



ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM

BETA TEST

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Beta Test of the ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** Role-playing game. We are very glad to have you aboard and look forward to hearing what you think about every aspect of the game. This is your chance to shape the incredible universe of Dune.

WHAT IS THE BETA PLAYTEST?

We have been working for several months to adapt the award winning 2d20 system to the complex setting of Dune. However, every group plays differently and has different experiences of gaming. So in this playtest we want to show you what we've created and find out what you like and dislike, how easy you find the game to pick up and what you found most inspiring.

There will be a form sent out online at the beginning of August for you to provide feedback as a player or GM, where you can offer your experiences. If we don't hear anything from you, your opinion won't count.

It is vitally important you only send us feedback only through the online form (although we will provide a forum section you can discuss it). We anticipate a lot of response and cannot possibly go through individual emails. So, to make sure your voice is heard, please follow the instructions carefully.

As this is a beta test, it is also important to bear in mind a few other things:

- This is not the final version of the game. So we don't need any feedback on spelling errors, layout design and grammar. This document is a bare draft manuscript to share the bones of the system. It will be fully edited and proofread as part of our process.
- We are fine with the basic concept and design of the system. It is the details and how it plays we are interested in. So suggestions to use a system other than 2D20, or lose the Beliefs or Skills isn't helpful.
- While we have provided some examples for complications and assets etc. these lists will be expanded on in the Core Rulebook.
- We need feedback to be short and sweet. We don't have time to look through long and comprehensive play reports (much as we would love to). So the feedback form offers choices rather than questions, which also allows us to get an instant report of how many people answered each question and in what way.
- Please also remember this is a closed beta. This document is not to be shared with anyone not already involved in it at any time. Anyone found doing so, or uploading it to a pirate site will not be invited to any further playtests. Please remember this is privileged information and sharing it outside the playtest can only damage Modiphius and possibly risk the production of the game as a breach of our license.

WHAT'S IN THIS DOCUMENT?

The Basic Rules

This details how to make tests and explains some of the traits and attributes of the player characters.

The Basic Conflict Rules

Conflict is not just physical combat, it includes social conflict, intrigue, political attacks and espionage. But physical conflict is also covered, whether it is a small skirmish, warfare or a deadly personal duel. In the Core Rulebook we detail personal combat (dueling) skirmishes, Intrigue and Espionage. For this playtest you should only need the skirmish and intrigue rules which we have included with the general conflict rules.

Desertfall Adventure

So you can actually playtest the rules we offer a slightly cut down version of the adventure 'Desertfall' which will appear in its complete form in the forthcoming Quickstart Guide. It that takes the player characters to Arrakis in service to House Atreides. In the full game you will be able to create a House of your own, full details of which will be in the Core Rulebook.

Six Pregenerated Characters

The player characters presented here can be used to play the adventure.

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

All we'd like you to do is read through these rules and adventure, and run it with your group. Even if you don't get a chance to run the adventure we'll still find your feedback useful. However, your play experience is the most useful for us.

It is up to you how long you take to run the playtest for your group, but we will be ending the Beta test at the end of August, so we will not be looking at any feedback delivered after that date. We'd also like to hear from all of your group, not just the gamemaster. So please encourage everyone to fill out the feedback form.

Additionally we will be opening a section of the Modiphius Forum for you to discuss the playtest in a closed group – we'll provide the link when this is live. Remember you must not discuss this in social media or on forums. We will be listening and commenting on the discussion as much as possible once it's live.

CORE RULES

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter introduces the core rules for playing **DUNE: ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM**. As the rest of the rules in the other chapters build on the mechanics found here, it's valuable to have a decent understanding on how all this works. Each section within this chapter starts with a brief primer on what that section describes, which is then elaborated upon and described in full.

PLAYERS

DICE

DUNE: ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM uses a single type of dice to resolve the actions a character may attempt and the situations they may face: twenty-sided dice, often referred to as a **d20**. Most of the time more than one die will be rolled at once: these dice are collectively referred to as a **dice pool**. The number of dice being rolled will be noted as $Xd20$, where X is the number of dice being rolled, so $2d20$ means two twenty-sided dice are rolled.

Rerolls

Some situations or abilities allow a character to re-roll one or more dice. When re-rolling dice, you choose the dice you wish to re-roll. You then roll those dice again, and the new results replace the old ones, even if the new result is worse.

Some situations allow you to re-roll a specific number of dice, while others allow an entire dice pool to be re-rolled. You may always choose how many dice you wish to re-roll, up to the maximum listed—in essence, you can always choose *not* to re-roll a die if you wish to keep that result.

Once you've re-rolled a die, you may not re-roll it again: the second result stands, even if you have another ability that lets you re-roll.

CHARACTERS

This chapter will refer to abilities and details which are described fully in **Chapter 4: Skills, Beliefs, and Talents**, but in order to avoid too much page-flipping, we've provided a basic overview here:

- **Traits:** A character will have two or more Traits, which serve as basic descriptions of who the character is. These interact with the rules in the same way as other traits, in the section *Scenes and Traits*, below.
- **Skills:** A character has scores in five broad skills—Battle, Communicate, Discipline, Move, and Understand—ranging from 4 to 8. These determine how capable a character is at a certain type of activity, and they are used as part of a character's Target Number when they make a skill test.
- **Focuses:** A character will have Focuses for several of their skills. Focuses describe areas of specialization and expertise within each skill. If a Focus applies to what a character is doing, then increases the chances of scoring critical successes when making a skill test.
- **Beliefs:** A character has scores in five beliefs—Duty, Faith, Justice, Power, and Truth—ranging from 4 to 8. These show how strongly a character believes in these facets of life, and they are used as part of a character's Target Number when they make a skill test.

- **Belief Statements:** A character's highest beliefs also have statements associated with them. When a character wishes to use a belief as part of a skill test, they must check to see if the statement agrees with the action being taken, or conflicts with it. If a character's beliefs agree with their actions, they will receive bonuses, while if their beliefs conflict with their actions, they may be hindered.
- **Talents:** A character's talents are distinctive special abilities which set the character apart from other people. The distinctive powers of the Bene Gesserit and the accelerated thought processes of Mentats are both forms of talent.
- **Assets:** Described fully in **Chapter 6: Conflict** and **Chapter 7: Assets**, a character's Assets represent the tools and resources they have at their disposal, which can be invaluable in overcoming adversity.

AGENTS AND ARCHITECTS

In *Dune: Adventures in the Imperium* we utilize two levels of play to allow players to work as spymasters behind the scenes and as agents in direct missions. **Architect** level play involves the player characters using their assets from a distance to achieve an objective. This might be as a general moving their troops or as a spymaster activating agents as assassins or spies on a mission. In **Agent** level play the characters actually 'get their hands dirty' and perform the missions themselves.

Any character might use either style of play to perform missions and your group may have a preference for one or the other. Which level you use will often be determined by the assets you have available and the way the players decide to face a situation, rather than the adventure or the gamemaster.

SCENES AND TRAITS

All adventures in DUNE: ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM are broken down into scenes, which the Gamemaster is responsible for setting up. Once the Gamemaster has set up a scene, the players may take whatever actions they desire, and once there's nothing else they can, or wish to, do in that place, the scene ends. Scenes also include descriptors called Traits, which point out anything important about the scene's time or place, or the characters or objects within it.

A scene is the basic building block of an adventure, just like books and movies can be broken up into scenes. A scene is a place and time involving a specific set of characters, in which an exciting or dramatic event occurs.

At the start of a scene, the Gamemaster will inform you where your character is, what's going on, and anything else useful or important you should know. There'll always be a reason behind this scene, driven by what happened in the scenes before it: perhaps you came here because of a clue left by an assassin, or because you're looking for a specific person. Once the Gamemaster has finished setting the scene, you and your fellow players can ask questions about the situation and choose for your characters to do things within the scene: move around, talk to other people, or otherwise take actions. Once you've reached a point where you can't do anything further towards your goal, or you've gained a new goal that requires you go somewhere else, the scene ends, and a new one begins.

During a scene, your decisions are important; the choices you make have an impact upon the world around your character, and you'll have to face the consequences of those choices. The Gamemaster can shape the events in a scene too, by spending Threat and through the actions of NPCs, but this is normally in response to your choices and those of your fellow players.

For the Gamemaster, part of setting up a new scene is describing the **traits** which apply to that scene. Traits describe the notable and interesting details about a place, time, person, or object, sort of like keywords for other rules to interact with. Each trait is a single word or a short phrase that describes a single detail about the thing it belongs to. A trait is always both *true* and *important*: if a trait stops being true, or stops being important, it goes away.

As a player, traits will influence the kinds of things your character can try and do, and how difficult those actions will be, but you can also interact with traits more directly, adding, removing, or altering the traits in a scene as your actions change the situation. How you can do this will be explained later in the chapter.

THE EFFECT OF TRAITS

In practice, traits have a simple impact on your character's actions: if a trait is relevant to an action being attempted, it will make the action possible or impossible, or it will make the action easier or harder. Multiple traits can be applied to a situation at once, whether cancelling one another out or adding to one another. Some especially intense or potent traits may actually be multiple identical traits added together: a battlefield might be shrouded in *smoke*, or visibility might be reduced by *thick smoke 2*, with the number indicating that it counts as two traits.

In practice, this is easy to apply. Each trait can be placed into a simple statement, such as one of those below, and if that statement makes sense, then it applies. If it doesn't make sense, then it doesn't apply.

- Because I am [personal trait], this activity is...
- Because of [situation or location trait], this activity is...
- Because I have [equipment trait], this activity is...

The end of each of those statements is either "easier", "harder", "possible", or "impossible". At the simplest level, that's as far as the Gamemaster needs to go with trait: if the statement ends with "easier", reduce the difficulty, if the statement ends with "harder", increase the difficulty. If the statement ends with "possible", then the activity can be attempted while the trait applies, while if it ends with "impossible", then it can't be attempted while that trait applies.

It's also worth remembering that if a truth makes an action impossible, that doesn't necessarily mean you can never attempt that action: rather, it may mean that the action is impossible *unless you change the situation to make it possible*.

Example of Play

Kara Molay, heir to her House, is trying to negotiate a new trade deal with a spice merchant. As the merchant is known as a fair trader, Kara's player believes her trait 'Honorable' may apply. She tells the gamemaster "Because Kara is honorable, it will be easier to make a deal with the merchant." The gamemaster agrees and reduces the difficulty of the test.

SKILL TESTS

Whenever you take action, and there is doubt in the outcome—failure is a possibility, or the result might depend on how well you succeed—the Gamemaster will ask you to make a skill test. When you make a skill test, the Gamemaster will tell you how difficult the skill test is, and you select one of your **Skills** and one of your **Beliefs** and add their scores together to make a target number. Then, roll two d20s; each die that rolls equal to or under that target number is a success, and each one that

rolls a 1 is a critical success, worth two successes. If you have a **Focus** that would help in that action, then any die that rolls equal to or less than your Skill is a critical success instead. Count your successes, and if you scored successes equal to or greater than the difficulty, you've passed the skill test: you achieve what you set out to achieve.

WHEN TO ROLL

Much of the time, when playing **DUNE: ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM**, you will simply describe what you want your character to do, and the Gamemaster will decide whether it's possible and what happens next. Most actions your character takes should be so simple that you don't need to use the rules.

However, there will be actions that aren't so simple to resolve. Most commonly, these fall into one of three categories:

- The action is difficult or dangerous, or both.
- The action is directly opposed by someone else.
- The action is simple, but how well you succeed is important.

In these situations, the Gamemaster will ask you to make a skill test, following the process described below.

What's at Stake

Both you and the Gamemaster should have a clear idea of what a skill test is for, and what will happen if the skill test succeeds or fails. In general, one of the following is likely to be true:

- The skill test is an attempt to achieve something: if you pass, you get the result you desire, if the skill test fails, you don't get that.
- The skill test is to avoid or resist a danger. In this case, a pass means that you avoid some or all the danger, while failure means that you suffer the full effects of the danger you sought to avoid.
- The skill test is to achieve something, but there's something at stake as well. If you pass, you get what you wanted and avoid the consequences, while failure means that you'll suffer the consequences instead, or must choose to face the consequences if they want to achieve their goal.

The Gamemaster should inform you of the potential outcomes for success or failure before you attempt a skill test. Your character is assumed to be capable enough to know the most likely outcomes for their actions.

DIFFICULTY

For many skill tests, as long as you achieve one success you will have succeeded at the action you are attempting. However, some actions are simply more complex than others, or can be made more difficult by circumstances. While it may be a challenge to pick a lock, it is more of a challenge to do so in the rain, blindfolded with an enemy agent about to attack you.

So, when a player asks to make a skill test the gamemaster should determine the difficulty of the task, which is rated 0-5. The player must get at least as many successes on the skill test result as the difficulty level to achieve the task. If they fail they may still opt to 'succeed at cost' (see page XX). The gamemaster should determine the difficulty as fairly as possible based of the task at hand. However, they may then spend Threat to increase the set difficulty to represent further complications to the task.

The gamemaster may allow a test to be made with a difficulty of 0. This sort of test is made when the character cannot really fail, but the quality of their action may still apply. This might be staking out an enemy facility to get an idea of the security, scouting out terrain before a battle or mingling with the guests of a soiree to pick up rumors and gossip. As usual, any successes scored above the difficulty generate Momentum, and so such tests can grant a boost to the player's Momentum pool before they initiate a conflict, representing their preparations and planning.

In general, the difficulty level should follow the following guidelines:

Simple (Difficulty 0)

Nudging open a stuck door

Following an unaware subject in the dark in a place you know intimately

Asking for a simple favour

Deceiving a simple minded subject

Investigating a subject of common knowledge

Average (Difficulty 1)

Overcoming a simple lock

Following an unaware subject in the dark

Asking for a significant favor from a friend

Deceiving a trusting subject

Investigating private but not secret knowledge

Challenging (Difficulty 2)

Overcoming a complex lock

Following a suspicious subject in the dark

Asking for a favor that will cost the benefactor something minor

Deceiving a wary subject

Investigating confidential or hidden knowledge

Daunting (Difficulty 3)

Overcoming a complex lock in a hurry

Following a suspicious subject during the day

Asking for a difficult favor from someone you already owe

Deceiving a deeply suspicious subject

Investigating knowledge that has been actively hidden by a powerful faction

Dire (Difficulty 4)

Overcoming a complex lock, in a hurry, without the right tools

Following a suspicious subject in the daytime in streets they know well

Asking for a complicated or expensive favor

Deceiving a subject who considers you an enemy

Investigating knowledge whose very existence has been hidden

Epic (Difficulty 5)

Overcoming a complex lock, in a hurry, without the right tools, during a battle

Following an subject who knows they are being followed, knows you personally and knows the streets

Asking for a dangerous favor from a stranger

Deceiving a your worst enemy

Investigating knowledge whose very existence has been hidden for centuries

What are you doing, and why?

When you're attempting a skill test, the choice is yours as to which skill and which belief you want to use. However, this isn't simply a case of picking the biggest numbers.

First, select your skill. This should be fairly obvious, as your skill relates directly to what you're doing. Usually the gamemaster will determine the skill to be used, but the player is allowed to suggest alternatives. More detail on which skills can be applied to what kinds of actions is described in **Chapter 4: Beliefs, Skills, and Talents**.

When you've selected your skill, check to see if any of your focuses apply to the action. For both skill and focus, the Gamemaster may overrule your choices and suggest something else, or they may prompt a particular choice in advance, but you always get to make a choice and try to justify why it fits the situation: the choice of skill is defined by what it is you're choosing to do.

Second, select your belief. This reflects your character's motivation and drive behind the action—why you're doing what they're doing. Some of your beliefs come with a statement. These describe the most important aspects of what your character believes, providing both advantages and limitations. To select which belief to use, the player should look at their belief statements and pick the one most appropriate to the situation. This will not necessarily be the most advantageous as beliefs can often be a disadvantage in some circumstances. The belief linked to the belief statement you choose is the one you must use for the test. If multiple statements are appropriate, the player may choose which of those beliefs to use. If none of the statements apply the player should choose one of their beliefs that does not have a statement to use in the test.

When you wish to use a belief, you *must* check to see if the statement agrees with the action.

- If the belief statement agrees with the action, then you can use that belief on this skill test. In addition, you are allowed to spend a point of **Determination** (described later) on that skill test if you wish. You cannot spend Determination if the belief you're using has no statement.
- If the belief statement clashes with the action—the belief doesn't support the action, or the action goes against the belief—then the Gamemaster may offer you a point of Determination and ask you to make a choice about the belief: either comply with the belief, or challenge it. If you comply, you suffer an immediate complication on the action you're attempting (see **Complications**, later), which could include being unable to carry out the action. If you challenge the belief, you can use it in the skill test, but the statement is crossed

out immediately after the skill test is resolved, and you can't use that belief until you've recovered it—you now doubt how you feel about that belief, and can no longer rely on it. If you don't want either of those options, you may refuse the point of Determination and choose a different belief instead.

If the belief you're using has no statement, then you may choose to use it, without restriction. In these cases, the following guidance may be helpful when determining which to use:

- **Duty:** does the action relate to your responsibilities or obligations? Often easy to justify when acting for your House.
- **Faith:** does the action rely upon trusting in others, an organization, or a higher power? Often useful when relying on empathy and wisdom.
- **Justice:** does the action relate to matters of morality, of simple right and wrong, or to the law? Often useful (ironically) in acts of deceit.
- **Power:** does the action rely on you having authority, status, or power over someone, or does it relate to your ambitions? Often useful in conflict.
- **Truth:** does the action seek to uncover secrets, or to convince someone else something, whether true or false. Often useful in investigation.

Tests can also be augmented by the players spending points of Momentum or Determination, or hindered by the gamemaster spending points of Threat. A result of 20 will create a Complication for the character making the test that represents an additional problem similar to a trait that will make further tests harder. We will detail how players and gamemasters can spend and acquire these points further on.

Example of Play

The gamemaster determines that for Kara to make the trade deal with the spice merchant, she will need to use her Communicate skill. This is mainly as they are in an informal setting at a party. Were it a board room negotiation, Discipline, or perhaps even Battle might have been another option.

Next, Kara's player looks at her belief statements. Kara has three statements: Duty "I am the heir of my House", Faith "My family trusts me" and Power "I get what I want."

As Kara is negotiating on behalf of her House, her Duty statement seems the most appropriate. Her Faith statement might also apply but as she is not with her family at this soiree it isn't quite right. If she was negotiating for herself and not her House, her Power statement might be the one to use.

Next Kara's player and the gamemaster must decide if the task is at odds with the belief statement. In this case it is, as Kara is negotiating as the heir of her House. However, had this negotiation been a minor trade that could have been left to an underling, her belief statement might have been at odds with the task.

Choosing Beliefs

It can be difficult to decide which belief is the most appropriate, but just as difficult to pick when none of your belief statements seem to fit the situation. The following guidelines should help you make that decision.

If you have exactly the right belief statement

Great! Pick that belief and carry on.

If several belief statements suit the action

Here you can pick from whichever you prefer (usually the highest) but consider how your character is deciding to approach the action defined by the belief you choose. If it feels more 'in character' to pick a lower rated belief, that's great too.

If none of the belief statements suit the action

Sometimes there just isn't a belief or statement that fits. In which case, you should choose one of your two lower beliefs that don't have a statement. This represents the character attaching no real focus to the task as it doesn't mean as much to them.

If the most appropriate belief statement is one that opposes the action

In this case you can choose to **challenge** the belief. The gamemaster may offer a point of Determination and if you take it you delete the opposing statement after making the test. The character has chosen to act against their beliefs and will have to rethink their values. This is a way for you to change your character's beliefs if they are not suiting the way you are playing them.

If you know what belief seems appropriate but the statement doesn't fit

Here you might **comply** with the belief and gain a point of Determination, picking the belief you think is most appropriate, even though the statement doesn't quite fit. Your character considers the action at odds with their beliefs, but not enough not make them question their ideals. They can continue to make the test and keep their belief statement but pick up a complication to represent how unsettled they are.

SKILL TEST PROCEDURE

When attempting a skill test, follow the procedure below:

1. The gamemaster usually selects one skill to be used, then the player should pick one belief they think is appropriate, guided by their belief statements. They may also select an applicable focus if they have one.
2. The Gamemaster sets the **difficulty** for the skill test; this will normally be between 1 and 5, but it can be higher. Some skill tests may have a default difficulty listed in the rules, but **traits**, **Threat**, and other factors can increase or decrease difficulties. The difficulty is the number of **successes** you must generate to pass the skill test.
3. You take two d20s, plus any additional d20s you've bought for this skill test. This is your dice pool for this skill test. Then, roll your dice pool.
4. Each d20 that rolls equal to or less than the target number scores a single **success**. Each die that rolls a 1 is a **critical success**, which scores two successes instead of one.
 - a. If a focus applies, then each die that rolls equal to or less than the skill being used scores a critical success.
 - b. Each die that rolls a 20 causes a **complication**.
5. If the number of successes scored equals or exceeds the difficulty of the skill test, then you have passed. If the number of successes scored is less than the difficulty of the skill test, then you have failed.
 - a. If the number of successes scored is greater than the difficulty, each success above the difficulty becomes a single point of **Momentum**.

- The Gamemaster describes the outcome of the skill test, and if the skill test was successful you may spend Momentum to improve the result further. After this, the effects of any complications are applied.

Example of Play

Kara's player and the gamemaster have determined the test to convince the merchant to make a deal should be Communicate + Duty, and that Kara can apply her 'Diplomacy' focus to the roll.

The difficulty would normally be 2, but the gamemaster reduces this to 1 as Kara has the trait Honorable.

With a Communicate of 6 and a Duty of 7, Kara's player must roll 13 or less to gain a success. But if a dice rolls 6 or less it will count as two successes because of the focus. If no focus applied, Kara's player would need to roll a 1 to gain 2 successes.

Kara's player has 2 D20 to roll for the test, and no Momentum yet to buy any more. But as this is an important deal she decides to give the gamemaster Threat so she can add another dice for a dice pool of 3 D20.

She rolls 5, 14 and 20. The 5 grants 2 successes, the 14 grants nothing and the 20 saddles Kara with a complication.

The roll is a success as Kara only needed 1 success. So she also gains a point of Momentum for getting one more success than she needed. The trade deal is completed in Kara's favor.

However, there is still a complication and the gamemaster suggests that Kara has been so busy negotiating she has failed to notice how often the servants have been filling her glass. She gains the trait 'intoxicated', which might cause problems if there are more negotiations to be done.

RECOVERING BELIEFS

If any of your belief statements is crossed out, then you are less certain of your beliefs, and of your place in the universe. It takes time, reflection, and counsel to clear away that uncertainty.

When a scene ends during which you contemplated personal matters or discussed them with another character, and you did not spend or gain any Determination during that scene, you may ask the Gamemaster to allow you to recover a belief. If you don't do this during play, it will happen automatically between adventures, should no suitable opportunities arise.

When you recover a belief, select a single belief which has had the statement crossed out, and do one of the following:

- **New Statement:** Create a new statement for that belief, which should in some way reflect your character's changed views and perspectives.
- **Changing Priorities:** Reduce the score of that belief by 1 and choose the belief with the next lowest score to increase by 1 (so, if you're reducing a belief with a score of 6, you would increase the one which had a score of 5). If this would mean that the belief is reduced to less than 6, then it no longer has a statement (and similarly, any belief increased to 6 gains a statement). If this doesn't reduce the belief's score to 5, then the statement may remain unchanged (and no longer crossed-out).

Whichever option is chosen, the belief is now recovered and may be used freely, though you cannot challenge a belief which has already been challenged and recovered during that adventure (people's core beliefs do not change that often).

IMPROVING THE ODDS

While succeeding at most common tasks is a straightforward matter, even the most capable and driven character cannot succeed at the most difficult tasks without effort, opportunity, or assistance. To truly triumph, a character needs to find some other way of improving the odds.

There are a number of ways to improve the odds: buying more d20s to roll, spending Determination, or getting assistance.

- **Momentum** can be spent to buy additional dice before a skill test. You can buy up to three d20s for a skill test after the difficulty has been declared, but before any dice are rolled. The first die you purchase for a skill test costs 1 Momentum, the second die costs 2 Momentum, and the third costs 3 Momentum. Momentum is described in more detail later.
- **Threat** can be generated to buy extra dice instead of spending Momentum. This works in the same way as spending Momentum, above, but you may generate Threat to pay some or all the cost, generating 1 Threat point for each Momentum you would have spent. Threat is described in more detail later.
- **Determination** ties into a character's belief statements, and has other uses, but it can be used to improve the odds. If the statement for the belief you're using on a skill test supports the action you're attempting, you may spend a point of Determination before rolling to change one of the dice so that it automatically rolls a 1, or after rolling to re-roll your entire dice pool. Determination and a character's belief statements are discussed above.
- **Assistance** is when another character actively assists your action. The Gamemaster may limit how many characters may assist a given skill test. Each assistant selects a belief and skill to create a target number of their own, based on how they are helping, and rolls 1d20 (assistants cannot buy extra dice themselves). Any successes they generate are added to the skill test you are attempting, so long as you score at least one success of your own. Any complications from anyone involved in the skill test apply to everyone.

Example of Play

Having completed her trade agreement in principle with the spice merchant, Kara can enjoy the rest of the party. Unfortunately she notices her old enemy Marcus Tarin, a courtier from a rival House, is also in attendance. Kara decides to chat to some of the other guests to see if anyone else knows why Marcus has arrived and what he plans.

As Marcus wasn't expected the gamemaster decides learning anything will be a difficulty 3 test, not a result Kara's player believes she can roll easily on 2 d20. Kara has a point of Momentum from her trade negotiations to buy another d20, and she decides to give the gamemaster threat to get another one. This brings her dice pool up to 4d20.

While that should be enough, Kara can also enlist the help of Anna, her handmaiden. Anna will see what she can learn from the other servants. She will make a skill test of her own using only 1d20, but any successes she gets will be added to Kara's total.

MOMENTUM

*Whenever you score more successes than you needed on a skill test, each extra success becomes **Momentum**, which you can spend to improve the outcome of the skill test you've just passed. Any Momentum you don't spend can be saved, and saved Momentum goes into a group pool for everyone to use, and up to 6 Momentum can be saved like this. Momentum can be used for several things, including getting extra information about a situation, creating or changing traits in the scene, or buying extra dice for skill tests.*

As already explained, whenever a character succeeds at a skill test and scores more successes than the difficulty, the extra successes become **Momentum**, a useful resource which allows characters to improve the results of their skill tests or improve the odds of success in future. Each extra success becomes one point of Momentum, which you may use immediately, or save for later.

SPENDING MOMENTUM

You can spend Momentum to improve the outcome of a skill test you have passed, such as gaining more information or creating a lasting effect.

After a skill test has passed, the Gamemaster will describe what happens. You can then spend Momentum to improve this outcome, to gain other benefits, or generally to make the situation better for you and your allies, or worse for your opponents.

Momentum that you use in this way doesn't need to be declared in advance, and each point can be spent one at a time as needed. For example, if you spend Momentum to get more information from the Gamemaster, you can wait to see what that information is before you decide what to do with the rest of the Momentum, so you don't waste Momentum by using it unnecessarily.

Unless otherwise noted, each use of Momentum—often called Momentum Spends—can only be used once on any single skill test. Some uses of Momentum can be used multiple times, however, and these will be noted as **repeatable**, or that their effect is “per Momentum spent”. These options can be used as many times as you wish.

Once a skill test has been resolved, any Momentum you've not spent is saved into the group pool, as described below. Momentum that can't be added to the group pool—because the group pool is already full, or because it was bonus Momentum—is lost if it isn't spent.

Example of Play

Kara's test to learn more about what Marcus might be up to goes very well, yielding 4 successes. She passes the test and gains a point of Momentum. The gamemaster tells her that officially Marcus is here to make a spice deal, but many suspect he may have another motive. Kara can spend her bonus point of Momentum to ask a further question. Fearing Marcus may be looking to offer a deal to the same spice merchant she considers asking who he might be making a deal with. However, she knows Marcus is also known to be a skilled assassin so instead she asks 'is he here to kill someone'. The gamemaster replies "probably", leaving Kara to wonder who the target might be, her spice merchant, or even herself! If only she had another point of momentum to ask another question...

Bonus Momentum

Some assets and talents grant a character bonus Momentum to successful skill tests, under specific circumstances. This is added to the amount of Momentum the character generates when they

succeed at a skill test. Something which grants bonus Momentum may specify that it can only be used in specific ways.

Bonus Momentum differs from normal Momentum in that it cannot be saved into the group pool: if it is not used, then it is lost.

SAVING MOMENTUM

Saved Momentum goes into a group collection called the **Momentum pool**, also referred to as the group pool. Momentum in this pool can be used by anyone in the group, representing the benefits of prior successes and collective effort. **The Momentum pool cannot contain more than 6 Momentum at any time.**

Whenever you wish to spend Momentum, you may spend from the group pool in addition to or instead of any Momentum you've generated yourself on a skill test. As normal, you don't have to choose how you're spending Momentum in advance, so you don't need to choose how much to take from the group pool until after you've decided how to spend it, and you don't need to spend it all at once.

At the end of a scene, one point of Momentum from the group pool is lost. Momentum needs to be maintained, and it will not last forever, so it's in your interests to spend it rather than saving it up.

Timing Momentum

The majority of uses of Momentum come immediately after a successful skill test, to improve the outcome of that skill test. However, a few important uses for Momentum happen spontaneously during play. These options have their own restrictions on how and when they are used, which is made clear in their text. Buying extra d20s is the most common examples of this.

COMMON USES

You're encouraged to be creative in your uses of Momentum. When you pass a skill test and generate Momentum, think of how your superb performance might be reflected in the outcome, or how it might influence what happens next.

However, there are a few common Momentum spends which are key to how the system works and which serve as examples for what you can do with Momentum.

Regardless of how you use it, Momentum must make a degree of sense in the story—the benefit you've gained from Momentum must make sense from the perspective of the characters—and the Gamemaster can veto any uses of Momentum that don't fit with the story or the scene.

- **Buying d20s** is one of the most common uses for Momentum. This is done before you roll the dice pool, but after the Gamemaster decides on the difficulty. The cost increases for each die purchased: the first die costs 1 Momentum, the second costs 2 Momentum, and the third costs 3. No more than three bonus d20s may be bought for a single skill test. As noted in *Improving the Odds*, earlier, you may pay for some or all this cost by adding to **Threat** instead of spending Momentum.
- **Create a Trait** allows you to define a new fact about the scene or situation. Spending 2 Momentum either creates a brand-new Trait (described in their own section, later), changes an existing one, or removes one currently in play. When you create a trait, it must relate to the action you've just attempted, and it must be something that could reasonably result from that action.

- **Obtain Information** allows you to learn more about the scene and situation. Each point of Momentum you spend allows you to ask the Gamemaster one question about the current situation. The Gamemaster must answer this question truthfully, but the answer doesn't need to be complete: partial or incomplete answers that leave room for further questions are more common. The answers must reflect the skill you've used to gain the information, and it should be something that your character would be able to determine themselves. "You don't know" or "you can't tell" are valid answers for the Gamemaster, but the Gamemaster **must** refund any Momentum spent if they give answers like that.

Example of Play

So far, Kara has used Momentum to buy extra d20s and to Obtain Information by asking about Marcus' secret mission.

If she had more she might ask more questions. But she could create a new trait such as 'Inquisitive' that might gain her a bonus to further investigations.

COMPLICATIONS

*When you attempt a skill test, any dice which roll a 20 cause a **Complication**. This doesn't mean you've failed—you can suffer complications and still succeed if you get enough successes—but each complication does create an extra problem, and may be inconvenient, painful, or embarrassing.*

Things don't always go to plan, and while you may succeed at what you set out to achieve, there may be bumps along that road. When you roll a skill test, any die that rolls a d20 causes a **complication**, which takes effect once the skill test has been resolved. Complications don't stop you succeeding, but they may impede your actions later, or they may simply be inconvenient, painful, or embarrassing.

The Gamemaster can use a complication to inflict an immediate problem upon your character or the situation, which should relate in some way to the action you've just performed. This can often create a **trait**—a fact about the scene, described later—which will hinder or impair your actions, by increasing the difficulty of skill tests or making some actions impossible. These traits may be persistent problems, or they may be short-lived, lasting only long enough to affect the character's next skill test.

There are other ways for the Gamemaster to use complications, however. A useful alternative is to impose some immediate restriction or penalty, limiting a character's immediate choices by prohibiting an action they could normally take. A complication might instead cause an activity to take longer than normal (as a rule of thumb, each complication increases the time taken by 50%). In general a complication can work like a negative trait. It can stop you doing something you would usually be able to, or increase the difficulty of an action by one.

You are not powerless in this situation, though. When you suffer a complication, you may choose to buy it off by adding two **Threat** to the gamemaster's pool—in essence, avoiding a problem now for a potential problem later. The Gamemaster may also trade a complication you or another player has rolled for 2 Threat, if they don't wish to create an immediate problem or simply can't think of one right now. If an NPC suffers a complication, the Gamemaster can buy it off by spending two points of Threat.

Example Complications:

Battle:

Injured - I have suffered an injury to <area>

Flanked – I’m in a tactically bad position

Communicate:

Rude – I have caused offence

Disconnected – I am out of my depth in this social situation

Inferior – My lack of status has been exposed

Discipline:

Intoxicated – I’ve had too much to drink

Unfocused – I can’t seem to concentrate

Move:

Tired – I am feeling too exhausted to run

Uncoordinated – I can’t seem to control my movements

Understand:

Confused – I don’t quite understand what is going on.

Uninformed – I am missing a vital piece of information

Example of Play

Kara has already picked up the Complication ‘Intoxicated’ that has been adding to the difficulty of her tests. As this is a social scene further complications would relate to that. She might make a fool of herself in some way (such as spilling something on the wrong person) or fail to remember a point of etiquette and gain further complications like ‘Clumsy’ or ‘Rude’.

If the situation with Marcus becomes physical, she might gain complications representing wounds, or even that she has been poisoned.

COMPLICATION RANGE

Some situations can make a skill test uncertain, rather than more difficult. These factors make it more likely that complications will occur, by increasing the range of numbers which cause complications. A character has a complication range of 1 normally, so complications occur on any die that rolls a 20 (only 1 in 20 chance per die). The complication range can never be increased to more than five, and the effect of changing complication range is explained on the table below:

Complication Range	Description	Complications occur on...
1	Normal	20

2	Risky	19 or 20
3	Perilous	18-20
4	Precarious	17-20
5	Treacherous	16-20

SUCCESS AT A COST

Some skill tests can't really be failed outright. Sometimes an action will inevitably succeed, but there might be problems or consequences along the way. In these situations, the Gamemaster may allow a skill test to **succeed at cost**, either before the dice have rolled, or after the result is known. If a skill test succeeds at a cost, then a character who fails a skill test still achieves their goal in some form, but they also suffer one or more automatic complications, in addition to any they're suffering because of the roll. The Gamemaster determines how many extra complications are suffered.

Although the failed skill test has produced a successful outcome, Momentum cannot be spent to improve the result of a skill test that succeeded at cost: Momentum can only be spent if a skill test was passed.

The Gamemaster may declare that an action succeeds at cost, or they may give a player a choice to succeed at cost. This choice can and should be made on a case-by-case basis according to the situation.

Example of Play

Kara attempts to make another test to learn more from the gathering before confronting Marcus. However, she fails to get the required successes. The Gamemaster allows her to succeed at a cost. For succeeding the test she learns the spice merchant is indeed Marcus' target. However, the cost is that Marcus becomes aware Kara is asking questions about him and now knows his plan.

THREAT

Where you and the other players have Momentum, the Gamemaster has **Threat**. Threat works much the same as Momentum, but for your opponents and enemies, and can be used for the same things, but the Gamemaster can also use Threat to alter situations or the story in a few ways as well. Threat represents perils, unforeseen dangers, and the potential for drama and excitement, and it will rise and fall during play. In addition to this, if you're low on Momentum, you can buy extra dice by adding to Threat, essentially taking risks to get an advantage.

As player characters generate and spend Momentum, the gamemaster generates and spends their own resource: **Threat**. The Gamemaster makes use of Threat to alter scenes, empower non-player characters, and generally make things challenging, perilous, or unpredictable for the player characters. Threat is a method by which the game, and the Gamemaster, builds tension: the larger the Threat pool, the greater the likelihood that something will endanger or threaten the player characters. In this way, Threat mimics the rise and fall of tension that builds throughout a story, eventually culminating in a high-tension finale. Strictly speaking, characters don't know about Threat, but they will have a sense of the stakes of their current situation, and the potential for things to go wrong.

The gamemaster typically begins each adventure with two Threat for each player present at the start of the adventure, though this can be adjusted based on the tone and underlying tension of a given adventure: if the stakes are high, the Gamemaster may begin with more Threat, while a calmer, quieter situation may reduce the Gamemaster's starting Threat. Part of this is defined by the size of the player characters' House: a powerful House invites challenge and breeds enemies and rivalries, and this is represented by larger amounts of starting Threat.

ADDING TO THREAT

Player characters can add to the Threat pool in the following ways:

- **Buying d20s:** As noted earlier in this chapter, characters may buy bonus d20s for skill tests by adding points to Threat instead of spending Momentum. As normal, no more than three dice can be bought, and the cost increases for each dice: the first costs 1, the second costs 2, and the third costs 3.
- **Complications:** Whenever a player character suffers one or more complications on a skill test, they or the Gamemaster may choose to add two points to Threat to ignore a complication. This may be done for as many or as few complications as desired.
- **Escalation:** At times, the Gamemaster (or the rules) may state that a specific action or decision risks escalating the situation, making it more dangerous or unpredictable. If a character performs an action that risks escalation, they immediately add one point of Threat to the pool.

The gamemaster may add to Threat in the following ways:

- **Threatening Circumstances:** The environment or circumstances of a new scene may be threatening or perilous enough to warrant adding one or two Threat to the pool automatically. Similarly, some NPCs may generate Threat simply by arriving, in response to changes in the situation, or by taking certain actions. This also includes activities that escalate the tensions of the scene, such as NPCs raising the alarm.
- **Non-Player Character Momentum:** NPCs with unspent Momentum cannot save it as PCs can: NPCs don't have a group Momentum pool. Instead, an NPC may add to Threat, adding one Threat for every Momentum they have remaining

Example of Play

Realizing the stakes have increased, Kara's player decides to shake off the Intoxicated complication, adding 2 Threat to the gamemaster's pool. The gamemaster also decides to add another point of Threat to their pool given Marcus is now looking to either silence Kara or at least ensure she doesn't interfere.

SPENDING THREAT

The gamemaster can spend Threat in several common ways:

- **Buying d20s:** The gamemaster can purchase d20s for a skill test attempted by one of their NPCs. The cost of this increases for each die purchased: the first die costs 1 Momentum, the second costs 2 Momentum, and the third costs 3. No more than three bonus d20s may be bought for a single skill test, regardless of the source.
- **Increase Difficulty:** The gamemaster can choose to make things more difficult for a character, increasing the difficulty of a single skill test by one for every 2 Threat spent. The decision to increase a skill test's difficulty must be made before any dice are bought for or rolled on that skill test.

- **Non-Player Character Threat Spends:** When a player character's action would normally add points to Threat, an NPC performing that same action, or making the same choice, must spend an equivalent number of points of Threat.
- **Non-Player Character Complications:** If an NPC suffers a complication, the gamemaster may buy off that complication by spending two Threat.
- **Traits:** The gamemaster may change, remove, or create a trait by spending two Threat. This must come naturally from some part of the current situation.
- **Environmental Effects and Narrative Changes:** The gamemaster may trigger or cause problems with the scene or environment by spending Threat.
- **Rival House Action:** The gamemaster may spend a Threat point to introduce a known enemy House to the situation. It may be one of their agents simply taking an opportunity to attack the player characters or turn out they have an alliance with whoever the player characters are dealing with. Either way, the House makes an appearance some way to complicate the situation for the player characters.

Example of Play

As the situation is heating up, the gamemaster decides to spend some of their Threat. They decide that Marcus has a lot of friends at the party who have become irked at Kara's questioning. The gamemaster spends a Threat to add the Environmental effect 'Hostile room'.

DETERMINATION

Determination is a special, scarce resource which you can spend on skill tests which align with your character's beliefs. It is earned when a character's beliefs impede or hinder their actions. You can spend determination before rolling to set a die so that it counts as having rolled a 1, or after rolling to reroll an entire dice pool, or to create, destroy, or change a trait, or to take extra actions in a conflict.

A character's beliefs are a vital part of their successes and their failures. Conviction and clarity of purpose, and a potent sense of self are key parts of why a character takes the actions they do. To this end, all player characters, and many NPCs, have **belief statements**, which reflect the character's personal values and guiding principles. When a character's actions align with these principles, they can be spurred on to greater heights of success, but when a character attempts actions which clash with their values, it can cause them considerable problems.

At the start of each adventure, you have a single point of Determination for your character, but you may gain more during play. You may never have more than three Determination at once,

When you attempt a skill test, and the Belief you are using has a belief statement, both you and the Gamemaster should consider whether the statement and the action you're attempting align. If the statement supports the action—that is, if the statement would be an advantage to the action being attempted—then you can use that belief freely for that action, and you may spend a point of Determination to gain one of the following benefits. Some talents or other character abilities may grant them additional ways to use Determination.

- **Automatic 1:** Before rolling, choose one of the d20s in your dice pool: that die is considered to have rolled a 1, and does not need to be rolled. It thus scores a critical success automatically.
- **Re-roll:** After rolling, reroll any number of d20s in your dice pool.

- **Declaration:** Before or after rolling, create a new trait, or change or remove an existing one; this must relate to your character, but it may represent something which was always true, but which has only now been revealed or become important. You may retroactively describe how this trait came to be.
- **Extra Action:** In a **conflict** (see the **Conflict** chapter), immediately take an additional action after this one, even if you have already kept the initiative.

However, if the statement would conflict with the action—it may impair your character’s judgment, make them biased, blind them to possibilities, or it may be that the action goes against your character’s morals, spiritual beliefs, or sense of honor—then the Gamemaster can offer you a point of Determination to give you a choice: comply or challenge.

- If you **comply** with your belief, then you immediately suffer a complication (which may often make the action harder or prevent you from even attempting the action). The character’s beliefs are too strong to allow them to carry out this action freely, causing a problem.
- If you **challenge** your belief, then you may act freely, but you must cross out that belief statement, and you may not use that belief score again until it has been recovered (see below). The character’s need to act has outweighed their strongly held beliefs, and in the process, their worldview has been shaken.

You may refuse to accept the offered Determination to avoid making the choice, but if you do so, you *must* choose a different belief to use for the skill test. You may also suggest to the Gamemaster moments where your beliefs may conflict with your actions, though both you and the Gamemaster must agree for this to happen.

That’s a lot of different points

Momentum, Threat and Determination have a variety of different effects, and it might seem like a lot of points to keep track of as you make rolls.

But in the 2D20 system how you spend these points is often far more important than what dice you roll. They grant both players and gamemaster a lot of control over their dice and represent the characters marshalling their resources before making their play. This makes knowing what to spend on which test an important skill to master. Do you put everything into the current test or save something for later? How important is it to succeed, and can you afford the cost? All these factors must be decided before you roll anything. This means any roll of the dice is a carefully considered plan of action, never just the whim of fate.

CONTESTS

In a contest, the character opposing you rolls first, and their number of successes becomes the difficulty you need to roll against. Once they’ve rolled, you roll to see if you can beat them.

When the actions you want to attempt are actively opposed by another, a skill test becomes a contest.

In a contest, the opposing character first rolls to set the difficulty. They gather a dice pool, rolling against their own target number as if they were attempting a skill test. The total number of successes they score becomes the difficulty for your skill test.

At this point, you make your skill test as normal, rolling against that difficulty.

If you succeed, then you achieve your desired goal, and can spend any Momentum you generate to improve that outcome as normal. If you fail, the opposing character generates 1 Momentum for each success fewer than the difficulty which you scored—i.e., if the difficulty was 4, and you scored two successes, the opposing character would get 2 Momentum—and they may spend this Momentum immediately, as if they had succeeded at a skill test.

After all this has been resolved, any complications suffered by either side are handled by the Gamemaster.

Example of Play

Given that Marcus is a highly skilled assassin, Kara cannot let him get close to the spice trader, who is chatting amiably nearby to another noble, utterly unaware of the danger he is in. She could try and physically confront Marcus but that may go poorly. However, she might be able to intimidate him into leaving, given that she knows his intentions and has a vested interest in keeping the spice trader alive.

Kara finds a quiet part of the ballroom to take Marcus aside. Luckily he makes no attempt to avoid a confrontation as he wants to know what Kara is up to. Kara explains she knows his plan and tells him that the spice trader is under her protection as they have a deal. Assassinating him may start a new conflict between their Houses.

This will be a Communicate test, with Kara using her Power belief with the statement 'I get what I want'. As this challenge is very much in line with her belief statement, the gamemaster allows Kara's player to spend Determination on the test.

The gamemaster rolls for Marcus first to set the stakes as he is the defending party. The gamemaster spends some Threat and manages to get 4 successes on Marcus' test. This means Kara will need to roll 4 successes to win the contest.

Kara has to overcome the additional difficulty of a hostile environment as Marcus knows he has several allies to back him up. This raises the difficulty to 5, but luckily Kara has bought off her complication so it doesn't get any worse.

However, she will need to call upon all her resources. She gives the gamemaster enough Threat to buy 2 more dice and brings her handmaiden Anna in to support her with assistance. This gives her a dice pool of 4 with bonus successes if Anna rolls well with her single die.

The roll is not very good, yielding 2 successes, not nearly enough. As the stakes are high, Kara's player decides to spend her Determination point. She could change 1 die into a 1, but that would only gain 2 more successes. So, Kara's player opts to spend her Determination to reroll some of the dice. Two of her dice offered a success each, and while she could reroll those in the hope of getting a better result she decides not to risk it. She rerolls the two other dice, the ones that yielded no successes. Anna's assistance roll was also a failure but as it isn't part of Kara's dice pool it cannot be rerolled with the Determination spend.

Thankfully, the two rerolled dice both come up a success, and one of them even rolls a 1. This adds another 3 successes to the existing 2, taking the total to the five successes required.

Marcus takes a moment to weigh up his options. He decides that the risk of a House ot House conflict is not what is masters are interested in. He chooses to take Kara seriously and withdrawn to confer with his superiors. With a small bow he smiles at Kara and tells her he looks forward to their next encounter and leaves.

External Factors in Contests

The procedure for contests assumes that both sides are on roughly equal footing, and that neither side has any real advantages or hindrances beyond their own abilities. This isn't always the case.

If the opposing character has any factors—such as traits—which would make things harder for them, each such factor reduces the difficulty they set by 1, to a minimum of 0. In essence, fewer of their successes translate into difficulty for their opponent.

If the active character has any factors which would affect the difficulty of their action *other* than the opposing character, then adjust the final difficulty up or down as normal.

In either case, characters in a Contest may accept assistance from other characters on their side.

Example of Play

In Kara and Marcus' contest the environment was working to Marcus' advantage. Had they been among Kara's allies the circumstances would have been different. Had time been a factor for either party that too could have made their position trickier.

EXTENDED TASKS

Some activities may take a while to complete, requiring ongoing effort over a prolonged period. This is especially useful when an ongoing action can be interrupted or cannot be completed all in one go.

These extended tasks occur entirely at the Gamemaster's discretion and can be used for a wide range of situations. When the Gamemaster decides that a situation is an extended task—and this can be something caused during play, perhaps by spending Threat or because of a complication—they choose how big the extended task will be. This is called the **requirement**. Each passed skill test made towards completing an extended task scores one or more points, and when a total number of points have been scored equal to the requirement, then the extended task is complete, and whatever event or activity the task represented is resolved.

As a rule of thumb, each passed skill test should score 2 points towards the requirement, which can be reduced by complications and increased by spending Momentum. If an extended task is based on overcoming something set in place by an opponent, then using one of their skill scores is a good basis for the task's requirement. In either case, appropriate traits may increase these scores further.

Similarly, Extended Tasks can be used to represent impending problems, with failed skill tests, complications, or simply perilous actions adding points, and the problem occurring when the requirement is met. Some situations may have both an extended task for you to work towards, *and* one representing a problem, with one or other increasing depending on whether skill tests were passed or failed.

Example of Play

Her behavior at the party has not done Kara's reputation any good. She has upset a few of the guests with her questions, and possibly embarrassed herself a little drinking too much. She also clearly had a conflict of some form with Marcus, who has many friends in the gathering. Kara's player asks the gamemaster if there is anything Kara can do to repair her reputation, so it doesn't suffer any damage when people talk of how the evening went.

The gamemaster decides this will be an extended test, with a requirement of 5 to settle any of the other guests ruffled feathers. However, the party will eventually end, meaning Kara has a limited amount of time to perform the test.

The gamemaster decides Kara can only make 3 rolls before the party ends—there's only so much effort she can make to fix this. The first test makes decent progress, succeeding and scoring 2 points towards the requirement. The second, she struggles to assuage the partygoers' concerns, succeeding but suffering a complication, which means she only scores 1 point. The third attempt, she succeeds—scoring the last two points she needed—and even generates some Momentum, which she saves for later, as it's not needed here. While it takes her the rest of the night, she manages to talk to all the guests and assure them that Marcus simply felt ill and had to retire. While it is exhausting, she finally leaves the party having made a new deal, beaten a deadly enemy and maintained the reputation of herself and her House. All in all, quite a good evening.

CONFLICT

OVERVIEW

Conflict is inevitable in the Imperium. The interplay of wealth, power, influence, politics, greed, and ambition that forms most interactions between the Houses of the Landsraad, CHOAM, the Imperial Court, the Spacing Guild, the Bene Gesserit, and other factions, breeds strife and turmoil. This creates opportunities to exploit and crises to overcome, and the fortunes of any House, or any person, rise and fall with how they face the conflicts ahead of them.

This chapter introduces the rules for conflicts in *Dune*. Conflicts expand upon the core rules of the game to help depict and resolve situations where characters are in opposition to one another, and where a mixture of cunning and daring are necessary to achieve goals against difficult odds. Conflicts come in a number of different forms, from duels between individuals, to armed skirmishes between soldiers, to the subtle tactics of espionage, to social intrigue and cutthroat politics.

Conflicts add an additional layer to gameplay, and they are used to provide greater detail to specific situations when desired. This does mean they add an extra level of complexity to the game, so they should be used sparingly and only in situations where the benefits of including them outweigh the extra effort involved.

CONFLICT SCOPE

Conflicts in *Dune* take many different forms, and they can occur on many different scales. The following forms of conflict are discussed in these rules:

- **Personal Combat** is physical conflict between individuals, using hand-held weapons like swords and daggers, envenomed needles, and similar close-quarters tools. Personal shields—either full-body, or partial—are common in personal combat, making ranged weapons mostly ineffective, and lasguns of any kind a desperate proposition. This can take the form of formalized dueling, assassination attempts, gladiatorial bouts, and similar one-on-one combat.
- **Skirmishes** are similar to personal combat, and employ a similar range of tools, but involve a handful of combatants on each side. A skirmish may make use of ranged weapons in a way that personal combats do not, particularly if the conflict starts when attempting to ambush unshielded foes. Skirmishes still take place over a relatively short range, but close enough that a swordmaster is still able to put their prowess to good use.
- **Warfare** is physical combat on a strategic level, where groups of armed personnel such as House troops, mercenaries, or even the Emperor's deadly Sardaukar. Outright warfare between Major Houses is rare and highly regulated, in part because most factions must rely on the Spacing Guild to move anything from world to world, and the Guild may refuse to support actions that they do not regard as worthwhile. Amongst the Minor Houses on a single world, however, warfare may be as common or uncommon as the ruling Major House allows—some Major Houses encourage strife between their subordinates to weed out the weak, while others prefer different matters of resolving tensions.
- **Espionage** is physical conflict relying on stealth and deception to gain access to a secure location or important person, normally to obtain information, steal valuable items, or

perform assassinations. Espionage can easily turn into another form of conflict if performed poorly, but it can also negate the need for other, more overt forms of conflict if performed well. Espionage is primarily performed by spies, informants, and surveillance devices, and countered by guards, security systems, and methods of ensuring loyalty or rooting out deception, such as truthsayers. Mentats and Bene Gesserit sisters are often exceptionally valuable in both espionage and counterespionage.

- **Intrigue** is social conflict where secrets and individual agendas are most prominent. Participants will often seek to discover what others know or what they desire, while keeping their own goals and their own secrets hidden. Intrigue can take place over a long period of time, or it can be focused on a single localized event, and it occurs most regularly where society's expectations and cultural taboos would prevent more overt forms of conflict. Intrigue often overlaps with espionage. Achieving goals through intrigue and influence is often regarded as "soft power", as a counterpoint to the "hard power" of direct authority, force, and military might.

Each of these forms of conflict will be described in more detail in their own sections, later in this chapter.

THE BASICS OF CONFLICT

All conflicts have similarities. At their core, conflicts arise when two or more opposing parties have goals which are at odds with one another, and the conflict itself occurs as a means to resolve that tension. Each side in a conflict has a collection of tools and resources—collectively referred to as **Assets**—which they can employ. It isn't enough to merely have a tool, however: you must be able to wield it effectively, maneuvering your own assets to harm your opponents or protect yourself from their actions.

This section describes the ways that conflicts in *Dune* are similar. Later sections describe the specifics of how these common elements differ in different types of conflict.

ASSETS

Conflict revolves around the use of **Assets**. An asset is anything which a character possesses or controls which they can use to protect themselves, overcome others, or otherwise achieve their goals. Assets are described more fully in **Chapter 7: Assets**, but as they are integral to the Conflict rules, it is worth describing them here first.

Each asset is useful in different circumstances, and can be used in a variety of ways: a company of House Troops can be used during warfare to attack or defend, but they can also be used as guards to prevent infiltration during espionage, or in a parade to honor or awe a guest during negotiations or intrigue.

Assets are, by themselves, a form of trait (see the **Core Rules** chapter), though specific assets may have additional rules associated with them in some contexts, such as to describe the forbidden and devastating interaction between a lasgun and a shield. Each asset will also note the type or types of conflict they are most suited for. This is not a restriction, so much as a prompt: using an asset in an unconventional way in a type of conflict it isn't normally used for might be a winning strategy, but that sort of creativity is left to the GM to resolve.

Assets broadly come in two forms: tangible, and intangible.

A tangible asset is one that has a physical presence, and which has a degree of permanence to it: a weapon is a tangible asset, as is a unit of troops, a surveillance system, or a quantity of material goods. Tangible assets are normally owned by individual characters or by the House. They're difficult to remove from play, and they are normally only removed temporarily.

An intangible asset is one that has no physical presence: a bribed guard, the leverage from having other potential trading partners, the mistaken belief of a foe fed false information, or newly obtained knowledge about a rival's weaknesses. Intangible assets are created by individual characters during play... but they're also easier to remove from play than tangible assets.

Assets also have a *Potency*, normally rated from 0 to 4. The higher an asset's Potency, the more effective or impactful it is compared to other assets of a similar kind. A monomolecular-edged blade is more potent than a simple footpad's knife, elite professional soldiers are superior to an equivalent number of ill-trained conscripts, etc. Potency is used in a few ways, described later in this chapter.

ZONES OF CONFLICT

When a conflict begins, the GM will define the area within which the conflict will take place. This may be a physical area, or an abstract representation of the conflict, but in either case, it will be divided into distinct zones, within which characters can move and use their assets.

How these zones relate to one another (including how they're connected and how characters and assets move around them) is determined by the GM as well (more guidance in the finished rules, lean towards common sense where possible: personal combat, skirmishes, warfare, and espionage should have clear links between zones, negotiations and intrigue should have most/all zones 'free-floating' where they all count as adjacent to everything else).

Some zones may have special effects which apply to assets or characters within them, or which are regarded as more or less important than others; a skirmish may have a zone which is full of hindering obstacles that make it harder to move, while warfare may denote particular zones as objectives which each side is eager to secure.

The division of the arena of conflict into zones can be as complex or as simple as you like. A simple street might have several different nooks and crannies to provide a multitude of zones, but might just as easily be considered a single zone. It is up to the players and gamemaster to use what works best for their style of play.

ACTION ORDER

During a conflict, characters perform actions in a specific order.

Each character takes a turn, during which they may take an action. Once each character in the conflict has taken a turn, a single round is completed, and a new round begins. This repeats until the conflict is concluded.

At the start of the first round, the GM selects which character takes the first turn. This will normally be a player character, unless there is a compelling narrative reason for an NPC to take the first turn, or the GM spends 2 Threat.

Once a character has finished their turn, they may do one of the following: either allow an opposing side to choose someone to act next, or to spend 2 Momentum (or add 2 to Threat) to keep the initiative (enemy NPCs may spend 2 Threat to do this). If they keep the initiative, then that character may take an extra action immediately, adding +1 difficulty to any test they attempt, or allow an

allied character to take a turn before handing over to an opposing side. Once a side has chosen to keep the initiative, they may not do so again until at least one enemy character has taken a turn of their own.

Each time a new character is chosen to act, the character chosen must be someone who has not yet taken a turn during the current round. If there are no characters left on a side who haven't yet taken a turn, that side must pass and immediately nominate another opposing side. If only one side has characters remaining to act, then they will each take a turn in sequence until all characters have taken a turn.

Once all characters have taken a turn, the round ends. The character who acted last must either nominate an opposing side to take the first turn in the next round or spend 2 Momentum/add 2 to Threat (NPCs spend 2 Threat), to allow their side to take the first turn next round.

TAKING ACTION

When you take your turn, you may take a single action, to either **move an asset**, or **use an asset**. You are welcome to suggest actions which aren't covered below, and the GM will determine how to resolve them (often by selecting which action is closest to what you've suggested and using it as a baseline).

MOVEING AN ASSET

You move one of your assets (or yourself, in some cases) from its current location to any adjacent zone. You may spend 2 Momentum to move your chosen asset one additional zone, or to choose a second asset to move one zone.

When you move, you may choose to try and gain an additional benefit, but there is a risk to this. You may attempt to move in a **subtle** way, trying to avoid attention, or you may move in a **bold** manner that draws attention and provokes a response. In either case, this requires a skill test, with a difficulty of 2. If you pass the skill test, you gain an additional benefit, listed below.

- If you move an asset **subtly**, your subtlety limits your opponents' ability to respond. If you pass, then you move your asset, and you reduce the cost to *keep the initiative* to 0: your subtlety allows you to act again before your enemy can react.
- If you move an asset **boldly**, you provoke a hasty response from your opponent. If you pass, then you move your asset, and then you may move one of an opposing character's assets: your daring ploy has provoked a reaction, just as you planned.

In either case, if you fail, you may not spend Momentum on additional movement, and one enemy may move a single asset one zone, as they react to your failed ploy. Further, if you fail, you may not *keep the initiative*.

USE AN ASSET

You may choose one of the assets you control and use it to achieve some other goal. You must declare what you are doing with the asset, and what effect you wish the action to have.

Common examples of ways to use an asset include, but are not limited to:

- Attacking an opponent with the intent of harming or defeating them (see **Attacks, Defeat, and Recovery**, below)
- Attempting to remove an opponent's Asset from play.

- Attempting to create a new Trait for the scene, or a new Asset for yourself or an ally.
- Attempting to overcome an obstacle or hindrance in the environment.
- Attempting to gain information about the situation.
- Attempting to remove a Trait or similar complication from an ally, or to aid a defeated ally.

Regardless of the desired outcome, this action always requires a skill test. If you pass the test, then you get the desired effect. If you fail, then the action you've attempted is prevented, and you may not *keep the initiative*.

Actions which directly affect a specific opponent are **Contests** rather than skill tests: the opponent gets to resist the action taken against them. The final difficulty of a contest will be influenced by the assets the defender has.

Some outcomes may not be possible to achieve in a single action. These turn into **extended tasks**, where the character makes progress towards their goal bit by bit over several actions. The amount of points made towards the requirement of the extended task is equal to 2 plus the Potency of the asset used: more potent assets make progress faster.

Specific details for different kinds of action and outcome are covered below.

Attacks, Defeat, and Recovery

A common choice in conflicts, characters may attempt to defeat their opponents in order to remove those opponents from the conflict. Any action where the goal is to defeat an opponent is classified as an attack, and defeated opponents are no longer able to participate in that conflict: they may be injured or even dead, they may have been forced out of a social gathering, or they're otherwise incapable of continuing to effect the conflict.

Making an attack is always a **Contest**, because it affects another character.

- If the attack is against a minor NPC or minor Supporting Character, then a successful attack against them means they are defeated.
- If the attack is against a notable or major character (or a player character), then defeating the character is an extended task, with a requirement equal to the most appropriate skill of the character. Each successful attack scores points equal to 2 plus the Potency of the asset used; you may spend 2 Momentum to increase the Potency of the asset by +1 for that attack only. Once this requirement has been reached, the character is defeated.

As noted above, a defeated character can no longer take part in the scene, at least until they've had opportunity to recover. This may require time, action from allies (see below), a specific condition being met (such as restoring a tarnished reputation after a social defeat), or some combination of the three.

Some defeats may be impossible to fully recover from, such as serious debilitating injuries or death (though permanent defeats for player characters should be rare (anyone as significant as a player character is likely to be captured, to ransom or subvert, as they're too valuable to simply kill). Defeats with a long-lasting effect may add new traits to player characters, at the GM's discretion, reflecting permanent effects from injury, disgrace, or similar. **If you want to inflict a lasting injury on an opponent, spend 2 Momentum after the attack which defeats that opponent.** The reverse is true if the player characters want to take an opponent alive when their enemy would rather fight to the death. It will cost 2 Momentum to capture them without killing them when they are defeated.

Essentially, the gamemaster should determine the default circumstances of defeat for either party in the conflict and impose a cost in Momentum if the player characters want to change that.

Attack Summary

1. When you make an attack, choose the asset you're using to attack. The nature of this asset will vary based on the kind of conflict you're engaged in, as will the means by which you choose a target for the attack.
2. Make a **contest** against your opponent. The skills used in this test will vary based on the type of conflict, and the circumstances of that conflict. The attacker's final difficulty increases by +1 for each defensive asset in the target's zone.
 - a. If you win the contest, then you successfully attack the enemy.
 - b. If you lose the contest, then your attack has failed, and the action ends. You may not *keep the initiative* after this.
3. If you successfully attacked, then the outcome depends on the type of enemy. Typically, the results are as follows:
 - a. If the enemy is a Minor NPC or Minor Supporting Character, then they are **defeated** immediately.
 - b. If the enemy is a Notable or Major NPC, a Notable Supporting Character, or a Main Player Character, then defeating them is an **extended task**. Each character has an extended task track with a requirement equal to a relevant skill, which is used to track how close to defeat that character is. Each successful attack against a character scores points towards that extended task equal to 2 plus the attacking asset's Potency, and you may add +1 to this by spending 2 Momentum. A character is defeated when their track is full.
4. If you defeated an opponent, then you may spend 2 Momentum to inflict a lasting defeat.

The specifics of attacks in different form of conflicts can be found in the relevant sections, later in this chapter.

Resisting Defeat

Some characters are harder to overcome than others, possessing a limited ability to fend off the attacks—literal or figurative—that would lay them low. This kind of desperate, last-ditch survival cannot be achieved often, and it always comes at a price: something lost, something suffered, or some advantage given to the enemy.

All Player Characters have this option, as do all Notable and Major NPCs, and all Notable Supporting Characters.

Once per scene, if you would be defeated, you may choose to *Resist Defeat*. Resisting defeat prevents that defeat from occurring—you remain active in the scene. When you choose to *Resist Defeat*, it costs 1 Momentum, or adds 1 to Threat, and causes you to suffer a complication (NPCs opposing the players spend Threat instead). This complication could cause the loss of one of your assets, an advantage the enemy have gained over you, or some hindrance suffered avoiding the defeat.

The amount of Momentum, or Threat spent to *Resist Defeat* increases by an amount equal to the Potency of the asset used to cause that defeat: it's harder to avoid an injury caused by a poisoned dagger than some ruffian's blade. The attacker inflicting the defeat can increase this cost further by spending Momentum.

Targeting Assets

Denying assets to the enemy is a key element of conflict—the fewer assets they have, the harder it is for them to attack you or defend against your attacks—so targeting assets is likely to be a common choice of action.

First, select the asset you wish to target, describe how you are trying to remove that asset from play, and make a skill test. Typically speaking, targeting an asset will be a skill test with a difficulty of 2. If the asset is being wielded directly by a character—as in, it is an object in their hands—then it will be a contest instead.

If the test is passed, then the outcome depends on what kind of asset has been targeted. An intangible asset is destroyed. However, if the intangible asset can be used against enemies not in the scenes it might be recovered at the end of the scene if the gamemaster allows. For instance, a blackmail document might apply to several people, and only those in the contest will have been able to refute it. A tangible asset is set aside, unable to be used by their owner, but continuing to exist; that asset can be recovered as an action, or at the end of the scene.

Creating a Trait or Asset

It's likely that you'll seek to try and shift circumstances in your favor during a conflict. This may come about by establishing new facts and details about the current scene or environment, by creating a trait, or by obtaining or revealing a new tool or resource at your disposal, by creating an asset.

If you wish to create a trait, describe the sort of effect you want, and how you wish to create it. Then, attempt a skill test, with a difficulty of 2. If you pass, then you've managed to create the desired trait.

Creating an asset works in the same way, but there are some limitations to the kinds of assets you can create. An asset created has a Potency of 0, and it should be useful in the current type of conflict. This can be an intangible asset, such as advantageous positioning in a skirmish or duel, additional preparations, useful information, or some other non-physical benefit. Alternatively, it could be a tangible asset, but this must be something that you could reasonably have concealed from everyone else (and you're revealing it now), or something which you could find in the scene.

Assets created in this way are temporary and will cease to exist at the end of the scene: whatever the asset represents is discarded or ceases to be useful. You may spend 2 Momentum to make an Asset created during a scene permanent, in which case it is added to the list of assets on your character sheet. This might include people as much as items. A defeated opponent might be convinced to change sides in the same way.

Overcoming an Obstacle

A conflict may occur in an environment littered with obstacles, hindrances, and challenges to overcome. These obstacles are traits and don't strictly belong to any one character, but they are still problems that need to be overcome in some way.

In a physical environment, such as for a skirmish or warfare scene, these obstacles will be features of the terrain: walls and similar barriers, fast-flowing water, dense mud, or shifting sands, and other features that will impair movement and action. During espionage or intrigue, these obstacles may represent factors that prevent access to places or people.

When you attempt to overcome an obstacle, you must describe how you are bypassing it, and then attempt a skill test. The Gamemaster will determine the difficulty of this; this will normally have a

difficulty of 1, but more challenging obstacles will naturally have a higher difficulty. Passing this test means that you've managed to pass the obstacle unhindered. Failure means that you've been stopped for the time being, and you'll need to find a different method to overcome the obstacle.

Gaining Information

Often, a situation may not be entirely as it seems, and many conflicts revolve around keeping secrets, and relying on misdirection and misinformation. You're likely to find yourself in a position where you need to try and gain information during a conflict in order to win, particularly in espionage and intrigue conflicts.

How this is resolved can differ based on the nature of the information you seek and what you plan to do with it. Basic information-gathering is typically a Difficulty 0 Understand skill test, with Momentum spent to ask the GM questions about the situation. Momentum from this can also be used to create traits representing advantages gained from knowledge, or to remove traits that represented concealment or deception. You may instead seek to create an asset, or overcome an obstacle by gaining information, as noted above.

The difficulty of this skill test will increase if there are any factors that would make the information harder to uncover. Classified, restricted, or obscure information will be harder to find, while secrets may be impossible to uncover unless you know where to look or who to ask.

Other skills are applicable for this in some situations as well. Move may allow you to discern details from the manner of someone's movement. Battle may allow you to identify weapons, fighting styles, battlefield strategies, and to judge the prowess of a combatant. Communicate may be useful when trying to interrogate someone or gathering information by asking people or watching how they communicate. Discipline may be useful when patience and restraint are vital, such as to notice obscure patterns or subtle details.

Aiding an Ally

You may find yourself in a situation where your allies are hurt or impaired in some way and you want to try to help them. These kinds of problems tend to take the form of traits or complications inflicted on characters and removing traits from a scene is much the same as adding them.

If you wish to remove a trait, choose which trait you wish to remove and describe how you wish to get rid of it. Then, attempt a skill test, with a difficulty of 2. If you pass, then you've managed to remove the chosen trait.

Helping a defeated ally during the scene they were defeated in works in much the same way but is somewhat more challenging. There are two ways you can go about this.

- If the defeat would have a lasting or permanent effect (death, adding a new character trait, or some other long-lasting effect), then you may attempt to prevent that lasting effect. Describe how you wish to aid the defeated character and attempt a skill test with a Difficulty of 2. If you pass, then the ally is still defeated, but the lasting effect is prevented: you've stabilized a dying ally, or you've helped alleviate the lasting effect, but the ally still needs time to recover and can't rejoin the scene.
- If the defeat has no lasting or permanent effect, then you can try to recover the defeat directly. Describe how you wish to recover the defeat, and begin an extended task, with a requirement equal to 4 plus the Potency of the asset used to defeat that ally. If the extended task is completed, then the ally is no longer defeated and they may rejoin the scene.

SKIRMISH CONFLICTS

SKIRMISH

Skirmishes are combats involving a small number of individual combatants, but more than a one-on-one duel. They typically involve movement and maneuver around a small environment, attempting to overcome enemies through positioning and decisive action.

As with personal combat, skirmishes are most commonly fought with swords and knives. However, low-velocity projectile throwers are somewhat common in skirmishes, often employed in an opening salvo against unprepared foes or those lacking shields.

ZONES: MANEUVER AND POSITIONING

In a skirmish between several combatants, the physical environment is important. Combatants maneuver around the battlefield, using the terrain and their relative positions to their advantage. Divide the environment of the skirmish up into zones: this might take the form of a grid, or a collection of hexes, or abstract spaces around important features (terrain or points of interest); individual zones may grant advantages or impose problems on the characters in them, representing terrain features.

Rather than moving assets around individually, skirmishes track the movement of individual characters, moving them using the normal rules for moving assets. A character may, once per turn without taking an action, move into or out of arm's reach of a character in the same zone, allowing them to physically interact with that character (to help an ally, interact with an object, or attack an enemy). Once within arm's reach of an enemy, attacks can be made with melee weapons. A ranged weapon can be used to attack enemies in the same zone at no penalty, or in an adjacent zone at +1 difficulty.

ASSETS: WEAPONS AND DEFENCES

The assets used in personal combat are, naturally, weapons and defenses.

- **Melee weapons** are the most common form of personal combat asset. Blades, varying in size from swords to daggers and knives, are the most common form of melee weapons, and many combatants enter battle with more than one: a blade in each hand, and maybe some extras sheathed about their body for special circumstances. Blades are useful both on offence and defense, and swordsmanship is a complex game of feints, parries, and precision attacks. In a skirmish, you may attack with a melee weapon when you are within arm's reach of an opponent.
- **Ranged weapons** are rare in personal combat, and they are used more commonly by soldiers and assassins seeking an unfair fight in their favor. They're hard to use against a shielded target—the shield stops fast-moving objects completely—but quite effective otherwise. In single combat, moving a ranged weapon asset represents moving where the weapon is pointed, and what it is aimed at. A ranged weapon may be used to make an attack against any enemy in the same zone, or an enemy in an adjacent zone at +1 difficulty.

- **Shields** are the primary form of personal defense for anyone of any importance. All player characters are assumed to be of sufficient standing that they can equip a shield belt if desired. Most shields protect the whole body, stopping any object moving faster than a few centimeters per second (to allow air to pass through and avoid suffocating the wearer). Some combatants employ a partial shield, or half-shield, which only covers half of their body, but which can be maneuvered around tactically. Attempting to attack an enemy with a full-shield with a ranged attack immediately fails. Note that a shield will also prevent the wearer making ranged attacks. Ranged attacks against half-shields increase in difficulty by +2 instead. Melee attacks against shielded foes increase in difficulty by +1.
- **Armor** is sometimes used by soldiers and other combatants who may not be equipped with a shield. Those wearing shields tend to avoid armor as it hinders mobility for little benefit: the kinds of careful attack that can pierce a shield can also find the weak spots in a suit of armor. Armor makes attacks against the wearer more difficult, with heavier armor providing a bigger difficulty increase, but it also increases the complication of actions relating to movement and maneuvering by the same amount.

In addition, characters may seek to create intangible assets to represent an especially favorable position, taking advantage of cover, or taking aim, or other temporary advantages that come about through tactics or circumstances.

ACTIONS IN SKIRMISH

Below provides some guidance on a number of common actions you're likely to attempt—or have attempted against you—during a skirmish. These are all explained in the **Conflict Overview**, but here we've provided some context that is specific to skirmishes for how to use and interpret those actions.

Movement

In a skirmish, you do not move your assets individually. Rather, movement actions move your character around the battlefield.

- Ordinary movement allows you to move to any adjacent zone. This can be thought of as a standard walking pace, or normal wary movement around a combat environment. Spending 2 Momentum to move an additional zone represents moving more quickly: a quick dash or run. You may instead spend 2 Momentum to allow one of your allies to move to an adjacent zone; the ally must be able to see or hear you, and they take the opportunity to move at your signal.
- When you move, you may enter into arm's reach of any character or object within the zone you're moving to. If you start your move within arm's reach of an enemy, you **must** attempt move subtly or boldly: you cannot attempt to leave the reach of an enemy without some risk.
- Moving **subtly** often involves moving stealthily or snatching the opportunity to move when an opponent is distracted or looking elsewhere; the opportune movement allows you to continue acting before the enemy can respond.
- Moving **boldly** is overt, dramatic, and attention-grabbing, often accompanied by a shout or war-cry that might drive a foe away in sudden fear, or a taunt that draws out a chosen foe.
- A failed attempt to move subtly or boldly allows a single enemy to move to an adjacent zone.

Attacks

Personal combat is one of the forms of conflict where actual physical attacks are most likely, so a closer look at how attacks work is useful.

1. When you make an attack, choose the asset you're using to attack, and the opponent you're choosing to attack. This asset must be a weapon of some kind.
 - a. If the asset chosen is a melee weapon, you must be within arm's reach of your opponent.
 - b. If the asset chosen is a ranged weapon, you must be within the same zone or an adjacent zone of your opponent.
2. Make a **contest** against your opponent. This will normally be a Battle skill test for both sides; other skills are possible if there's a good reason, and the defender may always choose to use Move instead of Battle (creating a trait that represents an observation or insight might allow you to use Understand to attack or defend, for example). The attacker's final difficulty increases by +1 for each defensive asset they possess (armor, shields, and weapons used to block or guard). Regardless of the result, complications may even allow the enemy to gain an advantage over you because of your failed attack, like opening you up for a counterattack.
 - a. If you win the contest, then you successfully attack the enemy.
 - b. If you lose the contest, then your attack has failed, and the action ends. You may not *keep the initiative* after this.
3. If you successfully attacked, then the outcome depends on the type of enemy.
 - a. If the enemy is a Minor NPC or Minor Supporting Character, then they are **defeated** immediately.
 - b. If the enemy is a Notable or Major NPC, a Notable Supporting Character, or a Main Player Character, then defeating them is an **extended task**. In a Personal Conflict, each character has an extended task track with a requirement equal to their Battle skill. Each successful attack against a character scores points towards that extended task equal to 2 plus the attacking asset's Potency, and you may add +1 to this by spending 2 Momentum. A character is defeated when their track is full.
4. If you defeated an opponent, then you may spend 2 Momentum to inflict a lasting defeat.

A character defeated in a skirmish may have surrendered or fled (at the controlling player's discretion), been rendered unconscious, or suffered some painful but non-serious wound: something which keeps them from fighting but which won't have any real lasting impact.

A lasting defeat includes death, but also covers serious injuries which will have a long-term or permanent effect, such as dismemberment, disfigurement, severe organ damage, and similar.

Targeting Assets

Targeting an opponent's assets is a useful way of gaining an edge. While it's next to impossible to deny a shielded or armored foe their shield or armor—as such assets are securely affixed to them—you can still remove other kinds of asset from play. In these circumstances, assets and traits are largely synonymous.

- Assets which represent weapons can be knocked from their owner's hands, allowing you to disarm your foe. They can attempt to retrieve weapons lost in this way but doing so will require an action.
- Intangible assets which represent your opponent's positioning or circumstances, or effects inflicted upon you (such as being tricked, put off-balance, or having a weapon aimed at you)

can be overcome and removed from play entirely. If an opponent has a good position, you can move to deny them that. If an enemy is aiming at you, you can disrupt their aim. If you're off-balance, you can regain your center and rebalance yourself.

Creating a Trait or Asset

Creating traits to give you an edge or impair your opponent can tip the balance of a fight in your favor, opening up new opportunities for you or closing off options that your opponent might have used. Similarly, creating new assets can be an important option during a conflict.

- Tangible assets must be something hidden on your person, and only revealed now, or they may be something improvised from the environment, such as finding an object to use as a weapon.
- Intangible assets can represent the benefits of observation, positioning, tactical ploys and tricks, and any other advantage that may come from how you fight rather than the physical tools of combat. Alternatively, an intangible asset might be some hindrance inflicted upon an opponent, such as knocking them off-balance, creating a fake opening to lure them in, using taunts to distract or confuse them, and similar.

Overcoming an Obstacle

The environment where a skirmish happens can be as vital for victory or defeat as the combatants. Individual zones may contain obstacles that are difficult to move over, around, or past, or which otherwise get in the way of fighting.

The majority of skill tests to overcome an obstacle will use Move: the obstacles may be an area of difficult terrain that may slow you down or ensnare you, or there's a hard barrier that cannot be crossed without effort. It may be possible to use Understand, representing trying to discern an easy path through or past the obstacle, or to use Discipline to simply force yourself through with grit and fortitude.

Gaining Information

Even in a skirmish, knowledge is power. Being able to read an opponent's fighting style may allow you to form appropriate defenses or figure out a way of attacking that they're ill-equipped to defend against. Being observant might allow you to detect hidden weapons or discern the signs of their ploys. It may also be useful for spotting useful details about the environment around you; spotting escape routes, useful objects or items, precarious or dangerous terrain, and similar.

While **Understand** is the obvious choice for gaining information, the **Battle** skill can be useful in personal combat for learning about an opponent's weapons and fighting style or judging how capable a fighter your opponent is.

When gathering information during a skirmish, you might wish to create traits that represent identifying a weakness in their defenses (making it easier to attack them), or ones which represent anticipating enemy attacks, to make it harder for the enemy to attack you. Alternatively, you may be on the lookout for information that doesn't help you during the combat at hand, but which might be helpful later: many swordmasters swear that you can only learn who someone truly is when you fight them.

INTRIGUE CONFLICTS

INTRIGUE

Subtle battles of status, wits, words, and secrets, Intrigue is perhaps one of the most difficult forms of conflict to visualize, but also one of the most rewarding to play out. Intrigue is an inevitable part of power and politics, with status, influence, and more tangible resources at stake. Everyone who takes part in intrigue has something to gain and everything to lose, and even those at the very top of society—the Padishah Emperor, the Spacing Guild, CHOAM, and the subtle Bene Gesserit—must play this game carefully.

ZONES: PERSONAL AND POLITICAL CONNECTIONS

The zones in an Intrigue scene are the people and groups involved. This can be very simple, with one zone for each individual participant, or more complex as factions such as Houses, and the interconnected web of loyalties and rivalries, come into play.

In the simplest cases, it should be sufficient to create one zone for each person involved in that particular intrigue. This might be the people in a specific location at a particular time, such as a society party, a meeting, or similar gathering, or it might simply be all the people vying for power and influence in a particular region of a planet, or within the courts of a the Major House which commands your own. You are considered to be adjacent to any zone which represents someone you can communicate with in some way: speaking directly, sending messages, etc. If you're unable to communicate with someone—perhaps their underlings or allies serve as intermediaries—you do not count as adjacent to that person's zone.

As the number of people involved in intrigue grows, the intrigue itself grows more complicated. Grouping individuals into factions and allegiances is often the first step here, creating hard connections between those aligned people to represent their shared interests (and meaning that, if you can influence one, that can be a way to reach others in that group who might be hard to get to otherwise). Additionally, new zones may be added to the map whenever needed to represent new participants or parties who weren't involved before but are now (such someone calling on allies to support them).

Physical Environments

It may be useful, in some social scenes, to think about the physical environment rather than social connections; you may be describing a social gathering such as a party, a diplomatic conference, or similar.

These function in much the same way as environments described in the **Skirmish** section, though they are typically more comfortable. Each zone is likely to be a different room, though especially large chambers may be divided into multiple zones at the Gamemaster's discretion. Characters can move between these zones freely—though there may be locked doors or guards barring access to some areas—and unless you are deliberately trying to be discreet, any character in the same zone as you can hear the conversations you have. This does mean that finding a quiet, isolated place to have a private conversation can be important.

Disposition and Desire

A couple of extra considerations for intrigue are disposition (what is the relationship between you and someone else) and desire (what does each person want). These factors can often influence how characters choose to interact with the people in an intrigue (and the zones that represent them). These might not always be immediately visible, and part of the intrigue may be to discover who hates whom, who is secretly working with whom, and what everyone wants.

A character or group has a **disposition** of Allied, Friendly, Neutral, Unfriendly, or Opposed, which modify the difficulty of attempts to influence them by the amounts shown on the table below. Disposition is always that character/group's stance towards the PCs and their House.

Disposition	Modifier
Allied	-2 Difficulty (minimum 0)
Friendly	-1 Difficulty (minimum 0)
Neutral	No effect
Unfriendly	+1 Difficulty
Opposed	+2 Difficulty

Disposition is not fixed and should change over time as a result of various actions. You may attempt to improve the disposition of others if you help them get something they want. You might worsen the disposition of others if you help their rivals or enemies, if you claim something they wanted, or if you do something that causes problems for them.

Noting the **desire** of a zone (whether it represents a person or group) works alongside this. Much like a PC's Ambition (see **Characters** chapter), this represents what that person or that group wants to achieve or obtain. This both guides the actions of that person or group (it's a roleplaying prompt for the GM), and is something valuable for the PCs to learn, because it allows them to influence that person or group more easily. A desire should be a short statement of intent and it doesn't have any numerical value.

ASSETS: TRADE AND SECRETS

The assets used in intrigue typically things which can be used or traded to gain an advantage or exert influence. Many of these assets will be intangible, representing information learned or rumors circulated (and the potential for extortion, knowledge trading, and similar), while tangible assets may represent valuable items such as precious goods, raw materials, land, or hard evidence. However, as you will rarely have those items on your person, the difference between tangible and intangible assets is far less meaningful in intrigue, and you may wish to use this to your advantage by creating intangible assets that represent things you *claim* to possess.

Moving an intrigue asset into another zone allows you to confront that person with the asset, perhaps to offer it as a gift, to propose a trade, or to try and threaten or coerce them. The asset is considered to be leverage, which allows you to influence someone else, whether positively (the ability to help that person), negatively (the ability to harm that person or take something from them), or through the status quo (appealing to social standards and norms, religious beliefs, or the target's reputation).

- **Knowledge** is the basic currency of intrigue. Knowing something your opponents don't gives you power, especially if you know things *about* your opponents that they don't want known. Trading secrets can be a useful way to gain influence.
- **Rumors and lies** are similar to knowledge, but fake. They are easy to create and can be powerful if well-used... but they're also risky. Finding a rumor and assuming that it's true can lead to mistakes, while spreading lies which are found to be false can worsen the disposition of others. Rumors and lies always appear like knowledge when first encountered, but they can be investigated to determine if they are true.
- **Valuables** are physical items of worth. Money, manufactured goods, precious materials (and any useful material is precious if you have enough of it), land, population, ships, mercenaries, and anything else which has both physical presence and worth. Contracts—such as trade deals, agreements with other parties, and similar sources of potential wealth—can also be considered valuables. Valuables are often traded for other things, either other valuables, or for knowledge.

ACTIONS IN INTRIGUE

Below provides some guidance on a number of common actions you're likely to attempt—or have attempted against you—during intrigue scenes. These are all explained in the **Conflict Overview**, but here we've provided some context that is specific to intrigue for how to use and interpret those actions.

Movement

Assets in intrigue are sources of leverage and things which can be traded to gain an advantage during social interactions. Moving an asset to a character's zone represents putting that leverage or those valuables into a position where they can be used; mentioning or alluding to knowledge you have or resources you possess in conversation.

- Moving assets in intrigue is relatively uncomplicated, as any character you can talk to directly (or any group where you can speak to a representative) counts as an adjacent zone you can move assets into.
- Moving an asset **subtly** can represent using innuendo, subtlety, and implication to bring that asset into the conversation, creating a situation where your opponent may not know what you're implying until it's too late.
- Moving an asset **boldly** is the use of direct, forceful language and mannerisms to bring the asset into the conversation, with the intent of compelling an immediate, hasty response from your opponent.

Attacks

Direct attacks should be relatively rare in intrigue, but where they represent physical attacks in other forms of conflict, they represent a social attack in intrigue: an attempt to diminish or destroy someone's social influence in order to prevent them from meaningfully taking part in the intrigue.

5. When you make an attack, choose the asset you're using to attack, and the character you wish to attack. Also describe *how* you're attacking the target. The attack doesn't always require interacting with the character directly; rather, it can represent a concerted effort to shame and disgrace the target character, often by spreading rumors, revealing unpleasant information about them, or attempting to provoke a disgraceful act from the target. It may also represent blackmailing the target to get them to back down willingly, or it may be a process of undermining the target's resources and the sources of their influence.

6. Make a **contest** against your target. This will normally be a Communicate skill test for you, to get close enough to strike; your opponent may use Awareness or Communicate in response.
 - a. If you win the contest, then you successfully attack the enemy.
 - b. If you lose the contest, then your attack has failed, and the action ends. You may not *keep the initiative* after this. It may be that the target seeks to avenge such a slight, which could include a challenge to single combat if they are of a militant inclination.
7. If you successfully attacked, then the outcome depends on the type of enemy.
 - a. If the enemy is a Minor NPC or Minor Supporting Character, then they are **defeated**.
 - b. If the enemy is a Notable or Major NPC, a Notable Supporting Character, or a Main Player Character, then defeating them is an **extended task**. In intrigue, each character has an extended task track with a requirement equal to their Discipline skill. Each successful attack against a character scores points towards that extended task equal to 2 plus the attacking asset's Potency, and you may add +1 to this by spending 2 Momentum. A character is defeated when their track is full.
8. If you defeated an opponent, then you may spend 2 Momentum to inflict a lasting defeat.

A character defeated in intrigue simply departs the scene; they may leave voluntarily, or be forcibly ejected, but either way, they are no longer present to participate in the scene.

A lasting defeat involves the loss of social standing, a lasting impact upon the character's reputation, a disgrace or dishonor that will be talked about at social events for a considerable time, and perhaps even having influence and power taken from them by their betters.

Targeting Assets

It can be useful to try and undermine the assets of your opponent during an intrigue scene. This involves challenging the truth of information, casting doubt upon the provenance or worth of resources and other valuables, and similar means of rendering an asset ineffective.

- Knowledge assets can be tricky to target, unless you have access to information which appears to contradict that knowledge, or some way to cast doubt upon the validity or worth of that knowledge. Once doubt has been established, the leverage of knowledge is greatly diminished, but it can be recovered if the information can be properly verified by a trusted source.
- Lies and rumors are similar to knowledge, but easier to produce and easier to remove, as they have little or no basis in truth to begin with. Once sufficient doubt has been cast upon a lie or rumor asset, it loses any potency it had.
- Valuables can be difficult to target, as the asset represents items with actual physical presence and real worth. As with knowledge, casting doubt upon the real worth of a valuable is possible—are these art items real or fake, do you have as much of this mineral as you claim, etc.—but often more effective is demonstrating that there is no need or demand for those valuables. A shipment of rare raw materials is less useful as leverage against a person who has no need for those materials, or who can obtain those materials more cheaply elsewhere.

Creating a Trait or Asset

Creating traits can help shape the landscape in intrigue, creating options, opportunities, and connections that may not have existed before.

- A trait created may lay the groundwork for other actions later, such as establishing a good rapport with a character you may wish to deal with later, or a falsehood that you've managed to convince someone else to believe.
- Tangible assets are difficult to create in intrigue, but it is entirely possible to pass them between characters; obtaining an asset from another party within the scene to use for your own purposes can be quite useful, but you may have to give something up to achieve that.
- Intangible assets are most commonly lies and rumors, including lies about what valuables or knowledge you possess; these are easy to create, but easy to destroy as well, and it is potentially dangerous to lean too heavily on deceit to achieve your goals in intrigue, as it can result in many resentful people who regard you as a cheat and a liar.

Overcoming An Obstacle

Obstacles in intrigue are not typically physical obstructions so much as social or political ones. Secretive or isolated factions may be difficult or impossible to reach under normal circumstances, even if connections exist.

Overcoming such obstacles typically requires work establishing legitimate—or seemingly-legitimate—reasons for access, such as proving yourself worthy or useful to an isolated group who shun outsiders, obtaining letters of introduction or some other reason to reach a reclusive but powerful individual.

These typically require Communicate or Understand tests, but tests of worth may require Fight, Move, or Discipline tests depending on the nature of the group you're seeking to access.

Gaining Information

Information is valuable in intrigue, so naturally this is an action that will be undertaken frequently during intrigue scenes.

Most characters in an intrigue scene will be fairly guarded about their goals and their feelings, seeking to maintain a mask of neutrality where their true intent cannot be easily guessed. As noted above, characters in an intrigue scene will have dispositions—how they feel about other characters—and desires—what they wish to gain—which will guide their actions, but most will keep those secret.

So, gaining information about who wants what, and who likes or dislikes whom, can be an invaluable part of an intrigue, as you cannot easily get what *you* want unless you can navigate these social battlefields. This normally involves observation and asking around, trying to glean information from other people. Some may give up small amounts of information freely, while others may be more forthcoming but only if they get something in return, and some information can be obtained simply by standing back and observing proceedings (this is, in fact, an ability that many Bene Gesserit master, allowing them to discern subtle details from signs that most wouldn't even notice)

Learning the dispositions of another character is relatively straightforward, requiring only Momentum to be spent to obtain information (one question lets you ask the disposition of one character towards a single other character). Learning desires is a longer process.

Discovering the desire of a character is an **extended task**, with a requirement equal to that character's Discipline. Overcoming that extended task reveals the target character's desire. Each successful attempt to gather information scores points towards that requirement equal to your Understand minus two. You may spend 2 Momentum to add +1 to the number of points scored.

INVESTIGATING INTRIGUES AND ESPIONAGE

Once the gamemaster has created a map of any intrigue, spy ring or smuggler operation, it is up to the player characters to uncover it. They don't always just get handed a map of all the zones, they have to earn it! Usually the player characters will discover an intrigue by chance, having crossed the wrong person in a bar or run foul of a local power broker. But this gives them a place to start.

When the player characters encounter what looks like a larger operation they should begin drawing their own map, starting with the place, person or asset that represents the zone they have first encountered. From there they can investigate that zone to see if it has any connections and where those connections lead. Using gather information they can gradually build up their map until it matches the gamemaster's. They might also start conflicts to uncover new parts of the conspiracy but that will ensure the conspiracy knows they are investigating.

What is important to note is that at no point can they be absolutely sure they have uncovered every zone in the conspiracy. Not finding any further connections isn't proof they aren't there. The player characters might follow a single path through the map to the conspiracy kingpin and take them down. But if they missed a minor connection, some of that intrigue remains and might replace and rebuild the operation.

Investigating an intrigue is a subtle task. It is unwise for the player characters to start knocking heads before they have figured out how far the conspiracy goes. Once they have initiated a conflict with the conspiracy they have shown their hand. So tests to uncover each zone should be quite difficult as the player characters won't want to be noticed. They will be watching and following suspects rather than abducting and questioning them. In all cases the gamemaster should ask them how they are getting the information and how they plan to investigate. Add some role-play and description rather than just make a roll and draw a new zone. How are they making an approach? Who is going in to investigate? What sort of cover story are they using? If they are too forthright they may arouse suspicion and force a conflict before they are ready to engage with the conspiracy. Remember as well that just taking down the leader is rarely the end of the intrigue. If there is power (or spice) to be claimed, the whole operation will have to be uncovered and dealt with or new leaders will rise to continue the work.

DESERTFALL

The following should only be read by the gamemaster, who should take time to fully read the adventure before they run this game. The gamemaster should be as familiar with the rules as possible, though the players are welcome, even encouraged, to read the rules and system beforehand as well.

PRELUDE

On Caladan, the homeworld of House Atreides, the household is in a form of organized chaos. The news has broken to the staff, soldiers, and retainers that House Atreides is to take over the spice mining operation from their old enemies, House Harkonnen. However, it is for the noble family to worry about the politics and dangers that might await on Arrakis. For the player characters, there is much to be done to move the entire household to another planet. With only a few weeks to prepare, the contents of every room in the castle must be itemized, recorded, and packed. Every member of the Atreides staff has been drafted in to help. It is so busy that the player characters are grateful for the break when they are summoned to meet with Duke Leto himself.

The Duke's office is comfortable and hospitable, unlike the serious expression on the face of his trusted Mentat advisor, Thufir Hawat. The Duke welcomes the player characters and tells them that he has a mission for them on Arrakis.

The situation on Arrakis is currently in flux. Technically, the Atreides are now in control of the planet. However, the Emperor has insisted that spice production cannot be interrupted, and so House Harkonnen has been allowed to continue to manage spice production until the Atreides arrive. The Harkonnens are currently running the operation from the city of Carthag, but the Atreides are reestablishing the old Residency in the city of Arrakeen as their base. While this should keep clashes to a minimum, the Duke expects the Harkonnens to leave a few "surprises" waiting for them. The longer the Atreides take to get to Arrakis, the more time the Harkonnens have to plant traps and sabotage spice production to make the Atreides look incompetent when they take over.

The Duke charges the player characters to travel ahead of their House and take an initial assessment of the Residency at Arrakeen where the Atreides family will stay. The Duke makes it sound as if the assignment is only a formality, but it is clear that he fears for the safety of his family and he is looking to take every precaution.

Being exceptionally busy, Duke Leto leaves the rest of the briefing to Thufir Hawat. Even more serious than Duke Leto, Hawat underlines the fact that the lives of the noble family may be in the hands of the player characters. Failure is unacceptable. He tells the player characters that they are being provided with a cover story to assuage any suspicions that they are anything more than junior staff of the Atreides household. However, he warns that enemy agents are not so naïve. The player characters need to watch their backs, as the whole Residency could be riddled with Harkonnen agents.

The mission is simple. Investigate the Arrakeen Residency and root out any spies, traps, and assassins hidden there. As the Atreides cannot lose any time before taking over spice production, the player characters have only five days when they land on Arrakis before the Duke and his family

arrive. If they fail in their mission Duke Leto, Lady Jessica and their son Paul may all be in danger. The player characters are taking passage on a Guild Heighliner in two days' time, travelling as minor members of House Atreides. Their cover stories are:

Sharah Fell is the leader of the group, charged with making sure that all the mining documents are in order and ready for Thufir Hawat to look over when he arrives.

Hassan Diago has been tasked to take stock of the Residency servants and make sure there are enough to cope with the arrival of House Atreides at the level of professionalism they will expect.

Anna Margrave is a handmaid of the Lady Jessica. As such, she is there to ensure that Lady Jessica and the rest of the noble family have everything they need as they would want it.

Marcus Syn is officially and unofficially a bodyguard entrusted to protect the rest of the group.

Corbin Bralik has been brought in as a guide to help the group find their way around Arrakeen.

Talia Carell is a mere all-purpose servant just in case they need to lift anything heavy!

The player characters have a day to prepare for the mission before a Heighliner is due to arrive at Caladan. The gamemaster should ask each of them how they plan to prepare. They might read up on spice production or customs on Arrakis, or continue to train and sharpen their skills. If they choose the latter, the gamemaster may make them make some appropriate skill tests to represent these exercises to get everyone used to rolling dice and using the system. The player characters might even play out a combat sparing with each other (using non-lethal weapons).

Eventually, it is time to depart and the player characters board a standard Spacing Guild shuttlecraft that takes them to the vast Guild Heighliner in orbit around Caladan. After a few hours for the passengers to embark, the Heighliner enters foldspace. After several similar jumps to other destinations on the route, the Heighliner arrives in orbit around the bleached bronze planet of Arrakis.

ACT 1: ARRIVAL ON ARRAKIS

The player characters arrive at the Arrakeen spaceport on a Spacing Guild shuttle with all manner of other passengers. Most of the other passengers are looking to make new lives as spice miners. Some of the wealthier passengers are returning to their business or looking to trade in spice or water. Almost every passenger balks for a moment as they step off the shuttle into the dry heat of Arrakis. Most scurry to get inside and out of the sun as quickly as they can.

Each player should take a moment to describe how their character reacts to the stifling heat, sand, dust, and burning midday sun. They might also mention one thing they notice about arriving on Arrakis and coming into the nearby Arrakeen market. Those who have read a little about Arrakeen note that they can see the Residency from the landing area, as it is one of the tallest buildings in the city.

WELCOMING COMMITTEE

The player characters are met at the spaceport (little more than a huge courtyard for a Guild shuttle) by one of the Residency servants. Her name is Mara Naseel, a middle-aged woman who has worked at the Residency since she was a young woman and now serves as the second in command to the Housekeeper (Shadout Mapes, who is currently busy). As one of the head servants, Mara feels that

she has to meet the new arrivals, but has plenty of more important things that she'd rather be doing.

Mara greets the player characters tersely but pleasantly and introduces herself, saying she is here to conduct them to the Residency. She also tells them that it is expected that outlanders bring water upon entering the Residency. A successful Communicate test (Difficulty 2) reveals this is partly a lie, but that she is also serious. There is no tradition, but (as a Fremen) Mara wants to see that the player characters treat water seriously.

If the Communicate test achieves 3 successes, it is apparent that Mara **may** actually be one of the Fremen. It is common knowledge that a few desert Fremen mingle with the pyons, the native city folk of Arrakeen, but that they rarely reveal their true identities.

Which Belief?

As this is the first 'proper' test required for the adventure, it is a good opportunity to assist the gamemaster with a little guidance with which beliefs the players might use.

- **Duty** is for characters that feel they are in charge of the group and that it is their responsibility to check everyone out as a potential enemy.
- **Faith** is for characters concerned for their friends in this new environment, or who wish to gauge if Mara is a woman of faith herself.
- **Justice** is for characters who suspect Mara is more than she appears and might be trying to trick them
- **Power** is for characters who want to underline to this servant who is in charge.
- **Truth** is for characters who think nothing might be quite as it seems and want to dig a little deeper than the surface.

Unless one of the player characters has thought to mention it when leaving the shuttle, they have not brought any water with them. While the player characters have been told Arrakis is a desert world, they have been used to having such basic needs provided. Mara is surprised if any of them did think to bring water as she is used to privileged offworlders not understanding its importance. So, she suggests they visit the market on the way to the Residency.

If anyone did think to mention water and bring some (perhaps by studying up on Arrakis before arrival), Mara is impressed that they thought ahead. But she still suggests they buy water in the market as a gift for the Residency, claiming "The water of Arrakis is more precious than any in the universe."

If they have brought water, the player characters may be tempted to offer Mara some to impress her. This has the opposite effect. Doing so suggests that she is not responsible for her own water and must rely on others, quite an insult to a Fremen (or any other inhabitant of Arrakis). It also marks the Atreides envoys as soft fools to part with water so freely. However, if the player characters can make a successful Communicate roll she forgives the insult as a simple cultural misunderstanding.

Mara Naseel (Notable Supporting Character)

Traits: Fremen, Housekeeper

Belief	Score	Statement	Skill	Score	Focuses
Duty	6		Battle	5	

Faith	7	The desert provides the faithful with what they need.	Communicate	6	Listening
Justice	5		Discipline	7	Self-control, Desert Survival
Power	5		Move	4	
Truth	5		Understand	5	

Talents: Direct

Assets: Crysknife, Servant of the Residency

ARRAKEEN MARKET

If the player characters have not brought water, they need to buy some in the market on the way to the Residency. If they did, they may still buy some water as a gesture to gift to the Residency supply.

The Arrakeen market is nestled in a huge courtyard, under the vast shadow of the Arrakeen shield wall. The market is a mixture of smells and colors, a crowded and noisy street bazaar of many stalls and traders hawking their wares. Chief among these wares is water, and water sellers are everywhere. The player characters should use Understand tests (Difficulty 2) to figure out which trader looks the most honest and Communicate tests (Difficulty 1) to get a good deal.

There is no need for currency assets to change hands; the player characters have more than enough cash to purchase water. The question is whether they get a good deal by making a successful test. If they do, Mara is impressed. If not, they confirm her suspicions that outlanders are fools.

To grant some character to the water sellers, the gamemaster might use any or all as example non-player characters:

- **Manan**, a wealthy water merchant who loves to flaunt his wealth and over charge his customers.
- **Binda**, an old lady who sells water as a sideline and loves to gossip with her customers.
- **Nia**, who is a low-grade informant for House Harkonnen and on the lookout for secrets.

Depending on how they do, the player characters either impress or annoy Mara. This can make her a helpful ally, but otherwise leads her to do her best to ignore them. However, she is loyal to her employers, so the player characters would have to be especially insulting to make an enemy of her.

WATER BANDITS

Having bought water, Mara leads the player characters through the narrow streets of Arrakeen towards the Residency. She eventually takes them down a very narrow shortcut. Unfortunately, it turns out to be a great place for an ambush. A group of ragged looking criminals slip out of the shadows and demand the player characters hand over their water.

Each of the bandits is armed with a knife, and there is one for each player character. Ideally this is an opportunity for an exciting knife fight, although some cunning player characters may manage to talk, bluff, or intimidate their way out of it. The gamemaster should give them a chance to do so before Mara attacks. As a Fremen, she is incensed that someone should try and steal water from her and those in her care. If it looks like no blood will be spilled, she draws her crysknife and attacks!

If the player characters do dive into combat, Mara steps back and observes (unless they get in real trouble). She does not want to reveal her crysknife unless necessary and combat shows her the measure of the player characters.

This conflict is a simple skirmish, with the player characters and bandits all in the same zone (unless the gamemaster is confident of the rules and fancies complicating the environment). A successful test against any bandit kills them. However, bandits might be taken alive if they are given an opportunity to surrender, such as if the fight looks hopeless for them. Trying to take a bandit alive increases the Difficulty by 1.

Not all the player characters have an available asset to use in the fight, making them unable to engage in the combat. However, if they can suggest a way they might arm themselves (such as picking up a rock or broken bottle, or later taking a knife from a defeated bandit) they then have the asset they need to engage in the combat. The same applies for any form of conflict where an asset is required.

The bandits are making the attack simply because the player characters appear to be wealthy and new to the city. They're not out to kill, just to steal from the newcomers. However, the player characters may wonder if Mara has led them here and the situation is more than simple coincidence...

Water Bandits (Minor Supporting Characters)

Traits: Criminal

Quality: 6 (use for all Beliefs)

Skill	Score	Focuses
Battle	6	Knife Fighting
Communicate	4	
Discipline	5	
Move	5	
Understand	4	

After the fight, the player characters see a few of the locals have arrived and are looking towards any dead bodies. Mara nods to someone before the player characters leave, granting permission for the locals to take the bandits' water (using a death still). The player characters can claim the water and the bodies if they wish. But as the bandits were part of the local community, Mara does not think it right that the community doesn't get their water back.

ACT 2 – THE RESIDENCY

After the fight, the player characters reach the Residency without any further trouble. Any other bandits or troublemakers think twice before attacking given the fate of the water bandits.

The Residency is situated in the center of Arrakeen. While old, it is in good condition. It is a huge ziggurat whose angled sandblasted walls remain strong to this day.

For the purposes of investigation, the Residency can be divided into several zones:

Main Foyer – A grand open space designed to impress and/or intimidate guests. Stairs and doorways lead from here into most other areas of the Residency.

Main Ballroom – Another vast and open space where balls and large dinner parties can take place. The area has several arches and nooks where meetings might take place and is overlooked by a balcony.

Kitchen – A vast yet cramped area full of tables, stoves, and cooking facilities on the ground floor. The heat is oppressive here when the stoves are on as the air conditioning is barely adequate.

Linen Room – Connected to the kitchen, this room is where all the Residency linens, bedsheets, and clothes are washed and stored. This area is a maze of towels, bedsheets, and clothes hung out to dry in this sealed room. A water extractor in the ceiling collects evaporating moisture for the Residency tanks.

Servant's Quarters – Each servant has their own small room (although they share two communal bathrooms) in one of the upper floors of the Residency. The area is sparse but well-kept and accessed by several stairs to allow the servants to move about the Residency without crossing the guest areas. Any soldiers assigned to the Residency guard are quartered here as well (although none at the moment).

Basement – The large basement of the Residency is used for storage and contains the vast Residency shield generator. With no important guests in residence, the shield is currently shut down. This area has several cot beds where additional soldiers can be barracked if needs be.

Resident Bedrooms – The top floor (with the best views) and most of the upper floors contain private rooms for the residents and guests. Each suite has a bedroom, sitting room, and bathroom facilities.

The servants are mostly native Arrakeen city folk, with a few outlanders who were not born on Arrakis but came looking for work. A few Fremen have infiltrated the staff, as the Residency is a good place to observe Arrakeen and the actions of any visiting nobles. The servants have kept the place well and everything appears in order. As the Harkonnen rule Arrakis from the nearby city of Carthag, the Residency has been most recently occupied by Count Fenring as the Imperial observer. But he and his household have moved to Carthag to oversee the changeover (after which Fenring and his wife plan to return to the Imperial Court on Kaitain).

So, to many, the Residency is more a historical site than a place of government. However, the Atrides have chosen to rule from Arrakeen as the Harkonnen are so entrenched in Carthag that few people there can be trusted. Arrakeen is considered by most to be a little backwards and less civilized than Carthag. However, the same 'provincial' nature that makes Arrakeen so abhorrent to the Harkonnen is quite attractive to the less industrial Atrides.

Once they arrive at the Residency, the player characters can settle in and start seeing to their "official" duties. The Residency is vast, with easily enough rooms for the noble family, all their entourage, and several guests. While the player characters are unofficially here to check for traps, poisons, and assassins before the noble family arrive, they each have another task as detailed previously. While many servants (and especially the enemy agents) can probably guess their true purpose, most of the staff take the player characters at face value. It is not the servants' place to start challenging the motives of any of the Atrides anyway.

In this section, the player characters are free to explore the Residency and interview the staff as they like. They might just choose to get on with their cover missions and see what happens. Or they can start sneaking around the Residency looking for clues. Following are descriptions of the various members of staff and the enemy agents.

THE ENEMY AGENT

Shalla Durain – Shalla is a Harkonnen agent, in deep cover as a housemaid. She joined the household just under a year ago, serving under Count Fenring, and has been a good employee ever since. She was placed here as a form of sleeper agent and has recently received her orders to kill as many Atreides as possible. As she has been here awhile, she plans to kill a few of the player characters and then wait for more Atreides to arrive. She would rather die than allow herself to be taken prisoner, as she might reveal some of her still active traps under interrogation. She might also “confess” that she is working for Count Fenring, to throw suspicion away from the truth that she is a Harkonnen agent.

THE HOUSEHOLD STAFF

While the only two servants who really matter are the agents, having names and details for only those two characters is a dead giveaway to the player characters looking for them. Following are details for the other Residency servants, so as to not make the villains so obvious. Some carry a few secrets of their own that make them suspicious and provide a few red herrings and sub-plots for the player characters.

At some point the player characters should interview some or all the staff. Some have secrets they only reveal under interrogation. Others may have an accusation they make if the player characters talk to them alone. Many of these secrets only confuse the investigation, but some are actually clues.

Shadout Mapes (Fremen Housekeeper, age 62) – Mapes is the official head of the Residency servants. However, she leaves much of the running of the household to Mara, as she is often away from the Residency. As the Residency is currently officially unoccupied, it only has a skeleton staff. To serve House Atreides, they need a lot of new staff, for which Mapes is recruiting and checking across Arrakeen.

Additionally, Mapes is an agent of the deep desert Fremen. As such, her main mission is to watch the Atreides and determine if they can be trusted. She considers this a holy mission as there are rumors that Paul Atreides may be the one foretold in several prophecies.

Mara Naseel (Fremen Head Housemaid, age 57) – Mara oversees the housemaids and serves as a second in command to Mapes. When Mapes is away, she is the keeper of all keys and lock combinations. While very skilled in all the household tasks, she does few of them, except to teach lazy servants how things should be done. Her main responsibility is serving as an administrator and bookkeeper for the house, as Mapes has little interest in paperwork. She presents any written records on request.

If taken into the player characters' confidence, Mara tells them that no Fremen could be a Harkonnen agent as 'she would know about it'. As a head of the household, she also points out that it is her right to do any killing that needs to be done (which may make her a prime suspect). She mentions that she will kill any Fremen who has betrayed their word to serve this house.

Basha (City Folk Cook, age 48) – A rather lazy woman who has gotten used to only cooking for the household staff. She resents that she will be busy when a full noble family arrives to stay. She tends to cook very spicy food, as she can handle spice that would floor an elephant and finds plainer dishes rather bland. Basha thinks all the other staff are lazy, but this is mainly because they refuse to do her work for her. She doesn't think any of them are enemy agents.

Housemaids

The female servants are generally charged with laundry and cleaning. They also take turns to help in the kitchen and serve at dinner. There are seven in total, one is Fremen, three are City Folk, and the remaining three are from offworld who came looking for work some time ago.

Pasha (Outlander, age 22) – The most recent recruit, who is rather sullen and difficult to befriend. Her surly attitude might make the player characters suspicious of her. She is having an affair with Chakir the footman, even though she knows that he is also seeing Uhuru. Chakir ends both relationships if word gets out, so Pasha is keeping this secret and seeking other ways to remove her rival.

Aisha (Outlander, age 47) - Always thinking she knows better than anyone else, she enjoys chatting and sharing news. Aisha is popular among the servants, but dislikes anyone who isn't interested in being part of the group. She might accuse Pasha as an agent for no better reason than she keeps to herself.

Sefa (Fremen, age 38) – Constantly complaining that she does all the real work, and not entirely wrong about that either. Sefa often tidies up after servants who have not done their work properly. As such, she is often in places people do not expect her to be. She has overheard Chakir talking furtively with at least two of the younger women (not sure which). Sefa is more forthcoming with her information as she wants to deflect anyone from investigating her. She killed an outlander in a fight over water a few days ago and she has so far evaded the authorities.

Shalla (Outlander, age 25) – A hardworking girl who gets on reasonably well with the other servants. She is an assassin agent of House Harkonnen. She suggests that Chakir is an enemy agent if cornered, not only to evade suspicion, but also because he offended her when he rather bluntly propositioned her a while ago.

Talora (City Folk, age 52) – Longest working servant here, Talora believes herself second in command to Mara, but Talora is the only one who does. She is generally rather critical of the younger servants. This is especially true of Uhuru, who Talora believes is having an affair with someone she shouldn't (but doesn't know it is Chakir or that he is cheating on her). However, she also tells the player characters to talk to Sefa, as she seems to see more than most.

Uhuru (City Folk, age 22) – Youngest servant who gets most of the worst jobs. She is very pretty, which means she gets a lot of attention from men (something she feels is both good and bad). She is in a relationship with Chakir that she badly wants to talk about. Yet he has convinced her that they will lose their jobs if anyone finds out (which is a lie). She does not get on well with Pasha, who she feels victimizes her at every opportunity. This is true, as Pasha is her rival for Chakir, although she doesn't know.

Wisal (City Folk, age 36) – Quiet and serious, dedicated to the Fremen faith. So much so that Mapes is considering allowing her to join her tribe. Wisal is a 'red herring', as her dedication to her faith has made her feel guilty about a lot of quite innocent things. She seems sneaky and might be caught

spying on anyone at the Residency. However, this is because Mapes has recruited her to 'watch for the one', as the Fremmen believe the new Atreides regime may bring the messiah they are waiting for.

Footmen

The four male servants are mostly used for heavy lifting and building repairs. They are also used to serve at dinner on occasion. While not combat trained, they are also expected to act as bodyguards and porters to any nobles they accompany into town.

Korah (Outlander, age 37) – The largest of the servants, often considered a little stupid because of his size, but is actually quite intelligent. Korah is in love with Uhuru but hasn't plucked up the courage to tell her. If he discovers Chakir is in a relationship with her, he becomes disappointed. If he finds out Chakir has been two-timing her, he gets very angry and may get into a fight with Chakir (which does not go well for Chakir).

Arvio (City Folk, age 32) – Lazy and shiftless, he avoids doing as much as possible. Arvio is a dreadful servant but manages to look busy when Mapes or Mara are about. He is another red herring as he owes a lot of money to some shady characters having built up some gambling debts. He may try to play cards with the player characters in the hopes he can scam some cash from an easy mark. Otherwise, his shady contacts might make the player characters suspicious.

Chakir (City Folk, age 25) – Rather attractive and secretly in a relationship with both Pasha and Uhuru. Being a somewhat arrogant and selfish person, Chakir rather enjoys being secretly involved with two women. However, it is a situation that cannot last, and Uhuru will be deeply hurt to discover Chakir is not being faithful to her. While Pasha knows about the other relationship, it will upset her to discover Chakir has no real interest in her beyond their sexual relationship.

Chakir is also in trouble if Korah finds out he's been cheating on Uhuru, who Korah has a crush on. Chakir also made a rather unpleasant pass at Shalla recently (wrongfully under the impression that no woman could resist him) but he denies it if asked as he knows he was being rude to her. Given how many secrets he is keeping, the player characters might pick up that Chakir is lying and believe he is hiding more than he is.

INVESTIGATIONS

The player characters are free to wander the Residency and look for clues in any order they like. The gamemaster should remind the players that their characters have only five days to make sure the Residency is safe.

Following are some of the sort of investigations they might attempt.

Investigating the Staff

There are two potential ways the player characters might learn more about what is going on from the staff. The first is to take them each into a room separately and interrogate them. While they have every right to do so, it isn't the most subtle approach. Once such a witch hunt begins, some staff may try to run away out of fear, and the actual agent escalates their plan and tries to kill the player characters.

So, the best option is to quietly chat to each of the staff and see what they can learn. This can be done quite casually and requires a Communicate test. This test allows the player character to build up Momentum, which they can use to interview the suspect. For the spend of 1 Momentum the player can ask the gamemaster a question about the interviewee, or even directly to them, and expect a truthful answer.

The Difficulty of the test depends on how they approach the person in question. A casual conversation is only Difficulty 0, but if the player character attempts to intimidate or interrogate the subject the Difficulty is 1. The gamemaster should also add 1 (or even 2) to the Difficulty if the player characters have been aggressive or abusive to any of the staff, or made threats against their lives or jobs.

The gamemaster need not give things away too easily. No one is going to answer the question “Are you a secret assassin?” without dissembling. At the same time, the gamemaster should allow a few clues to slip past if the player characters ask the right questions to the right person. In this way the potential guilty party might reveal any of their secrets.

The player characters should pick up enough information to decide who they should keep an eye on or investigate further, building a short list of suspects.

The Mining Files

These are held in an office in the Residency. As there is currently no ‘lord or lady’ in residence, the office is not officially in use. However, Mara Naseel often uses it as a convenient place to do household accounts. She saw to it the mining reports were delivered here and placed in the safe. She is the only person in the house with the combination.

Upon investigating the reports, a player character can make an Understand test (Difficulty 1) to notice some files are missing. The missing files are essentially summaries of the operation rather than anything specific. All the information they contain should be in the other reports. The reports show spice production is good, but corners are being cut to maximize profits. This is harming production, as low pay and bad conditions are making the workers less productive.

The summaries were stolen by Shalla, so she could pass them on to the Harkonnen. While the Harkonnens have most of this information, they want to know what is being passed to the Atreides. Shalla used a small safecracking device that she has hidden in Aisha's room along with the plans to divert suspicion.

In terms of suspects, two servants regularly clean this room (Pasha and Aisha) and Pasha might mention that Shalla swapped shifts with her a few days ago so she could run some errands in Arrakeen. Shalla's story is watertight, but this was also when she stole the mining files.

Deadly Traps

The player characters might decide to look over the various rooms that have been earmarked for the Atreides family. Some of the player characters have an official remit to make sure the rooms are as the nobles would want them. However, it is also their unofficial task to ensure the rooms are safe.

Shalla is mainly hoping to get close to an Atreides and assassinate them. However, she has prepared traps in the rooms set aside for Duke Leto (and Lady Jessica) and Paul Atreides. Each room has the same trap installed in the glowglobes above the bed. Anyone lying in the bed for over an hour springs the trap, a shower of poison needles that scatter over anyone in the bed.

Searching each room requires an Understand or Discipline test at Difficulty 3 to find the trap. If the player character in question only manages to make Difficulty 2 (or rolls a complication) they set off the trap. Evading it requires a Move test at Difficulty 2. Failure to evade the trap means that the player character suffers the effects of a deadly poison. They pass out for the rest of the day and die if not given medical attention. For a week after they awaken, they gain the negative trait ‘poisoned’, as

they are weak and find it hard to concentrate. Any non-player character triggering the trap is killed almost instantly.

If the player characters don't think to search the rooms or they are not being as proactive as the gamemaster would like, Chakir and Pasha decide to secretly spend the night in the Ducal bedroom to spice up their relationship. They set off the trap and are found dead in the morning. This not only uncovers their affair, but also proves embarrassing to the player characters, given the victims might easily have been Duke Leto and Lady Jessica.

The Residency Shield

While it is not part of their official remit, the player characters might investigate the Residency shield generator to make sure it is in working order. It is not operating at the moment, as no one important is in residence, and an engineering team is among the next wave of Atreides to make sure it is functional. But it won't hurt for the player characters to take a look beforehand.

The shield generator looks old but serviceable. However, an Understand test at Difficulty 3 shows it has been very cleverly sabotaged. A crossed relay ensures several components will be destroyed if the system is powered up.

If the player characters make a general search of the shield systems room (in the basement), they find a secret workspace where someone is constructing an explosive device. The test to uncover the bomb is a Difficulty 2 Discipline test. The bomb is currently under construction and when finished creates a power feedback through the Residency that causes several moderate explosions across the whole building.

Shalla is the one constructing the bomb. If the player characters can find a way to 'stake out' the area, they may catch her coming down to complete it. However, if her suspicions have been raised, she avoids the basement as she doesn't want to get caught red-handed.

ACT 3 - CONFRONTING THE AGENT

After investigating the inhabitants of the Residency and the place itself, the player characters hopefully have a few suspects to confront. Even if they have failed to uncover any suspects, they should have at least discovered the traps in the bedrooms and the missing mining report summary. It should be clear there is something going on at least.

THE RED HERRINGS

After a string of interviews, the player characters should discover that Chakir, Arvio, Pasha, Shalla, Sefa, and Wisal have something to hide. However, several of these plots have nothing to do with the Harkonnens. The complexities of Chakir's relationships with Pasha and Uhuru, Wasal's religious loyalties, Arvio's debts, and Sefa's crime are worth investigating, but they are not much of a concern for the Atreides. However, dealing with them well earns the trust and respect of the people involved, especially if the player characters choose to keep any confidences they discover. This translates into a Difficulty bonus when dealing with some of them (at the gamemaster's discretion).

Investigating the most suspicious servants leads to the following:

Watching Chakir or Pasha might lead to uncovering the secret relationships. It is up to the player characters what to do with any information they discover, as it has no bearing on their mission. It should be noted that Uhuru actually is in love with Chakir. Pasha is attracted to Chakir, but she is

more in love with taking him from Uhuru. Chakir loves himself more than anyone and mostly enjoys being involved in two affairs.

Following Arvio leads the player characters to a gambling den run by a loan shark called Dulan Tass. How the player characters deal with the situation is up to them. A violent approach may be more than the player characters can handle (Dulan has at least four good bodyguards in his establishment). However, a conversation might lead to the player characters making a valuable underworld contact. Settling Arvio's debt means he owes them, but he won't change his ways. The debt is also too large for the player characters to settle on their own without House funds. They might enter an Intrigue conflict with Dulan to get him to reduce the debt in return for Atreides favor.

If the player characters watch Wisal they find she attends prayer meetings for the most part. If they are really paranoid, this might lead them to think she is some form of religious terrorist. They see Wisal meet Mapes more often than the others and she seems to be reporting to her. If the player characters challenge Wisal or Mapes, they are told to mind their own business. If they force the issue, they might be told what the Fremen are watching for, but the Fremen are very resistant to sharing this information unless the player characters have gained their trust in some way.

Sefa's crime is better hidden, as the body of the outlander she killed has long since been passed through a death still. However, the outlander (Marcus Kharon) had a wife called Sarah who has been trying to follow up on what happened to her missing husband. Her trail has led her to the Residency, as the only clue she has found is that one of its employees, Sefa, was seen arguing with him in the market. The next day her husband didn't return after setting off to look for work and later that day Sarah received a set of water rings (tokens) from an anonymous messenger. Sarah comes to the Residency to try and find out more from Sefa and to cause a scene.

What happened is that Marcus knocked into Sefa when she was collecting water and spilled some of what she had bought. Not understanding the importance of water, he was rather offhanded and rude to her when she demanded recompense. She gave him a day to get the money or water to repay her. But when she found him the next day, he had no money or water, so she reclaimed what she was owed the old way: she killed him. Then she took his body to a Fremen deathstill hidden in Arrakeen, collected the water she was owed and sent the remainder to his wife (in the form of water tokens for the community supply), as that belonged to her by right as next of kin.

Sefa is not ashamed of her actions, as she acted according to Fremen custom. The local authorities (and Sarah) may not see things the same way. The player characters might hand Sefa over to the authorities, help hide her, or let her slip away to live in the desert sietches. While the Atreides are the final authority on Dune, the player characters don't rank highly enough to overrule the local law enforcers, unless they can find a way to convince them that they do.

THE ASSASSIN

If the player characters have made Shalla suspicious, she avoids doing anything that might lead to uncovering her loyalties and behaves the model servant. But if they can watch her surreptitiously enough or make her believe she is not under suspicion she might be caught continuing to build bombs and traps. Staking out the bomb she is building in the basement is a good way to catch her. But the player characters must somehow first put her at her ease. They might do this by confiding to her that they suspect someone else.

Otherwise, Shalla should be the simplest agent to uncover. There are direct clues to her involvement, and if the player characters get close, she may go on the offensive. If they know too

much, she tries to kill them all, one at a time, once she has each of them alone. This should allow the player characters a blatant clue that she is an agent and provides a chance for them to take her down. Note that in any combat where they are trying to take her prisoner versus killing her, the player characters increase their Difficulty by 1, as Shalla has no intention of being taken alive.

If Shalla is captured, she admits that there are Harkonnen agents everywhere, but she doesn't actually know of any. There is little she can reveal, and the player characters have every right to execute her if they see fit.

Shalla Durain (Notable Supporting Character)

Traits: Assassin, Harkonnen

Belief	Score	Statement	Skill	Score	Focuses
Duty	7	I serve the strongest master.	Battle	7	Knife Fighting
Faith	6		Communicate	5	
Justice	5		Discipline	5	
Power	5		Move	6	
Truth	5		Understand	4	Traps

Talents: Bold (Battle)

Assets: Knife, poison, bomb construction materials

EPILOGUE

The adventure ends when the player characters are convinced that they have rooted out the Harkonnen agent, or when five days are up. Rather than telling the player characters they have done so, the gamemaster should ask the players if they now believe the Arrakeen Residency is secure. If they believe they have rooted out all enemy agents, they should then report to Thufir Hawat, telling him it is safe. When they arrive, the Atrides land troops and deploy to fully secure the Residency with an armed force before finally bringing Duke Leto and his family.

Unfortunately, the player characters may be wrong. They may execute the wrong people, and/or fail to discover the real agent. If so, the epilogue may play out with a few surprises for the player characters!

If Shalla remains undiscovered, she becomes less subtle. She sets the timer on the bomb under the Residency to detonate and then tries to kill the player characters in their sleep. They must kill her to stop her, and she dies laughing, saying the Residency is doomed. The player characters either need to evacuate the Residency or search for the bomb which requires an Understand tests at Difficulty 4 to defuse. If they fail to find it, much of the Residency is destroyed.

If the Residency is indeed safe, the adventure then concludes with the player characters being personally thanked by Duke Leto and granted greater status and responsibility as agents of the Atrides. There is much work ahead, however, securing their House's future upon Arrakis.

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS

Sharah Fell – Mentat

Sharah is technically the leader of the group, although as a newly qualified Mentat she has little experience of life outside the training center. She is looking forward to putting her skills to use in the field and proving herself to her new House.

Talia Carell – Criminal

House Atreides rescued Talia from the streets, but she never really left them behind. She has an amazing talent for finding where any troublemakers are in an area. Luckily, she is good at making friends with them, or beating them into submission with her fists.

Hassan Diago – Servant

Hassan has served the Atreides for many years. From the shadows he has learned the rules of noble society and exactly how the nobility does business.

Anna Margrave – Bene Gesserit Novice

Anna is a handmaid to the Lady Jessica, and while not fully qualified as an adept of the Bene Gesserit, she is a skilled agent.

Marcus Syn – Swordmaster Apprentice

Marcus is not quite a master of the blade, but that still puts him ahead of most of the rest. While his training with the Swordmaster of the House is not quite complete, he takes every opportunity to prove his skill with his sword.

Corbin Bralik – Reformed Spice Smuggler

While not Fremen, Corbin has spent most of his life on Arrakis as a spice smuggler, until he crossed the Harkonnens. Upon hearing of the Atreides' move to Arrakis, he offered his services as someone who knows the planet... and the Harkonnens.

SHARAH FELL – MENTAT

You have just left the Mentat School and you are eager to experience life in service to a noble house. You may be a little naïve at times, but your detachment also helps you see every situation with a clarity unclouded with social mores and preconceptions. You find serving alongside a Mentat like Thufir Hawat quite intimidating. You are glad to be assigned somewhere you may prove yourself, out from under his shadow.

Official Agenda: You are on Arrakis to make sure that all the documents for current spice operations are up-to-date and complete for perusal by Duke Leto Atreides and Thufir Hawat.

Traits: Direct and Clinical, Mentat Conditioning

Ambition: To become the leading Mentat of my house.

Belief	Score	Statement	Skill	Score	Focuses
Duty	6	I have a duty to the truth.	Battle	4	
Faith	5		Communicate	6	Innuendo
Justice	8	Justice isn't always fair.	Discipline	7	Command
Power	4		Move	5	
Truth	7	The truth is always eventually revealed.	Understand	6	Data Analysis, Deductive Reasoning

Talents

Cool Under Pressure (Understand)

When you select this talent, choose a single skill. When you attempt a test using that skill, you may spend 1 Determination point to automatically succeed at that test, but you generate no Momentum.

Intense Study

Once per scene, you may Understand instead of using any other skill, and you are counted as having a focus for that test.

Mentat Discipline (Mentat talent)

You score two automatic successes on all Understand tests you attempt, as your mind processes and derives conclusions from the information you have available. In addition, you have exceptional recall, and may spend 1 Momentum to immediately recall any fact or detail you have previously known (asking the gamemaster for a reminder of those details).

Starting Assets

A knife marked with the crest of House Atreides

A Contact within the spice mining community on Arrakis

A shield belt

TALIA CARELL – CRIMINAL

You were rescued from a life on the streets by House Atreides. They gave you a home and had a use for your skills and contacts; in return you gave them your loyalty. While you have learned how to act in more well-to-do company, your instincts have not left you and you are quick to turn to violence when you feel threatened.

Official Agenda: As you are hiding the fact that you have criminal connections, as far as anyone knows you are simply here to fetch and carry as required by the others.

Traits: Dangerous scum, Criminal

Ambition: To run the underworld on Arrakis.

Belief	Score	Statement	Skill	Score	Focuses
Duty	4		Battle	7	Dirty Fighting
Faith	7	I can always rely on myself.	Communicate	6	Intimidation
Justice	5		Discipline	5	
Power	8	Power comes at a knife's edge.	Move	6	Stealth
Truth	6	I make my own truth.	Understand	4	Danger Sense

Talents

Driven

After you spend a point of Determination, roll 1d20. If you roll equal to or under your Discipline rating (by itself), you immediately regain that point of Determination.

Decisive Action

In a conflict, when you Battle successfully to remove an opponent's asset, and you bought one or more dice by generating Threat, you may spend 2 Momentum to remove a second enemy asset.

The Slow Blade

When you make an attack during personal combat using a melee weapon, and you buy one or more dice by spending Momentum, you may choose one of the enemy's assets in the same zone as your attack to ignore during your attack.

Starting Assets

A knife with a poison reservoir

A small gang of criminal thugs who look to you as their leader

A Friend within the Arrakeen underworld

HASSAN DIAGO – SERVANT

You trained and worked hard to become a servant. Working for a noble house is an honor you strive hard to live up to. As a servant, you are often overlooked, granting you the opportunity to observe and overhear many things that House Atreides would find useful. It has also granted you a far better understanding of how to behave among the upper classes than most noble-born.

Official Agenda: You are here to take stock of the current servants and household organization at the Residency. It may be adequate, but that might not be good enough for House Atreides.

Traits: Loyal and Trustworthy, Servant

Ambition: To become a renowned spy for my house.

Belief	Score	Statement	Skill	Score	Focuses
Duty	7	My place is to serve.	Battle	5	
Faith	8	I believe I have chosen the right place to serve.	Communicate	7	Diplomacy
Justice	6	If I serve, I will be rewarded.	Discipline	4	Resolve
Power	5		Move	6	Unobtrusive
Truth	4		Understand	6	Social Awareness

Talents

Advisor (Communicate)

When you choose this talent, select a single skill. Whenever you assist an ally and you use that skill, the ally you assist may re-roll a single d20 in their dice pool.

Cautious (Understand)

When you select this talent, choose a single skill. When you attempt a test using that skill, and you buy additional d20s by spending Momentum, you may re-roll a single d20 in that dice pool.

Subtle Words

Even they may not realize what influence your words have had. When you try to Communicate, and you buy one or more dice by spending Momentum, you may create a new trait for free upon the character you have spoken to, which reflects your influence upon their thoughts or mood.

Starting Assets

A Contact among the servants of Arrakeen (outside the Residency)

A Friend among the merchants of Arrakis

A small group of maids and footmen under your command

ANNA MARGRAVE – BENE GESSERIT NOVICE

You have spent most of your life training among the Sisters of the Bene Gesserit. While their more advanced skills still elude you, your control of your body and ability to observe what is going on around you in minute detail are incredible. While you continue your training, you now serve House Atreides as one of their agents, but do so in the guise of a simple handmaid of the Lady Jessica. You report back to the Sisterhood, but no one expects you to do otherwise.

Official Agenda: As a handmaid, you are here to make sure the family quarters meet the standard they would expect and that all their creature comforts are available at the Residency.

Traits: Quiet and Watchful, Bene Gesserit

Ambition: To become a Reverend Mother.

Belief	Score	Statement	Skill	Score	Focuses
Duty	8	Duty can be owed to many places.	Battle	6	Sneak Attack
Faith	7	The Sisterhood is always behind me.	Communicate	5	Deception
Justice	4		Discipline	6	Self-control
Power	5		Move	4	
Truth	6	The greatest truths are the most well-hidden.	Understand	7	Body Language

Talents

Hyperawareness (Bene Gesserit Talent)

Whenever you spend Momentum to obtain information about the current situation, your current location, or a person you can currently observe, you may ask two questions for each Momentum spent. Further, the limits of what others would be able to notice do not apply to you.

Passive Scrutiny

When you enter a scene, you may ask one question of the gamemaster as if you'd spent Momentum to obtain information.

Prana-Bindu (Bene Gesserit Talent)

Whenever you attempt a test which relies on your control of your body, you score one automatic success. You can perfectly control your breathing, heart rate, and your internal organs (including the ability to choose to conceive a child and determine its sex).

Starting Assets

A deck of Dune Tarot cards

A Contact among the Bene Gesserit Sisters on Arrakis

A small knife that can easily be hidden

MARCUS SYN – SWORDMASTER APPRENTICE

You joined House Atreides as a soldier, hoping to find excitement and adventure. But your skill with a blade singled you out by Duncan Idaho himself. He took you on as an apprentice and you have learned more than you ever thought possible from him. This is your first opportunity to test your skills in the field and you are eager to find out how much you have learned.

Official Agenda: Your reason to be here is straightforward. You are to keep the rest of your party safe. The enemies of House Atreides target anyone loyal to them.

Traits: Impetuous and Cunning, Swordmaster

Ambition: To become the Swordmaster of my house.

Belief	Score	Statement	Skill	Score	Focuses
Duty	6	A blade that serves the wrong master has no honor.	Battle	6	Dueling, Strategy
Faith	4		Communicate	4	
Justice	7	Justice is a keen blade.	Discipline	6	Precision
Power	5		Move	7	Stealth
Truth	8	The truth is always simple.	Understand	5	

Talents

Bold (Battle)

When you select this talent, choose a single skill. When you attempt a test using the chosen skill, and you buy additional d20s by generating Threat for the gamemaster, you may re-roll a single d20 in that dice pool.

Deliberate Motion

When you attempt to Move and suffer one or more complications, you may spend Momentum to ignore some or all of those complications; this costs 1 Momentum per complication ignored.

Make Haste

When you attempt to Move, you may choose to suffer a complication in exchange for scoring one automatic success on the test. During any conflict, you may add 1 to Threat to take the first action, regardless of who would otherwise act first.

Starting Assets

A sword with the House Atreides crest

A shield belt

A Friend among the mercenary community on Arrakis

CORBIN BRALIK – REFORMED SPICE SMUGGLER

You are the only member of the group whose loyalty to House Atreides has not been tested quite yet. You were brought up on Arrakis as part of a spice smuggling family, and it was a good life until the Harkonnens tracked you down. Then everything got bad very fast. You used up every favor to get off the planet and find sanctuary with the Atreides. Unfortunately, it looks like now you are going home again. You really hope that none of the Harkonnens got a good look at you before you ran.

Official Agenda: As a native of Arrakis you are acting (officially and unofficially) as a local guide for the group. What you are keeping secret is your old smuggling career!

Traits: Survivor, Commoner, Smuggler

Ambition: To stay alive long enough to get rich.

Belief	Score	Statement	Skill	Score	Focuses
Duty	6	You must watch out for those who watch your back.	Battle	6	
Faith	5		Communicate	7	Local People, Bartering
Justice	4		Discipline	4	
Power	8	You can only rely on yourself.	Move	6	Escaping
Truth	7	Everything catches up to you in the end.	Understand	5	Spice Smuggling

Talents

Bold (Move)

When you select this talent, choose a single skill. When you attempt a test using the chosen skill, and you buy additional d20s by generating Threat for the gamemaster, you may re-roll a single d20 in that dice pool.

Collaboration (Battle)

When you select this talent, choose a single skill with a rating of 6 or more. Whenever an ally attempts a test using that skill, and you can communicate with them, you may spend 2 Momentum to allow them to use your score for that skill, and one of your focuses (if applicable).

Subtle Words

When you try to Communicate, and you buy one or more dice by spending Momentum, you may create a new trait for free upon the character you have spoken to, which reflects your influence upon their thoughts or mood.

Starting Assets

A small safehouse in Arrakeen

A maula pistol

A contact among the spice smuggler community