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1 The Barrier

Why? Because I like Solar System, but...

If someone wants to do actual artwork for this thing, contact me at tuomas@palosaari.org. I might be able to scrounge up some pocket change in exchange for art.

At this point the game is just a framework and rules. If you want to actually run a game, you'll need to figure out how to handle magic, settings and make choices on how to handle equipment and such, if you feel adding more crunch will benefit your game.

Thanks and apologies to...

Thanks to Petri, Pokke, Kauko and others I've probably forgotten or am not aware of who've contributed to POX. Most recently Pokke and Anttio for fleshing out new ideas, Jenna from whom I stole the idea for contest resolution after misunderstanding what she's doing in her own ruleset.

This is basically a hack of Solar System, except for parts that did not resonate with what I want from RPGS or did not fully understand the reasoning behind. Stupidity and personal tastes are the main reasons for creating this.

Ideas liberally lifted from:

- **Solar System** by Clinton R. Nixon and Eero Tuovinen
 - <https://www.arkenstonepublishing.net/tsoy>
- **Burning Wheel** by Luke Crane et al
 - <https://www.burningwheel.com>
- **Gold Hack + Hot Circle**
 - Burning Wheel hacks
- **Empai Tirkosu**
 - <https://empaitirkosu.wordpress.com/>

TODO

Check example character creation numbers

Example setting moved to own file ages ago - still WIP

Advanced rules

Flow and basic terminology, play examples and more meat on the bones

"Settings" ie. secrets, keys, lifepaths

Flow and basic terminology

Scene

Session

Story

This will contain more info on basic conventions, characters, GM stuff and so on. Basic "what is role-play" to be added.

Session zero

Before starting the game, consider having a pre-game session to discuss and agree on the game's themes, boundaries, and specific setting details.

X card

"Please stop, the direction we're heading is uncomfortable."

A tool to signal discomfort and halt the game's direction when content becomes uncomfortable for players.

O card

“OK, this is cool, more of this.”

Used to signal approval and enthusiasm for the current direction of the game.

2 Characters

This chapter covers character creation and the fundamental concepts of the game, using a well known space hero as an example.

Creation

First thing you must choose is the “age” of your character, or at least how many different things they’ve done during their lifetime before the start of the game. This choice affects various character attributes.

The number of **life paths** try to give a sense of balance to character creation, but if you really put your heart into it you can probably break the system. Such is life.

Choose from the following:

| Number of life paths | Keys | Secrets | Focuses | Abilities | Pool points | Karma |
|----------------------|------|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|-------|
| One | 2 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
| Two | 2 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 2 |
| Three | 2 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 1 |
| Four | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 1 |
| Five | 1 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 0 |

Spread the Ability and Pool points and focuses around as you please and choose the number of **Secrets** and **Keys** you are allowed. You don’t have to make all the choices before starting the game, but you should have a rough idea about the character before starting play, at least the origin life path and one **Key** should be chosen.

Life Paths

Paths represent the experiences a character has had and can include cultural backgrounds, professions, or activities. At least one path should define the character’s origin.

Let’s use a certain farmboy as an example:

- Luke Skullwaker (two life paths):
- * Force sensitive outer rim kid
- * Farmboy

That’s all Luke really is in the beginning of the movie. Oh sure, he has abilities and motivations, but those come after choosing the paths.

If you wanted to create Luke as he is in the beginning of the fifth movie you could try something like this:

- Luke Skullwaker, rebel general, (three paths worth of experience):
- * Force sensitive outer rim kid
- * Farmboy
- * Ace fighter pilot

Paths can be expanded during the game by spending **Karma**. If for example you want your guardsman to be a member of a secret order who has knowledge of the hidden pathways of the city, you can decide to turn your Guardsman lifepath into Guardian of the Hidden Pathways or something like that. Add flavour to your character and do some worldbuilding at the same time.



Figure 1: Different paths take you to different places

Resource Pools

Resource pools are used to power **Secrets** and get additional dice for ability tests and contests. There are three default pools available. You can always use less or create more, if you feel like your game has different needs. You might give magicians a mana pool, vampires a blood pool or something along these lines.

The pools are:

- Body
- Social
- Mental

This is a pretty boring list, you could name the pools in a different way, like The Shadow of Yesterday/Solar System does where this whole idea has been stol... borrowed from. Thanks to Clinton R. Nixon and Eero Tuovinen for this. They use these three pools instead:

- Vigor
- Instinct
- Reason.

During the game, these points are spent to get bonus dice or activate **Secrets** (more on all of this later), but are not permanently gone. The scores on each player's character sheet represents the maximum points in each pool, and players will get a chance to restore their characters' pools to their maximum.

The first version of Luke is a shy, awkward kid that hasn't seen much of the galaxy, this is one possible use of the six points he has available to him:

- Instinct: 3
- Vigor: 2
- Reason: 1

Abilities

Lifepaths define what the character knows and can do. If you don't have a ability on your character sheet you can figure out a value to use based on your lifepaths. When you attempt something for the first time, you're opening an ability. When you decide you want to allow your character to grow in something you're focusing an ability.

Opening abilities

If a lifepath is somehow relevant to a thing you're doing, you can get 2 ability points from it. If another lifepath provides the same sort of skillset, you can get 1 additional point per lifepath.

One point is the minimum you get from just basically being a person of some sort that can do things. You can usually rely on your origin to provide at least one point to every ability imaginable, some origins might be milked for two points. Eg. dwarves in a fantasy setting might be tough creatures that don't tire easily.

In character creation Luke opens up abilities based on his background. A desert planet on the edge of civilized space is a dangerous place so he chooses the following:

- Blasters
- Fighter pilot (his T-60 Skyjumper)
- Mechanic

He then figures out the starting values based on his background. Outer rim kids tend to know how to shoot so +2 from the background, then Luke adds 1 point from his pool. Luke's spent lots of hours in the cockpit of the T-16 so three points go there in addition to nagging the GM for two points from his background as a force sensitive wonderboy. Mechanic gets two as the starting value

from farmboy and one from being an outer rim kid. Luke decides against adding any points to this ability leaving him with two points.

Luke ends up with the following ability ratings:

- Blasters - 3
- Fighter pilot - 5
- Mechanic - 3

He leaves two ability points unused since he doesn't know what to do with them now. He later uses them whilst in the Millenium Falcon to open up Jedi abilities.

Figuring out the ability values later uses the same process. If you have ability points left you can apply them instantly, the same applies to focused abilities.



Figure 2: An idyllic view

Focused abilities

Chosen for advancement with karma or in character creation. It costs one karma point to focus.

Secrets

Secrets are special abilities a character can learn that augment abilities. These are often preternatural, sometimes magical, and always better than normal. In order to use **Secrets**, points from a **pool** are normally spent, meaning that most **Secrets** can be used a limited number of times per game, unless the characters take time to refresh their resources.

Secrets can be better explained with an example: > Secret of the Hidden Pocket: This character is adept at hiding objects on his person. No matter how carefully searched the character has been, he may pull an inexpensive, small (hand-sized) item off his person with a successful Stealth Ability Check. There is no need for the player to have written this item on the character sheet previously. Cost: 1 Instinct.

You can expand an existing **Secret** by using **Karma**.

For example a character might have: > Secret of Animal Speech: Your character can speak to an animal and understand its signals with a successful Animal Ken Ability Check. Cost: 2 Instinct. You can expand this into: > Secret of Greater Animal Speech: Your character can speak to a specific species of animal with a successful Animal Ken Ability check.

In this case the older **Secret** would allow the character to expend resources to talk to other animals. In some cases the older knowledge might be obsolete and you could remove the **Secret** altogether. There needs to be an in-game explanation for all this, though.

Keys

Keys give out karma for the characters. A Key costs 1 karma to buy.

These are goals, emotional ties, or vows a character has. By bringing these into the story, the player gains Karma he can use to advance the character, opening and focusing new abilities or learning new Secrets and Keys.

Again, an example will illustrate this better:

Key of Conscience: Your character has a soft spot for those weaker than their opponents. Gain 1 Karma every time your character takes someone in an unfortunate situation and changes their life to where they can help themselves.

Keys can also be abandoned. If you feel your character has outgrown a key, you can buy it out. This nets you 2 karma. You can never buy back a Key you've bought off, though.

A character can have a maximum of five keys.

3 Karma & Advancement

This chapter goes through how to gain and use karma in a bit more detail and how to open new secrets and keys, raise your pools and how advance and open new abilities.

Karma

Karma is used for:

- Rerolls
- Buying new secrets
- Buying new keys
- New ability focuses
- Getting out of a tight spot without exiting the game

You can spend karma to partially buy an advance, but you'll have to complete the advance before moving to the next one.

Advancement

Pools

A pool needs to be spent completely multiple times to advance. You need to exhaust the pool a number of times equal to the current pool rating + 1.

Abilities

An ability needs both successes and failures to advance, combined total of the current value of the ability. At least half need to be failures, round up normally.

The number of tests might be on the low side, we'll see.

For example a character with an ability level of five needs to fail at ability checks at least three times and succeed up to two times to raise the ability.

New secrets

Bought with Karma, price is usually 1-3 points.

New keys

Bought with Karma, one karma per one new key. Maximum of five keys per character.

4 Ability tests

Always Let It Ride, fortune in the middle.

Roll dice equal to your ability. Any 4+ result raises your Degree of Success (DoS). Consequences might lower the number of dice available or raise the target number.

Simple tests

GM sets the target number (TN), you figure out consequences, roll. If $\text{DoS} > \text{TN}$, you succeed. If $\text{DoS} = \text{TN}$, you succeed at cost. If $\text{DoS} < \text{TN}$, you fail. Some failed tests might cause consequences depending on the level of failure.

| Difficulty | Target Number |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Easy | No roll required |
| Simple | 1 success needed |
| Moderate | 2 successes |
| Difficult | 3 successes |
| Very Difficult | 4 successes |
| Formidable | 5 successes |
| Nearly impossible | 6 successes |
| Heroic | 7 successes |

Consequences

Consequences from simple tests are always lingering ie. not permanent and are removed either at the end of the scene or the end of the session, depending on the severity. A level 1 consequence lasts only for the scene. A higher level of consequence requires more time.

A consequence might be something like “bruised 1” which means you’re physical activities require one additional degree of success.

Contests

When two parties want a thing to happen but they are at odds. Contests and especially Extended Contests should involve one or more Keys of the characters. Otherwise there is little point in them.

Figure out what they want, see if they actually are opposed to each other. If not, they get what they want.

If they are in opposition, figure out the consequences. if we’re talking about a physical contest, like melee, damage might occur.

Roll dice. Larger DoS gets to narrate. If the difference is only 1 DoS, narrate at cost. If DoS is equal either both get what they want or neither gets what they want.

Consequences

The winning party might want to incur consequences of a game mechanical sort as well. Use the DoS as a guideline. Consequences from contests might be lingering or they might require more time to “heal” depending on the severity and agreed upon consequences.

Extended contests

If either of the two parties is not satisfied with the results of the contest, they can extend it. Usually it’s the losing party, but sometimes the winner might be a bad winner and wants to trounce their opponent properly, who knows?

Draw the Line/Moment of Truth

Set up another contest, specify consequences. Use secrets, call on your reserves and make the rolls. Best two out of three. The first contest was the one that lead to drawing the line. Now you need to win two contests or else you're toast.

The winner gets to narrate what happens.

If the loser lost the previous contest, then they are now, in addition to suffering the mechanical consequences of the contest, either:

- Grievously wounded and maybe captured.
- Fled the scene but lost something precious (like Luke at Bepin in ESB)
- Dead

OR the social/mental equivalent OR something else that fits your fiction, but is a terrible consequence for the character. If there is no threat of physical harm, the consequences might involve removing Keys from the character, especially if they have no Karma to burn. This might be interesting in physical contest, since it implies the character is no longer willing to risk his life and limb for the cause.

The winner of the conflict can Win More, by spending one point from his resource pool. This allows them to narrate a "Yes, and" conflict resolution.

Recovering from consequences

The consequences of drawing the line are more severe. A grievously wounded character requires medical attention or they might still end up dead.

This will lead to new ability tests, of course.

5 Downtime

Downtime activities allow character to recover or refresh before new adventures.

5.1 Recovery from consequences

Depending on effects, these will require either skill tests or other scenes.

5.2 Pool Refreshment

Characters can refresh their pools through various activities and interactions. Different pools are refreshed under specific conditions related to physical, social, or intellectual engagement with others.



Figure 3: Resting and refreshing

Characters replenish their Pools by unwinding and lowering their defenses, a relatively straightforward process. From a dramatic perspective, this marks a tranquil interlude in the narrative, devoid of conflict or high-octane action. Instead, it serves as an opportunity to delve into character development and explore potential new avenues for the storyline.

The rejuvenation of individual Pools occurs under varying circumstances, as follows:

- Vigor: Engaging in physical activities with others for the sake of refreshment.
- Instinct: Participating in social activities that bring pleasure.
- Reason: Engaging in intellectually stimulating interactions.

For games utilizing different pools, the specific conditions for refreshment must be determined accordingly.

It's evident that character rejuvenation largely hinges on interpersonal interactions. This deliberate design choice not only facilitates the introduction of new supporting characters but also adds depth to the human dynamics within the narrative. Moreover, it's conceivable that certain activities may simultaneously refresh multiple Pools, adding versatility to the process.

When a player seeks refreshment for their character, two scenarios typically arise: either the character is already in the company of friends, with a mutually agreed-upon activity in mind, allowing the scene to unfold naturally; or the character finds themselves at a loose end and actively seeks refreshment. In the latter case, it is the responsibility of the Game Master to craft the scene and facilitate opportunities for the character to forge new connections.

Other pools like Magick require their own refreshment rules.

5.3 Other downtime activities

- Learning new skills or secrets
- Fighting against the effects of Corruption

Depends on the setting, really.

6 Extended rules

Mooks vs. Bosses

Dumb terminology but you get the idea. Sometimes the “enemy” doesn’t need more than a simple ability check or a simple contest to evade/eliminate, but stronger, more important adversaries require some additional care. They might have pools and secrets of their own! Treat them like a PC maybe. Go wild!



Items

Items have tags that describe their features. Can be used to create advantages or disadvantages.

<https://rottenpulp.blogspot.com/2012/06/anti-hammerspace-item.html>

Certain items, like armour and shields can be “exhausted” or even lost to save a character from consequences.

Advantages and disadvantages

Either add +1 die to throw or allow re-roll, will have to check math which is more useable. Advantages and disadvantages cancel each other out, as do advantages on opposing sides in a conflict.

Is there a need for an upper limit? Players will need to lose conflicts to raise abilities, though.

Helping

Helpers add one die as an advantage but also suffer the consequences.

Resources

Money as counting coins vs. resources “ability”

Resources should be handled as a ability/pool. It can be exhausted like a Pool, but it can also be “trained” like a ability.

Or something.

Contacts

Circles as an ability from Burning Wheel is an option.

Social circles can be handled like resources. They can be exhausted and they can be increased.

Vehicles

Who needs rules for vehicles anyway? OK, maybe some Mad Max game would benefit from them.

Or Star Wars.

Or Firefly.

OK. We'll write something up.

7 GM's role

You're one of the players as well, so make sure you're having fun as well.

Make sure to take note of characters' keys and ability focuses. You're obligated to give out the spotlight to the player characters. Allow them to grow and learn. Be their fan.

- Enjoy the game
- Make it enjoyable for other
- Pay attention to the characters

8 Settings

Settings are more than a list of cultures and a map. You'll need to create multiple origins, paths, keys and secrets. Here are some examples.

8.1 **Origins****8.2** **Paths****8.3** **Keys****8.4** **Secrets**

9 Cyberpunkish rules

9.1 Machine

This measures how much machine and chrome you are. Every time you overcome a significant obstacle using your cyberware, you lose humanity and the Machine rises. Until nothing is left but a Machine.

9.2 Punk

How much you can rebel. Every time you lose a significant conflict, you lose a bit of the fire inside you. Until you're nothing but a Zero.

9.3 Statwise

Two new stats for Cyberpunk games, Machine and Punk. Machine starts at 0 and Punk usually starts at 7. Depending on choices made during character creation, these values may change.

Every time a character is involved in a significant conflict, where Keys matter and Lines are drawn, there is a chance for either of the stats to change.

9.3.1 Machine

If the character wins an important conflict or a Drawing the Line situation by using his cyberware in any way, the Machine stat is increased by 1.

Once Machine reaches 7, the character is no longer playable. They either go full cyberpsycho, upload their engram to the net and disappear or something else more suitable to the character. They leave their humanity behind.

9.3.2 Punk

If the character loses an important conflict, his Punk decreases by 1.

Once Punk reaches 0, the character gives up and is no longer playable. They either put on a suit and tie and stop pretending they were anything else besides a soulless corpo drone, lose themselves in addiction or splatter their brain matter over the nearest passerby.

9.4 Reducing the Impact

9.4.1 Mitigating a Rising Machine Stat

These actions aim to regain humanity or resist becoming fully blown cyberpsycho. All of these are Downtime activities.

1. **Human Connections**

Reconnect with a loved one, a past relationship, or a meaningful aspect of your humanity. This could be visiting an old friend, reminiscing over a cherished memory, or fulfilling a promise made before becoming augmented.

Mechanic: Spend downtime engaging with this connection to reduce Machine by 1.

2. **Cyberware Purge**

Remove or disable a piece of cyberware that has been pivotal in recent conflicts. This is a sacrifice that comes with consequences but restores a sliver of humanity.

Mechanic: Permanently lose access to a cyberware ability to decrease Machine by 1.

3. **Art or Self-Expression**

Create something that is entirely human—write poetry, paint, play music, or rebuild a pre-cyberpunk relic. The act must connect to emotions and individuality.

Mechanic: Dedicate a scene to self-expression; if it succeeds in impacting others (players or NPCs), reduce Machine by 1.

4. **Reject the Corporate Machine**

Perform an act of rebellion specifically against the corporations or systems that encouraged cybernetic dependence—destroy a factory, expose their secrets, or refuse an upgrade despite its power.

Mechanic: Spend resources or opportunities to disrupt a corporate plan, reducing Machine by 1.

9.4.2 **Mitigating a Falling Punk Stat**

These actions reignite the rebellious fire within and remind characters of what they're fighting for. All of these are Downtime activities.

1. **Victory Against the Odds**

Achieve a meaningful victory against a powerful enemy, even if it's small in the grand scheme of things. Every triumph chips away at despair.

Mechanic: Winning a conflict against a larger, oppressive force restores 1 Punk.

2. **Defining Your Cause**

Reaffirm or discover what the character is fighting for. It could be personal freedom, revenge, or defending a vulnerable group.

Mechanic: Spend downtime drafting a manifesto or completing a goal tied to the cause to restore 1 Punk.

3. **Community and Solidarity**

Build alliances with other rebels, gang members, or like-minded individuals who share your ideals. Find strength in numbers and shared purpose.

Mechanic: Establish a meaningful bond with an NPC or group; once the bond is secured, restore 1 Punk.

4. **Small Acts of Defiance**

Engage in everyday rebellion—tagging a corporate building with graffiti, helping an oppressed NPC, or disrupting a minor system.

Mechanic: Successfully completing minor rebellious acts during downtime or a session restores 1 Punk.

5. **Symbolic Restoration**

Reclaim or forge a personal symbol of rebellion—like a jacket, tattoo, or piece of graffiti—that represents your indomitable spirit.

Mechanic: Dedicate a scene to crafting or recovering this symbol; if it resonates with the group, restore 1 Punk.

9.4.3 **Dual-Impact Actions**

Certain actions could mitigate both stats, depending on context and execution.

1. **Sacrifice for a Cause**

Giving up something cybernetic or critical for a deeply human cause might reduce Machine and restore Punk simultaneously.

Example: A character disables their weaponized arm to save a group of innocents.

Mechanic: Resolve both stat changes as appropriate.

2. **Rebel Against Your Own Cyberware**

A situation where the character must override their cyberware's programming, perhaps by sheer will or emotion, could restore Punk while preventing Machine from rising.

Mechanic: If the act is successful, reduce Machine by 1 and restore Punk by 1.

9.5 **Effects of Machine and Punk Stats on the System**

9.5.1 **Machine Stat Effects (0 to 7)**

1. **Resource Pools**

- **Higher Machine:** Decrease **Instinct** (representing diminished gut feeling or human intuition) while increasing **Reason** (logical and cold efficiency).
Example: At Machine 5+, instinct-driven feats cost an extra point of Instinct, while reason-based feats cost one less to a minimum of one.
 - **Lower Machine:** No effect except reduced efficiency as the character is less reliant on cybernetics.
2. **Skills**
 - **Higher Machine:** Gives penalties to social or creative skills. Benefit is what the cyberware provides. *Example:* -1 to Persuasion per point at Machine 5 and higher.
 3. **Narrative Consequences**
 - **Higher Machine:** NPCs may distrust or fear the character, making social interactions harder. Some cybernetic systems may take temporary control (e.g., overriding actions).
 - **Lower Machine:** The character may be seen as vulnerable or underpowered in cyberpunk settings dominated by technology.
 4. **Feats or Perks**
 - Introduce feats that unlock only at higher Machine levels but have a cost to humanity or relationships.

9.5.2 Punk Stat Effects

1. **Resource Pools**
 - **Higher Punk:** Increase **Vigor** regeneration (the fire to rebel and keep fighting) but reduce **Reason** efficiency (rebellion over logic).
Example: At Punk 5+, vigor-driven feats cost one less.
 - **Lower Punk:** Reduce all resource regeneration during downtime, as the character struggles to find purpose.
2. **Skills**
 - **Higher Punk:** Provide bonuses to improvisational or defiant skills (e.g., streetwise, deception, or melee combat) but penalties to technical or corporate-aligned skills.
Example: +1 to Streetwise or Brawling at Punk 5 or higher, but -1 to Negotiation with corporate NPCs.
3. **Narrative Consequences**
 - **Higher Punk:** NPC rebels or outcasts might flock to the character, but corporate or authority figures will target them more aggressively.
 - **Lower Punk:** The character becomes less inspiring to allies, potentially losing access to support or provoking betrayal.
4. **Feats or Perks**
 - Introduce feats unlocked at higher Punk levels (e.g., “Rage Against the Machine” or “Unbreakable Will”) that offer powerful but risky effects tied to rebellion.

9.5.3 Dual Impact Mechanics

1. **Conflict Resolution**
 - Use Machine and Punk to add stakes in significant conflicts. For example, winning with high Machine might resolve the conflict efficiently but alienate allies or humanity, while winning with high Punk inspires others at the cost of collateral damage.
2. **Resource Burn**
 - Spending resources in specific ways could affect Machine and Punk. For example:
 - Spending **Reason** heavily could raise Machine.
 - Spending **Vigor** heavily could raise Punk.
3. **Dynamic Roleplay**

- Allow players to make key choices that shift these stats in real-time, making them central to the story arc. E.g., a choice between using cyberware to win quickly or relying on allies and risking failure.

9.6 Character creation

9.6.1 Starting Punk

For every lifepath beyond the first two, reduce starting Punk by 1. Old fogies are conservative.

9.6.2 Starting Chrome

For every Secret available at character creation, you can instead choose take a piece of Chrome. Every piece comes with a price.

9.6.3 The Cost of Chrome

When you acquire cyberware during character creation, you must decide how you paid for it.

Every piece of chrome comes with a price—some debts are financial, some are personal, and some cut deeper than flesh.

1. Owned

The chrome isn't yours; it belongs to someone else. A megacorp, a cartel, a military outfit—some faction has a claim on your body, and they can call it in whenever they please.

Maybe you're just on a long lease, or maybe they implanted a failsafe. Either way, you don't hold the deed. You are Owned.

2. Bloodied

You didn't pay; you *took*. Maybe you ripped it from a corpse, maybe you boosted it off a medbay table, maybe you just walked away from a deal without paying up.

Someone out there wants it back, and they *will* come looking for you. The cost isn't credits—it's blood. You have an Enemy.

3. Paid in Full

No debts, no loose ends. The chrome is yours, fully paid and accounted for.

But there was a cost all the same—something inside you had to break to make it happen.

Maybe you sold off a part of your past, burned a bridge that can't be rebuilt, or let the cold, metallic grip of the Machine settle deeper into your soul. Increase Machine by +2. # Magic {-}



9.7 Old World Magic

9.8 Beyond the Barrier Magic

9.9 Sorcery

One variant on magic rules is presented here. This might fit a Sword & Sorcery setting where sorcerers are weird and twisted.

For every Secret available at character creation, you can instead choose to take a piece of Magick. Every piece comes with a price.

9.9.1 Corruption

Corruption spreads in the soul of every magician. Every scrap of forbidden lore eats at your very being. Mechanically this is measured by a stat named Corruption. If Corruption reaches 7, the character is utterly lost to the dark forces.

If the character wins an important conflict or a Drawing the Line situation by using his Magick in any way, the Corruption stat is increased by 1.

9.9.2 Reducing the Impact

9.9.2.1 Mitigating a Rising Corruption These actions aim to reclaim one's humanity or resist being wholly consumed by Magick's influence. All of these are **Downtime** activities.

1. **Human Connections**

Reconnect with a loved one, a past relationship, or a meaningful aspect of your mortal life. This could be visiting an old friend, reminiscing over a cherished memory, or fulfilling a promise made before embracing Magick.

Mechanic: Spend downtime engaging with this connection to attempt to reduce **Corruption** by 1.

2. **Purging the Taint**

Sever ties with a source of Magick that has deeply affected you—this could be destroying an enchanted artifact, abandoning a powerful spell, or renouncing an eldritch pact. This sacrifice weakens your power but restores a sliver of your soul.

Mechanic: Permanently lose access to a magical ability or artifact to decrease **Corruption** by 2.

3. **Art or Self-Expression**

Create something purely mortal—compose a song, carve a statue, paint a mural, or craft a piece of mundane beauty. The act must be rooted in emotion and individuality, untouched by Magick's influence.

Mechanic: Dedicate a scene to self-expression; if it succeeds in impacting others (players or NPCs), reduce **Corruption** by 1.

4. **Defiance of the Arcane**

Reject the forces that seek to control or corrupt you—banish a spirit, break a blood contract, destroy a cursed tome, or refuse a tempting source of power despite its allure.

Mechanic: Spend resources or opportunities to disrupt an arcane force, reducing **Corruption** by 1.

9.9.3 The Cost of Magick

When you acquire Magick during character creation, you must decide how you came by it.

Every spell, rune, or enchanted relic has a cost—some are owed in coin, some in blood, and some in ways that twist fate itself.

1. **Bound**

The Magick isn't yours alone; it is tethered to a greater force. A coven, a fae lord, a forgotten god—some entity holds a claim on your power, and they can demand their due whenever they wish.

Perhaps you struck a bargain, or perhaps the binding was never your choice. Either way, you are **Bound**.

2. **Stolen**

You didn't earn it; you *took* it. Maybe you looted a sorcerer's sanctum, maybe you pried it from a slain warlock's hands, maybe you stole the knowledge from a forbidden tome.

Someone—or something—wants it back, and they *will* hunt you down. The cost isn't gold—it's vengeance. You have an **Enemy**.

3. **Paid in Full**

No debts, no lingering oaths. The Magick is yours, wholly claimed and accounted for.

But that doesn't mean it was free—something had to be sacrificed.

Perhaps you surrendered a cherished memory, severed a bond that can never be mended, or let the raw, untamed essence of Magick stain your very being. Increase **Corruption** by +2.