provisions, death from old-age remains an inevitable fate. Naturally, different creatures have different life-spans – an insect may live for a day, a tree may live for centuries – but even the Siklans, whose lives can span millennia, must eventually succumb to the ravages of time, and give themselves over to the Mortans; keepers of the dead, citizens of the towering necropolis. The marble gates of Taphos open to all of Amalgus's dying; even vicious monsters who pass away on its threshold are interred within its catacombs, and the methods and instruments of burial are as varied and ancient as the things they lay to rest. Taphos itself is a tremendous city-state; its graves creep past its walls to cover the surrounding hillsides, its spires pierce the clouds, and not even its most ancient families know how deep its caverns wind. Some of the city's oldest texts hint that in the past the necropolis has even buried itself, sinking into the soft earth that surrounds it and forcing its inhabitants to rebuild on its ruins. Many believe that the sunken city was consumed by its own corruption, and that the diseased and terrible walking dead who periodically shamble up out of the bowels of the old city are the remains of a forgotten race of Mortans who foolishly presumed that their station as death's advocates gave them mastery over death itself.

The Mortans themselves are a grim and stoic people, training generation after generation in the methods of preparing the dead. Funeral expenses comprise most of their economy, although they also turn a fair trade in stone and woodwork. Tradition and ancestry play a very important role in Mortan life, and all Mortan families have extensive genealogical charts, although occasionally young Mortans have struck out on their own outside the walls of the city, making their own ways and often settling in other towns. Mortan undertakers are a valuable boon to these communities, since in addition to performing funerary rites Mortans are also trained in destroying the undead that rise out of Taphos, and also sometimes appear in other parts of the world.

About five years ago, a bright and talented young Mortan named Nick Nightshade left the city to pursue a career in music. He was immediately branded an outcast and scorned by virtually everyone in Taphos, but as his fame as a travelling musician skyrocketed, he was slowly and begrudgingly accepted as Taphos' favorite son. These days even the necropolis' most hard-hearted traditionalists own a few of his albums (although there are still those who view him as

little more than a heretic), and many of Taphos' youngest generation have begun to harbor their own dreams of globetrotting and fame. Although the city as a whole remains just as it has been for thousands of years, some "allowances" have begun to be made; this year marks the first semester that Taphos' elite Funerary Academy has opened its doors to students from outside the necropolis, although the screening process is terribly arduous and complex. Truth be told, the Academy actually had a non-Mortan student last year as well, but he blended in so well that no one discovered the fact that he was an outsider until halfway through the semester. When asked why he had come to the Academy, he replied that he was a huge fan of Nick Nightshade, and wanted to follow in his footsteps and learn more about Mortan society. The wheels of progress creaked ever so slightly in Taphos that day; the boy was allowed to continue his studies, and preparations were made to accommodate the inevitable trickle of outsiders who yearn to become Undertakers.

Omniport, Amalgus's Greatest Marketplace

The one place in all of Amalgus where people of all nations, races, creeds and species can truly get along is also the one place where they do the most fighting. Omniport, the mercantile hub of the entire planet where everything has a price and billions of jools trade hands every day is often described lovingly by its inhabitants as the ultimate cosmopolitan chaos. If it can be found for sale anywhere, it can be found in Omniport, and most of the latest, cutting-edge items from every imaginable field make their debut in one of Omniport's dozens of bazaars. The dazzling blend and juxtaposition of cultures from all around and even beyond Amalgus makes Omniport's people and customs difficult to distill and generalize, and even lifelong residents spend their lives without experiencing a fraction of the city's intricacies. Every bustling hive must have a queen, however, and for Omniport that queen is the Dowager, widely considered to be the single most powerful woman on Amalgus, by those who still consider her a woman. No one quite knows the Dowager's true age, and no one quite knows where her body ends and her monstrous life-support machinery begins, regulating every minutiae of her being and constantly pumping and draining strange preserving and rejuvenating fluids through what's left of her flesh. The Dowager's palace towers dizzily over the rest of the city, and her court is constantly bustling, day and night, with accountants and bookkeepers tallying the taxes, tariffs, and fines levied on every single jool that passes through Omniport, while deep in the bowels of the building a dozen times as many doctors, mechanics, and workers perform ceaseless maintenance on the engineering marvel that keeps the Dowager alive. When the Dowager wants something done, and there's always something she wants done, she calls in a section of her Flying Squadron, two dozen young women trained from birth to revere the Dowager and perform any task – physical, mental, social, or political – that their benefactor assigns them. One of the very few jobs in Amalgus with a gender barrier, the Dowager's Flying Squadron are the absolute cream of the crop, neatly, efficiently and tirelessly completing any task they are assigned. The Squadron derive their name from the fact that, on her initiation, each member is given a pair of jet boots imbued with the power of flight, which allow her to move about the city and beyond in the most efficient way possible. In the few rare instances where a Squadron member has been "lost in the field", a new pair of boots is immediately created to replace hers. Members of the Flying Squadron are unanimously happy with their job, and it offers an excellent retirement package after only ten years of service, for despite the Dowager's personal stagnation, she wants a constant influx of fresh faces and clever new minds for her Flying Squadron.

Roughly two thousand hexes inland from the Dowager's palace is the city's second greatest landmark, the Crater Arena. Just as all of the planet's mercantile routes lead to Omniport's marketplace, so too do the paths of fighters eventually draw them to the Crater

Arena. All manners of combat occur regularly within the arena's gates, and the recuperative powers of jools on even the most viciously slain warriors saves the Crater from the discomforting air of death and horror that otherwise overshadows arena combat, making the Crater a clean and invigorating entertainment venue for the whole family. There's something for everyone from delicate fencing tournaments to massive, team-sport-style battles, Zodian duels to summoning duels, even matches where people are pitted against vicious monsters who've spent so long on the circuit that they've garnered their own fan clubs. The arena even offers a summer day camp, where forward-thinking parents often send their children to learn self-defense, confident that no injury is so grave that a handful of jools won't fix it.

Cathodral: The Frozen Metropolis

From the distance, Cathodral twinkles like a beautiful and brilliant diamond wonderland, reflecting and refracting sunlight, moonlight, and starlight off of its faceted walls of ice, and casting its own scintillating light from the millions of television screens that line its streets and fill its buildings. The closer one gets, however, the colder one gets, and within its heavily-guarded gates a chilly and oppressive air has settled over all of its inhabitants. The Frozen Metropolis is ruled by the Regulators, a self-appointed council who control the two most important things in the lives of Cathodral's citizens – temperature and television – maintaining the delicate balance that keeps the citizens content and complacent, but not over-stimulated or disgruntled. This process is aided by the fact that outside of Quality Control, the Regulators' base of operations, all of the city's walls are carved from transparent blocks of ice, subjecting all of Cathodral's inhabitants to the constant scrutiny of their neighbors. Although the ice itself is treated to withstand high temperatures without melting, the Regulators have found that the ideal temperature for the populace is around ten degrees below the comfortable zone, which dissuades them from leaving their homes or getting excited, and encourages them to spend their free time escaping into the warm glow of the astonishingly insipid and propagandistic shows that run perpetually on Cathodral's televisions. Like everything else of value in Cathodral, the televisions themselves are property of the state, and can only be rented from Quality Control at ludicrous prices, running upwards of 500 jools a month for the most basic models, but citizens are indoctrinated from birth with the notion that lacking a television is the most shameful thing imaginable, and thus every single household in the Frozen Metropolis contains one.

Despite the fact that Cathodral's list of punishable crimes is far, far too long, convoluted, and esoteric for any of its citizens to grasp, from obscuring too much of the view into one's apartment from the street to trafficking in books, chocolate, or over a hundred-thousand other contraband substances, the Frozen Metropolis actually has the lowest crime rate of any major city on Amalgus. Undercover agents from Quality Control are everywhere, and are granted the powers of judge and jury, and the means to administer whatever means of punishment they deem necessary, dropping the temperature in a criminal's apartment below freezing for a few days or months, raising the temperature in a criminal's home until it melts to the ground, or the worst punishment imaginable, revoking a criminal's television license. Surprisingly, leaving Cathodral is not a crime, but the level of bureaucracy and paperwork involved renders the process virtually impossible. Of those who do emigrate, however, the vast majority return to a life they know to be inferior, simply stating that they had started to miss their favorite shows.

Aside from the full-time job of keeping the citizens in line, the Regulators are also tasked with the slow and steady expansion of the Frozen Metropolis. Cathodral's standing army is the largest known in the modern age, and most of its citizens are either soldiers themselves or work in the city's countless factories, perpetually manufacturing Cathodral's wide range of weapons and war machines. Over the course of recorded history, Cathodral has swallowed up eleven other

sizeable cities and dozens of smaller villages. Since the great war, many of these “acquisitions” have involved no bloodshed, as the mayors of nearby towns are politely referred to different branches of Cathedral’s vast military or Quality Control, over and over, on an endless bureaucratic wild-goose-chase, as their villages are slowly frozen over and rented televisions. The exact purpose of the expansion, as well as the identities of the highest-ranking Regulators, remains a mystery.

The Sample Characters

Now that you’ve read through the skill descriptions and become a little more familiar with the wonders of Amalgus, here are the skill listings and background stories for the sample characters introduced at the beginning of this book. Each character is skilled as a first-level character; if you like one of them enough, or are just completely out of ideas for a new character, feel free to try one on for size.

Orlando Griegos, Cuban Semi-Pro Baseball Player

Speed 2

Luck 1

Vitality 1

Grand Slam (Melee Attack) 2

Bottom of the ninth, bases loaded, down by one with two strikes against him, the ball came toward Orlando in slow-motion as he gritted his teeth, swung the bat, and connected not with the ball, but with the head of a terrible, ravenous monster light years away from the Cuban baseball diamond where he had stood a split second before. The thing recoiled and then lunged at him, slashing its claws through his flimsy jersey before he beamed it again with his bat. From behind him, Orlando heard what could only be the words “Super Spicy Hot Dumpling!” and the monster before him suddenly burst into flames, slashing at the air and howling angrily as it crumpled to the ground. Turning around, he found a little girl, horribly battered, and armed with nothing but a large frying pan and a pair of chopsticks, then pain from the gash the beast had cut through his chest overtook him, and he collapsed unconscious.

Orlando awoke to find the girl sitting on the ground next to him, offering him a handful of what looked like lemon-drops. He sprang to his feet and looked around frantically, but the monster had disappeared, along with the wound it had given him. Slowly, and repeating herself several times, the little girl explained jools to Orlando in perfect Spanish as she led him from the crumbling, Aztec-style ruins in which he had appeared, down the road to her village. Along the way Orlando saw plants and animals he was familiar with from his native Cuba and TV nature shows, intermingled with strange and wonderful things that he knew had never existed on Earth. Gradually it dawned on him that even this little girl, who was telling him that his sudden appearance was a sign of good fortune as they walked, looked and talked like a little girl but had big floppy ears and a tail like a dog, and stunted, feathery wings growing out of her back. Most of what the girl said went completely over his head, but he stayed silent for the entire trip all the way to the village and the girl’s home, only shrugging when her parents (a mother who looked more like a dog and a father who looked more like an ostrich) profusely thanked him for saving their daughter from certain doom, and mumbling a “thank you” in return after they fed him a delicious but indescribable supper with lots of noodles and gave him their guest room for the night. It was only the next morning when Orlando awoke to the call of a bird with a beak like a tuba instead of the usual screaming fight between his three little sisters that he finally accepted

the fact that he wasn't in Havana anymore. After the girl's mother fixed him a breakfast of rice and something that looked like broccoli but tasted like chorizzo, Orlando thanked the family for their hospitality, shouldered his baseball bat, and set off to explore this strange new world.

More than anything, Orlando just wants to go back home. However, his mood changes from day to day between being determined to find a way home by the end of the week to wanting to stick around for a while, accumulate some wealth and experience, and have something to show for himself when he finally does go back. Orlando has found and followed many promising leads, all of which have been dead-ends, but he still keeps searching for the way back to Cuba. In the meantime, he's adapted fairly quickly to life on Amalgus; he's opened a Save Bank account, visited many of the planet's important sites, been on a number of wild adventures, and started baseball leagues in nine major cities. He still visits the family he met when he first arrived, bringing them back gifts and trinkets from the exotic places he's been, and they've more or less adopted him as a son, although Orlando keeps telling them they shouldn't get too attached since he'll be going back home any day now.

Velveteen, the Battle Seamstress (and Patch)

Speed 1

Luck 1

Vitality 1

Whip Stitch (Melee Attack) 1

Knit (Rest) 1

Surgical Stitch (Heal) 2

Rag Doll (Summon) 1

With a mother in the Flying Squadron and Omniport's greatest tailor for a father, Velveteen's childhood studies were split fairly evenly between battlefield strategy, espionage, and brocading. An early bloomer with a needle and thread, at the age of seven Velveteen won first prize in Amalgus's annual international quilt-off, and was awarded Patch, a stalwart little companion who doubles as a pin-cushion. Two years later she took third place in the Crater Arena Junior League Championships. Her parents have vowed to support her in whichever path she chooses; her grandparents, however, are a different story, constantly bickering over what Velveteen should do with her life, and trying to make all her decisions for her. Finally, after years of her mother's parents spiking her father's parents' food with concoctions that make their skin turn blue and her father's parents sewing her mother's parents into their clothes while they aren't looking so they have to tear them to shreds to take them off at night, Velveteen has announced, on the morning of her fourteenth birthday, that she's off to see the world and decide what she wants to make of herself on her own (with Patch following along, of course). Her mother's parents suggested tricking her into promising to be a good little girl and never say such things again, and her father's parents suggested lecturing her that a close-knit family is a happy family, but once they had all left her father presented her with one of the finest sweaters he'd ever made and her mother taught her the three most devious tricks she knows, and they kissed her on her cheeks and told her that there would always be a place set at the table and a bed made for her. Her grandparents will be furious that she actually had the nerve to strike out on her own to explore the world, but after a while they'll simmer down, remember her as "the one who got away", and turn their attention, and their ceaseless arguing, to Velveteen's poor little brother.

DJ Eggman

Speed 1

Luck 1

Vitality 2

Two Turntables and a Microphone (Job) 1

Ambient (Elemental Attack: Air) 1

Rock the House (Elemental Attack: Earth) 1

Disco Inferno (Elemental Attack: Fire) 1

At only 248 years of age, DJ Eggman is young for a Siklan, but all the same he has made a tremendous impact on Sikla's elite dance club scene. Hailed as a prodigy by his peers, DJ Eggman assumed his moniker to fit his body at the time of his rise to stardom; a fuzzy, white, egg-shaped creature from Amalgus's frozen north. Twelve years ago, DJ Eggman met with an unfortunate accident involving a poorly-wired turntable and a 28th-story balcony, and all of Sikla's top musicians mourned his passing and anxiously awaited his return to the scene – for like all Siklans, DJ Eggman possesses the mysterious power to be reincarnated into a random newborn body after death. A decade passed, styles changed, and most people forgot about the Eggman until finally, after years of travel, a savage Derg of the Yellow-Eye clan arrived in Sikla claiming to be the returned prodigal DJ, and promptly backed-up his claim by stepping to the mike and laying down the funk in ways the world hadn't heard in a dozen years.

DJ Eggman has a lot of brushing up to do; he's twelve years out of practice, and a Derg's mighty burrowing claws don't scratch with quite the finesse that his fuzzy little paws used to. He's brought a fresh perspective to his music, however, mixing the organic, tribal beats of traditional Derg music with his tried-and-true original stylings. This new influence has broadened his musical horizons in other ways as well, and now he longs for adventure away from Sikla's posh sophistication, where he can discover Amalgus's multitudinous musical variations in their natural environments and incorporate them all into the ultimate groove.

The High Plains Toaster

Speed 2

Luck 1

Vitality 1

Mixer Shot (Ranged Attack) 2

A drifter, a loner, an appliance who makes his own rules, the High Plains Toaster spent much of his young life as a hired hand on various ranches around Junkyard Junction, fending off Derg raiders and rust rustlers, herding cattle and mending fences. An avid reader of the dime-novels the traders from outside the heap brought with them, the Toaster longed to see the world, and finally saved up enough jools from his menial jobs to make his dream come true. Travelling from port to port, taking in everything he could and never letting an opportunity for a new experience pass him by, the Toaster became an appliance of the world, learning to fight, gamble, drink and swap stories with the best of them, all the while teaching himself the ins and outs of business, making sound investments and laying the foundations for a vast mercantile enterprise. Indeed, it seemed as if the Toaster was well on his way to a bright, chrome-plated future, when one evening his senses escaped him for a fleeting moment and he lost it all on a game of Hearts, staggering out into the night with nothing to his name save his faded yellow duster and the custom-built pair of Smith & Decker egg-beater

revolvers that had once belonged to his father. It was weeks before anyone caught sight of the Toaster again, and by then he was a very different machine.

At some point toward the end of his youth something happened to the Toaster that changed him forever, but exactly what that something was no-one can say, and ever since that day the Toaster has been a machine of few words, moving from town to town righting wrongs, answering prayers, and bringing hope to the destitute. Some of the people whose lives he's touched say the Toaster's just a mighty good Samaritan, some say he's a saint, and others whisper that the Toaster died that fateful night, and ever since he's walked Amalgus as an angel, doing the good work, and delivering justice, salvation, and piping-hot toast to those most in need. The truth is that the Toaster did something unspeakably horrible that night long ago after he left the card table empty-handed, and even if he spends his every last moment performing good deeds (which he well plans to do) he will never, ever atone for it.

Regretta September

Speed 1

Luck 0

Vitality 1

Bladed Shovel (Melee Attack) 2

Bury (Elemental Attack: Light) 2

Regretta's elder brother kept the September Gate, as did their father before him, and their father's father, and so on for the last 147 generations, when the post and name of September was willed to them by a family that had no heirs. Every evening of Regretta's childhood, hatch number 32 of the September Gate would creak open on its massive hinges, her father would disappear inside with the lunch she and her brother had packed for him, and he would return well after dawn, sometimes in good spirits, sometimes bloody and battered, but always exhausted. As the years passed, Regretta grew to understand the truth of the matter; some things, many things, buried in the ancient catacombs beneath Taphos refuse to stay dead, and her father was the man who stood watch over one of the city's 97 gates, keeping the decay below from infecting the healthy, living world above. When Regretta was 10 she asked her historian why her father had to perform the job alone, and was reminded of the incident at Alabaster Point, where the walking dead infected the whole battalion that was garrisoned there to keep them at bay, and with their help laid waste to an entire section of the city before they were contained and destroyed. The morning that Regretta's father failed to return through the September Gate she knew that her brother was not yet ready to assume his post. He was a scholar, not a fighter, and three years later he disappeared as well.

Regretta is not a coward. She spends every moment of her life knowing that she has brought the worst kind of shame upon her family name for running from her responsibilities, running from the September Gate and even from Taphos, out into the alien world beyond the Province of Tombs. But she also knows that she is not ready; she knows what waits for her in the murky darkness beneath her home, what has taken her brother and their father before him. Its horrible rotting face peers at her in dreams, piercing her heart with eyes that have seen beyond death, dragging her down through narrow, twisting corridors to long-forgotten pits of seething, suffocating darkness. In the note she left behind for someone, perhaps the neighbors, to find, she has vowed that she will return to September Gate and to her post some day. That day is steadily approaching; with every new adventure, experience, and victory, Regretta feels her strength slowly rising to match that of the thing in her dreams. It may take years, it may take her entire lifetime, but eventually Regretta will amass the power

to stare back into the darkness, to awake without feelings of fear and shame, to return to her home and her duty, and to conquer the thing that refuses to stay dead.

Items

For the most part, the weapons and equipment that characters carry are extensions of the characters themselves, and any skills the characters apply to those items could just as easily be applied to any other items or no items at all. Although Orlando fights mostly with his baseball bat, he could perform a Melee Attack at exactly the same rank with exactly the same effect with a punch, a kick, a sword, or a guitar instead. The High Plains Toaster, deprived of his guns, could just as easily throw a rock, an apple, or whatever happened to be in his pocket as his Ranged Attack. You are, however, free to impose your own limitations on what your character can or can't do without her preferred equipment for the sake of the story, and the GM is encouraged to reward you for doing so. All of these "personal" items are, for all intents and purposes, considered part of you; if a personal item is ever taken from you, it soon evaporates or otherwise "gets lost", and you either find it again, find an exact replica, or happen to have a spare. Your personal items even disappear along with your body if you die. You may, at any time, give a personal item to another character, at which point that item ceases to be part of you and becomes part of them. Any personal item that you intentionally spend a long time separated from (something you leave at home while you spend a month out adventuring, or something you simply throw away) loses its status as a personal item, at your and the GM's discretion. Any new clothing or other pieces of simple equipment that you accumulate during your adventures will usually automatically become personal items, unless the GM has a specific reason for making them otherwise.

On the other hand, there are some items that create effects beyond the abilities of skills. These items, called "Special Items", are listed below, first in tables all together, and then individually with more detailed descriptions. Special Items are broken down into three categories; Common Special Items are the most useful, and the kinds of Special Items player characters will most likely want to stock up on, Miscellaneous Special Items are Special Items that contribute more to the feel of the game than give their owner a specific advantage (although you're encouraged to come up with clever uses for them that **do** give you an advantage of some sort), and Advanced Special Items are rare, expensive, and powerful Special Items that stretch the bounds of Amalgus technology. A fourth category of Special Items, Vehicles, is covered in the next section.

Any Special Item can be created by a character with the necessary Imbue rank and other requirements by spending its Creation Cost in jools (this price covers the cost of materials and loose jools that are Imbued into the item). Creating a Special Item takes a number of days equal to the Imbue rank required, although you may subtract a day for every rank of Imbue you have over the required rank, to a minimum of zero days (the creation will still take a few hours to complete even if the days are lowered to zero). You may create a single Special Item that incorporates the powers of multiple separate Special Items (a Cooking Pot that's also an Elemental Battery, for instance), or Imbue a Special Item that has already been created with additional powers, as long as you pay for each power as if it were a separate Special Item. All Simple and Miscellaneous Special Items have a durability score of 1000. Save Banks have a durability score of 10,000, unoccupied Zodians use their Vitality rank to generate V jools if they are damaged and have additional durability scores of 5000, and Vehicles' durability scores are determined when they are created. If multiple Special Items are combined into a single Special Item, their durability scores are added together to create the item's durability.

Unless otherwise specified in a Special Item's description, using a Special Item only requires that you have the item somehow attached to you (usually held in your hands). Record any

Special Items you have by writing them on the back of your character sheet, including exactly what kind of Special Item each item is, and any important variables (the type and number of charges in an Elemental Battery, for instance).

The Market Price for any Special Item is twice its Creation Cost, although this price may vary a bit from market to market. Your GM may, and probably will, create other Special Items that are not listed here.

Here is a list of Special Items, broken up into the three basic types, along with the Imbue rank, other requirements, and cost in jools needed to create each item, followed by more thorough descriptions:

Common Special Items:

Name	I	Other Reqs	Creation Cost	Brief Description
Bomb Weapon	4	Melee Attack 3	200	A weapon that explodes on command, dealing big damage
Elemental Battery	3	Elemental Effect 1+ (<i>SD</i>)	20+c (<i>SD</i>)	Stores jools for use with a specific Elemental Attack
Elemental Bomb	4	Elemental Attack 5	200	One-use only powerful elemental attack
Gravity Bomb	4	Pull 5	200	Creates a “gravity well” that pulls nearby characters into it
Healing Salve	3	Heal 1+ (<i>SD</i>)	20+c (<i>SD</i>)	Heals a number of V jools equal to half its Market Cost
Homing Beacon	4	<i>None</i>	200	Tracks objects and characters
Living Creature	8	<i>None</i>	<i>SD</i> (<i>not for sale</i>)	Creates an autonomous, living creature
Mirage Projector	5	Illusion: Mirage 3	1000	Maintains a mirage indefinitely
Personal Touch	3	<i>None</i>	200	Makes a Special Item behave like personal equipment
Skill Boost	<i>SD</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SD</i>	Gives you ranks in a specific skill
Skill Capsule	4	<i>SD</i>	<i>SD</i>	Gives you ranks in a specific skill for one use only
Smoke Bomb	3	Sneak 3	100	Increases your chances of escaping from combat
TelepaPhone	5	Telepathy 6	1000	Lets you communicate over vast distances
Water Breather	6	Swim 5	500	Lets you breathe water for a day

I = Imbue rank required; *SD* = “See Description”

Bomb Weapon

Immediately after performing a Melee Attack using a Bomb Weapon, you may detonate that weapon and triple the number of dice you roll for damage from that attack. Detonating a Bomb Weapon destroys it completely and it can not be repaired, but until you destroy it you may use it as a normal weapon.

Elemental Battery

Every jool past the first 20 jools used to create an Elemental Battery adds a “charge” to that battery. When you create an Elemental Battery, note which element it has been created for and the number of charges you used to create it. You can not give an Elemental Battery more

charges than 10 times your rank in the corresponding Elemental Effect. When you perform an Elemental Attack using an Elemental Battery, you may spend that battery's charges instead of V jools (at a one-for-one ratio) to pay for the attack. Elemental Batteries can not be recharged, and once one has been reduced to zero charges it evaporates.

The Creation Cost (in jools) of an Elemental Battery is equal to 20 plus the number of charges.

Elemental Bomb

When you create an Elemental Bomb, note which element it has been created for. If you use the Throw skill to throw an Elemental Bomb at an enemy and that enemy does not catch the bomb, or if you Throw an Elemental Bomb into an empty hex, treat the effect as a free Elemental Attack (using the same element as was used to create the bomb) at rank 5, with distances measured from the hex where the bomb landed. You may Throw multiple Elemental Bombs of the same element with the same action to increase the Elemental Attack rank to 5 times the number of bombs thrown. Using an Elemental Bomb destroys it completely and it can not be repaired.

Gravity Bomb

If you use the Throw skill to throw a Gravity Bomb at an enemy and that enemy does not catch the bomb, or if you Throw a Gravity Bomb into an empty hex, treat the effect as if a character had used the Pull skill at rank 5 on **all** characters and objects (including you) within 10 hexes of where the bomb landed. You may Throw multiple Gravity Bombs with the same action to increase the Pull rank to 5 times the number of bombs thrown. Using a Gravity Bomb destroys it completely and it can not be repaired.

Healing Salve

Every jool past the first 20 jools used to create a Healing Salve adds a "charge" to that salve. When you create a Healing Salve, note the number of charges you used to create it. You can not give a Healing Salve more charges than 10 times your rank in Heal. As an action in combat, you may use a Healing Salve to gain a number of V jools equal to the number of charges in the salve. You may use the Throw skill to throw a Healing Salve to a friend, but that friend must also use an action if she wishes to use the salve. Using a Healing Salve destroys it completely and it can not be repaired.

The Creation Cost (in jools) of a Healing Salve is equal to 20 plus the number of charges.

Homing Beacon

If you are adjacent to a person, either in or out of combat, you may roll Sneak versus that person's Awareness to attempt to plant a Homing Beacon on him. If you succeed, you remain constantly aware of where that person is in relation to you until the next time that person is defeated in combat and turned into jools. Alternately, you can place a Homing Beacon on a willing friend or a non-living object without needing to make a Sneak roll, and with the same effect, or you can leave a Homing Beacon at a specific location to constantly track your position relative to the location. If you use a Homing Beacon to track someone or something, you will only know where the target is in relation to you; you will not know exactly where it is in your surroundings (what specific room the target is in in a building, for instance) unless you are already very familiar with those surroundings.

Living Creature

A Living Creature is exactly that: a brand new character, with no skills, a level of zero, and a size of 1, capable of autonomous thought and action. How intelligent a Living Creature is, how it behaves, what it looks like, and other defining features are determined by how and why the creature was created, and is ultimately up to the creator and the GM. The base cost for creating a Living Creature is 1000 jools, although you may increase its size during creation (and only during creation) by spending an additional 200 jools per rank of size, up to a number of ranks equal to one-quarter of your Imbue rank (rounded down).

Mirage Projector

A mirage projector is a small device roughly the size of a hockey puck that perpetually maintains a nearby mirage. When a new mirage projector is created, the associated mirage must be created separately, and then attached to the mirage projector via a simple process that only takes a few seconds. Each mirage projector can only have one mirage attached to it, and the mirage can only be changed by the person who attached it. The mirage projector maintains the mirage relative to its position, and if the projector is moved the mirage moves with it, so mirages that must stay in one place to be effective usually have their projectors bolted, nailed, glued, or otherwise affixed in place. If a projected mirage is shattered via the use of a Shatter Illusion skill, the mirage projector shuts off and the mirage disappears, but the mirage will gradually fade back to normal over the course of a number of hours equal to the rank of the Shatter Illusion skill used. Optionally, a mirage projector may be created with a button, spoken password, or other trigger that shuts off its mirage for an hour or until the trigger is used again. The complexity of projected mirages of living creatures and similarly detailed things is at the GM's discretion.

Personal Touch

When you apply a Personal Touch to a Special Item that's already been made, that item becomes part of you, taking on the same characteristics of a personal item (see the description of personal items on page @@). Special Items with a Personal Touch lose their durability score when they become part of you, but regain it if they ever cease to be personal items. You can not apply a Personal Touch to a Special Item that already has a Personal Touch. A Special Item with your Personal Touch will only work when you use it, although like any other personal item you are free to transfer the Personal Touch of a Special Item to another character at any time. Special Items that are destroyed when they are used, like bombs and Healing Salves are lost forever and do not reappear even if they have a Personal Touch.

Special Items **without** a Personal Touch are **never** considered personal items.

Skill Boost

A Skill Boost is a Special Item that lets you use a skill that you do not normally have. Every Skill Boost has a single set skill and rank. You can not create a Skill Boost for a skill that you don't already have, and the boost's rank can not be higher than either your Imbue rank or half your rank in the appropriate skill (rounded up). A Skill Boost acts as a substitute for the corresponding skill; if you have a skill and a Skill Boost for that skill, you can only use one or the other, and their ranks are **not** cumulative. Likewise, Skill Boosts for the same skill don't add to each other either. Once a Skill Boost is created, you can not increase its skill later, although you may incorporate Skill Boosts for multiple skills into the same item, as long as you create (i.e. pay for) each Skill Boost independently. If you have a Skill Boost for

a complex skill, you do not have to fulfill that complex skill's requirements to use it. Skill Boost ranks do not contribute to your level.

The Creation Cost for a Skill Boost for a simple skill is 1.5 times the number of jools that it would normally cost to buy that skill directly from zero to the desired rank, and the Creation Cost for a Skill Boost for a complex skill is 2.5 times the number of jools it would normally cost to buy the skill from zero to the desired rank.

Skill Capsule

A Skill Capsule is basically a Skill Boost that is destroyed after one use and can not be repaired. You can not create a Skill Capsule for a skill that you don't already have, and the capsule's rank can not be higher than your rank in the appropriate skill. All other specifics are the same as those listed for a Skill Boost.

The Creation Cost for a Skill Capsule for a simple skill is equal to one-tenth of the number of jools that it would normally cost to buy that skill directly from zero to the desired rank, and the Creation Cost for a Skill Capsule for a complex skill is equal to one-fifth the number of jools it would cost to buy the skill from zero to the desired rank.

Smoke Bomb

After you spend an action to use a Smoke Bomb, anyone attempting to escape from the current combat must roll lower than triple the number of hexes between herself and the nearest enemy on one die to succeed. This effect lasts for the entire duration of the current combat. Be sure to ask your GM if the current combat can be escaped from before using a Smoke Bomb.

TelepaPhone

A TelepaPhone works exactly the same way as a cell phone does on Earth, except that the range is unlimited and there are no fees past the purchase price. A TelepaPhone never needs to be charged, either, but can only be used for two hours every 24 hours before it gets worn out and needs to rest and recharge itself.

Water Breather

A Water Breather allows you to stay under water (or any other liquid within reason) for a full 24 hours without losing the usual 1 V jool per round from drowning. After the 24 hours is up, the Water Breather will stop working, and you will begin to drown normally. If one Water Breather is split between multiple characters, the characters must stay in constant contact and the amount of time it will support them is divided by the number of characters. A Water Breather must spend at least 24 hours outside of water in open air to "recharge" between uses; otherwise the amount of time it will function will be equal to the amount of time it spent out of the water. All Water Breathers have a gauge or some other means of indicating exactly how much time they have left. It is possible to use multiple Water Breathers consecutively, remaining underwater for several days at a time, and recharge them all simultaneously when you emerge.

Miscellaneous Special Items:

Name	I	Other Reqs	Creation Cost	Brief Description
Cooking Pot	2	<i>None</i>	100	A pot that automatically cooks anything put into it
Disposable Lock	2	<i>None</i>	100	A lock that destroys itself and its key when it's unlocked

Everlasting Food	1	<i>None</i>	<i>SD</i>	Food that never goes bad
Increased Durability	2	<i>None</i>	<i>SD</i>	Makes things harder to break
Perfect Lock	4	<i>None</i>	500	A lock that can only be opened by the matching key
Self-Mending	4	Repair 1+ (<i>SD</i>)	<i>SD</i>	Makes items repair themselves
Sweeping Broom	2	<i>None</i>	100	A broom that automatically sweeps the floor of a room

I = Imbue rank required; *SD* = "See Description"

Cooking Pot

A standard Cooking Pot is large enough to hold 2 hex volume of food (enough to feed four). Any food put in a Cooking Pot is quickly cooked to, and kept at, a low boil. The Cooking Pot itself is always the same temperature as its exterior surroundings. A Cooking Pot will not cook anything living put inside it. Cooking Pots always have lids that latch shut to keep things from accidentally falling in and getting cooked. Larger Cooking Pots are available, at an increased cost directly correspondent to the increased size.

Disposable Lock

A Disposable Lock and its corresponding key are created simultaneously. The first time that the latch on a Disposable Lock is closed, it automatically locks itself, and subsequently can **only** be unlocked with the matching key, and which point both the lock and the key are destroyed and can not be repaired. Any attempt to pick or otherwise circumvent the lock will always fail, unless the lock is destroyed (by taking 1000 points of damage) or whatever the lock is holding shut is destroyed. Disposable Locks can be made in any size up to 1 hex in volume.

Everlasting Food

Everlasting Food will never go bad, regardless of what condition it's kept in, unless it is directly affected by an Elemental Effect: Decay. Similar techniques are used to keep the blocks of ice used to build the fireplaces in the Cathedral frozen even when the fireplace is lit, and to keep the various cities made of sand that dot Amalgus's beaches from being blown or washed away.

The Creation Cost for Everlasting Food is 1 jool per 1 dex weight of food (in addition to the normal cost of that food).

Increased Durability

Increased Durability raises the durability of an object by one point per one jool of Creation Cost, up to ten times that object's normal durability. Items with Increased Durability can be repaired up to their new durability if they are damaged.

Perfect Lock

A Perfect Lock and its corresponding key are created simultaneously. A Perfect Lock can **only** be locked or unlocked with the matching key, and any attempt to pick or otherwise circumvent the lock will always fail, unless the lock is destroyed (by taking 1000 points of damage) or whatever the lock is holding shut is destroyed. Perfect Locks can be made in any size up to 1 hex in volume. Perfect Locks make wonderful additions to Zodians and vehicles.

Self-Mending

Every 50 jools used to create a Self-Mending item adds a "charge" to that item. When you create a Self-Mending item, note the number of charges you used to create it. A Self-

Mending item will automatically repair itself of any damage it takes, up to ten times its number of charges per day. If a Self-Mending item is damaged but not destroyed, it will gradually repair itself to being as good as new at a rate of ten times its number of charges per day. If a Self-Mending item is destroyed completely (either by having its durability score reduced to zero or being destroyed as part of its function like an Elemental Bomb or a Disposable Lock), it will not repair itself. You can not give a Self-Mending item more charges than your rank in Repair. Self-Mending is often applied to the walls of important buildings, and buildings designed to occupy hostile environments.

Sweeping Broom

If a Sweeping Broom is placed, bristles down, inside any enclosed room up to 1000 hex in area, it will immediately begin sweeping the entire floor of that room and continue to do so until it is picked up and turned upside-down or the room is no longer enclosed. A Sweeping Broom gauges the size of a room by the amount of floor it can freely move over, so windows and chimneys can be left open in the room as long as the door is closed or significantly raised above the floor, but if the area increases past 1000 hex (by a door being opened to the outside or by a wall being destroyed, for instance) the broom will become confused and stop.

Sweeping Brooms can work together to clean a room more quickly, and can be safely stored with their bristles pointing up.

Advanced Special Items:

Name	I	Other Reqs	Creation Cost	Brief Description
Save Bank	20	Heal 10 Manual	10,000,000	Allows characters to return to Amalgus after death
Zodian	12	Manual	2,000,000	Powerful, oversized armor

I = Imbue rank required

Save Banks

Save Banks won't let you live forever, but they will make you nearly impossible to permanently kill. The concept is simple: deposit at least 1000 jools (the required minimum) and a sample of your essence at a bank in any major city. From that point on, if the unfortunate should happen and your spark of life is extinguished, the Bank automatically becomes aware of the fact and recreates you totally from the sample of your essence over the course of a week. You will retain your size, appearance, personality, and memories, but all of your skills (and level) will have reset to zero, at which point you may use the deposit of jools you left at the bank to buy your skills back up again or to buy completely new skills. The sample of essence is different things for different characters; it could be a blood sample or a lock of hair for an organic character or a small cutting from a mechanical one, but it could also just as easily be a keepsake, a piece of jewelry, or even the character's signature on a scrap of paper. If you have Save Bank accounts in multiple cities, you will be recreated in the nearest one to the place where you died. Like normal banks, Save Banks make their money by re-investing a portion of the jools invested with them, so there is no service charge or membership fee as long as you keep a minimum balance of 1000 jools. A Save Bank itself is a small chamber one hex in diameter in which the member is recreated, but the term Save Bank is also used to refer to the larger building in which the chamber stands, its employees, and the rows upon rows of tiny receptacles in which members' samples and account information are kept. Larger Save Banks also contain one or two oversized chambers to accommodate larger clientele. There is no difference in creation cost between the various sizes of chambers, it's simply a matter of available real-estate in the middle of an already crowded city.

The creation of its first Save Bank is a major milestone for any growing city, as they always bring a huge influx of trade and commerce from adventurers, merchants, travelers, and tourists no longer afraid to stray too far into un-“Saved” territory. Virtually everyone in a city with a Save Bank has an account; the Save Bank is often the first stop for new parents who want to assure a safe future for their child, although there have been cases of particularly stupid and over-confident teenagers closing out their accounts and blowing the jools on reckless activities that wind up killing them with no Bank to bring them back. Cities with Save Banks have incredibly low violent crime rates, as “leaving no witnesses” ceases to be a viable solution, but also tend to make much less of an effort toward public safety, since occasionally compensating someone for a few lost jools and a week out of work is usually much cheaper than installing guard-rails, crosswalks, warning signs, and other measures that people are just going to ignore and circumvent anyway.

Save Banks are a double-edged sword in other ways as well. Despite their sturdy structure, locations in the centers of cities, and typical regiments of guards, Save Banks do get robbed and even destroyed from time to time, and no outside institution exists to insure them or reimburse their members for their lost accounts. Save Banks do their best to notify their members with permanent addresses of such occurrences, but if you’re way out in the wilderness fighting horrible monsters you’re no match for, you really have no guarantee that you’ll be back on your feet in a week after one of them bites you in half. This problem creates a caveat for multiple Save Banks to exist in the same city, with paranoid citizens opening accounts in as many of them as they can afford to. Save Banks are also both a blessing and a curse for adventurers since their method of creation is so widely-known that tens of thousands of black market Save Banks exist all over Amalgus, so the arch-nemesis that you yourself threw into a raging volcano could conceivably come back for more again and again and again, at least until he runs out of jools. Surprisingly, Save Banks were originally invented by Siklan engineers who didn’t like the gamble of being reborn into a random body. There was immediately a huge demand for the technology outside of Sikla from people who lacked the gift of rebirth, so after a few decades of modifications the engineers presented Amalgus with the modern Save Bank, which can accommodate creatures of any kind.

Save Banks can not be created without the use of Save Bank design manuals, which are usually closely guarded by their owners but can be copied with only a few days of work. Traffic in Save Bank design manuals is very loosely regimented, since even a perfect Save Bank design manual is useless to all but the few characters on Amalgus with high enough Imbue and Heal ranks to use them.

The Fine Print on Save Banks:

A Save Bank account will bring you back to life regardless of how you died (even if you killed yourself or used a skill like Explode), as long as your spark of life **has** been extinguished (see Damage, Death, and Decay on page @@). A Save Bank can not bring you back if you die of old age.

Zodians

Zodians are incredibly powerful weapons whose creation dates back to the Great War. With a few exceptions, Zodians are roughly human-shaped, size 3 robots that amplify the skills of a pilot who sits in a cockpit in the Zodian’s chest. The technology to create them was thought lost after the war, but after centuries of archaeological and scientific research all 12 original designs have been restored, and are available for manufacture. The correlation between the designs of the Zodians and Earth’s own zodiac has been noted by Amalgus researchers, but so far no clear correlation has been drawn between them. Some records of the Great War also suggest that there are a further 12 Zodians, whose classes correspond to Earth’s eastern zodiac, but so far no

evidence has been found to support this claim, aside from a toy model of a “Rooster” class Zodian that was recently discovered in an archaeological dig.

Creating a Zodian requires an Imbue rank of 12 and the design manual for the specific Zodian being created. The creation cost for a Zodian is 2 million jools, and each design manual alone costs 1 million jools. Design manuals are only available from the Zodian Design Committee who operate out of Omniport, or from a manual’s previous owner. Due to a strange encoding method known only to the Zodian Design Committee, any attempt to transcribe or otherwise copy a Zodian design manual always fails.

When piloting a Zodian, you may perform actions as you normally would. For every rank you have in the Pilot Zodian skill you gain 2 ranks in each of the skills the Zodian possesses, up to the Zodian’s rank in that skill. You may use skills normally that you have and the Zodian does not, and you may add your rank to skills that you share with the Zodian (after applying the limit imposed by your Pilot Zodian rank). Zodians’ skills do not contribute to your level.

Example: Orlando has 3 ranks in Vitality and 2 ranks in Pilot Zodian. He is piloting a Scorpio Zodian, which has a Vitality of 6. Orlando can only use 4 ranks of the Scorpio Zodian’s Vitality (twice his Pilot Zodian rank), but adds his own Vitality rank, giving him a total of 7 ranks of Vitality while piloting the Scorpio Zodian.

Zodians use V jools the same way that characters do. Even if a Zodian has no pilot, it will still turn any jools stored in it into V jools to heal damage, although it won’t be able to perform any actions on its own. While piloting a Zodian, you share your V jools with it, and it will continue to function normally until you drop below zero V jools, at which point you will fall unconscious as usual. An unconscious Zodian pilot can be removed from his Zodian by anyone who touches the Zodian and spends an action to remove him (normally a Zodian pilot can only exit the Zodian by his own will). A Zodian with negative V jools has a durability of 5000, and if its durability is reduced to zero or less it is destroyed and can not be repaired. Like characters, Zodians with negative V jools must be brought back up to at least zero V jools before they will function again. Keep in mind that you must be size 1 to pilot a Zodian, but while piloting a Zodian you are effectively size 3, with all the benefits and drawbacks that being so entails.

The 12 Zodian Classes:

Aquarius

Vitality	4
Twin Geyser Spray (Elemental Effect: Water)	7
Twin Geyser Blast (Elemental Attack: Water)	4
Cooling System (Elemental Resistance: Fire)	2
Fire Axe (Melee Attack)	4

Originally designed to fight fires in urban and other hard-to-reach areas, the Aquarius class Zodian’s twin geyser cannons were also found to be very useful for crowd control and against fire type monsters.

Aries

Vitality	5
Lightning Bolt (Elemental Attack: Electric)	4
Thunder Hammer (Melee Attack)	6
Ram (Dash Attack)	5

Combining the powerful electric charges stored in its coiled horns with its signature, enormous sledgehammer, the Aries class Zodian is designed to go toe-to-toe with the other Zodian classes. During the Great War, large armies would hold one or two Aries class

Zodians in reserve specifically to deal with troublesome enemy Zodians one-on-one and then immediately withdraw.

Cancer

Vitality	4
Armor Plating (Defend)	6
Intercept (Cover)	4
Heavy Claw (Grab)	5
Vice Grip (Crush)	3

The heavily-armored Cancer class Zodian is most often found guarding the gates of walled cities or escorting convoys through dangerous areas. Its fortitude and powerful grappling claws make it ideal for keeping enemies at bay until reinforcements arrive, although the Cancer Zodian is certainly capable of dealing with threats on its own.

Capricorn

Vitality	5
Gate Crystal (Summon)	7
Gate Battery (Metabolize)	4
Defensive Shell (Defend)	4

Almost more of a Summoning Stone bank than a Zodian, the Capricorn's major thrust is filling the battlefield with allied monsters. Without its standard menagerie the Capricorn is a fairly mediocre class, but its ability to summon wave after wave of monsters and activate its defensive shell while they do its dirty work makes it the ideal Zodian for dealing with large numbers of opponents. Capricorn class Zodians can accommodate any form of Summoning Stones, but the Stones themselves must be procured separately.

Gemini

Vitality	4
Fists of Iron (Melee Attack)	6
Sensory Refraction (Vision: Decoy)	7
Reality Refraction (SpaceTime: Split)	2

The Gemini class Zodian was originally designed simply to make small armies look larger and more intimidating via its Decoy and Split skills. After its "trick" was discovered by its creators' enemies, the Gemini became doubly deadly in armies that employed several of them, as the trick was reversed and enemies found a squadron of Geminis where they expected only one.

Leo

Vitality	5
Mighty Blade (Melee Attack)	7
Shield of Valor (Defend)	3
Fearless Protector (Cover)	3
Lion's Leap (Jump)	3

Created for nobility and generals as show-pieces that could also hold their own in the thick of battle, Leo class Zodians inspire their allies with their majestic appearances and chivalrous fighting style.

Libra

Vitality	5
----------	---

Blade of Justice (Melee Attack)	5
Blinding Flash (Elemental Attack: Light)	5
Blind-Sight (Awareness)	4
Judgment (Premonition: Sense)	3

A short-run program in a cluster of frontier towns gave Zodian-armored sheriffs the power of judge, jury and executioner to deal with rising crime waves. The program was a spectacular failure, but the Zodians themselves lived on. The Libra class Zodian's most intriguing feature is the fact that it has no eye-slits or visual sensors, but its "blindness" is more than compensated for by its wide array of auditory, olfactory, sonar, radar, and other sensors, giving it a full 360° sphere of perception.

Pisces

Vitality	4
Trident (Melee Attack)	5
Chain Net (Grab)	5
Jet Propellers (Swim)	6

Special: The Pisces Zodian has a special built-in Water Breather Special Item, allowing its pilot to remain underwater for a week at a time without suffering any ill effects.

The only Zodian specifically designed for aquatic combat, the Pisces class is equally competent in and out of the water. A popular yet nasty tactic for Pisces class Zodians is to lure an enemy into the water and then use the Zodian's chain net to grapple him until he drowns.

Sagittarius

Vitality	1
Pulse Cannon (Ranged Attack)	7
Aim (Charge)	4
Sensor Array (Awareness)	4
Escape Drive (Dash)	4
Optical Camouflage (Illusion: Vanish)	2

The only Zodian designed specifically for sniping, the Sagittarius class features a quadruped design for improved stability, long-range optics with a variety of sensors, and low-level cloaking capabilities. Its four-legged design also offers an improved retreat speed when its position has been compromised.

Scorpio

Vitality	4
Reflex Enhancement (Dodge)	5
Universal Toxin (Hinder)	5
Grappling Tail (Pull)	5
Silence Mechanism (Sneak)	3

Fast, sneaky, and poisonous, the Scorpio class Zodian is the ideal candidate for softening up an opponent before a stronger Zodian moves in for the kill. Despite its deadliness when teamed with competent fighters, the Scorpio is little more than a nuisance on its own since it lacks any inherent attacks.

Taurus

Vitality	5
Gore (Melee Attack)	8

Rage (Counter Attack)	2
Stampede (Dash Attack)	3

The Zodian heavy assault class, the Taurus is built to demolish anything that stands in its way. During the Great War Taurus Zodians were often paired with Virgo Zodians who kept them running as they waded through the opposition.

Virgo

Vitality	7
Deflective Shielding (Dodge)	2
Purity Blast (Heal)	4
Purity Recharge (Rest)	4
Purity Battery (Metabolize)	4

Initially created as “support” troops to meet the demand for healing-specific Zodians to support the numerous suicidally barbaric classes that had been created so far, Virgo class Zodians were widely adopted by pilots who were already competent fighters in their own rights and relied only on the Virgo’s healing and recuperative powers to keep themselves and their allies going in combat. The heart of the Virgo Zodian’s power is a device called the “Purity Engine”, which quickly and efficiently transmutes jools into healing power.

Vehicles

Vehicles each have four basic attributes: Type, Size, Speed, and Durability. The Imbue rank and cost in jools necessary to create a vehicle depends on a vehicle’s type and its ranks in the three other vehicle attributes. Each attribute can be increased after the vehicle has been created for twice its normal cost. Like all other Special Items, vehicles can have the powers of additional Special Items added to them, although Personal Touch can not be applied to a vehicle. Amalgus vehicles all run off some type of “perpetual motion engine”, a Special Item that is included in the cost of the vehicle and never has to be re-fueled.

Vehicle Types:

Name	I	Other Reqs	Creation Cost	Brief Description
Land	x1	Pilot Land	x1	Vehicle travels across land
Water	x1	Pilot Water	x1	Vehicle travels through water
Air	x2	Pilot Air	x2	Vehicle travels through air

I = Imbue rank required

Type

Land vehicles (designed to travel along the ground) and Water vehicles (designed to travel on the surface of water and underwater) each have creation costs and required Imbue ranks determined by their other three attributes. Air vehicles (designed to fly through the air, but not along the ground or underwater) have double the creation costs and required Imbue ranks of Land or Water vehicles with the same ranks in the three other attributes. Vehicles with multiple types have an initial cost equal to the total of the costs for their types (a vehicle designed to travel through Air and Water would have a tripled creation cost and required Imbue rank, for instance).

Other Vehicle Attributes:

Name	I	Creation Cost
Size	+1/5	+200

Speed	+1/5	+200
Durability	--	+2/1

I = Imbue rank required

Size

Like characters, every vehicle occupies a number of hexes equal to its size rank, although a vehicle's size rank also indicates how many hexes of space exist inside of and on top of it for characters to occupy. A vehicle's maximum number of occupants (in size ranks) is equal to 3 times the vehicle's size. If a Land vehicle exceeds maximum occupancy, it will not move. If a Water or Air vehicle exceeds maximum capacity, it will sink at about half the speed that objects normally sink. Ranks in size for a vehicle each cost 200 jools. Every 5 ranks of size a vehicle has increases the Imbue rank required to create it by 1 (rounded up). Vehicles that only have the Air type can not move at an altitude lower than their size in hexes (relative to the ground directly below them), unless they are landing or taking off, at which point they can only move vertically. Every Water vehicle automatically has a number of Water Breather Special Items equal to its size included in its creation cost.

Speed

This number indicates how fast a vehicle moves. Treat this number exactly like a character's Dash, Fly, or Swim rank (depending on the vehicle's type). As an action during combat, you may move a vehicle that you are piloting a number of hexes equal to its speed rank. (You may also move a vehicle you are piloting a number of hexes equal to its size as your free move.) Ranks in speed for a vehicle each cost 200 jools. Every 5 ranks of speed a vehicle has increases the Imbue rank required to create it by 1 (rounded up). Each rank of speed is roughly equal to 10 mph. Vehicle speed is not related to the Speed skill.

Durability

Vehicles start with a durability of zero. A vehicle's durability can be increased at a cost of 2 jools per point. A vehicle's durability can not be raised higher than 1,000 times the vehicle's size. A vehicle's durability does not affect the Imbue rank required to create it.

Creation Cost Examples:							
General Use Motorcycle:				Small Airship:			
Type:	Land	x1	x1 Imbue	Type:	Air	x2	x2 Imbue
Size:	1	200j.	+1 Imbue	Size:	10	2000j.	+2 Imbue
Speed:	12	2400j.	+3 Imbue	Speed:	8	1600j.	+2 Imbue
Durability:	100	200j.		Durability:	10,000	20,000j.	
Total Creation Cost: 2,800j., 4 Imbue				Total Creation Cost: 47,200j., 8 Imbue			

Sample Vehicles:

Here are a few of the more common vehicles that might show up during an adventure. Many of these sample vehicles have lower market costs than they should normally have because they are mass-produced.

Basic Land Vehicle

Virtually every nation has its own variant on the six-passenger car. Mortan hearses are available in a wide variety from modern, station-wagon-style vehicles to steam-driven horseless carriages. Siklan land vehicles tend to look like giant insects, zipping down roads on a blur of mechanical legs. Junkyard Junction's land vehicles usually look to be cobbled together from old appliances and broken-down machine parts, but are remarkably sturdy

and maneuverable all the same. The Cathodral employs a variety of bulky, utilitarian tanks and armored troop transports. Omniport's vast variety in everything else naturally extends to its land vehicles, which run the gamut from otherworldly, giant phosphorescent amoebas that hum softly as they drift down the road to Earth cars found at Forgotten Ruins, seamlessly and not-so-seamlessly retrofitted with perpetual motion engines.

Type: Land

Size: 2

Speed: 15

Durability: 2,000

Market Cost: 14,000 j.

Mitrecycle

The primary means of personal transportation within the Cathodral, Mitrecycles are very affordable because they are made mostly of ice, and thus quickly melt away outside of the protection of the Cathodral's walls. The Regulators love this feature, as it keeps the citizens of the Cathodral efficient and content, while also providing them with a strong reason to never leave. Specially imbued Mitrecycles that can travel outside the Cathodral without melting are available and commonly issued to ground troops, although they are strictly forbidden to civilians.

Type: Land

Size: 1

Speed: 4

Durability: 50

Special: Mitrecycles melt and immediately cease to function if taken outside of Cathodral

Market Cost: 2,000 j.

Lance Pod

A Lance Pod is little more than a tremendous jousting lance with what looks like a motorcycle sidecar attached. Designed during the Great War to launch powerful individual troops into the thick of combat at great speeds, Lance Pods have since evolved into sports-car-like status symbols for fairly wealthy people who are always in a hurry.

Type: Air

Size: 1

Speed: 20

Durability: 200

Skill Boost: Dash Attack 5

Market Cost: 20,000 j.

Wind Sail

Created for travel between and fishing among the Skylands, Wind Sails are little more than large floating stones with sails attached. Most Skylanders modify their Wind Sails with rocket engines for faster propulsion and cannons to keep the float spiders at bay, and the vehicles are in fact so common that some closer Skylands are connected by bridges of Wind Sails moored together. Travel via unmodified Wind Sail outside all but the most populous areas of the Skylands is recommended only to those who can fly on their own or have a deathwish.

Type: Air

Size: 1

Speed: 2

Durability: 100

Market Cost: 3,000 j.

Wrasp

The staple of the Cathedral's air force, Wrasps look like Mitrecycles with the wheels removed and a pair of enormous insect wings added. Wrasps are strictly forbidden to civilians, but fairly common among the city's troops, as their small size makes them ideal for both aerial and ground-based operations.

Type: Air

Size: 1

Speed: 15

Durability: 50

Market Cost: 12,000 j.

Speed Yacht

In an effort to cut costs, many Water-type vehicles have been designed to only travel along the surface of the water, and not underneath. The lack of built-in Water Breathers and only having to be airtight on the bottom shaves a great deal off the cost, making boats a very practical alternative to airships and submarines for travel between continents and islands. The biggest downside, however, to travelling by boat is that they make ideal targets for pirates in submarines, airships, and even other boats. Most captains have the foresight to heavily armor and crew their boats, but ships still often disappear, even on the shortest of routes. The Speed Yacht is a common example of the wide variety of boats found on Amalgus.

Type: Water

Size: 8

Speed: 10

Durability: 2,000

Special: Speed Yachts (and similar boats) can not travel underwater, and are not equipped with the Water Breather Special Items common to other Water vehicles

Market Cost: 10,000 j.

Basic Submarine

Almost all of Amalgus's thousands of coastal villages and cities have their own variant on the basic submarine, ranging from sleek vessels built to resemble various fish and whales to clunky contraptions that hardly look airtight or detailed sculptures of glass and steel that perfectly balance internal and external pressures to plumb the darkest depths of the planet's oceans.

Type: Water

Size: 7

Speed: 8

Durability: 3,000

Special: Three additional Water Breathers (for a total of 10)

Market Cost: 20,000 j.

SquidPod

The favored vehicle of most underwater explorers, the SquidPod offers a great deal of flexibility for solo divers at a reasonable price. While a larger submarine is necessary for

longer underwater missions, SquidPods work wonderfully for day trips or for scouting in deep water while using a larger submarine as a base.

Type: Water

Size: 1

Speed: 10

Durability: 100

Market Cost: 4,500 j.

Travel

While personal vehicles are a good idea if you're going to be doing a lot of travelling far from civilization and have the jools to spare, Amalgus's various public transportation systems are much less expensive for most travel needs. Most major cities have subway, bus, canal boat, or similar systems for travel within the city limits at a flat rate of 1 jool per trip. Travel between most major cities by train, ship, or airship runs between 200 and 1,000 jools one-way, and submarines and airships can be chartered for around 800 to 2,000 jools per day.

Travel by cannon is also an option for strong characters on a tight budget, and can launch a character up to 10,000 hex (about 20 miles) in any direction. Trips by cannon each cost 100 jools; 50 jools for the trip, and 50 jools to pay for the damage inflicted by being shot out of a cannon. Naturally, the Defense skill can be used to cut down on this cost (rolled normally just as you are being shot out of the cannon). All major cities and most medium-sized cities have at least two or three cannon stations.

History, Mysteries, and Legends

Despite the wondrous technologies and abilities of its inhabitants, Amalgus is still far from being the "tamed" planet that Earth has become; most of it still remains unexplored, and most of its past is muddled, forgotten, or unclear. As such, explorers and researchers are constantly making new discoveries, from secrets about Amalgus's past, to foreign cultures and strange creatures in distant lands and long-forgotten ruins deep beneath some of the planet's oldest cities. Adventure and mystery lurk in every corner on Amalgus, just waiting to be discovered by the brave... or the foolish.

The Smart Bomb

All of Earth's wars taken together can't begin to equal the magnitude of carnage that existed during Amalgus's Great War. Violence spawned violence, every inch of the planet was a battle ground, and with the invention of Save Banks, the destruction was literally endless, as glassy-eyed, shell-shocked troops killed and were killed over and over again, and generals deployed the exact same platoons onto the same battlefields where they had all died the previous week. Battle lines remained unmoved for centuries, war machines reached, and plateaued at the absolute peak of efficiency, and no structure remained standing on the face of Amalgus that wasn't a bunker or a trench. Allegiances were in constant flux, as war-crazed nations fought their enemies, their allies, and even themselves.

Finally, after untold centuries of senseless bloodshed, the ultimate weapon was created in an unknown town by an unknown inventor. It was both the most humane and the most inhumane solution, a doomsday device that could insure a bright, hopeful future for all of Amalgus's children. The Smart Bomb's blast was designed to penetrate all barriers; no-one would escape its effect, including the inventor herself. The bomb went off with a thunderclap, and a wave of strange color that rippled across the globe. Some combatants paused for a moment waiting for the quick death they had long acquainted with loud sounds and strange colors, while others

ignored them and kept fighting. Slowly, the Smart Bomb's effect settled in, and soldiers began to stare strangely at their weapons and at each other. Troops forgot who their generals were, generals forgot who their troops were, everyone forgot who or what they were fighting for, who or what was their ally, and who or what was their enemy. Pilots forgot how to control their complex vehicles and Zodians, and abandoned them where they stood. People forgot their names, their families, their pasts, everything. In Sikla's sanitariums, every last invalid, from the catatonic to the raving, was instantly cured as the burdens of their pasts evaporated from their minds. Everyone forgot how to read, how to speak, everything but the most basic instincts was wiped away completely. Communities developed where the most people found themselves together, in the hearts of the battlefields, as families made homes out of overturned machines that had been chewing through troops by the hundreds just a few years before. Violence still permeated the world, of course, but perhaps because of the bleakness of their surroundings or perhaps because they still retained a glimmer of their past atrocities, people were usually more concerned with maintaining the safety and happiness of their communities and families than with conquering their neighbors.

Gradually, over many many centuries, societies and civilizations were rebuilt, archaeologists discovered the ruins of long-abandoned cities and lost technologies, linguists learned to read and speak the ancient languages, and the bloody history of the Great War slowly came into focus. Historians have pieced together much of Amalgus's past; allegiances and accounts of the Great War, the names and customs of cultures long since wiped off the face of the planet, great kings and generals, tactics, strategies, developments, and failures. But throughout all the documents and relics, one detail of the Great War still eludes modern scholars – the cause – although many historians agree that perhaps that's the one bit of information that truly is best left forgotten.

The Kygrin Legion

Of all the hundreds of armies recorded in the history of the Great War, none were as vicious, or successful, as the Kygrin Legion. With no homeland to defend, the Kygrin Legion plagued Amalgus, completely obliterating cities, turning everything they could into jools, and leaving the rest ablaze. Their leader, Kygrus, began his career as the head cook on the Wings of Victory, the largest airship ever built, and after leading a mutiny and usurping the role of ship's captain, he steadily began amassing an army of airship pirates and stewards, with no regard to race or species, using self-taught tactics to evade pursuers and pick the stragglers and spoils from waning battlefields until he had built sufficient forces to take the offensive. The Kygrin Legion quickly became one of the most powerful forces in the Great War, allying themselves with any nation willing to pay their outrageous tributes, and destroying their allies at the first sign of weakness. Eventually word spread and the Legion stopped receiving offers of alliance, but they functioned just as well on their own, pillaging and consuming anyone and everyone who crossed their path. As tensions mounted and what was originally considered a "random element" became less random and much more of a threat, a committee of allied nations determined that without Kygrus the Legion would fall apart, and combined their forces to launch one grand assault that would take care of the Legion once and for all. They accrued heavy casualties sinking the Wings of Victory, and as the news of Kygrus's death spread around the world the Legion stood undivided, systematically wiping those allied nations off the map one by one with ruthless precision.

An efficient but now leaderless organism, the Kygrin Legion continued its reign of terror, and became viewed more as a force of nature than a nation to be parlayed with; a sign of good luck if they were headed in your enemy's direction, bad luck if they were headed towards you. Generals prayed to their deities or even to Kygrus himself to send the Kygrin Legion screaming

out of the sky onto their foes. The world's largest and wealthiest cities invested in vast weapons arrays and early-warning systems, and although these did succeed in keeping the Legion at bay there were plenty of smaller cities that couldn't afford such amenities and were slowly gobbled up. Then all at once, after a series of successful and devastating raids, the Kygrin Legion disappeared. The Great War continued as usual, but the random element of a Legion raid was gone. After over a century of daily attacks, the world waited as if in the eye of a hurricane, wondering what horrible power the Legion were amassing. Amalgus continued to wait for six more months, and then the Smart Bomb dropped and everyone forgot what they were waiting for.

Now that records of the Kygrin Legion have been uncovered and translated, many historians are perplexed and a little worried that out of all the digs and archaeological sites that have been uncovered around the world, there is no sign whatsoever of slain members of the Legion, their weapons, or their vehicles. Even dives at the location that many records concur to be the final resting place of the Wings of Victory produce nothing but the remains of smaller airships and submarines belonging to nearby nations of the time. All that is currently known of the Legion comes directly from records of the war, and although there are detailed illustrations of their uniforms, insignia, and airships, there is precious little else besides conjecture. There isn't even enough information left to properly theorize on what happened to the Kygrin Legion, only to hope that the Legion finally got what was coming to them and was completely disassembled and turned to jools by the nations that it had terrorized for so long, or to fear that somehow the Kygrin Legion escaped the Smart Bomb, and are simply biding their time until they return to reclaim Amalgus with an arsenal of airships and weapons more powerful than anything seen in nearly a thousand years.

The Gargantians

The Great War's most powerful destructive forces, the Gargantians were the physical embodiments of the nations they fought for; 10-hex-tall robots manned by six-person crews, with arsenals and defenses that stretched the limits of the imagination. Only truly a match for each other, the history of the Great War is filled with tales of Gargantians wiping out entire armadas and even entire countries with a minimum of effort. Fortunately for all of Amalgus, the Gargantians were all destroyed, dismantled, or lost by the end of the Great War.

The Eastern city-state of Benali, for instance, was named for Tim Benali, a Gargantian pilot who, by some strange fluke, could still recite his name and clans after the Smart Bomb was dropped, although he couldn't remember anything else, or even what the words meant. He was elected god-king of the remnants of the city he was probably in the midst of destroying when the Bomb detonated, and ruled justly and benevolently for close to a hundred years. His first edict was that his Gargantian be broken down into the millions of jools that powered it, leaving only its empty husk in the center of the city, and that the jools be used to turn the city into the lush, green wonderland it is today, as bountiful as it is beautiful, with every variety of non-violent plant that Amalgus's botanists have catalogued.

By contrast, the Kygrin Gargantian "Woe", a horrible, smoke-belching behemoth of blackened metal, lies at the bottom of one of Amalgus's oceans according to many histories of the great war, although which ocean in particular is a point of contention among scholars. Most accounts place it aboard the Wings of Victory when it sank, although other reports place it halfway round the globe in the Gemstone Islands when it was destroyed, or far to the North near the shoreline battlements of the Cathedral. Most historians agree that Woe was by far the most menacing and mysterious of all of the Gargantians, but perhaps its most puzzling aspect is that historical accountants who run the figures on the assets, expenditures, and plunders of the Kygrin

Legion over the course of the Great War all find that their funds are around six million jools short of the amount required to create a Gargantuan of Woe's size and power. Some have suggested that the Kygrin Legion were receiving extra jools from a source beyond Amalgus, perhaps through a forgotten ruin somewhere, but few will readily except this idea as it lends chilling credence to the theory that the Legion somehow escaped the Smart Bomb and are mounting their forces for a return.

The Mesmetismian

Amalgus's most dynamic and enigmatic character, no-one is entirely certain the Mesmetismian even exists, let alone what it looks like. A tree whose roots penetrate to the very core of the planet, a gigantic monster or sentient Gargantuan that sleeps deep underwater or deep underground, an ethereal, bodiless force that regulates the circulation of jools across all of Amalgus, or a powerful general whose memories survived the Smart Bomb, sequestered in a hidden fortress or walking the world disguised as a petty vagrant; the legends of who the Mesmetismian really is are as diverse and hotly debated as its origin, its motivations, and its values. Many people (including the half-dozen religions devoted to it) call themselves followers or servants of the Mesmetismian, although their beliefs and actions often contradict those of its other followers and servants, and when something is done on the Mesmetismian's behalf, any attempt to trace the chain of command inevitably ends with someone who "believes" they know what the Mesmetismian wants them to do, rather than anyone who has received a direct order. Everything from wonderful acts of charity to the vilest of crimes have been performed by people who claim to be following the orders of the Mesmetismian, and every year another handful of people come out of the woodwork claiming to be the Mesmetismian – most are obvious charlatans or lunatics, but a scant few have backed up their claims with a couple of miracles before disappearing completely, leaving a confused mix of believers and skeptics.

The chaotic and disorganized array of things that are done "for the Mesmetismian" has led many to dismiss the Mesmetismian simply as a figment of an overactive or insane imagination, an excuse, or a convenient rallying point for anyone pushing their own agenda. It has convinced others that the Mesmetismian is basically a force for chaos or a force of nature, constantly changing and contradicting itself as it communicates purely random messages to its followers. A paranoid few, however, believe that the Mesmetismian is the world's most powerful, scheming mastermind, and that the apparent chaos, contradictions, and mysteries are really all carefully controlled to disguise its true agenda. The vast majority of this last group of people can be found in Sikla's finest sanitariums.

The Hermit's Tower

Throughout Amalgus's history, there have been tales of a mysterious tower that appears and disappears in remote regions all over the planet. According to legend, this tower is guarded by fearsome monsters unlike any ever seen before, and contains equally rare and unusual treasures. Sightings have occurred everywhere from deserts to jungles to caves to mountaintops, even underwater, and the tower always has the same appearance; a windowless gray column rising over 500 hexes high, tapering to a point at the top and wreathed in a spiral pattern intermingled with strange symbols and indecipherable writing. The tower doesn't actually "appear" in previously-explored areas, but is rather discovered in remote locations where it seems to have stood for centuries. The time that the tower remains in one place after being discovered varies widely, sometimes disappearing over the course of a day, sometimes staying for almost a week, but it somehow always vanishes when no-one is there to witness it, leaving behind nothing but a patch of soft earth where it stood. Due to its "wandering" nature and the fact that it seems to

“flee” from the encroachment of civilization, the tower is commonly referred to as “The Hermit’s Tower”.

Recently, one of the Hermit’s Tower’s greatest mysteries was partially solved, but many new riddles sprung up in its place. An explorers’ party camped deep in the uncharted swamplands of the far south came upon the Hermit’s Tower in their expeditions, and while half of the party entered through an opening five or six hexes above the ground, the rest went to work studying and recording the hieroglyphics on the tower’s surface. On the evening of the first day spent at the site, all communications, even by telephaphone, were cut between the group inside and those who stayed outside. Early the next morning the outside group was attacked by a swarm of creatures that appeared out of the opening their companions had entered through, and which they later described as looking similar to insects on some basic levels but overall completely foreign in both their appearance and fighting styles. Fortunately, the group was well-trained and well-equipped, and although most of their members were defeated, one remained conscious to witness the disappearance of the tower. Details are sketchy, but his reports indicate that the tower rose a few hexes to reveal a gigantic, crab-like creature underneath it, which proceeded to burrow slowly, and completely silently, straight down into the soil. In less than an hour, the entire tower had disappeared underground, leaving only the usual circle of soft soil in its place.

Several months later, a junior member of the team which entered the tower appeared in a save bank. Her memories were severely muddled by unusual complications with her reincarnation, but what she could remember of the tower painted a horrifying picture of a nightmare world filled with otherworldly monsters and bizarre special items that couldn’t be imbued with Personal Touch. Of the rest of her team, who have yet to return either of their own accord or through their save banks, she remembered next to nothing, and a few days later she disappeared. The half of the party who remained outside currently reside in a small town west of Taphos, and do not like to speak of their experience with the Hermit’s Tower.

The Ghost Moons

Amalgus itself has no moons; however, every visitor to Amalgus sees her own homeworld floating in the sky, as bright and as solid as Earth’s moon. When people from two different planets have children, those children see both of their parents’ homeworlds in the sky, but each is transparent and when their paths cross they pass through each other like illusions. When these children have children, they will see all of the worlds that their parents were able to see, but they will be even more transparent, and so on down the generations until the “ghost moons” become so numerous and transparent that they can no longer be distinguished at all. For the most part, this occurrence is simply taken for granted by Amalgus’s inhabitants, although no-one understands how it happens exactly. Occasionally, however, someone will appear on Amalgus who sees a completely different ghost moon from her homeworld, or who sees a multitude of different moons, all completely opaque. Many search for a deeper meaning in the paths of the ghost moons across the sky, and many books have been written on the subject, although so far no reliable conclusions have been reached.

Roleplaying Tips

So you’ve created your character, you know the setting, and your pretty sure you understand how jools work; the only thing left to do is to find a GM and start playing! If you’re feeling anxious about your first game, or just want to brush up a bit, here are some general pointers to start you on your way.

1. Act Quickly in Combat

As in real-time video games, anime, and movies, combat in Amalgus should be fast and furious. Decide what you want to do while other combatants are taking their actions, so that you can act quickly and decisively when you have an action. If you can't think of anything to do, a good rule of thumb is just to delay; if you've delayed all you can and still don't know what to do, then dropping an attack combo on the nearest enemy is always a good option. In the next section of this book, the GM is encouraged to count down from ten if you're taking too long to act, and if he reaches zero you lose your action. Of course, if your GM is taking too long to act you should certainly use the same trick on him.

2. Describing Actions and "Zero" Actions

Remember that the easiest way to get a bonus on an action is to describe it well. However, you must also remember that you're trying to act quickly, so you will need to strike a balance between making your description sound cool enough to merit a good bonus, and not droning on and on for hours about the various minute intricacies of whatever it is you're doing. Usually, if it takes you more than five seconds to describe your action, you're saying too much and probably won't receive a good bonus for it.

"Zero" Actions are descriptions of things that have absolute no effect on actions; they should be used sparingly, but can create great effects and get you great bonuses when used well.

Here are a few examples:

Delay: *"My arms move like liquid in their loose sleeves as I slide into a Tiger Stance, then silently beckon with my forward hand for the enemy to 'bring it on'."*

Charge: *"I lean back against the wall, pull my hat down over my eyes, and ask someone to tell me when these wimps are ready for some real combat."*

Dash: *"I bolt toward the cluster of gunmen, and as they open fire my sword becomes a blur in front of me, deflecting every bullet that comes my way."*

Ranged Attack: *"Reeling from his attack, I fire wildly. The Count sneers and says 'Ha! You'll have to shoot better than that if you—' and is cut off as the chandelier I shot loose falls on his head and knocks him senseless."*

In the above examples, nothing is really happening except your action; the Gunmen in the "Dash" example aren't actually performing Ranged Attack actions, you're just describing a special effect that adds flavor to the story but has zero bearing on the game mechanics-wise, hence the name "Zero" Action. The falling chandelier in the "Ranged Attack" example has the exact same effect on the enemy that a Ranged Attack would, because actually it **is** a Ranged Attack targeting that enemy, just described in an unusual way. Friends, enemies, random objects lying around on the battlefield, onlookers and pedestrians, anything can be included in a Zero Action as long as nothing important really changes, and you should feel free to invent your own props for Zero Actions as long as it makes sense for them to be there. If your Zero Action does affect something that it shouldn't, The GM will let you know that it won't work and let you change it, or he might make your Zero Action backfire and affect the plot or mechanics in ways that you hadn't intended.

3. Save Early, Save Often

One of the very first things you should do when playing with a new character is set up a Save Bank account; the primary reason that Save Banks exist is to keep death from getting in the way of a good story. Save Banks not only save you from the frustration of permanently losing a character you've poured countless sessions of roleplaying into developing as an interesting and complex person, but should also encourage you to perform dramatic and heroic acts, as the worst that can happen is to sacrifice your life to save your friends, and then

have them show up at your Save Bank capsule a couple weeks later, welcoming you back to the living world with your gear, the jools you left behind, and your share of the spoils of battle.

Now Start Playing!

There you go! Everything you need to know to play Amalgus. Of course, if you're going to be the GM of a Amalgus game then you should read the rest of this book as well, but if you're a player then you're all set. If you have any questions about anything in this book, ask your GM; if she doesn't know the answers, then come to the Amalgus website, listed on the back of this book, and someone there will be glad to help you out. Good luck, and above all have fun!

No, Wait! What am I supposed to do?

If this is your first time playing an RPG, here's a quick basic primer. First, use the instructions on page @@ to create a character. Once all of the players have created a character for themselves, the game begins. The GM will tell you what is going on in the story (*"You've followed the monster down into the sewers. You're now all standing at the base of the ladder underneath an uncovered manhole. The main sewer tunnel stretches out to the North and the South, and a little ways North of you there's a smaller side tunnel running off to the East."*), and you can make statements about your character's reactions (*"I head North"* or *"I shine my light down the South tunnel"* or *"I mark a big X on the wall with chalk so we'll know where we came in"*), ask questions about what your character perceives (*"Is there water running through the tunnel?"* or *"can I hear anything?"* or *"can I see the monster's tracks in the mud along the floor?"*), or converse, as your character, with the rest of the players (*"We should split up"* or *"Boris, since you're part greyhound, can you smell anything unusual down here?"* or *"Look! There's fresh blood splashed on the wall here. It must've gone this way!"*). If the result of something you want to do or ask requires the use of one of your skills, the GM will tell you, and then base the result on your roll. When combat ensues, the GM will roll out a hexagonal grid, mark the players' positions with their miniatures and mark the enemies' positions with other miniatures, and also draw in or place objects to represent important features of the space in which you're fighting. During combat, refer to the rules on page @@, and the descriptions for the skills that you've chosen for your character, which start on page @@. Once combat is over, the game returns to its normal pace. Remember that each session is only part of the whole story; you don't have to finish an entire epic adventure in one night (and you really won't be able to, since roleplaying is usually a very steady process). The GM is encouraged to end each session with either a satisfying conclusion to that session's conflicts or a hair-raising cliffhanger, but if you're getting tired, you have other things you need to do, or if some other situation arises that ends the game abruptly, there's nothing wrong with stopping at any point in the action (even in the middle of combat) and picking up at that same point the next time you play.

A final note, which has really become the golden rule of all roleplaying games is that if there's something, anything, in these rules that your group doesn't like, get rid of it, change it, or do whatever is necessary with it to work best for your group. After all, it's **your** story, and it should be personalized in every possible way to the way that **you** want to tell it.