



PSYCHEDELIC METAL RPG

SEACAT

L u k a R e j e c

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Sincere thanks to all the heroes who made this booklet possible.

P S Y C H E D E L I C M E T A L R P G

SEACAT

L u k a R e j e c

PLACEH

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HOLDER



PSYCHEDELIC METAL ROLEPLAYING

Introduction

A caravan on a strange long trip through the Ultraviolet Grasslands to find the Black City at the end of the world.

Devotees and deserters build a new life under red skies in the heart of the twitching corpse of the greatest city the world had known.

Half-mad fools ascend into the skies on cobbled-together chariots of fire like the shamans of old to wander the voidways of the sky gods.

Heroes end cities and civilizations and worlds through accidents and inattention, and through it all, creation and invention dance on, a couplet unbound by space and time.

What even makes a hero when the tale is told? Not goodness, perhaps. But excess, yes, indeed.

Moebius' mind-bending bande dessinée *Airtight Garage*. Blue Oyster Cult's evocative *Veteran of the Psychic Wars*. The rambling melange that is the *Heavy Metal* movie. The surreal fantasy of Jodorowsky's *Holy Mountain*. The impressionistic brilliance of Miller's *Fury Road*. The semi-coherence of the Strugatskys' *Roadside Picnic* or VanderMeer's *Annihilation*. The neo-baroque pop metal of *Ghost*.

The shifting realities of new wave science fiction. Psychedelic journeys between inner and outer spaces.

All these inspire and inform Seacat, *le chat de mer*, the roleplaying game of whimsical and capricious worlds, digressing from a single arc, lurching into branching stories, dancing into an act of creation itself. Seacat is self-consciously modernist; impressionist and expressionist by turns, embracing the theatre-of-the-mind and the infinite special effects budget that brings.

May the seacat bless you all with strange tales to laugh over for many days and many years.

—Luka, 2020



CREATING THE HERO

The Hero

“A hero need not be good, but they must be extraordinary and memorable.”
—Ikto XLIII, famously forgettable seer poet of L’Isle Parasol

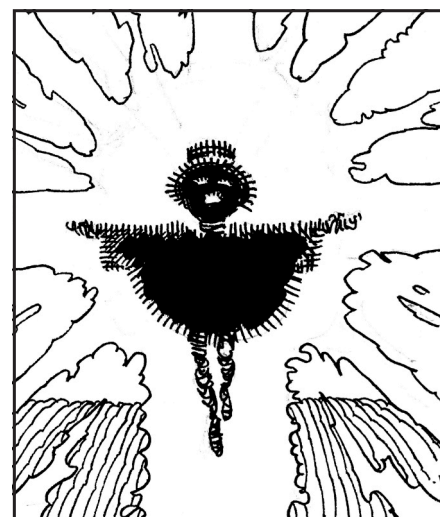
Every player needs a hero.

A hero is a player’s protagonist, their lead character. A player runs a hero exclusively and has a veto on what their hero does in play—thus that player is called the runner. A runner can have multiple heroes, pets, and sidekicks. How many of these characters are present for a given session is up to the players.

A ghost shaman possesses wizards and mediums to uncover the secrets of transcendence. A diesel dwarf warrior hunts undead bio-machines created by the wire plague. A feline aristocrat historian recreates the glories of the lost doghead empire. A pengling merchant adventurer builds a magical nanite fountain to turn water into wine. A curious many-bodied void-plumber dives into the wormways to find where the reactivated travel gate leads.

A player’s first hero is a pulp hero. Perhaps not renowned, but far more powerful than the common turnip farmer. With an array of strange abilities, skills, and magics, they are a force to be reckoned with. As they progress they perform incredible feats and inscribe themselves into history—if nothing else, as reckless fools endangering common hard-working folks and the foundations of centuries’ old ruling institutions.

To make their character a player needs a pencil, some polyhedral dice, a copy of the hero sheet overleaf, and ten minutes for the protagonic generator.



hero

NAME

TYPE

LEVEL

SKILLS

ABILITIES

LIFE

HURT

STR

END

AGI

PRO

actions

magic

CHA

AUR

THO

HERO DICE

invested XP

DEFEND

Character progression track with icons: diamond, lightning bolt, target, star.

INVENTORY

Inventory table with 3 columns and 10 rows.

SPACE

The Protagonic Generator

“Ah. That was one strange machine. Some sort of dome cage. One yuman entered, two yumans left. Both a little different from the original, but convinced they were unchanged. We ended up with fifteen Porter Bobs. The sixteenth called ‘imself Pörter Bōb. Hah.”

—Robert 32-Chrome, feral polybody subsistence clan.

Tales from the Vastlands aside, the protagonic generator is a series of random tables used to create a hero with polyhedral dice. In order:

Skills • What a hero is good at. Butcher, banker, soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, investigator, gladiator.

Abilities • Perks, traits, mutations, divine gifts. A salamander’s fire resistance. Ur-plant light-feeding. Cyber-telekinesis. A parasitic symbiote named Bōb.

Stats • Natural aptitudes. Strength, endurance, agility, charisma, aura, and thought.

Inventory • The hero’s baggage. Woes, fears, illnesses, magic spells, mundane items, beloved pets, trusted sidekicks.

The player wraps up by filling in the rest of the sheet and naming their hero.

Skills

“Wealth was an inferior object, but what glory would attend the discovery if I could banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!”

— Dr. Frankenstein describes his search for the philosopher’s stone and the elixir of life. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818)

All skills also imply a status within a community, which brings benefits or drawbacks depending on the context.

Protagonist Skill Generator [d100]

1. Artist Aesthete
2. Arcane Apparatchik
3. Auxiliary Captain
4. Barricade Comedian
5. Big Game Tourist
6. Butcher Banker
7. Cat Burglar
8. Celebrated Athlete
9. Chain Flailer
10. Coffee Savant
11. Cryptic Chemist
12. Electric Wizard
13. Escapist Acrobat
14. Freiherr Archaeologist
15. Golemwright Coder
16. Human Decommissioner
17. Neoprimitive Archer
18. Respectable Biomechanic
19. Serpent Apothecary

PLACEHOLDER

1. Artist Aesthete

#social

The unmanifest idea is worthless.

Creates treasures out of aether, dreams, and labor. Paints, sculpts, draws, dances and sings (badly). Wields a brush and chisel, sells broken trinkets as avant-garde art to hungry social climbers.

Rank 1 • Gets ITEM (table)

2. Arcane Apparatchik

#social

The highly trained bureaucrat reproduces the bureaucracy.

Project manager navigating byzantine institutions and accessing secret locations. Passes the buck and avoids blame. Organizes time sheets and sets key performance indicators. Uses office supplies as weapons.

Rank 1 • Gets ba ITEM (table)

3. Auxiliary Captain

#adventure #social

Lead that cannon fodder.

Leads the forces of civilization to victories over monsters of madness and chaos by navigating the military bureaucracy. Understand boots, morale and logistics. Wields standard issue weapons and equipment.

Rank 1 • Gets ITEM (table).

4. Barricade Comedian

#social

For this next joke.

Plays audiences and sways masses. Makes folks laugh and cry, all at once. Shifts moods, fast talks, and dodges blame. Wields verbal and physical incendiaries.

Rank 1 • Gets ba ITEM (table).

5. Big Game Tourist

#social

It's a fair chase, honest.

Shoots big guns and rides a large burden beast or armored golem. Blithely orders servants around and overlooks the lower classes. Chomps cigars, swills overpriced firewater and talks turkey.

Rank 1 • Gets ITEM (table)

6. Butcher Banker

#social

Blood and money. Both must flow.

Lends money and practices usury. Nobs with fine folk, promotes charities and intimidates with wealth. Crunches numbers and collects arts or antiquities.

Rank 1 • Gets ITEM (table)

7. Cat Burglar

#social

Door, window, wall. Same thing.

Breaks into and out of places. Disarms locks and traps and extrasensory wards. Moves very, very quietly. Appraises treasures. Stylish, suave, and elegant.

Rank 1 • Gets ba ITEM (table)

8. Celebrated Athlete

#adventure #social

Run, rabbit, run.

Runs the extra mile, stretches reserves further, goes faster. Does a biathlon, a triathlon, a polythlon. Signs an autograph. Waves a bottle of fizz-wine.

Rank 1 • Gets ITEM (table)

9. Chain Flailer

#combat

Against the army of the dead.

Wields flails, chains, saws and chainsaws in the savior style from the Last Zombie Necroicide. Also puts on a great show of being a lumberjill or lumberjack.

Rank 1 • Gains #reach.

Rank 2 • Critical range increased one step.

Rank 3 • Critical range increased

one more step and decapitates
undead on critical.

10. Coffee Savant

#social

*Mind-altering coffee varieties
changed many things.*

Runs a plantation or a bar, roasts
and brew flavorful beans. Puts
minds at ease or aflame with
mildly intoxicating brews. Settles
disputes and covers up
grievances. Wields a tamper club
or a samovar.

Rank 1 • Gets ITEM (table).

11. Cryptic Chemist

#magic

It's supposed to explode.

Understands chemical processes
and matter modification
equipment. Makes explosives,
cook drugs. Transmutes refuse
into treasures (like excreta into
gunpowder).

Rank 1 • Gets SPELL (table).

12. Electric Wizard

#magic

Creation hums the song Electric.

Practices the old rites of electric
equipment maintenance and
repair. Uses heavy energy
weapons and ka batteries. Casts
spells with blueprint scrolls.

Rank 1 • Gets SPELL (table).

13. Escapist Acrobat

#adventure

Make no bones about it.

Squeezes into small places. Puts
on circus shows. Gets out of
restraints. Gets into and out of
armor very quickly. Shows an
amazing knowledge of pressure
points. Evades enemies with
surprising grace. Daydreams
through dreary day jobs.

Rank 1 • Gets ITEM (table).

14. Freiherr Archaeologist

#social

Behold, the golden idol!

Discovers lost artifacts. Climbs,
jumps and dodges boulders.
Detects traps and hidden doors.
Whips a small gun and cracks a
neural whip.

Rank 1 • Gets ITEM (table)

15. Golemwright Coder

#magic

Robotist to the initiated.

Heals and maintains ancient
autonomous machines. Follows
preserved manuals of ritual
assembly to copy platonic golems.
Communicates with machines via
the ancient art of coding. Uses
integrated energy weapons and
void screwdrivers.

Rank 1 • Gets SPELL (table)

16. Human Decommissioner

#social

It's just like hunting hogs.

Tracks down humans. Reads their
minds for criminal thoughts. Uses
hidden and less-lethal weapons.
Brings them in for reprocessing.
Plies the grey seas between law
and underworld.

Rank 1 • Gets ITEM (table)

17. Neoprimitive Archer

#combat

Shoot an arrow, split a tree.

Skirmishes with the best. Looses
storms and sharpshoots alike.
Makes and breaks bows and
arrows. Keeps fighting trim.

Rank 1 • Critical damage
increased one step.

Rank 2 • [+] to close attacks.

Rank 3 • Attacks twice per action.

18. Respectable Biomechanic

#magic

Skin-deep poems carved in flesh.

Plays the living spirit of flesh and

bough. Dams injuries and diseases, modifies biological processes, sculpts angels and monsters. Wields knives and saws, needles and probes. Unofficially dabbles in mad science body horror.

Rank 1 • Gets SPELL (table)

19. Serpent Apothecary

#magic

Prayers to the many-winged serpent.

Mixes poisons, potions, and medicines. Entreats the tiny machines that swim in all living things. Harvests herbs that heal and those that ill. Wields knives, pestles, and mortars.

Rank 1 • Gets SPELL (table)



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PLACEHOLDER



PLAYING THE GAME

The Game

“Iacta alea est.”

—JC according to Suetonius

A hero from another time awakens in their nanomagical sarcophagus. Researchers marooned on a mountain struggle to win the trust of the local yeti-analogues. Savages en route to a battle-world run amok on a void ship. Godlike lings on their ring-habitat argue about which of the local flora and fauna would make the best uplift candidates. A sentient motorcycle possesses their rider like a puppet of flesh and bone. A crowd of bystanders looks on, perplexed.

Players run these characters. The runner players handle the protagonists: the heroes, their pets, sidekicks and other attendants. The referee player handles the antagonists: the villains, minions, creatures, and bystanders.

This chapter covers the following:

- Test** • How a character struggles against the world.
- Contest** • Competition between characters against the world.
- Conflict** • Characters fighting other characters.
- Damage** • Characters getting hurt.
- Defeat** • Characters losing.
- Recovery** • Characters getting well again.
- Experience (xp)** • The metacurrency players earn.
- Advancement** • How characters and game objects become more powerful.
- Inventory** • What a hero brings along on adventure.
- Gameplay** • Examples.

The Test

“The character against the world.”

—Venerable Mede, *Brews Against the Terror of Knowing*

The referee presents a situation. The runner says what their hero does. The ref narrates the outcome.

Playing the game involves only dialogue until an uncertain and consequential situation arises. Then the referee calls for die rolls to test what happens.

Heroes roll **d20 + stat + skill over target**.

A player rolls a 20-sided die and adds the sum of their hero’s relevant stat and skill to beat a target between 3 and 19 set by the referee. Context determines what stat and/or skill is relevant in a particular situation.

Extras roll **d20 + sum over target**.

Extras (including pets and sidekicks) are simplified characters that have only a single sum score they use when they know what they are doing, instead of different stats and skills for different situations.

The maximum sum any character ever adds to any d20 roll is +13.

The referee uses the amount by which the test result exceeds or misses the target to narrate the quality of the success or failure.

Special Numbers

These natural numbers rolled on a d20 have special effects during tests:

- 1** • Fumble. The test is an automatic failure with an additional drastic, catastrophic, or humorous consequence determined by the referee.
- 7** • Silver lining. Whether the test succeeds or fails, there is an unexpected positive side effect determined by the referee.
- 13** • Luck runs out. Whether the test succeeds or fails, the character runs out of a resource (such as ammunition) or suffers an unexpected negative side effect determined by the referee.
- 20** • Critical. The test is an automatic success with an additional exceptional consequence determined by the referee.

Edge Roll

When a character’s d20 + sum precisely equals the target their runner or the referee can suggest a sacrifice that will allow success at a cost. For example:

- A warrior takes a blow or breaks their weapon as they push through an enemy’s shield wall.
- An ambassador pays a bribe or gives away a personal item to get into an exclusive club.
- A magus of the seventh circle sets themselves on fire or summons a weaker **ominous daemon** (L3, chilling) rather than suffering corruption.
- A burglar destroys their tools or triggers an alarm as they disable a lock.

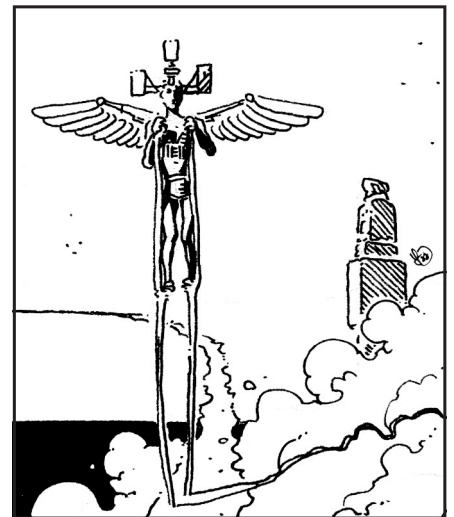
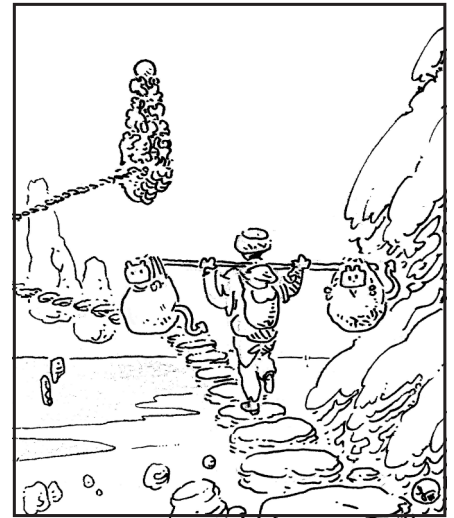
Targets

How hard is it to leap over a burning fence? While carrying a large bucket of gasoline? Without spilling any of it? While blindfolded?

The referee uses their judgement to assign a target number between 3 (very easy) and 19 (very hard), then **describes** the probability. Leaping over a burning fence might be routine, with a target of 7. Doing it while carrying a bucket is moderately hard, (target 10). But doing it without spilling anything? Rather difficult (target 15). More so while blindfolded (target 19).

Example Targets

TARGET	EXAMPLE
3 minor, frivolous, trivial	A terrified thief tries to start their engine as zombies crawl towards them.
7 easy, elementary, simple	A knight explains feudalism to some peasants with their sword.
11 common, moderate, regular	A watchmaker attempts to stop a ticking time bomb.
15 difficult, onerous, tough	A duelist rolls under a golem spider to stab their soft(er) belly.
19 dire, extreme, utmost	A surgeon tries to put out a gorgon's eye with a thrown scalpel.



Dice

Seacat uses a ladder of classic polyhedral dice to determine effects. Special abilities, spells, and other circumstances move dice up and down this ladder.

Dice Ladder

DICE	AVERAGE	COMMON EFFECT
d1	1	Minimal life or stat damage. Disposable extra's life.
d4	2.5	Weak damage. Level 0 extra's life.
d6	3.5	Civilian weapon or improvised damage. Annoying extra's life.
d8 or d10	4.5 or 5.5	Common military weapon. Up to L5 extra's life / level.
d12	6.5	Big weapon. Big extra's (monster's) life / level.
d20	10.5	Very large / scary weapon, enemy or trap. Can defeat any level 3 hero.
d6 x 5	17.5	Terrifying. Can defeat any level 4 hero.
d8 x 5 or d10 x 5	22.5 or 27.5	Tremendous. Can defeat any level 6 hero.
d6 x 10	35	Extreme. Can defeat any hero.
d10 x 10	55	Overkill.

The d100, generated by using one d10 for the tens and another d10 for the units, stands outside the dice ladder. When tables call for more unusual dice, like d30, d40 or d60, players can simulate them with a d100.

Boon [+] and Bane [-]

A boon lets a player roll an additional die and use the result they prefer. A bane requires that a player roll an additional die and use the worse result.

Boons and banes may apply to every roll. Boons cancel banes and vice versa.

Multiple boons or banes do not stack. The one exception is when a player spends hero dice to gain additional boons to their roll.

Exploding*

Exploding dice are marked with an asterisk. Whenever a player rolls a maximum natural roll with an exploding die, they roll an extra exploding die of that type and add the result. Exploding die rolls are open-ended in theory.

Consecutive/

Consecutive rolls are used in some tables to create rare results. In a d12 encounter table 12/12 means that when a player rolls a natural 12, they roll again and if the second result is also a natural 12, a special result occurs.

Group Action Token

Every player begins with a group action token (or *gat* token). This is a small but memorable object: a meeple, a large die, a polished stone, or a cat idol.

The gat token is used in two ways:

- To perform group actions.
- To create game lore.

Group Actions

A runner uses their gat token when they make a test that affects the whole group. For example, encounter or misfortune rolls, initiative tests, and any other test where the whole group is trying to achieve a goal, whether it is sneaking past a guardian golem, convincing a priest-king to buy a golden barge, or breaking the ur-father's mental control over their wayward child.

When a group of runners attempts a group action the referee declares a group action test and a participating runner with an available gat token steps up.

The runner declares what they are going to do, place their gat token in the centre of the table, and roll the relevant dice. They use their character's abilities and equipment to help (or hinder) the group.

A runner cannot perform a group action when their gat token is in the centre of the table. When all the runners have spent their gat tokens, each collects their token from the centre of the table and the circle of actions resumes.

Creating Game Lore

When the runners encounter something new in the game the referee can take an exquisite-corpse improv approach.

First, the ref broadly describes the newly encountered scene, creature, object, or whatever-it-is. Then they pass their gat token clockwise to the next player and ask them a question that adds some detail. After the player answers, they pass the ref's gat token along to the third player.

The ref can then continue to ask questions, adding contrast and nuance to the game. After each runner adds their part, they pass the ref's gat token along.

An example scene the ref might narrate while the heroes are traveling:

“The heroes are welcomed to a camp of steppelanders on a spiritual drinking voyage. The nomads pass their ornate cup of ka-cha around, and as each drinks, they relate a story that brought them to this wastey place under the red stars. One tells of how she hung upon the mother tree for nine days to travel through her mind's eye. Another of how he learned a spell from the stone fish atop the white mountain. Then the cup passes to you. Why do you wander here?” says the ref and passes their gat token to the next player.

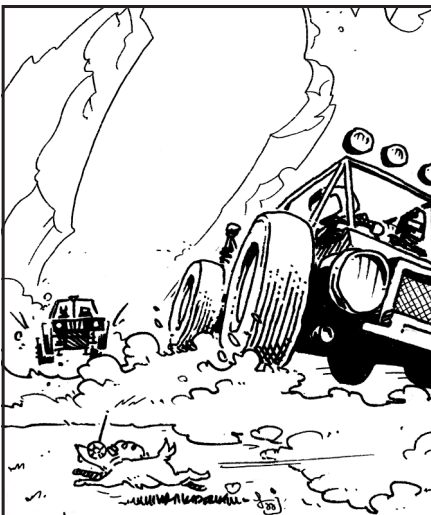




Two malcontents scramble for a gun.



Musicians compete to entrance rats.



Racers tear through Fraxion's Gap.

The Contest

"May the better golem win."

—Lectus Ecce, selectron of Voidport Coalition,
traditional greeting at the annual politician simulator battles.

A contest occurs when two or more characters compete for the same goal. Every character rolls one test and the highest successful result wins. Ties mean the competition has ended in a draw.

In a contest between groups, one character from each group rolls a group action test.

Bidding Contest

A character can take a risk in order to test first. Each risk taken increases the fumble range by 1 (e.g. from 1 to 1-2).

This starts a bidding contest. Another character has to take more risk to roll first instead. When all the characters pass on taking more risks the tests begin. The character who took the most risk rolls their test first, then the character with the second most risk, and so on.

In a bidding contest the first character to test successfully wins.

Characters who took no risk roll tests last as in an ordinary contest.

The Conflict

*“Always comes to this,
shores of Lake Infinity,
clatch of blade on blade,
whispering demons made steel,
rage from dream to dream.”*

—läga, electric witch, *Future Memories of the Eternal Struggle*

A conflict occurs when the runners’ heroes physically (ha), spiritually (ka) or socially (ba) attack or are attacked by another character or group. Each of these characters or groups is a party to the conflict. There can be two or more parties to a conflict.

The conflict unfolds over a series of rounds. Each round the parties contest initiative. The results of the contest determine the order in which parties take their turns. Every character gets two actions per turn and all members of a party act in any order they like on their party’s turn.

Anything can be an action in a conflict. There is no fixed list of actions. Context determines whether an action counts as an attack, defense, or other action.

Every conflict ends in a victory, draw, or defeat.

An action can be anything that makes sense within the context of the conflict: running, hiding, shooting, shielding, spearing, helping, tricking, flanking, offending, provoking, subduing, jumping, singing, driving, charging, spellcasting, talking, swimming, etc.

Rounds

Each round is sufficiently long for meaningful actions in a conflict. The referee defines the approximate duration of a round at the beginning of a conflict.

Each party takes their turn to act within a round. This is an abstraction to allow

but this is just an abstraction to make

Each round is a sufficiently long period of time for each party to take their turn in the conflict.

The conflict unfolds over a series of rounds. Each round the parties contest initiative. The results of the contest determine the order in which parties take their turns. Every character gets two actions per turn and all members of a party act in any order they like on their party's turn.

Turns are an abstraction for turning chaotic conflicts into a narrative game.

As circumstances change, they may adjust the length of a round.

The duration of a round also affects space: distances, ranges, and areas of effect. The referee adjudicates

Time and Space

Space and Distance

The

Initiative

Initiative is a **special contest** between parties to determine turn order. At the beginning of every round a different character from each party rolls an agility group test. This initiative test does not have a target number.

Before they roll, the player decides their party's stance for the round.

Push Forward • The player rolls 1d20 for the initiative test. The party aggressively tries to seize the initiative.

Hold • The player rolls 2d6 for the initiative test. The party focuses on maintaining their position.

Pull Back • The player rolls no dice. Their party takes their turn last in the round. They may *withdraw* from the conflict on their turn.

The player hides their chosen initiative dice until it is their turn to roll them.

If players turn initiative into a bidding contest, the party that risks the most rolls initiative first and acts first.

Parties that took no additional risks roll initiative at the same time. The party with the highest initiative result acts first, then the second highest, and so on. If parties are tied for initiative chaos reigns and all the actions between those parties resolve simultaneously.

Initiative Effects

Natural numbers rolled during initiative tests apply special effects.

1 • Every member of the party loses an action on their turn this round.

7 • Every member of the party gets one boon to spend this round.

13 • Every member of every other party gets one boon to spend against the party this round.

20 • Every member of the party gains an action on their turn this round.

Actions

Attacks

Defenses

Other Actions

Withdrawal

A group action

Ending

Morale Test - break / pull back / hold / push

Flight

Surrender

Fight to the End

Special Options

Damage

Hakaba

Hurt

Conditions

Damage • Characters getting hurt.

Defeat • Characters losing.

Recovery • Characters getting well again.

Advancement • As players invest xp in their characters and equipment they become more powerful.

Gameplay • Examples.

Defeat

Flight

Surrender

Fight to the End

Replacement Heroes

Recovery

Recovery • Characters getting well again.

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Gameplay • Examples.

Experience

(xp) • The metacurrency players earn.

Inventory • The limit of what a hero can bring along on adventure.

Tests • How a character struggles against the world.

Contests • Competition between characters against the world.

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Gameplay Examples

• Examples.

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RUNNING THE GAME

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MAKING THE WORLD

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THE AFTERTHOUGHTS

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Nine Core Ideas

1. Players: Referee and Runners

One player is mainly responsible for preparing the game, they're the ref. Like a bass player they set the rhythm of play. The other players run heroes and sidekicks. They're called runners. When seacat refers to players, it always means all the players: ref and runners.

2. Co-Creation

The players co-create the game world through play. The ref moves play forward and wields a soft veto to maintain a measure of consistency, but they are not the only player with a say in how the fantasy world works.

3. Players Earn Experience, Not Characters

Players choose into which heroes, sidekicks, pets or equipment they invest their xp. Players can have a stable of characters and diverse fantasy assets. When a character is defeated or training, their player runs another character.

4. There Is No Balance

Heroes do not encounter linear progression or balanced encounters. The vast world does not conform to the heroes' powers and abilities.

5. Heroes Are Different

The runners' heroes use different, more involved rules than do their sidekicks and pets, or the extras run by the ref. The ref doesn't have as much time to put into preparing each extra as a runner has for their personal hero.

6. Inventory Matters

The heroes have a strictly limited personal inventory of ten slots. The gear they carry is a crucial resource and affects what they can do in a conflict or scene.

7. Everything Is a Resource

Every attribute on a hero sheet is a resource which may change, deplete or increase through play. This includes stats, skills, and abilities.

8. D20 Roll Over Core Mechanic

Players roll polyhedral dice. They use a d20 + a sum of modifiers to test their heroes against challenges. Tests succeed when a player rolls over the target number. The number a die rolls is its natural or naked roll. Modifiers (stats, skills) may apply. Boons or advantages [+] and banes or disadvantages [-] may apply. High rolls are almost always better. Rolling a maximum result (a natural 20) is always a good thing, a natural 1 is always a bad thing.

The top cat verbally describes a challenge's difficulty and secretly assigns a target number between 3 (very easy) and 19 (very hard). Challenges may have binary or multiple possible outcomes. The runners may ask what target number they need to beat and the top cat should tell them.

9. Hard Limits for Heroes

The maximum level a hero can ever reach is 9. The maximum sum (stat + skill) they ever add to any d20 roll is +13. The highest target number a hero can ever possess or set is 19—this includes defense.

Three Counterpoints

1. Rules Break

Monsters and obstacles set by the ref can break all the the hero rules and limits. Specific abilities and variants supersede all core rules. The players together can decide to change any rules.

2. Roleplaytime

The players are a group of friends—or people who might want to become friends—gathered together to have a good time. That they are also playing social games of unexpected heroes in strange imaginary worlds is incidental. Breaking immersion to tell a joke or put a meal on the table is fine.

The players should act like friends: with respect and kindness towards one another. If a player acts inappropriately that is not something game rules can fix. The players should pause play and address the issue honestly and directly.

3. Incomplete as a Feature

No set of rules and mechanics and random tables and games can cover all the possibilities of roleplaytime. Nor should they even try. During play the players will come across situations not covered by the game rules. Rather than shy away, they are encouraged to improvise and adapt. To take existing mechanics and bend and break them until they fit.

The players will, in the course of play, realize that some parts of the game aren't useful or are even hindering their fun. They should throw them away.

Finally, players will invent or find bits and pieces of other games they want to try. They should try them. Their games and rules will naturally evolve from session to session. This is fine. There is no way to break roleplaying games.

Every player in a roleplaying session becomes a game designer, and that is part of the fun: expanding, changing, creating their own games and worlds.

Twenty Session Tasks

Players perform multiple tasks during a roleplaytime session. Traditionally many systems bundle them together with the roles of referee and runner. The referee is often tasked with much more work than the other players, which can lead to exhaustion, burnout, and failed roleplaying groups. It's also a big reason why many players avoid running sessions. By unpacking the tasks and talking about them it might be easier to divide the labor fairly.

1. Organizing a session

Finding a time and place for the group to meet. This can be any player, but it's good to make sure somebody is responsible for making the call.

2. Hosting a session

Often roleplaying takes place at somebody's home. This can be any player, but it's important to realize that as the host, they are also have a social role beyond just play. Thus, while the host has an obligation to make the group feel welcome, the other players have a responsibility to be good guests and not abuse the host's hospitality. If playing outside of a home, say at a cafe, the player organizing the session takes on some of the social role of a host. Playing online, somebody will usually be responsible for setting up the digital tools used to play and track events in the game.

3. Taking care of food and drinks:

Roleplaying is a social event that often involves eating and drinking. Whether there will be food and drinks at the table is a group decision, but it's worth respecting the host player's preferences. Some groups make every player responsible for their own food, others do potlucks, yet others prepare communal meals like the traditional frozen pizza of adventuring.

The players should decide who will bring what, who (if anyone) will handle preparation during the sessions (e.g. who's handling the frozen pizzas and making sure they don't burn in the oven, who's making sure the glasses don't run dry), and it's absolutely a good idea to collect food money up front so nobody's left holding the tab. Online this task tends to disappear.

4. Cleaning up after a session

Especially if there is food involved, there will be crockery and cutlery to clean up. All the players should pitch in to help the host clean up after a session. Ideally, the players won't leave until the venue is as clean as they found it.

5. Generating characters

New heroes and sidekicks regularly come into play. There should be one player who knows the rules for making new characters well enough that they can help others. It is helpful if this is not the referee, letting them focus on keeping the session rolling along.

6. Introducing new players to game rules

When a new player joins the group, it helps if there is another player who is not the referee who can guide them through the rules.

7. Roleplaying the heroes

This is the primary task of the runners. The ref should absolutely not roleplay the runners' heroes or make their decisions for them.

8. Roleplaying the antagonists

This is a primary top ref, since obstacles to the heroes' desires is where stories are born.

9. Roleplaying the extras and sidekicks

Any player can take over the extras in a scene. Usually, a runner will roleplay their hero's sidekicks, but they can also assign them to other players.

Likewise, the ref can assign an extra along with a one or two-line description to a player not directly involved in a scene. The ref can call for tests to determine the extra's reactions, but leave the rest to the other player. Sharing out extras keeps all the players playing and makes outcomes unexpectable. Who knows, maybe the player will suddenly turn the stat-less invented-on-the-spot shopkeeper into a beloved recurring character?

10. Preparing hooks, plots, and modules for a session

This is almost always the referee's task. Ideally it should be fun, not a chore. As a rule of thumb, the preparation should not take more time than running the session itself, and ideally less. The more the ref listens to the other players during a session and riffs off their ideas, the more dynamic it will be.

11. Making up lore, names, and backstories

A large part of the fun of roleplaying is invention and imagination. Any player can and should do this. Traditionally, this task falls almost entirely on the referee (or on pre-written tomes), however it's a good idea to share it out among all the players, which is why the game uses group action tokens.

Additionally, the ref can declare runners to be the experts on their heroes' cultures, lives, and previous experiences. For example, the runner of a dwarven hero takes the center stage when it comes to describing dwarven breadstick duelling customs.

When the ref takes this approach, they should wield a soft veto to maintain some consistency in the shared world and to keep it roughly balanced, so that one player's ideas don't steamroll everybody else's. The whole group should also be relaxed about fitting all the bits together.

12. Running the environment, sandbox, and adventure module

This is another primary referee task. Keeping the imaginary world ticking over, setting the stage for the heroes.

13. Running antagonists in combat

This task usually falls to the referee, but they could outsource it to a player whose characters aren't present, or even a secondary referee player.

14. Refereeing conflicts and combat between heroes and antagonists

This is a primary referee task, but insofar as it deals with rules, another impartial player whose characters are not involved, could also handle this task.

15. Keeping track of the heroes' resources

This is a task for each runner individually when it comes to their own heroes, but one player might serve as a quartermaster and handle the resources of the whole group, for example their caravans or possessions.

16. Rules arbitration

This task usually falls to the referee, but it is easy to outsource to any player so long as they are fair and impartial.

17. Referencing existing books and lore

Another task that usually falls to the referee, but could be assigned to anyone.

18. Keeping a campaign journal

Yet again, a task that often falls to the top cat, but can go to any player. A group can even decide to skip it altogether, and the sessions will still be fun. Ideally, the player taking on this task will enjoy writing.

19. Drawing characters, scenes, and maps

This is a task that really helps bring the game alive and every group should encourage as many players as possible to participate. The hero sheet has a large portrait area to encourage drawing. In practice, many groups will usually have one or two players who really enjoy the craft aspect of play. That's excellent. Having a session art journal is a fun activity in itself.

20. Staying on the same page

This isn't really a task, but a useful reminder for every player. A group meets to play together and it's important for all the players to read the room, make sure nobody is getting uncomfortable, and that everyone is enthusiastically on-board with a course of action. Splitting the party could be fun, but it might leave a lot of players pretty bored. Introducing a terrifying spidercat character might have been a good idea, if two of the players weren't arachnophobic.

PLACEHO

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Glossary

"There is a house in UVG they call the Rising Cat."

—Steppelands folk son, author unknown.

- Ability** • Inherent attribute of a character that lets them perform in unusual ways.
- Advancement** • The effect of investing xp in a character
- Hero type** • A bundle of attribute and advancement tables. Also archetype, skin, or class.
- Attribute** • The things describing a character in play. Proficiency, stats, skills, abilities, inventory, life, hurt, hero dice.
- Ba** • The mind or personality, provides a unique direction to consciousness. Used in social conflicts.
- Boon [-]** • Situational penalty to a roll. Player rolls additional die, takes worse result. Also disadvantage.
- Boon, [+]** • Situational bonus to a roll. The player rolls an additional die and takes the result they prefer. Also advantage. A character may accrue multiple boons.
- Campaign** • Series of inter-connected meetings of players, featuring a similar cast of heroes. Similar to a show's season.
- Character** • Imaginary person or thing run by a player at a session.
- Conflict** • A fight between heroes (aka. Protagonists) and antagonists. Runners roll dice for the protagonists, the cat for the antagonists. There are three main kinds of conflict: spiritual (ka), social (ba), and physical (ha).
- Contest** • A competition between characters to see who achieves a goal first or best.
- Critical** • A natural 20 rolled on a d20 during a test. Always succeeds and has some additional positive effect. Also crit.
- Critical damage** • In conflicts criticals multiply damage dealt. The critical damage multiplier steps are $x2 > x3 > x4$, etc.
- Critical range** • The range of natural rolls that inflict a critical. The critical range steps are $20 > 19-20 > 18-20$, etc.
- D20, d12, d10, d8, d6, d4** • The polyhedral dice with different numbers of faces.
- Dice notation** • 2d6 is two six-sided dice rolled and added together. 3d8 is the sum of three eight-sided dice. D100 is two ten sided dice with one representing the tens, the other the digits. A roll of '00' is treated as 100.
- Defense** • A character's target number in a conflict.
- Extra** • Sketched out background character.
- Fumble** • A natural 1 on a d20 rolled during a test. Always fails and has some additional negative effect.
- Fumble range** • The range of natural rolls that result in a fumble. The fumble range steps are $1 > 1-2 > 1-3$, etc.
- Inventory** • The hero sheet places a strict limit on how much a hero can carry. It covers all sorts gear, weapons, armor, tools, spells, burdens, fears, woes, and treasure. Carried equipment greatly impacts a character's abilities.
- Gat token** • Physical object to help players take turns performing group actions or co-creating the game world.
- Ha** • The body, the vehicle of the soul (ka) and mind (ba). Used in physical conflicts.
- Hero, protagonist** • Excessive. A primary character.
- Hero dice (hd)** • D6s that modify a hero's natural rolls and provide some other benefits.
- Hurt** • Serious injuries. Cumulative penalties that accrue as life, stats and other resources run out. Also fatigue or death spiral.
- Ka** • The soul, the motive fire of consciousness and being. Used in spiritual conflicts.
- Level (L)** • A creature's relative power.
- Life** • A character's plot armor and vital force all in one. Once upon a time called hit points.
- Magic, fantascience** • Anything sufficiently advanced to be indistinguishable from magic.
- Natural result** • The number on a rolled die before any modifiers. E.G. A natural 20. Also naked roll.
- Player** • Sentient creature partaking in a roleplaytime session.
- Pro, proficiency** • A modifier between +2 and +5 used by skilled and expert heroes.
- Referee, cat** • The player running the game session and antagonists. Also top cat.

Relevant Stat or Skill • Stat or skill that the players judge to apply in a given context. The referee has a final (soft) veto on whether a stat or skill applies.

Roll • Rolling any polyhedral die.

Round • During a conflict, a sufficient amount of time for every character to take their turn.

Runner • Player running protagonists (heroes and sidekicks).

Scene, encounter • Basic unit of roleplay when and where the characters interact with the shared imaginary objects.

Session • One meeting of all or some of the players at their table to play. Similar to a show's episode.

Sidekick • Secondary character or pet with simplified attributes.

Skill • Trained attribute of a character. A profession. First rank (skilled) applies proficiency to relevant tests, second rank (expert) doubles this.

Spell • Recipe for altering reality. A type of gear, it takes up inventory.

Stats, S.E.A.C.A.T. • The six game stats represent natural aptitude and modify most natural rolls.

Sum • Total modifier (stat + skill) applied to a d20 test. Can never be larger than +13.

Table • The physical or virtual space where the players meet.

Target • A number between 3 and 19 set by the referee to represent the difficulty of a test.

Test • A d20 roll to overcome a target number to determine whether a character's desired course of action succeeds. Modified by a character's stat and skill (or sum).

Turn • Part of round, time unit when a character takes their actions.

Unusual dice • Polyhedral dice that players may have trouble finding, such as a d30. A dice rolling app or online random generator helps.

Xp, experience • Points or metagame currency a player collects through play and invests in their characters and game objects. Xp represent characters' successes and experiences.

Tags

"Look upon my works ye mighty and compare."

—Rushime, ancient monarch cursed to immortality and irrelevance.

Tags help to categorize different skills, abilities, and effects. They also help with searching through the book.

Skill Tags

#adventure • Skill has practical utility in the struggle of mortal against uncaring natural worlds.

#combat • Skill lets heroes apply their proficiency to relevant physical (*ha*) attacks and tests.

#magic • Skill lets heroes apply their proficiency to relevant spiritual (*ka*) attacks and tests.

#social • Skill lets heroes apply their proficiency to relevant social (*ba*) attacks and tests.

Conflict Tags

#reach • This form of attack

El Titolo

Seacat is self-consciously modernist; impressionist and expressionist by turns, embracing the possibilities of a theatre-of-the-mind-first approach and the infinite special effects budget that brings.

1. A caravan underakes a strange long trip through the Ultraviolet Grasslands to find the Black City at the end of the world.
2. Five
3. Four
4. Six

dd

1. **Two**
It were so it was oh aye!
2. **Threehundred:** a cat
3. **Fourty ninety:** a dog

Def: 11
Life: 20
Sum: +5

Devoted and deserters alike build a new life under red skies in the heart of the twitching corpse of the greatest city the world had known.

John

Half-mad fools ascend into the skies on cobbled-together chariots of fire like the shamans of old to wander the voidways of the sky gods.

- o **Librete:** Heroes end cities and civilizations and worlds through accidents and inattention, and through it all, creation and invention dance on, a couple unbound in space and time.
- o **What even makes** a hero when the tale is told? Not goodness, perhaps. But excessive, yes, certainly.
- o **May the seacat** bless you all with strange tells to laugh over for many days and many years.

Introduction to the introduction to the reality interdiction

Moebius' mind-bending bande dessinée Airtight Garage.

—Blue Oyster Cult's evocative Veteran of the Psychic Wars.

The rambling melange that is the *Heavy Metal* movie.

There is a cat.

The surreal fantasy of Jodorowsky's *Holy Mountain*.

Impressionistic brilliance of Miller's Fury Road.

The semi-coherence of the Strugatskys' *Roadside Picnic* or VanderMeer's *Annihilation*. The neo-baroque pop metal of *Ghost*. The shifting realities of new wave science fiction. Psychedelic journeys between inner and outer spaces.

1. **Musique** • All these inspire and inform Seacat, *le chat de mer*, the roleplaying game of whimsical and capricious worlds, digressing from a single arc, lurching into branching stories, dancing into an act of creation itself.
2. **Senape** • Seacat is self-consciously **modernist**; impressionist and expressionist by turns, embracing the possibilities of a theatre-of-the-mind-first approach and the infinite special effects budget that brings.
3. **Lattitude'** • A caravan underakes a strange long trip through the Ultraviolet Grasslands to find the Black City at the end of the world.

STYLE

PLAC

1. La Romanza D'arlequinna.

Devoted and deserters alike build a new life under red skies in the heart of the twitching corpse of the greatest city the world had known.

Half-mad fools • ascend into the skies on cobbled-together chariots of fire like the shamans of old to wander the voidways of the sky gods.

End of cities • Heroes end cities and civilizations and worlds through accidents and inattention, and through it all, creation and invention dance on, a couple unbound in space and time.

What • even makes a hero when the tale is told? Not goodness, perhaps. But excessive, yes, certainly.

May the seacat bless you all with strange tells to laugh over for many days and many years.

Los Ojos de Huevo

D11	ITEM	ARMOR	SIZE	SPECIAL	PRICE
1	Iksan bone-rank leather greatcoat. Fine white leather with special pockets for the Book of the Reasonable Screed, an official party notebook, and a set of pens.	+2	1	Good vs. undead.	150
2	Morri scalefish armor	+2	1	Good for swimming.	30
3	Izvoreni homeostatic suit	+2	2	Recycles fluids. Heat resistant.	160
4	Izvoreni glyphed tile armor	+3	2	Good vs. golems.	50
5	Ebéteen red living mail. Chitinous, half-living armor of flowing arthropod links.	+4	2	Heat comfortable. Feeds on flesh to give 5 life.	200
6	Iksan shock armor. Porcelain and olivine plates over a slippery metallic mesh.	+5	2	Good vs. grappling.	500
7	Ebéteen lapiz mail. Rocky tiles overlaid on a living chitinous matrix.	+5	3	Breathes in hot weather. Good vs. blunt weapons.	400
8	Tirsteen bronze-glyphed armor. Heavy plates of sinew-reinforced bronze.	+6	3	Good vs. spells.	100
9	Iksan leveller armor. Green plates of ceramic threaded with silvery metallic links.	+7	3	Good vs. energy attacks.	500
10	Ebéteen scarab armor. Iridescent parasite-bonded plate armor.	+8	3	Heat comfortable. Feeds on flesh to give 5 life.	1500
11	Iksan storm shield. Full-body ceramic shield.	+2	2	Good vs. missiles.	30

fine della tabella nuvolosa.

TEST PAGE

CEHOLDER