

# ***UNTOLD***

**Tabletop Roleplaying Game System**

## **Quickstart Rules**

***Untold Adventures. Untold Possibilities.***

Written and Designed  
by Brian Gibbons

## Table of Contents

<a href="#">1. The Basics</a> .....	2
<a href="#">2. Character Creation</a> .....	10
<a href="#">3. Game Play</a> .....	27
<a href="#">5. Game Mastering Untold</a> .....	52
<a href="#">6. Introductory Adventure</a> .....	63

NOTE: This Quickstart Guide contains a condensed version of the full rules contained in the *Untold Roleplaying Game's* Core Rulebook and Game Master's Guide. To order a copy of the Core Rulebook, please contact us at [untoldrpg@gmail.com](mailto:untoldrpg@gmail.com), visit us at [www.Untoldrpg.com](http://www.Untoldrpg.com), or support *Untold* on Patreon.

Thank you so much for your interest and willingness to playtest this game.

# 1. The Basics

*Untold* is a tabletop roleplaying game of collaborative storytelling. It is a game of flawed yet heroic characters, each with the potential to perform incredible feats of daring and skill. Such characters are meant to be more than just statistics on a page. They're meant to be deep and multifaceted, to have weaknesses as well as strengths, to have passion, purpose, and the conviction necessary to overcome deadly threats and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. *Untold* is meant to be inspiring, to awaken your creativity, to open up untold vistas of possibility and adventure. Most of all, *Untold* is meant to be fun!

Note: throughout this Quickstart Guide, there are certain sidebars highlighted like this. These are just helpful reminders or clarifications on the game rules or mechanics.

In *Untold*, all but one of the players take on the role of protagonists, the central **characters** of a collective story. The final player acts as the facilitator of the story. This player, more commonly known as the **Game Master** (or **GM**), is part narrator, part rules adjudicator, and part conductor, orchestrating the actions and reactions of all the other forces, allies, and adversaries the heroes might encounter throughout the course of the story.

Abbreviated terms found in this section:

DL—Difficulty Level  
GM—Game Master  
MR—Minimum Roll  
PC—Protagonist Character  
SN—Second Nature  
SR—Skill Rank

## Forging Characters

Working within the confines of the setting established by the GM, you and other players each create your own unique **Protagonist Character** (PC). As the name implies, these are intended to be the central figures in the as yet untold story of the game. Instructions for forging such characters can be found in section 2 of this Quickstart Guide.

## The Importance of Skills

One of the most important elements in defining your character will be which **skills** you choose for them to specialize in. Every action your character undertakes in the *Untold* Roleplaying Game is linked to a skill. Whenever an action would challenge a character's capability or prowess, a skill check—a test of a character's proficiency in a particular skill—may be in order.

## Broad Skills vs Sub-skills

Each *Untold* character has 14 overarching **broad skills**: 8 **mind-based** and 6 **body-based**. Beneath each broad skill are varying numbers of specialized **sub-skills**. These are more focused aspects of the overarching broad skill. For example, RUNNING, JUMPING, and FEATS OF STRENGTH are separate sub-skills beneath the broad skill of ATHLETICS; CHARM, NEGOTIATION, and DECEPTION are separate sub-skills beneath the broad skill of INFLUENCE.

A full list of all broad and sub-skills can be found in section 2, Character Creation.

Whenever a skill check is required, check to see if your character has invested skill ranks in the specific sub-skill called for. If not, default to the broad skill above it. For example, if your character needed to move quietly she would use the STEALTH sub-skill. If your character needed to hide herself, you would use the CONCEALMENT sub-skill. If she didn't have either sub-skill, you would default to the AWARENESS broad skill for either check.

## Skill Rank (SR)

Your character's **skill rank** (SR) in a given skill—broad or sub—determines the base number of dice you roll for checks associated with that skill. For every SR, you receive 1 additional die. Thus, with a skill rank of 3 you would roll 3 dice; with

an SR of 8 you would roll 8 dice. The more dice you roll, the greater your chances of successfully accomplishing an action. Dice from skill rank (SR) make up the basic **dice pool** a player rolls when making a check.

## Maximum SR

The maximum skill rank which can be attained in a broad skill is 6, while sub-skills can be raised all the way to SR 12. However, it's important to note that the *default* rank for all broad skills is always half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) the rank of the highest sub-skill beneath it. Thus, if you had a rank of 6 in RUNNING, you'd have a default skill rank of 3 in the broad skill of ATHLETICS. Any sub-skill without focused training would, by default, use the broad skill above it.

## Difficulty Levels (DLs)

Whenever you wish to perform an action, the GM assigns a **Difficulty Level (DL)** to the task. This is basically a number between 1 and 10. 1 is easy; 10 is so incredibly difficult it would be absurd to even attempt it. This number indicates the total number of separate successful die rolls (successes) needed to accomplish an action (achieve an overall success). Thus, an Easy (1) DL action only requires one success; an Absurd (10) DL action would require ten.

In addition to the 1-10 scale of standard Difficulty Levels, there are two others outside this range. The first is simply 0, what might be called effortless or negligible. The vast majority of actions will actually fall into this category. These are all the things that are glossed over in the course of the game because they are so obvious, mundane, and routine it's assumed everyone will be able to do them. Under normal circumstances, walking, talking, breathing, and generally being aware of what is around you would all be classified as 0 DL actions.

At the other end of the spectrum of difficulty, some things are simply beyond the capabilities of normal human beings. This is the equivalent of 12 or higher on the 1-10 scale. Such tasks are deemed impossible.

For ease of play, you can just use numbers to identify each DL in this sliding scale (i.e., DL 2, DL 5, etc.). However, each number also has a descriptor to aid in gauging difficulty. For example, 1 is Easy; 5 is Challenging; and 9 is Extreme. This 1-10 (or rather 0-12) scale of difficulty is shown in the table below:

DL	Title	Definition/Examples
0	Negligible	Routine/effortless tasks. No check required.
1	Easy	Simple/rudimentary tasks.
2	Average	Standard/normal difficulty. Default DL for tasks requiring a check.
3	Heightened	More difficult than the norm.
4	Demanding	Usually requires greater focus or effort to accomplish.
5	Challenging	Will test the ability of most.
6	Formidable	Even the most highly trained would be tested.
7	Arduous	Very difficult, even for the most highly trained or gifted.
8	Severe	Will require the limits of one's focus and stamina to achieve, <i>severely</i> difficult.

9	Extreme	At the most extreme edge of difficulty, <i>extremely</i> difficult.
10	Absurd	Ludicrous to even attempt it.
12+	Impossible	Beyond the reach (allegedly) of normal human beings.

As a task or situation becomes more complicated or as conditions worsen, the DL will be increased. Yet the inverse is also true. As conditions become more favorable and less complex, the DL may be reduced, even to the point where what would have previously been a task difficult enough to warrant a check becomes routine or negligible (0 DL). Any task reduced to 0 DL no longer requires a check.

This may seem like a lot of d12s to get your hands on, but trust that it will be worth it. If you're more digitally inclined, you can always use a smartphone app or website to simulate rolling any number of d12's. However, if you prefer the feeling of physically rolling a fist-full of dice, you can order some from an online retailer, or pick some up from your local game store.

## The Dice

*Untold* only requires one type of die—a **d12** (or 12-sided die). However, it's recommended you have no fewer than *twelve* d12s on hand for skill checks made during the course of the game—and you might roll even more!

## Determining Successes

In order to achieve a single **Success** on any given die, you must roll equal to or above the **Minimum Roll (MR)** required—typically a 9 or higher on a d12. Thus, any roll of a 9, 10, 11, or 12 will count as a success. If the total number of successes *equals or exceeds* the DL, your character is able to accomplish the task. If the number of successes falls short of the DL—the attempt fails.

It's also recommended you utilize some kind of receptacle to corral all the dice you'll be rolling. This can be a shoebox, a board game lid, or a dice tray specifically intended for this use. This will keep dice contained and prevent strays from rolling off the table.

## Tallying and Interpreting Successes

The multi-dice mechanic of *Untold* allows for a much broader range of interpretations than just a simple binary of pass/fail. Depending on the number of successes rolled, any of the following results are possible:

- **Abysmal Failure:** 3 successes or more below the DL. Also known as a critical failure. Will almost always be accompanied by some kind of unfortunate development or side effect (see **snags** below).
- **Failure:** 1-2 successes below DL
- **Mixed Success:** 1 success below DL. Also known as success at a cost. Will be accompanied by some kind of unfortunate development or side effect (see **snags** below). Of course players always have the option of choosing Failure instead.
- **Success:** the number of successful die rolls matches or exceeds the DL. (Matching the DL could also be thought of as barely succeeding.)
- **Amazing Success:** 3 or more successes above the DL. Also known as a critical success. Will be accompanied by some kind of opportunity or fortuitous development (see **boons** below). Also note that for every increment of 3 successes above the DL, the fortuitous development is compounded.

Note that three or more successes either above or below the DL may not necessarily be interpreted as *critical* successes or failures. Just because you tried to lift Thor's hammer and couldn't budge it (well below the Impossible 12+ DL assigned) doesn't mean you automatically strained a muscle or somehow dislocated your arm in the attempt. And achieving additional successes in combat won't necessarily add any fortuitous narrative development because, in most cases, the extra damage *is* the awesome effect (more on Combat in Section 3).

## Modifying the Minimum Roll (MR)

The minimum die roll (**MR**) can be reduced by some kind of **enhancement**, typically either a **strength**—a natural talent or aptitude—or a **technique**—a honed and focused extension of a specific sub-skill. A single enhancement lowers the MR by one, making it so only an 8 or higher is needed to achieve a success. Three enhancements would lower the MR by 3, meaning any roll of a 6 or higher would achieve a success.

Note that debilitations and enhancements can exist side by side, canceling each other out.

It's also possible to *increase* the MR through a **debilitation**. Debilitations are imposed by **weaknesses**, fatigue, and injury. With one debilitation (+1 MR), a character would only achieve a success on a roll of 10, 11, or 12.

**How MR, DL, and # of Dice Differ:** The separate factors of MR (Minimum Roll), DL (Difficulty Level) and dice pool (total number of dice) may seem like a lot of elements to keep track of. Yet in reality it's a lot easier than you might think. And each of these unique mechanics plays a specific role in simulating the various factors that can affect skill checks.

**Minimum Roll:** MR is specifically tied to *internal* capabilities. This is why strengths are one of the only means of reducing MR. Likewise, the MR reduction gained from techniques are meant to simulate the training of muscle memory or the established paths of mental synapses that make use of a particular skill easier and more natural. This is also the reason internal weakening, such as that caused by injury or fatigue, affects MR instead of DL.

**Difficulty Level:** Where MR is concerned with internal factors, DL is all about the external influences affecting a challenge or task. How heavy is an object? How slick or treacherous is the road? How complex is the problem? All of these are external in nature. This is also why certain tools and gear—such as a crowbar or lock pick—can reduce the DL of applicable checks, because they are an external aid.

**Dice Pool:** The number of dice rolled simply reflects the inherent skill and/or effort put into a particular check. It's important to note that unlike DL or MR, dice can never be taken away; they can only be added. No factor in the game should ever subtract die rolls or reduce a character's dice pool.

## Second Nature (SN)

As your character's proficiency in a skill increases, tasks associated with that skill become more and more routine. This is reflected by a skill's **Second Nature** rating, or **SN**. A skill's SN is normally equal to  $\frac{1}{3}$  that skill's rank, rounded down. Thus, a skill with an SR of 3, 4, or 5 would typically have an SN of 1 while a skill with a rank of 9, 10, or 11 would usually have an SN of 3. *Any task with a DL less than or equal to a skill's Second Nature (SN) rating does not require a check.* The character's expertise is high enough to consider such tasks Negligible, or 0 DL.

Note that any modification to the Minimum Roll (MR) will affect the calculation of SN (Second Nature). For example, a total of two enhancements (-2 MR) makes it so that SN will be  $\frac{1}{2}$  the SR (Skill Rank) instead of  $\frac{1}{3}$ . A [breakdown](#) of how MR and SR affect SN can be found below.

## Adding Additional Dice

The base number of dice for any skill check is always equal to the skill rank (SR) of the skill being used (broad or sub). You can always choose to add additional dice by spending **Exertion**. Exertion represents your character's limited supply of mental and physical energy. To roll a check and gain extra dice for a mind-based skill, you would spend **Tenacity** (mental exertion). To roll a check and gain extra dice for a body-based skill, you would spend **Endurance** (physical exertion).

SN ratings do far more than just make it so you don't need to roll for certain checks. They actually help determine some of the most important aspects of your character (more on those in [Section 2](#)).

The number of dice gained from each point of Exertion depends on whether the check employs a broad skill or a sub-skill. For specialized sub-skills, you receive 1 extra die for every point of Exertion spent—a 1:1 ratio. For broad skills the ratio is 1:2, or one additional die for every *two* points of Exertion spent.

Further information on Exertion and what these aspects look like on the character sheet can be found in [Section 3](#), page 28.

## Mixed Successes

Whenever the result of a check is only one success shy of the assigned DL, players may opt for a **Mixed Success**, also known as success at a cost. This can also be thought of as a “yes, *but*” result—*Yes*, you manage to succeed, *but* with a **snag**—a complication or setback—automatically attached to the result.

## Snags

Whenever a player makes a check, there’s always a chance of rolling one or more snags. A **snag** is any unfortunate development, complication, or setback. Every 1 rolled *above a skill’s SN* (Second Nature) will result in a snag. Thus, if a skill’s SN is 1, a single 1 could be ignored, but the second roll of 1 would result in a snag (as would the third 1 rolled, and the fourth, and so on). If the SN is 3, only the *4th* 1 rolled would result in a snag. If the SN is 0, *every* 1 rolled results in a snag.

Note: 1’s can never be rerolled. Once rolled, you’re stuck with them.

Note that it is possible to achieve an overall success and still have one (or more) snags. It is also possible for a failure to become even more disastrous when snags are tacked on.

Each snag has two consequences. First, each snag *subtracts* one success from the overall total. Second, each snag should include some kind of *narrative* complication. This could be virtually anything: from leaking gas in a car chase, to a gun jamming in a firefight, to a stupor of thought in a debate. Any additional snags rolled can either compound the severity of an existing snag, or add a new and separate detrimental effect. The exact nature of snags can have collaborative input from all players, with the GM having the final say.

## Boons

Any roll of a 12 counts as an automatic success which adds an *additional* die roll to the check. If any of these added dice also lands on 12 (back-to-back 12’s), this results in a **Boon**. Each boon has three effects: 1) it adds yet one more additional die to the check; 2) it produces some kind of narrative benefit related to the check; and 3) it rewards the character with 1 **Hero Point** (see below).

Note: rolling a 1 on an extra die roll stemming from a 12 only counts as a fail result, and will never contribute to additional snags. However, these 1’s—like all others—are still immune to reroll effects.

The exact nature of the narrative benefit provided by rolling a boon may be jointly decided by the group, with the GM having the final say. Boons may also be used to cancel out the negative effects of a snag.

## Rerolling Failed Die Rolls

To reflect their character’s determination, passion, and grit, players have the option of spending **Conviction** to *reroll* failed die rolls. Conviction is directly tied to your character’s core drives. If a check can be directly linked to a drive with a level of 3 or higher, the ratio of rerolls to Conviction spent is 1:1—one die for every point of Conviction spent. If the check can only be linked to a drive with a level of 1 or 2, the ratio is reduced to 1:2 (1 reroll for every *two* points of Conviction spent). Drives without any levels (0) cannot use Conviction. (More info on [Drives and Conviction](#) on page 32 below.)

## Using a Different Skill than the One Called For

Players always have the option of asking to use a different skill than the one called for to accomplish a task. If they can logically justify that skill's use instead, the GM should allow it. However, in every case the GM has the final say. Also note that whenever a different skill is substituted for the default skill normally required for a particular task, there is always the chance that the assigned DL may be higher.

Note: any additional rolls stemming from rolling 12's should *add* a die rather than just pick up a failed die and reroll it. Although uncommon in its application, certain game effects enable players to reroll any number of failed die rolls, allowing them to scoop up all dice that resulted in a failed roll—including *any added dice*—and reroll all of them.

## Combining Skills

In many circumstances, two separate skills can be combined in a single skill check for greater effect. Virtually any two skills can be combined this way as long as the player can justify them working in tandem (and the GM allows it). For example, a character could combine JUMPING and RUNNING to make a running leap, or GAMBLING and DECEPTION to bluff a winning hand or INSIGHT and PERSUASION to discern the best way to influence someone.

Note that both broad skills and sub-skills can be combined using this rule.

To combine two skills on any check, simply take the *highest SR sub-skill* and add the *SN* of the second skill to determine the base dice pool. Thus, if you were combining PERSUASION with LANGUAGE—Faerie and you had an SR (Skill Rank) of 9 in PERSUASION and an SN (Second Nature) of 2 in the Faerie tongue, you could roll a total of 11 dice. For a ranged attack in a zero-g environment, you might combine an SR of 8 in RIFLES and an SN of 1 in ZERO-G for a total of 9 dice.

Failing checks should not detract from the gameplay experience. In fact, failure can drive the story forward (or sideways) just as much as success. Embrace your character's failures. Lean into them. Use them as the impetus to push forward and find a way to salvage a bad situation. Your character is unlikely to give up. You shouldn't either.

## Collective Effort

Although most skill checks are individual in nature, there are certain tasks where players may assist one another. Some common examples include lifting or pushing a heavy object together (FEATS OF STRENGTH), or working together to solve a puzzle (DEDUCTION) or collectively scouring a location for clues (SEARCH). In every case where such collective effort makes sense, only one person rolls—usually the character with the highest skill rank in the skill being collectively contributed to. That player may add one additional die for each other character assisting them. In addition, dice equal to the combined SNs (in either the sub-skill or appropriate broad skill) of all assisting characters are also added to the check. The GM always has the final say as to which checks can benefit from collective effort.

## Hero Points

Protagonist Characters are the main characters of the game's collective story. This enables them to draw upon a certain amount of prowess and luck to perform, well, heroically. This amazing capability is represented by **Hero Points**.

## Using Hero Points

Hero Points are the most powerful resource available to Protagonist Characters. This is partly because Hero Points are actually able to *introduce a fortuitous development or fact* into the game. The Game Master and players should collectively work out the exact nature of these facts in each situation and encounter, but some examples might include:

- *Introducing a boost to a character's adrenaline, fortitude, will, or inspiration.*
- *Introducing an object, item, or environmental feature into the scenario.*
- *Introducing a modification to the outcome of an action or event*
- *Introducing any other agreed upon effect.*



Whatever the nature of the fact, it will typically have one of the following impacts on the game:

- 1) *Grant (or subtract) 3 automatic successes* (can also *Modify the difficulty (DL) by +/-3*)
- 2) *Allow re-rolling any number of dice for one specific check.* (Cannot affect 12's or 1's)
- 3) *Modify the facing of **each** die roll by + or -1* (Cannot affect 12's or 1's)
- 4) *Slightly modify the outcome of actions or events* (Instead of falling off the cliff, you manage to barely catch hold of the edge).
- 5) *Provide something*—such as a tool, insight, or means of escape—that was not previously available.
- 6) *Grant 2 additional Action Points* (more on those in [Chapter 3](#))
- 7) *Do anything else* the GM and players agree upon

Note: if any effect (such as the use of a Hero Point) bumps any 11 facing up to a 12, this does *not* grant any extra dice. However, such modified 12's still contribute to [Fatalities](#) (see page 43).

Players are encouraged to come up with a plausible explanation of how this new fact or development could have arisen. This could be as simple as saying it was overlooked the first time around, or inserting it as a kind of narrative flashback (“Oh, I arranged for a getaway car ahead of time to be parked right here.”)

## Starting Hero Points

Players begin the game with only one (1) Hero Point. However, they additional Hero Points may be acquired during the course of the game. There are two ways to receive additional Hero Points: 1) by rolling back-to-back 12's (rolling another 12 with any added die gained from rolling a 12); and 2) by *successfully* performing an **Extraordinary Heroic Action**.

## Extraordinary Heroic Actions

Whenever a PC undertakes an action deemed to be especially daring, risky, or difficult—especially on behalf of another character or the group's overarching mission or goal—it could be classified as an extraordinary heroic action. GMs still have the final say as to what actions would be considered sufficiently heroic. Just attempting such an action is not enough, though; the character must succeed. And s/he must do so *without* using a Hero Point (though they can certainly spend Exertion).

An Amazing Success (3+ successes above the required DL) will also add some kind of advantageous narrative development. In this way they can be considered a kind of boon. However, such Amazing Successes do not grant Hero Points. Only back-to-back 12s or Extraordinary Heroic Actions can do that.

## Putting it all Together

Every action in *Untold* is linked to a **skill**. Whenever a skill is called upon to perform a task, the **GM** (Game Master) assigns a **DL** (Difficulty Level) to the check. If the character's **SN** (Second Nature) in that skill is greater than or equal to the DL, the character automatically succeeds. If the DL is higher than the SN, a skill check is required. The base **dice pool** for a check is equal to a character's skill rank (**SR**) in the applicable skill. Players may increase the dice pool by spending **Exertion**. The number of extra dice gained from Exertion depends on whether the check uses a broad skill (1:2 ratio of dice to Exertion) or a sub-skill (1:1 ratio of dice to Exertion). **Tenacity**, can be used to add dice to mind-based skill checks; **Endurance**, can be used to add dice to body-based skill checks. Once the total number of dice has been determined, roll all of them and tally the results. Normally, the **MR** (Minimum Roll) required to achieve a success on each die is 9 or higher. The MR may be lowered by an **enhancement**—granted by certain strengths or techniques—or raised by a **debilitation**—imposed by weaknesses, wounds, or fatigue. If the total number of successes is equal to or greater than the DL, the action succeeds. If the total number of successes is less than the DL, the action fails. However, **Conviction** can be used to reroll failed die rolls. The ratio of rerolls to Conviction is 1:1 if linked to a drive of level 3 or higher, and 1:2 if linked to drives of level 1 or 2. On every check there is also the chance of rolling one or more **snags** (complications or setbacks), and/or **boons** (fortuitous developments). A snag is imposed for every 1 rolled *above* a skill's SN rating. Each snag imposes a narrative consequence and subtracts one success. A snag may also be voluntarily applied by opting for a **Mixed Success**

whenever a check is only one success shy of the DL. Any roll of a 12 adds another die. If back-to-back 12's are rolled, this results in a boon. Each boon grants a narrative benefit of some kind and rewards the character with a **Hero Point**. Hero Points can be spent to modify the outcome of checks or to insert new facts into the narrative. PCs start with one Hero Point. Additional Hero Points can be gained by rolling back-to-back 12's, or by performing extraordinary heroic actions.

*Example 1: Gregor needs to jump across a crevice. The GM assigns a DL of 3 to the check. Gregor has not specialized in the JUMPING sub-skill so he must default to his ATHLETICS broad skill. He has 4 ranks in ATHLETICS, so he starts with 4 dice. He may choose to add additional dice by spending Exertion. However, because he is using a broad skill, Gregor only receives 1 die for every 2 points of Exertion he spends. He opts to spend 6 Endurance for 3 extra dice, giving him a total of 7 dice. Gregor doesn't have any enhancements which lower the MR, so he rolls seven dice and tallies each roll with a result of 9 or higher*

*Example 2: Gary's character, Mons, is dueling a rival blademaster. Mons has an SR of 10 and an SN of 4. He puts some extra effort into an attack and rolls a total of 18 dice. Unfortunately he rolls abysmally, rolling a total of six 1s. Since the number of 1s rolled is two higher than his SN, he suffers two snags (which could also be interpreted as one compounded snag). He subtracts two successes and must face some dire negative consequence as well.*

## Resolving Skill Checks

1. <b>Player Chooses Skill / GM Assigns DL</b>	If you have the <b>sub-skill</b> , use it; if not, default to the <b>broad skill</b> above it. <b>DL</b> (Difficulty Level) = # of successes required
2. <b>Compare DL to SN</b>	If <b>SN</b> (Second Nature) matches/exceeds DL, <b>STOP</b> — <i>auto success</i> . If SN is lower than DL, go to step 3.
3. <b>Prepare Dice Pool</b>	<b>Base die + SR</b> (skill rank) = base dice pool Spend <b>Exertion</b> to <b>add extra dice</b> (use <b>Endurance</b> for body-based skills; <b>Tenacity</b> for mind-based skills) <b>MR</b> = Minimum Roll for each die rolled
4. <b>ROLL!</b>	Roll all dice! (Can spend <b>Conviction</b> to <i>reroll</i> failed die rolls) Each 1 rolled <i>exceeding SN</i> results in a <b>snag</b> Each 12 rolled adds another die; if any added die rolls a 12, this results in a <b>boon</b> .
5. <b>Tally Results</b>	3 or more shy of DL— <i>Abysmal Failure</i> 1-2 shy of DL— <i>Failure</i> 1 shy of DL—can opt for a <i>Mixed Success</i> Match/exceed DL— <i>Success</i> 3 or more above DL— <i>Amazing Success</i> (also apply snags and boons)

## 2. Character Creation

Characters are the lifeblood of the stories you and your friends will collectively tell using the *Untold Roleplaying Game*. The purpose of this section is to help you create rich and multifaceted protagonist characters, each one with remarkable heroic potential.

### The Steps to Simplified Character Creation

#### 1. Envision your character:

If you don't have a clear idea of what type of character you want to create, here are a few possibilities that might inspire you.

- Craftsman or Artisan
- Musician or Performer
- Noble, Knight, or Military Officer
- Rogue, Smuggler, or Thief
- Scholar, Academic, or Politician
- Soldier, Mercenary, or Warrior

It's also recommended that you consult with your Game Master about the possibilities and restrictions of the game setting to see if 1) they have any suggestions, or 2) if the character concept you're envisioning will fit into the setting and story.

#### 2. Consider His/Her Origin and Background:

Where is this person from? What skills might they have picked up? What events might have shaped who they've become? You don't need to go into too much detail. This is just to get your creative juices flowing. Here are a few background possibilities to consider:

- Criminal
- Foreigner
- Lower Class
- Mysterious
- Refugee
- Religious
- Student
- Tragic Loss
- Upper Class

Regardless of the answers to these questions, record the following automatic background skills. The first two are Body-based skills (left side of the character sheet); the remaining five are Mind-based skills (right side of the character sheet).

- Start with **BALANCE** or **DODGE** at SR (skill rank) 3
- Start with **RUNNING** or **FEATS OF ENDURANCE** at SR 3
- Start with **OBSERVATION** at SR 3
- Start with **RECALL** or **DEDUCTION** at SR 3
- Start with **PERSUASION** or **FEATS OF WILL** at SR 3

Abbreviated terms found in this section:

BD—Body Defense  
MD—Mind Defense  
MR—Minimum Roll  
SN—Second Nature  
SR—Skill Rank  
XP—Experience Points

You can download a character sheet from the same place you picked up this Quickstart Guide, [www.untoldrpg.com](http://www.untoldrpg.com). The character sheet is where you'll record all of the important details of your character.

For characters with a focus in *Magic*, *Faith*, or *Psionics*, refer to those chapters in the full Core Rulebook for instructions on character creation for each.

Many other roleplaying games have set classes or occupations that define characters. Many also have pre-defined races or ancestries. *Untold* has neither. Instead, the rules allow for any race, profession, or skillset you can imagine. If you want to create a character of a particular racial background, check with your GM to make sure it fits within the world they have imagined. If it does, just use these rules to create whatever distinct characteristics set that race or species apart. If you have a particular occupation in mind, use the steps below to bring that profession into reality.

Any physical skills chosen in these steps should be recorded on the *left* side of the character sheet. Any mental skills selected should be recorded on the *right* side of the character sheet.

- Record your character's **Native LANGUAGE** and assign it an SR of 6. (Alternatively, you could choose two separate languages and assign one an SR of 5 and the other an SR of 3.)
- Record your character's native **AREA/CULTURE** and assign it an SR of 6. This is the country, province, or city where your character grew up. (Alternatively, you could choose two separate areas or locales and assign the first an SR of 5 and the second an SR of 3.)

The front side of the character sheet is divided into three sections: Physical Skills on the left, Mental Skills on the right, and other important characteristics in the middle. OBSERVATION, RECALL, PERSUASION, FEATS OF WILL, Native LANGUAGE, and Native AREA KNOWLEDGE are all Mental-based skills (right side of the sheet), while RUNNING, FEATS OF ENDURANCE, BALANCE, and DODGE are Physical-based skills (left side of the sheet).

### 3. Choose Core Skills:

Look through the list of broad skills and sub-skills below.

- Choose one *sub-skill* as your character's highest level expertise. Assign it an SR of 8.
- Choose two *sub-skills* as your character's secondary proficiencies. Assign each an SR of 6.
- Choose three other sub-skills as your character's lesser competencies. Assign each one an SR of 3.
- Choose two other skills as your character's amateur-level skills. *These can be sub-skills or broad skills.* Assign each one an SR of 2.
- Choose one last skill as your character's novice-level dabbling. *This can be a sub-skill or broad skill.* Assign it an SR of 1.

**(1 skill @ SR 8; 2 skills @ SR 6; 3 skills @ SR 3; 2 skills @ SR 2, 1 skill @ SR 1)**

It's important at this stage to record all skill SRs in light pencil as they have the potential to be increased later on.

## Skills

(Note: All broad skills are flush left, in bold; all sub-skill are indented below their associated broad skill.)

Note: Broad skills automatically have a default SR equal to half the SR of the highest ranked sub-skill beneath it. This means if you are already putting skill ranks in a sub-skill, it is not advisable or worthwhile to invest in the broad skill above that sub-skill.

### Mental-Based Skills

#### **AWARENESS**

CONCEALMENT, DISGUISE, OBSERVATION, SEARCH, SECURITY SYSTEMS, STEALTH, TRACKING

#### **COGNITION**

COMPUTATION, DEBATE, DEDUCTION, INSIGHT, MEDITATION, RECALL

#### **CRAFT\***

*All Craft specializations are various unique forms of sculpting, forming, or other creation. Examples include: Armorer, Blacksmith, Carpentry, Cooking, Forgery, Gunsmith, Painting, Sculpture, Weaving, Weaponsmith, Woodcarving, and Tinkering/Invention. Each unique Craft requires a separate specialization.*

#### **HANDLING**

ANIMAL CARE/TRAINING, RIDING, DRIVING, PILOTING\*

#### **INFLUENCE**

CHARM, DECEPTION, FEATS OF WILL, INTIMIDATION, LEADERSHIP, NEGOTIATION, PERSUASION, PROVOCATION

Note: If you'd like to assign OBSERVATION, RECALL, FEATS OF WILL, PERSUASION, RUNNING, FEATS OF ENDURANCE, BALANCE or DODGE as one of the core skills in step 3, simply choose an alternate sub-skill (mental or physical) to start at SR 3. For example, if you decide to create a character who is forgetful, you might substitute DEDUCTION or COMPUTATION for RECALL; for a character confined to a wheelchair, you might choose WHEELCHAIR as an alternate physical skill instead of RUNNING.

## KNOWLEDGE\*\*

*A wide range of possible skill specializations for the three most common game settings are listed below. Each specific field of Knowledge requires a separate specialization.*

## LANGUAGE\*

*Each new language skill requires a separate specialization.*

## PERFORMANCE

ACTING, DANCING, INSTRUMENT\*, ORATORY, SINGING

**\*These skills require further specialization. For broad skills with this designation, characters *cannot* acquire skill ranks in the generalized broad skill.**

## Physical -Based Skills

### ATHLETICS

ARMOR MOVEMENT, CLIMBING, FEATS OF ENDURANCE, FEATS OF STRENGTH, JUMPING, RUNNING, SWIMMING, TUMBLING/ACROBATICS

### COORDINATION

BALANCE, CATCHING, DODGE, ESCAPE ARTIST, PICKPOCKETING, ROPE USE, SLEIGHT OF HAND, THROWING

### MELEE WEAPONS

AXES/CLUBS/HAMMERS, KNIVES, REACH WEAPONS, SHIELDS, STAVES, SWORDS

### RANGED WEAPONS

ARCHERY, BLOWGUNS, CROSSBOWS, PISTOLS, RIFLES, SLINGS, TURRET/HEAVY

### THROWN WEAPONS

HATCHETS, JAVELIN, KNIVES, MISCELLANEOUS

### UNARMED COMBAT

BOXING, MARTIAL ARTS, WRESTLING

**\*\*For KNOWLEDGE specializations, choose from the list below, divided by game genre/setting.**

<u>FANTASY</u>	<u>MODERN</u>	<u>FUTURISTIC</u>
ACCOUNTING	ACCOUNTING	ADVANCED FARMING
ALCHEMY	ANATOMY	ADVANCED MEDICINE
AGRICULTURE/FARMING	ANTHROPOLOGY	ALIEN FAUNA
APPRAISAL	ARCHAEOLOGY	ALIEN FLORA
ARCANE/RELICS	ARCHITECTURE	ARCHITECTURE
ARCHITECTURE	ASTRONOMY	COMMERCE/TRADE
AREA/REGION	BIOLOGY	COMPUTERS
ARTILLERY/SIEGE	BOTANY	CRYPTOLOGY
ASTROLOGY	CHEMISTRY	CYBERNETICS
BUREAUCRACY	COMMERCE/TRADE	DEMOLITIONS
CARTOGRAPHY	COMPUTERS	ENERGY SYSTEMS

COMMERCE/TRADE	ENGINEERING	ENGINEERING
CREATURE LORE	ETIQUETTE	ETIQUETTE
CULTURE	FIRST AID	FIRST AID
DIPLOMACY	FISHING	FLEET TACTICS
ETIQUETTE	GAMBLING	GAMBLING
FIRST AID	HISTORY/LORE	HISTORY/LORE
FISHING	LAW	HOLOGRAPHICS
GAMBLING	LITERATURE	LAW
HERALDRY	MATHEMATICS	LITERATURE
HERBS/PLANT LORE	MECHANICS	MATHEMATICS
HISTORY/LORE	MEDICINE	NAVIGATION
LAW	OCCULT	PLANET/SYSTEM
MIDWIFERY	PHILOSOPHY	POLITICS
NAVIGATION	POLITICS	PSIONIC STUDIES
OCCULT	PSYCHOLOGY	QUANTUM SCIENCES
POISONS/DRUGS	PHYSICS	ROBOTICS
POLITICS	SPORTS	STARSHIP MECHANICS
RELIGION	STREETWISE	STREETWISE
SAILING	SURVIVAL	SURVIVAL
STREETWISE	TACTICS	TECHNICIAN
SURVIVAL	THEATRE/FILM	TERRAFORMING
TACTICS	THERAPY	XENO BIOLOGY
TRAPS	ZOOLOGY	ZERO-G

#### 4. Choose Strengths:

- Take one free **Prowess** strength in the first sub-skill chosen in step 3a above (SR 8). Record this on the first line of **Strengths** (middle column of the front page).
- You have 5 additional strength slots to allocate. Major strengths require 3 slots, Medium strengths 2 slots, and minor strengths 1 slot. Thus you could either choose: a) one Major strength and one Medium strength; b) one Major strength and two Minor strengths; c) two Medium strengths and one Minor strength; d) one Medium and *three* Minor strengths; or e) *five* Minor strengths (strengths with an \* can be stacked/chosen more than once).

When recording strengths, write the name of the strength followed by a brief reminder of what the strength does. (Don't worry about the cost column for simplified character creation.)

Note: Strengths are purposefully worded as descriptive traits. If a strength leaps out as describing the character you have envisioned, mark it as one of the strengths to consider acquiring.

#### Major Strengths

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
-----------------	--------------------------

<i>Agile</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> COORDINATION skill checks (broad or sub) and +1 to Action Score
<i>Alert</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> AWARENESS skill checks (broad or sub) and +1 to Action Score
<i>Athletic</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> ATHLETICISM skill checks (broad or sub) and +1 to Action Score
<i>Charismatic</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> INFLUENCE skill checks (broad or sub) and +1 to Action Score
<i>Dead Eye</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> RANGED WEAPONS and THROWN WEAPONS skill checks (broad or sub) and +1 to Action Score
<i>Fighter's Instincts</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> MELEE WEAPONS and UNARMED COMBAT skill checks (broad or sub) and +1 to Action Score
<i>Inquisitive</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> KNOWLEDGE skill checks (broad or sub)

### Moderate Strengths

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
<i>Aptitude</i>	+1 SN in chosen sub-skill; also -1 DL (+1 success) to checks with skill
<i>Artisan</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> CRAFT sub-skills
<i>Confident</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> HANDLING skill checks (broad or sub)
<i>Eloquent</i>	+1 SN/+1 success in native Language and +1 die for DEBATE & PERSUASION checks
<i>Indomitable</i>	+1 AR against all mental attacks and +1 SN/ +1 success in FEATS OF WILL checks
<i>Inexhaustible</i>	Ignore negative modifiers from Fatigue (physical or mental)
<i>Intelligent</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> COGNITION skill checks (broad or sub)
<i>Intuitive</i>	+1 SN and +1 success on all INSIGHT checks & 1 free "insight"/session
<i>Linguist</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> LANGUAGE sub-skills
<i>Mighty</i>	+1 SN/-1 DL in FEATS OF STRENGTH and ARMOR MOVEMENT skill checks & +1 melee damage
<i>Pain Tolerance</i>	MR and AP penalty from Wounds reduced by 1
<i>Quick Reflexes</i>	+1 BD against all melee attacks and +1 to Action Score
<i>Rapid Healing</i>	Healing rate for Wounds is doubled (½ normal healing time)
<i>Resilient</i>	Recovery rate for Strain is doubled (½ normal recovery time)
<i>Sharp Witted</i>	+1 SN/-1 DL for DEBATE or PERSUASION checks & +1 mental damage

<i>Tough</i>	+1 AR (Armor Rating) against all melee and ranged combat attacks
<i>Versatile</i>	+1 die for all skill checks of SR 3 or below
<i>Virtuoso</i>	-1 MR in <i>all</i> PERFORMANCE sub-skills

### Minor Strengths

(Strengths with an \* can be stacked/chosen more than once)

<u>Strength</u>	<u>Brief Description</u>
<i>Acute Sense</i>	-1 DL for all OBSERVATION checks involving the chosen sense
<i>Adaptable</i> *	+3 dice per game session which can be used on any check
<i>Affluent</i> *	+1 MC (raise Monetary Class by 1)
<i>Ambidextrous</i>	No penalty for using off-hand for checks (normally +2 DL)
<i>Committed</i> *	Increase core drives by 3 levels (translates into +1 Conviction; see step 8)
<i>Courageous</i> *	+1 AR (Armor Rating) against all fear-based mental attacks
<i>Decisive</i> *	+1 to Action Score
<i>Determined</i> *	+1 to base Tenacity
<i>Hardy</i> *	+1 to base Vitality
<i>Level Headed</i> *	+1 AR (Armor Rating) against all stress-based mental attacks
<i>Light Sleeper</i> *	-2 DL to OBSERVATION checks to wake up
<i>Lucky</i> *	May reroll 2 failed die rolls per game session
<i>Privileged</i> *	+1 SC (raise Social Class by 1)
<i>Prowess</i> *	-1 MR in one sub-skill (one time per sub-skill)
<i>Reactive</i> *	+1 to Action Score
<i>Resistance</i> *	+1 AR against specific physical attack, such as cold, poisons, or fire
<i>Stable</i> *	+1 to base Sanity
<i>Shrewd</i> *	+1 AR (Armor Rating) against all influence-based mental attacks
<i>Vigorous</i> *	+1 to base Endurance



Note: Strengths with more complex customization, including *Companion*, *Faction Ally*, *Item*, and *Friend/Connection*, have been omitted here and are only found in the full version of the Core Rulebook.

### 5. Choose Weaknesses:

You have 5 weakness slots to allocate. Major weaknesses require 3 slots, Medium weaknesses 2 slots, and minor weaknesses 1 slot. Thus you could either choose a) one Major weakness and one Moderate weakness; b) one Major weakness and two Minor weaknesses; c) two Medium weaknesses and one Minor weakness; d) one Medium and three Minor weaknesses; or e) five Minor weaknesses (Note: weaknesses with an \* can be stacked/chosen more than once).

Note: Like strengths, many weaknesses are purposefully worded as descriptive traits. If a weakness leaps out at you as potentially describing an aspect of the character you've envisioned, mark it as one of the weaknesses to consider acquiring.

Record the weaknesses you choose in the designated area in the center of the character sheet. When recording weaknesses, write the name of the weakness followed by a brief reminder of the weakness's effects. (Don't worry about the value column.)

#### Major Weaknesses

<u>Weakness</u>	<u>Brief Description</u>
<i>Clumsy</i>	+1 MR in <i>all</i> COORDINATION skill checks (broad or sub)
<i>Contemptible</i>	+1 MR in <i>all</i> INFLUENCE skill checks (broad or sub)
<i>Learning Disability</i>	+1 MR in <i>all</i> KNOWLEDGE skill checks (broad or sub)
<i>Oblivious</i>	+1 MR in <i>all</i> AWARENESS skill checks (broad or sub)
<i>Poor Fighter</i>	+1 MR in <i>all</i> MELEE WEAPONS and UNARMED COMBAT skill checks (broad or sub)
<i>Poor Shot</i>	+1 MR in <i>all</i> RANGED WEAPONS and THROWN WEAPONS skill checks (broad or sub)
<i>Unlucky</i>	Count both 1's and 2's when determining snags
<i>Weak</i>	+1 MR in <i>all</i> ATHLETICS skill checks (broad or sub)

#### Moderate Weaknesses

<u>Weakness</u>	<u>Brief Description</u>
<i>Illiterate</i>	Unable to read or write
<i>Monoglot</i>	+1 MR in <i>all</i> LANGUAGE skill checks
<i>Performance Anxiety</i>	+1 MR in <i>all</i> PERFORMANCE skill checks (broad or sub)
<i>Reckless</i>	+1 MR in <i>all</i> HANDLING skill checks (broad or sub)

<i>Simple Minded</i>	+1 MR in <i>all</i> COGNITION skill checks (broad or sub)
<i>Slow Healing</i>	Double required healing times (Wounds only)
<i>Sluggish</i>	-1 BD (Body Defense) <i>and</i> -1 Action Score

### Minor Weaknesses

(Weaknesses with an \* can be chosen more than once)

<u>Weakness</u>	<u>Brief Description</u>
<i>Absent Minded</i> *	Roll 1d12 each scene/encounter. On a roll of 1, have forgotten or misplaced something.
<i>Anxious</i> *	-1 MD against all stress-based mental attacks
<i>Craven</i> *	-1 MD against all fear-based mental attacks
<i>Dark Secret</i>	Another weakness/background aspect must be kept secret
<i>Debility</i> (2) *	+1 MR in <i>two</i> separate sub-skills
<i>Deep Sleeper</i> (3 lvls)	+3 DL to OBSERVATION checks to wake up
<i>Delusional</i> (2 lvls) *	+2 DL to DEDUCTION checks to perceive past false belief
<i>Destitute</i> *	-1 MC (lower Monetary Class by 1)
<i>Frail/Sickly</i> *	-1 to base Vitality
<i>Hardened</i> *	Decrease a core drive by 2 levels or two drives by 1 level (translates into -1 Conviction; see step 8)
<i>Impaired Sense</i> (2 lvls)*	+2 DL to all checks involving chosen sense
<i>Indecisive</i> *	-1 to Action Score
<i>Inept</i> *	+1 DL to all checks in one sub-skill (one time/skill)
<i>Lowborn</i> *	-1 SC (lower Social Class by 1)
<i>Naive</i> *	-1 MD against all influence-based mental attacks
<i>Obsession</i> (2 levels)*	2 DL mental attack if act contrary to obsession (no MD)
<i>Phobia</i> (2 lvls) *	2 DL mental attack if encounter feared stimulus (no MD)
<i>Prejudice</i> (2 levels) *	+2 DL to FEATS OF WILL checks to treat with respect
<i>Short Winded</i> *	-1 to base Endurance

<i>Stigmatized</i> *	+1 DL INFLUENCE for prejudiced group
<i>Timid/Flighty</i> *	-1 to base Tenacity
<i>Traumatic Experience</i> (2 lvls)*	2 DL mental attack if encounter situation reminiscent of event (no MD)
<i>Unstable</i> *	-1 to base Sanity
<i>Vulnerability</i> *	-1 BD against 1 specific physical attack (i.e., cold, poisons, fire)

Note: certain weaknesses with more complex customization, including *Addiction*, *Allergy*, *Dependency*, *Faction Enemy*, *Obligation*, *Physical Impairment*, *Rival/Foe*, and *Wanted* have been omitted here and are only found in the full version of the Core Rulebook.

## 6. Choose Traits:

- Traits are intended to be roleplaying aids. They have no mechanical effect on the game.
- Choose one of the following Positive/Neutral Traits. Record it on the Traits line under Strengths.

Record the Traits you choose in the designated sections in the center of the character sheet.

### Positive/Neutral Traits

*Appreciative/Grateful*  
*Assertive*  
*Beautiful*  
*Cautious*  
*Cheerful*  
*Collaborative*  
*Competitive*  
*Cool Under Pressure*  
*Confident*  
*Courteous*  
*Curious*  
*Detail Oriented*  
*Disciplined*  
*Elegant/Refined*

*Energetic*  
*Empathic*  
*Enthusiastic*  
*Flexible in Views*  
*Flirtatious*  
*Forgiving*  
*Friendly*  
*Generous*  
*Good Humored*  
*Hard Worker*  
*Honest*  
*Honorable*  
*Hums/whistles/sings spontaneously*  
*Impeccably Dressed*

*Independent*  
*Kind*  
*Laughs Easily*  
*Loyal*  
*Modest*  
*Optimistic*  
*Organized*  
*Patient*  
*Relaxed*  
*Stylish*  
*Tranquil*  
*Trusting*  
*Trustworthy*

- Choose at least *two* of the following Unfortunate Traits. Record them on the Traits line under Weaknesses.

### Unfortunate Traits

*Anti-social*  
*Arrogant*  
*Awkward*  
*Bad breath*  
*Bitter*  
*Blames Others*

*Body odor*  
*Boisterous*  
*Boorish*  
*Compulsive*  
*Critical*  
*Cynical*

*Disorganized*  
*Dissatisfied*  
*Distinguishing Trait*  
*Domineering*  
*Eccentric (define how)*  
*Easily Distracted*

*Fidgety*  
*Forgetful*  
*Impatient*  
*Impulsive*  
*Intolerant*  
*Jaded*  
*Loud/Annoying Laugh*  
*Manipulative*  
*Miserly*  
*Missing/Crooked Teeth*  
*No Filter*  
*Obsequious*

*Ornery/Ill-tempered*  
*Overconfident*  
*Overly Flamboyant*  
*Paranoid*  
*Pathological Liar*  
*Perfectionist*  
*Perpetual Scowl*  
*Pessimistic*  
*Procrastinator*  
*Profane*  
*Rebellious*  
*Repetitive Tick/Gesture*

*Rigid Views*  
*Secretive*  
*Short Fuse*  
*Signature Mark*  
*Sloppy*  
*Speech Impediment*  
*Superstitious*  
*Suspicious*  
*Talkative*  
*Tendency to Slouch*  
*Timid/Shy*  
*Uncouth/Socially awkward*

### 7. Gain Additional Skills:

Up to this point you've simply assigned skill ranks to skills. Now you will spend Experience Points (XP) to raise existing skills or acquire new ones. You have 20 XP to spend on this step. The cost of each skill rank (SR) is equal to the new SR being acquired (SR 1 costs 1 point, SR 2 costs 2 additional points, SR 3 costs 3 more points beyond that, and so on). This is shown in the table below:

An important consideration when purchasing sub-skills and raising skill ranks are the benchmarks of SR 3, 6, and 9. These are the default SRs for increased SN ratings (see step 9). SN ratings are among the most important determiners of many secondary character aspects, including Exertion, Defense ratings (step 10), and Action Scores (step 12).

**Skill Ranks**

Rank (SR)	Title	# of dice	XP Cost	Total XP Cost
1	Novice	1	1	1
2		2	2	3
3	Competent	3	3	6
4		4	4	10
5		5	5	15
6	Proficient	6	6	21
7		7	7	28
8	Expert	8	8	36
9		9	9	45
10	Master	10	10	55
11		11	11	66
12	Legendary	12	12	78

## 8. Define Drives and Motivations/Beliefs:

- Rank your character's value in each of the five core drives (*Ambition*, *Connection*, *Duty*, *Justice*, and *Knowledge*). Rank the drive with the highest dedication and value a 5, rank the next highest as 4, then 3, 2, 1.
- For your 3 highest drives (5, 4, and 3), create a motivation/belief statement defining how that drive is manifested for your particular character.

The core drives can be found in the lower left section of the character sheet (front side). Record the levels of each drive here. Beliefs and Motivations can be recorded in the center section just to the right of this. Each drive with a level of 3 or higher should have an associated motivation/belief statement.

Note: an overview of each of the five core [drives](#) can be found in Section 3, Game Play and Combat, page 32. Further advice and tips for crafting motivations and belief statements can be found in the full version of the Core Rulebook.

## 9. Fill in the Numbers:

Record **SR** (skill rank) for all skills

- sub-skill SRs should have already been established in steps 2, 3, and 7.
- Broad skills have a default SR equal to half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) the highest ranked sub-skill associated with it, rounded down (though some broad skills may have been independently raised in step 3 or step 7 above).
- Broad skills without training in any associated sub-skill will have an SR of 0.

Record **MR** (minimum roll) for all skills

- The base or default MR for all skills (broad or sub) is 9.
- The **Prowess** strength will reduce this to 8.
- Other strengths, such as **Artisan**, **Intelligent**, or **Virtuoso**, may also grant a -1 MR modifier, potentially reducing the MR as low as 7. These strengths will affect both broad skills and sub-skills.
- The **Debility** weakness will increase the MR to 10.
- Other weaknesses, such as **Clumsy**, **Contemptible**, or **Reckless** may also impose a +1 MR modifier, potentially raising the MR as high as 11. These weaknesses will affect both broad skills and sub-skills.
- All recorded skills—including broad skills without any training—should have an MR recorded for them (typically 9 as well).

Record **SN** (second nature) for all skills

- SN is usually equal to  $\frac{1}{3}$  the SR (rounded down), but . . .
- If a skill has a strength or weakness that modifies the MR, the SN ratio may change (see the table below). Simply find the total MR modifier along the top and match it to the Skill Rank (SR) on the left. (When it comes to MR, a negative number is a good thing.) Most minimally trained skills, including broad skills, will have an SN of 0.

### Second Nature (SN) Ratings

#### MR Modifier

SR	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
3	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2
4	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	2

5	0	0	1	<b>1</b>	2	2	3	3
6	0	1	1	<b>2</b>	2	3	3	4
7	0	1	1	<b>2</b>	3	3	4	4
8	0	1	2	<b>2</b>	3	4	4	5
9	0	1	2	<b>3</b>	3	4	5	6
10	0	1	2	<b>3</b>	4	5	6	6
11	0	1	2	<b>3</b>	4	5	6	7
12	1	2	3	<b>4</b>	5	6	7	8

Note: since all SN ratings are recorded on the character sheet, referencing this table will only be required during character creation (or advancement where SN is impacted).

Once you've filled in the SN for each skill, *all* boxes should be filled in next to each broad skill and sub-skill (SR, MR, and SN).

### 10. Calculate Exertion, Conviction, and Defense ratings

#### Exertion Aspects

<u>Exertion Aspect</u>	<u>Calculation</u>
Endurance	6 + 6 highest body-based SNs
Tenacity	6 + 6 highest mind-based SNs
Vitality	3 + 3 highest body SNs
Sanity	3 + 3 highest mind SNs
Conviction	½ total levels among all drives (round down)

**NOTE:** Native Language and Native Area/Culture SNs *DO NOT* contribute to Tenacity or MD (Mental Defense) calculations.

Note: certain strengths and weaknesses, such as *Hardy* or *Timid*, may modify these base numbers.

These values are recorded on the backside (back page) of the character

- For Endurance and Tenacity, the second level aspect (**Fatigued**) is ½ the base value (**Rested**); the third level (**Depleted**) is ½ the value of Fatigued (all rounded down).
- For Vitality and Sanity, the second level aspect (**Injured**) is ½ the base value (**Healthy**); the third level (**Critical**) is ½ the value of Injured (all rounded down).
- Calculate **BD** (Body Defense) and **MD** (Mental Defense)
- BD is equal to the *average* of the three highest Body-based SN ratings; MD is equal to the *average* of the three highest Mind-based SN ratings (both rounded down).

sheet, smack-dab in the middle.

BD is recorded in the upper left and MD in the upper right of the battle sheet (back page).

### 11. Record Monetary Class, Social Class, and Choose Basic Gear

- Monetary Class and Social Class will both be 3 unless modified by a strength (*Affluent* or *Privileged*) or a weakness (*Destitute* or *Lowborn*)
- Gear includes any armor, weapons, and equipment your character would logically and justifiably have on their person. The Monetary Level (ML) of such gear cannot exceed a character's Monetary Class. Full lists of general equipment can be found in the full version of the Core Rulebook.

Monetary Class and Social Class are recorded on the front side of the character sheet, center section.

## Armor

The table below lists various kinds of armor, including each one's Armor Rating (AR)—which reduces the amount of damage delivered in combat. The table also indicates any Action Score modifier imposed while wearing the armor (offset by the ARMOR MOVEMENT skill SN), as well as the ML (Monetary Level) of each type of armor (indicating the minimum Monetary Class required to obtain it).

If Armor is worn, write it under Gear/Equipment (lower left section of Battle Sheet). Record its AR in the upper left section of the Battle Sheet.

<u>Armor</u>	<u>AR</u>	<u>Action Score Mod*</u>	<u>ML</u>	<u>Genre/Setting</u>
Padded	1	-1	1	Fantasy/Pre-Modern
Leather	2	-2	2	Fantasy/Pre-Modern
Scalemail	3	-3	3	Fantasy/Pre-Modern
Chainmail	4	-4	4	Fantasy/Pre-Modern
Plate	5	-5	5	Fantasy/Pre-Modern
Heavy Plate	6	-6	6	Fantasy/Pre-Modern
Kevlar	4	-2	4	Modern
Las-Null	9**	-1	4	Futuristic/Sci-Fi
Mechanized Plate	10	-7	5	Futuristic/Sci-Fi

\* May be offset by the ARMOR MOVEMENT skill SN

\*\* Only reduces damage from laser-based attacks

## Shields

Similar to armor, shields also provide protection in the form of AR (Armor Rating). Like armor, they are also bulky and may reduce your character's overall Action Score.

Shield Type	Action Score Mod*	AR Mod w/o skill	AR Mod w/skill**
Small (Buckler)	-1	---	+AR = ½ SN
Medium (Kite or Heater Shield)	-3	+1 AR	+AR = ⅔ SN
Large (Tower or Pavis Shield)	-5	+2 AR	+AR = SN

\* May be offset by the SHIELD skill SN

\*\* Rounded down (if value is lower, default to AR Mod w/o skill)

If characters don't have one of these sub-skills (ARMOR MOVEMENT or SHIELD), the Action Score modifier may be reduced by the applicable broad skill SN instead (ATHLETICS or MELEE WEAPONS, respectively).

## Weapons

All weapons are divided into two overarching categories: **Melee Weapons** and **Ranged Weapons**. These broad overarching categories are further divided by time period and setting (for example, Firearms and Futuristic weapons will not be available in all game worlds and settings).

All applicable factors can be recorded on the Battle Sheet for each weapon a character normally uses.

**Melee Weapons** have three defining aspects: *Name*, *Damage Modifier*, and *Speed* (which translates into a negative Action Score modifier).

### Melee Weapons

<u>Weapon</u>	<u>Dmg</u>	<u>Speed*</u>	<u>Weapon</u>	<u>Dmg</u>	<u>Speed*</u>
Axe, Small/Hatchet	+1	-1	Mace	+2	-2
Axe, Medium	+2	-2	Morning Star	+3	-3
Axe, Great	+4	-4	Polearm, Bardiche	+2	-4
Club	+1	-2	Polearm, Halberd	+1	-2
Flail, Medium	+2	-3	Spear	+2	-2
Hammer, Hand	+1	-1	Staff, Quarter	0	0
Hammer, Great/War	+3	-3	Sword, Small	+2	-2
Knife, Small	0	0	Sword, Broad	+3	-3
Knife, Dagger	+1	-1	Sword, Great	+4	-4



\* May be offset by the FEATS OF STRENGTH skill SN

**Ranged Weapons** have five defining aspects: *Name, Damage Modifier, Speed, Reload,* and a *DL modifiers* for each of the six range categories (Point Blank, Short, Medium, Long, Distant, and Extreme). Ranged weapons are divided into four types: **Missile Weapons, Thrown Weapons, Firearms,** and **Futuristic.**

### Missile Weapons

Weapon	Dmg	Speed	Reload	PB	Short	Med	Long	Ext
Blowgun	-1	-3	1 AP	-1DL	0	+2DL	—	—
Bow, Compound	+2	-3	1 AP	—	-1DL	0	+1DL	—
Bow, Long	+2	-2	1 AP	—	-1DL	0	+1DL	—
Bow, Short	+1	-2	1 AP	-1DL	0	+1DL	—	—
Crossbow	+2	-1	2 AP	-2DL	-1DL	0	+1DL	—
Crossbow, Heavy	+4	-1	3 AP	-2DL	-1DL	0	+1DL	—
Sling	+2	-4	1 AP	-2DL	-1DL	0	+1DL	—

### Thrown Weapons

Weapon	Dmg	Speed	Draw	PB	Short	Med	Long	Ext
Bola	0	-7	+6	—	0	—	—	—
Chakra	+2	-2	+4	0	+1DL	—	—	—
Hatchet	+2	-3	+4	-1DL	0	+1DL	—	—
Javelin	+1	-3	+5	-1DL	0	+1DL	+3DL	—
Knife	+0	-2	+3	0	+1DL	—	—	—
Spear	+2	-4	+6	-1DL	0	+1DL	—	—

### Firearms

Weapon	Dmg	Spd	Reload	PB	Short	Med	Long	Ext
Pistol, Semiauto	+2	-1	1 AP	-1DL	0	+1DL	+3DL	—
Revolver, small	+2	-1	3 AP	-1DL	0	+1DL	+3DL	—
Revolver, large	+3	-2	3 AP	-2DL	-1DL	0	+2DL	—

Rifle, Assault	+5	-3	1 AP	-2DL	-1DL	0	+2DL	—
Rifle, Hunting	+2	-3	1 AP	-2DL	-1DL	0	+1DL	—
Shotgun	+4	-3	1 AP	-2DL	0	+1DL	+2DL	—
Shotgun, Dbl-barrel	+4	-3	2 AP	-2DL	0	+1DL	+2DL	—
Shotgun, Sawed-Off	+5	-3	1 AP	-3DL	0	+2DL	—	—
Sniper Rifle*	+5	-5	1 AP	—	-2DL	-1DL	0	+2DL
Submachine-gun	+4	-3	1 AP	-2DL	0	+1DL	+3DL	—

\*The use of a sniper rifle reduces the Fatality threshold by 1.

### Futuristic

Weapon	Dmg	Speed	Reload	PB	Short	Med	Long	Ext
Pistol, Laser	+3	-1	—	-1DL	0	+1DL	+2DL	—
Pistol, Pulse	+4	-2	1 AP	-2DL	-1DL	0	+1DL	—
Rifle, Laser	+4	-2	—	-2DL	-1DL	0	+1DL	+3DL
Rifle, Pulse	+5	-3	1 AP	-2DL	-1DL	0	+1DL	+4DL

## 12. Calculate Action Scores, and Action Points, and take 1 Hero Point

- Calculate **Action Scores**
  - Start with a base score of 6
  - Add the applicable skill's SN
  - Add any modifiers from strengths (i.e., **Decisive, Quick Reflexes**)
  - Subtract any modifiers from weaknesses (i.e., **Indecisive Sluggish**)
  - Subtract any Weapon Speed modifier (offset by FEATS OF STRENGTH SN)
  - Subtract any Shield modifier (offset by SHIELDS SN)
- Subtract any Armor Encumbrance modifier (offset by ARMOR MOVEMENT SN)
- After all calculations, record the final number as the Base Action Score for each form of combat
- **Action Points** are equal to  $\frac{1}{3}$  the total Action Score, rounded down.
- Finally, record **1 Hero Point** in the designated box (top of Battle Sheet)

The primary Action Score and Action Points are recorded just below the Exertion Aspects in the middle section of the Battle Sheet.

There are several sections of the character sheet that will still be blank at this point. Some of these, like **Race** and **Gender**, you can simply fill out on your own; others, like **Techniques** and **XP Towards Next Level**, will be added as your character progresses through the course of the game. If you would like to add any details of your character's background, relationships, or other information you think is worth noting, you can record these in the **Misc.** section on the Battle Sheet (back page).

**Note:** the equivalent point value of this Simplified Method of Character Creation simulates a 0 level starting character. If the GM permits you to start at a higher experience level (1, 2, 3, etc), you may receive additional points to spend in step 7, **Gain Additional Skills**, based on the following level table.

### Experience Levels

Level	Additional XP Required to Attain	Total XP Required	Total including starting XP
0	0	0	120
1	10	10	130
2	20	30	150
3	30	60	180
4	40	100	220
5	50	150	270
6	60	210	330
7	70	280	400
8	80	360	480
9	90	450	570
10	100	550	670
11	110	660	780
12	120	780	900
etc	And so on	And so on	And so on

## Advanced Character Creation

If you'd like to take your Protagonist Character to the next level, there are numerous additions included in the full Core Rulebook related to Character Creation. These include:

- The ability to customize characters using a point-buy Experience Point (XP) system;
- An in-depth exploration of drives, including advice on crafting beliefs and motivations to bring characters to life;
- Full descriptions of all Skills, Strengths, Weaknesses, Techniques, and Gear, along with guidelines on incorporating each of these into your character;
- Guidelines for choosing and creating alternate races;
- Advice for establishing relationships with other PCs.

# 3. Game Play

The purpose of this section is to cover the most essential elements of playing the *Untold* Roleplaying Game. It is broken down into four sections.

1. **Exertion, Strain, and Wounds**
2. **Drives, Beliefs, and Conviction**
3. **Experience and Progress**
4. **Combat**

Abbreviated terms found in this section:

AP—Action Point	MR—Minimum Roll
AR—Armor Rating	PC—Protagonist Character
BD—Body Defense	PF—Persistence Factor
DL—Difficulty Level	SR—Skill Rank
Dmg—Damage Modifier	SN—Second Nature
GM—Game Master	TL—Threat Level
MD—Mind Defense	XP—Experience Point

## Exertion, Strain, and Wounds

The various strenuous and taxing experiences characters pass through in *Untold* can be exhausting, both physically and mentally. The good news is that characters have a certain amount of energy reserves they can spend on various activities. This is represented by **Exertion**.

There are four unique aspects of Exertion, two mental (**Tenacity** and **Sanity**) and two physical (**Endurance** and **Vitality**). Each of these is further divided into three levels. The three levels of Endurance and Tenacity are **Rested**, **Fatigued**, and **Depleted**. The three levels of Vitality and Sanity are **Healthy**, **Injured**, and **Critical**.

- **Rested**, the first level of Endurance and Tenacity, represents each character's *initial* supply of energy and resistance to stress or Strain damage.
- **Fatigued**, the second level of Endurance and Tenacity, represents a character's deeper reserves of energy and Exertion. As soon as any points are depleted or spent from this second level, characters suffer the ill effects of being fatigued (see Effects of Damage and Overexertion, below).
- **Depleted**, the third and final level of Endurance and Tenacity, represents a character's last vestiges of energy. As soon as characters dip into this third level they suffer the additional ill effects of being depleted. Points in this third level are the very last dregs of energy that can be expended before either the character falls unconscious (in the case of Endurance) or the character enters a state of mental stupor and the precarious realms of damaging their own Sanity (in the case of Tenacity).

Endurance	Total Spent Total Mod		
	Total	Spent	Total Mod
<b>Rested</b>			—
<b>Fatigued</b>			-1 AP +1 MR
<b>Depleted</b>			-2 AP +2 MR

Tenacity	Total Spent Total Mod		
	Total	Spent	Total Mod
<b>Rested</b>			—
<b>Fatigued</b>			-1 AP +1 MR
<b>Depleted</b>			-2 AP +2 MR

Vitality	Total Spent Total Mod		
	Total	Spent	Total Mod
<b>Healthy</b>			—
<b>Injured</b>			-1 AP +1 MR
<b>Critical</b>			-2 AP +2 MR

Sanity	Total Spent Total Mod		
	Total	Spent	Total Mod
<b>Healthy</b>			—
<b>Injured</b>			-1 AP +1 MR
<b>Critical</b>			-2 AP +2 MR

- **Healthy**, the first level of Vitality and Sanity, represents each character's initial capacity for sustaining potentially life threatening damage, or Wounds. Wounds inflicted on this level, be they physical or mental, might also be considered minor or superficial.
- **Injured**, the second level of Vitality and Sanity, represents more serious damage or wounds. Such wounds, if left unchecked can lead to being permanently maimed (in the case of physical wounds) or permanent mental disorders (in the case of mental wounds).
- **Critical**, the third and final level of Vitality and Sanity, represents a character's last vestiges of physical and mental health. If the points in this level are ever fully depleted the result is either complete and irretrievable madness (in the case of Sanity) or death (in the case of Vitality).

Rules for [calculating each Exertion aspect](#) can be found in Chapter 2, Character Creation, page 22.

## Exertion as Damage Capacity

In addition to being a source of extra dice for skill checks, Exertion also represents a character's overall health and damage capacity. There are two types of damage: **Strain** and **Wound**. Strain damage is dealt to the first level aspects of Endurance and Tenacity. Wound damage is dealt to the second level aspects of Vitality and Sanity. Physical strain damage is caused by such things as poisons, extreme heat or cold, and unarmed combat attacks. Mental strain damage is caused by fear, stress, influence, and moral infractions. Physical wound damage is caused by most weapons, as well as acid, fire, and high voltage electricity. Mental wound damage is typically only caused by truly horrific, unnatural, or mentally scarring occurrences.

## Effects of Damage and Over Exertion

As characters expend ever greater amounts of energy or sustain more serious wounds, their ability to perform at optimum levels will decrease. Each time a secondary or tertiary level aspect is breached, characters suffer an additional -1 Action Point (AP) and +1 MR penalty—and all such penalties are cumulative.

If characters ever lose all points in the Depleted level of Endurance, they will immediately fall unconscious for 1d12 rounds. After this time has elapsed and they regain consciousness, characters naturally restore 1 point in the Depleted level. If characters ever lose all points in the Depleted level of Tenacity, they will remain conscious, but afterwards all 2's rolled will contribute to snags in the same way as 1's.

If characters ever lose all points in the Critical level of Vitality, they die. If characters ever lose all points in the Critical level of Sanity, they become irreversibly insane and can no longer be considered a free-willed Protagonist Character (they become an NPC and must be turned over to the GM).

Note that it's impossible to completely deplete one's stores of energy in Endurance and continue to exert oneself and draw energy from Vitality, as fully expending all points in the Depleted level will render a character unconscious. Characters *can* continue to expend past the Depleted designation of mental exertion and draw energy from Sanity, though they will suffer for doing so, starting with 2's as well as 1's contributing to snags—in addition to all other modifiers to MR and AP.

## Rest and Recovery of Spent Endurance and Tenacity

There are four situations in which Endurance and/or Tenacity can be restored: *Full Rest*, *Partial Rest*, *Troubled Rest*, and *Quick Recovery*.

### *Full Rest*

The ideal (and most effective) method for restoring strain damage is to spend a full 48 hours receiving proper rest, relaxation, and nourishment. This includes sleeping in a comfortable bed, eating at least two square meals a day, and relaxing without any looming sense of risk, danger, or stress. This could include an inn or hotel, a place of peace and safety

(e.g., Rivendell in *The Lord of the Rings*), or one's own home. A full two days of rest restores *all* levels of spent Endurance and Tenacity, including any strain damage/expenditure in Fatigued or Depleted.

### *Partial Rest*

The next method for restoring expended exertion is to spend 8-12 hours receiving rest, relaxation, and nourishment. This includes sleeping in a comfortable bed, eating at least two square meals, and relaxing without any looming sense of risk, danger, or stress. A partial rest allows characters to restore 2d12 + their experience level in total spent exertion. These points may be distributed between Endurance and/or Tenacity in any way the player chooses, though it is often advisable to restore spent points in ascending order of levels (i.e., Depleted level points should be replenished before Fatigued, and Fatigued level points should be replenished before points in the Rested level are restored).

Note: if characters are unable to get a full 6-8 hours of rest, they may only be able to restore half the amount of Exertion they would otherwise regain.

### *Troubled Rest*

Unfortunately, the ideal conditions of a Full or Partial Rest cannot always be realized. If characters are forced to sleep on rough ground, in a lumpy bed, or under a leaky roof, it will not be fully restful; if unable to eat hearty, balanced meals, they may not receive a full degree of nourishment; and if stress and danger are a continual threat, they will not be able to alleviate all of their accumulated mental and physical strain. In such conditions, for every 6 hours of rest, characters will regain 1d12 + their experience level in total points of spent Exertion. This total may be divided however the player chooses between Endurance and Tenacity. Points in the Depleted level must be regained before Fatigued, and Fatigued must be replenished before Rested level points can be restored.

Note: if a 12 is ever rolled on a recovery die roll, players may roll another die and add the total of both rolls to determine the amount of total Exertion restored.

### *Quick Recovery*

Using this method, characters may spend 1 Action Point in the midst of combat or other high stress situations to recover 2 points of Exertion.

## Overview of Recovery

<u>Type of Rest</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Effect</u>
Full Rest	Full rest and nourishment free of risk	12 hours	Restore all
Troubled Rest	Anything which fails to meet standards of full rest	6 hours	1d12 + lvl
Quick Recovery	Spend 1 Action Point to restore 2 points of Exertion	1 AP	2 points

## Healing and Recovery of Damaged Vitality and Sanity

Without medical (or magical) aid, the healing of wound damage—be it physical or mental—requires much longer to recover. The conditions and time frames for healing wound damage are outlined below.

### *Ideal Conditions*

When the circumstances and conditions for recovering from injuries and wounds are ideal, characters can recover 1d6 (1d12/2) + ½ their experience level (rounded down) in Vitality or Sanity every 24 hours. Ideal conditions for healing Vitality damage include consistent care, a sanitary environment, and periodic changing of bandages; for Sanity damage it might include peaceful surroundings and some form of therapeutic support. Professional medical care facilities might

accelerate the rate of healing.

### Substandard Conditions

When the circumstances and conditions for recovering from injuries and wounds are *not* ideal, characters can recover a maximum of 1+ half (½) their experience level (rounded down) in Vitality or Sanity every 48 hours. Substandard conditions might consist of an unsanitary environment, unskilled care, and/or substandard rations. It might also mean that the environment is not conducive to healing, be it mental or physical.

Note: First Aid and medical (or magical) interventions will often accelerate the healing process for physical wounds. Likewise, therapy and psychological treatment can help in healing mental wounds. Rules for each of these can be found in the full version of the Core Rulebook.

### Overview of Healing

<u>Conditions</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Effect</u>
Ideal	Consistent and sanitary care conducive to healing	24 hours	1d6 + lvl
Substandard	Most environments/care below ideal conditions	48 hours	1 + lvl

### Putting it all Together

Exertion plays two important roles in the *Untold* roleplaying game: 1) as a resource for gaining additional dice for skill checks; and 2) as a gauge of a character's health and damage capacity. There are two types of Exertion: physical and mental. As characters deplete Exertion in the first level aspects of Endurance and Tenacity, they will move from an energized and Rested state to being Fatigued and eventually Depleted. Each of these levels—Rested, Fatigued, and Depleted—have a limited supply of points. As soon as characters expend points in any of the secondary or tertiary levels, they will suffer certain negative effects (+1 MR and -1 AP each). Maxing out the points in the final (Depleted) level of Endurance will render a character unconscious. Maxing out all points in the Depleted level of Tenacity will cause both 1's and 2's to contribute to snags. The second level aspects (Vitality and Sanity) also have three levels: Healthy, Injured, and Critical. While strain damage is dealt to Endurance and Tenacity, wound damage is dealt to Vitality and Sanity. As characters take damage in the Injured and Critical levels, they will also suffer equivalent penalties to performance (+1 MR and -1 AP). Maxing out all points in the Critical level of Sanity results in permanent and irreversible insanity. Maxing out the points in the Critical level of Vitality results in death. Exertion can be recovered with rest and, if available, medical aid. The standard rate of recovery depends on the aid rendered and the conditions of the recovery.

*Example 1: In the aftermath of an invasion of extra-dimensional creatures, Dorothea has lost her entire store of Tenacity. She is mentally shaken, fatigued, and utterly depleted. Because of her mental exhaustion, she is at +2 MR to all checks, -2 AP, and is more prone to mistakes (any rolls of 1 or 2 now contribute to snags). Dorothea has locked herself in her basement, but she hears a scratching on the door and a whining from outside. Pug-Mutton! She rushes to the door and flings it open—only to find her beloved dog is missing one of his legs and his whole left side has a long raking wound filled with a slimy green mucus. She screams and must face the horror of Pug-Mutton's unnatural wounds—a TL 3 attack. The GM rules that Dorothea must make a FEATS OF WILL check. She is at +2 MR to all checks, which means she only achieves a success on a roll of 11 or 12. She somehow manages to achieve 1 success. Still, she takes 2 wound damage to her Healthy level Sanity. Then Pug-Mutton whines and glances up the stairs, to the shadow of something large and inhuman blocking the light.*

## Drives, Beliefs, and Conviction

### Character Drives

Each character has five distinct drives that define what motivates them. These five core drives are: *Ambition*, *Connection*, *Duty*, *Justice*, and *Knowledge*.

- **Ambition**—this drive is built upon a desire for status, fame, wealth, influence, authority, or any other marker of power and prestige within the sphere of influence the character occupies. It also encompasses the pursuit of honor, praise, achievement, competency, and excellence. Finally, it could involve the simple need for security, stability, and control. A low level in this drive suggests a more care-free attitude or a more austere lifestyle.
- **Connection**—this drive centers on the relationships in a character’s life, whether they be friendships, familial, or romantic. Compassion and beneficence could be part of this drive, as could seeking atonement or forgiveness, or a desire for peace and harmony. This drive could also involve a connection with a higher power (whether real or imagined) or with a religious order or creed. Creativity may also be part of this drive in that the character is connecting with an expressive medium, or, in the case of entertaining, also connecting with an audience. A low level value in this drive may suggest a desire for independence or even an eschewing of connections.
- **Duty**—this drive is associated with ideals such as fulfilling responsibilities, keeping one’s word, fulfilling oaths, meeting obligations, doing what is expected, and adhering to one’s station in a society or organization. It could also involve maintaining traditions and norms. A low level in this drive may indicate a more individualistic, self-centered, or free-wheeling attitude.
- **Justice**—this drive is focused on the ideals of seeking equity, fairness, order and/or balance. It is concerned with a sense of right or righteousness, an obsession with the law—either in adhering to just laws or overthrowing unjust ones—and a dedication to what is perceived to be right, good, or just. It may also motivate characters to aid or protect the less fortunate, or to champion the cause of a disadvantaged subset of the population. A low level in this drive might apply to a character with a more unconcerned or *lais-e-fair* attitude.
- **Knowledge**—this drive involves a pursuit of learning, understanding, and enlightenment. Being driven by *Knowledge* may also indicate a need to uncover or reveal secrets, a desire to discover previously unknown facts, or a dedication to truth and reality in general. A low level in this drive might indicate a limited education or a preference for more hands-on activities.

### Ranking Character Drives

Each character has 15 levels to distribute among their core drives. For simplicity, players can simply rank them from 1 to 5 ( $1+2+3+4+5=15$ ). However, these 15 levels may be distributed in any manner players choose, as long as the total equals 15 (0 level is also acceptable). There are only two restrictions on how these levels are distributed: 1) the highest value drive must have a minimum level of 5; and 2) no aspect can be assigned a level greater than 8. It is also recommended (though not absolutely necessary) that each of the five drives be assigned a different level rating. This helps differentiate their importance and creates a kind of hierarchy of value and influence on character actions. Below is a breakdown of each level:

Level of Drive	Definition/Explanation
0	No regard or feeling whatsoever in regard to the value or drive.
1	Minimum possible regard for the drive or value; only the very slightest twinge of remorse if act contrary to this drive.
2	Minor regard or feeling related to the drive. Minimal pangs of conscience when violated.



3	Medium or noticeable feeling/regard towards the value/drive (minimum level required for an associated motivation or belief).
4	Above average regard for the drive. Somewhat significant importance to the character.
5	Significant importance to the individual.
6	High regard or feeling in relation to the value or drive.
7	Very high regard. Very serious remorse if individual acts contrary to the drive or belief.
8	Extremely high regard or devotion; zealous commitment to the drive or value
9	Borderline fanatical regard or feeling; complete devotion.
10	Fanatical/overzealous feeling or regard.
12	Unbelievably fanatical, possibly even pathological.

Though the base number of levels allocated to drives is constant across all Protagonist Characters, additional levels may be purchased through the **Committed** strength. This base number can also be reduced through the **Hardened** weakness. However, for starting characters, the maximum number that can be assigned to any one drive is 8, and 21 is the maximum number of total levels a starting character can have among all drives.

## Defining Your Character’s Motivations and Beliefs

Once a character’s core drives are ranked, the next step is to articulate specific statements of belief or motivation for each drive with a level of 3 or higher. Such belief/motivation statements are simply brief phrases outlining how a particular drive manifests itself in the beliefs and goals of a given character. Each statement should be centered in the character, but will ideally be connected in some way to the larger setting and game world as well. For example, a character with a level 4 in *Duty* might have a belief of: “I am dedicated to serving and protecting the King of Rhodenia”, while a character with a level 5 in *Justice* might have a statement, “I will restore the rightful King of Rhodenia to the throne at any cost.”

Additional advice and tips for crafting motivations and beliefs can be found in the full version of the Core Rulebook.

## Motivations, Drives, and Character Choice

In *Untold*, Drives and Motivations are meant to influence each character’s actions. Put another way, they are meant to help propel the story forward. Players should always be encouraged to align their choices and actions with their characters’ defining motivations. Yet there may be times when players will exhibit an instinctive tendency to protect their characters or to avoid danger or risk. At other times, their own real-world morals and values may be imposed—consciously or unconsciously—on those of their characters. For example, an opportunity within the course of the story to acquire money, prestige, or power may sometimes tempt a player while being entirely contrary to the driving motivations of the character. Conversely, a player’s own moral compass may find one of those same motivations (wealth, power, or prestige) abhorrent, yet must subvert their own sensibilities to those of the character they are playing. If something like this ever occurs, the GM may simply remind the players to reference their characters’ motivations and make sure they are aligned with their character’s actions. Yet ultimately, players must never be forced to choose any specific course or action for their

character. If players wish to choose an action that runs contrary to one of their characters' core Drives and motivations, they may certainly do so. However, there will invariably be consequences for such an action. Characters who choose to act in a manner contrary to one of their core defining drives and motivations will automatically suffer a moral-based mental attack with a TL equal to the level of the Drive. Moreover, this pang of conscience cannot be defended against, meaning MD has no effect and the character will suffer the full force of the attack.

*Example: Sir Narrin (who wants to be known far and wide as Sir Narrin the Mighty) desperately wants to grow in fame and renown. This drive (Ambition) has a level of 5 with an accompanying Motivation/Belief statement of: "I will be renowned across the realm". After slaying a rival in the Haphtael swamp, he can now take the man's sword (and possibly his head) back to the capital city triumphant, knowing this will surely increase his renown. But then Sir Narrin spots his rival's squire trapped in a nearby copse of strangle vines. He considers the sword—also sinking into the swamp—and the boy about to be pulled under the surface by the vines. Swearing aloud, Sir Narrin decides to leave the sword and rescue the boy. Since abandoning the sword of his rival is going against Sir Narrin's core drive and motivational statement, he immediately suffers a moral-based mental attack (cursing himself for a fool), and takes 5 Tenacity strain damage.*

## Conviction Points

Conviction points are directly tied to your character's drives. The number of Conviction points your character has is equal to  $\frac{1}{3}$  the total levels among the five core drives, rounded down. Thus, a character with 15 levels among all drives (the base starting amount) would have 5 points of Conviction.

Conviction points differ from Exertion in several ways. First, Conviction is always a far more limited resource. Second, Conviction is derived from a character's drives while Exertion is tied to a character's skills (specifically skill SN ratings). Finally, while Exertion grants players additional dice to spend on checks, Conviction is used to *reroll* failed die rolls.

## Restoring Conviction

In order to restore spent Conviction, characters must engage in some kind of personalized ritual. This is not necessarily a ritual in the religious sense of the word (though it certainly can be). Rather it is a routine or sequence of activities that have deep personal meaning for the character. For one character this could be meditative time spent listening to classical music; for another, playing classical music on the violin. It could be deep cleaning one's house or cleaning and polishing a cherished weapon. It could involve meditation, prayer, or solitary time in nature. The exact form of the ritual should be decided on by each individual player. Regardless of its form, 20 minutes engaged in the ritual are required to restore 1 point of spent Conviction (or 3 points/hour). Also note that with the exception of a Full Rest, this time cannot be concurrent with time spent restoring spent Exertion.

## Putting it all Together

All characters start with 15 levels to distribute among the five core drives. Any drive with a level of 3 or higher also warrants a statement of motivation/belief defining how that particular drive manifests itself in the outlook and behavior of the character. Players may choose to increase the ratings of any of their character's drives by investing XP in the **Committed** strength. These levels may also be decreased through the **Hardened** weakness. Each character's Conviction is equal to one-third ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) the total levels of all their drives. Thus, most characters will automatically start with 5 points of Conviction. Conviction can be spent to reroll failed die rolls on skill checks.

*Example 1: Clarice has just spotted a shiny glinting object at the top of the stairs above her. A moment later she hears the scream of a girl taken hostage by thugs tromping down the stairs below. The dilemma is that she has a level 4 drive in Knowledge with a belief of: "I am intensely curious about the new and interesting", and a level 5 Justice drive with a belief of: "I will safeguard and help the weak and innocent". She experiences a grueling moment of hesitation, curses under her breath that she has to leave the shiny object behind, and runs down the stairs after the thugs.*

*Example 2: In the latest game session, the PCs rescue a bunch of children from an orphanage fire. The experience moves one of the players to make aiding children a new motivation and to increase the level of her Justice core drive. Having a powerful story-centered reason for the change, all that remains is spending the XP on the **Committed** strength to solidify this change in her character. She opts to raise Justice from level 2 to level 3. Because it's now a level 3 drive Melanie must also create a belief statement (something related to aiding children). She then adds up the total levels of her drives and divides by 3 to determine if there is any increase to her Conviction.*

## Experience and Progress

Protagonist Characters are never static. They grow and change, gradually increasing in strength, skill, and ability. This progress and growth is represented by Experience Points (or XP). These points can be used for the same range of improvements present in character creation—to increase skills, purchase techniques, obtain strengths, and buy off weaknesses. Once characters attain enough points, they advance to a new [experience level](#), as shown on page 27.

Characters normally start at level 0, though level 1 is fairly common as well. Although it is possible for Protagonist Characters to “advance” to a higher level in the context of character creation, they normally only attain higher levels during the course of gameplay.

## Level Milestone Awards

Beginning at level 2, every level advancement comes with a Milestone Award. This is simply an additional bonus reward for achieving a new experience level. Subject to GM approval, players may choose to acquire any of the following strengths or techniques each time they advance to a new level.

**Potential Milestone Awards:** Choose either one strength or one technique from the lists below. In the case of techniques, each can only be acquired once per specific sub-skill.

GMs may also require a story/narrative justification for certain strengths or techniques gained from Milestone Awards. For example, how did the Faction Ally connection come about or what in-game experience may have made a character more courageous, hardy, or level-headed. Virtually every listed strength and technique may require such a story-based justification. Also note that the GM may restrict Milestone Awards to those which make sense in the progression of the game.

Strength	Effect
<i>Adaptable</i>	2 extra dice/game session (can be spent on any checks)
<i>Committed</i>	+3 levels to drives (+1 Conviction)
<i>Courageous</i>	+1 MD vs fear-based mental attacks
<i>Decisive*</i>	+1 Action Score
<i>Determined</i>	+1 Tenacity
<i>Faction Ally</i>	+1 Faction relationship
<i>Hardy</i>	+1 Vitality
<i>Level-Headed</i>	+1 MD vs stress-based mental attacks
<i>Light Sleeper</i>	-2 DL to awaken

<b><i>Lucky</i></b>	reroll 2 failed die rolls per game session
<b><i>Prowess</i></b>	- 1 MR in chosen sub-skill (only 1x/skill)
<b><i>Reactive*</i></b>	+1 Action Score
<b><i>Resistance</i></b>	+1 AR vs specific form of physical attack
<b><i>Stable</i></b>	+1 Sanity
<b><i>Vigorous</i></b>	+1 Endurance

<b>Technique</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Min SR</b>
Focused Specialization	+1 die in specialized aspect of sub-skill	4
Honed Reaction	+1 Action Score in chosen sub-skill	8
Increased Precision	Reroll 1 failed roll when using chosen sub-skill	6
Trained Enhancement	-1 MR in chosen sub-skill	9

\*Note: 6 is the maximum Action Score bonus which can be acquired between these two strengths.

GMs may also opt to make other techniques available as level milestone awards to characters. Such optional techniques can be found in the full version Core Rulebook.

## Receiving Experience Points

Experience Points (XP) are given to players at the completion of each game session. At that time, the GM awards points based on the following criteria.

- *Showing up* (This is basically a free or baseline XP for participating in a given session, typically between 1-3 XP)
- *Actively collaborating in the game/story session* (+1 XP for every hour of gameplay or every major event the player and their character were actively engaged in)
- *Spending a Hero Point* (+1 XP for every Hero Point spent)
- *Succeeding at an extraordinary heroic action* (without spending a Hero Point to do so)
- *Overcoming or defeating an especially difficult adversary or obstacle* (1-6 XP)
- *Acting in accordance with one's beliefs and most important drives* (Can receive additional XP if more than one belief or motivation was invoked in the course of the session)
- *Especially effective collaboration or collective effort*
- *Solving a problem in an innovative or creative way*
- *Doing anything else that was particularly memorable or awesome*

Although there is no set limit to the number of XP that can be awarded each game session, it is recommended that no fewer than 6 and no more than 15 XP be awarded to each player in any one game session. The average is typically between 8 and 12 XP per session.

Characters may also be awarded bonus XP at the GM's discretion. Reasons for bonus XP might include exemplary role

playing or embodiment of one's character, embracing any character weaknesses which may have arisen during the course of the game, or giving crucial aid to an ally.

## Advice for Spending Experience Points

Unless the GM imposes restrictions on how they can be applied, players are free to spend Experience Points in any way they see fit. The same 10 XP could be spent to raise a skill from SR 9 to 10, or to raise a skill from SR 0 to SR 4, or to purchase a strength, such as **Prowess** or **Determined**, or in buying down a weakness, such as **Unstable** or **Naive**. This freedom of allocation is one of the things that makes XP so extraordinary.

When deciding how and where to place your hard-earned XP, there are certain aspects of the game which are worth taking into account. Foremost of these is the impact of raising Second Nature (SN) ratings.

**Increasing SN:** Increasing the skill rank (SR) of skills is pretty straightforward: simply spend the required points to reach the new SR (see [table](#) on page 20) and you're all set to receive additional dice when using that skill. But whenever this increase in SR also increases a skill's Second Nature (SN) rating, it can have a far greater impact on your character. The same principle is true for acquiring any strength or technique which lowers MR as these can have a significant effect on the SN of any skill (or skills) they are connected with. Remember that several important aspects are directly tied to your character's highest SNs. These include Endurance, Tenacity, Vitality, Sanity, Defense ratings—BD and MD—and Action Scores.

One plausible restriction GMs might impose on skill progression is that no skill can be raised by more than one rank at a time, simulating gradual and incremental advancement in proficiency.

*Example: Allen's character, Vindalia, has just advanced from SR 9 to SR 10 in her ARCHERY skill. This also happens to raise her SN in that skill from 4 to 5. Before this, Vindalia's six highest body based SNs were 4, 2, 1, 1, 1, and 0. Including the base of 6, that comes out to a total of 15. Since Vindalia's highest body-based SN has increased, this will raise both her Rested level Endurance (to 16) and her Critical level Vitality (to 11). Her BD is unchanged (it remains at 2—though just one more increase among her three highest body-based SNs will raise it to 3). Finally, Vindalia's Action Score will also be increased by 1 due to the increase in SN.*

## Putting it all Together

As characters progress through the story of the game, they will receive Experience Points (XPs). These can be awarded for a wide range of actions and activities, including exemplary roleplaying, overcoming challenging obstacles, and contributing to the collaborative story. There is no actual limit to the number of Experience Points PCs can receive each gaming session, though it is typically between 8 and 12 XP per game session. XPs can be used to increase Skill Ranks, purchase techniques and strengths, or buy off weaknesses. Once a certain threshold of points is reached, characters will advance to a new experience level. When allocating XP, it's important to remember the impact of increased SN on various character aspects including Exertion ratings, BD/MD, and Action Scores.

*Example 1: After completing a particular harrowing game session, each player receives 3 points for participating in the story over a 3 hour session, and 2 points for just showing up to play. The GM also awards 3 bonus points to each character: 2 points for overcoming an especially difficult adversary, and 1 for collaboration and problem solving. That's a total of 8 XP awarded to each PC as a baseline. In addition, each PC receives an additional 4 XP from playing their weaknesses, acting in accordance with their drives, and from succeeding at some difficult tasks. That's 12 XP awarded to each player.*

*Example 2: After receiving 10 XP from her most recent game session, Clarice's character has enough points to advance to experience level 3. After recording that on her character sheet, Clarice decides to spend some of her Experience Points. In addition to the 10 XP she just received, she had also saved up 5 additional points, giving her a total of 15 points to spend, if she*

chooses. She wants to raise one SR 8 skill to SR 9, so that will cost 9 points. She also wants to remove one of her Unfortunate Traits that Clarice doesn't think fits her character anymore. The GM rules that will cost just 2 points. She still has 4 points left to spend, but she decides to hold on to those points. Because her character advanced to level 3, she also receives a level milestone award and opts to acquire the **Determined** strength which increases her Tenacity by +1.

## Combat

In *Untold*, combat comes in two forms: physical and mental. **Physical combat** is often exactly what you might expect: everything from a barroom brawl to a firefight with guns blazing. Yet there are other less obvious forms of physical combat as well. Resisting poison or disease would be considered a kind of physical combat, as would withstanding freezing cold or intense heat or flames. **Mental combat** can include any attempt to influence or wear down the resolve of another, as well as being confronted with anything inherently stressful, frightening, or conscience-wracking.

## Attacks and Defenses

Anything that can potentially harm or weaken a character—either physically or mentally—is considered an **Attack**. Any means of avoiding or thwarting such attacks is considered a **Defense**.

- **Physical Attacks:** The most obvious physical or Body-based attacks are those from various kinds of weapons—fangs, fists, or firearms. Yet effects such as fire, cold, and electricity, along with poisons, toxins and disease, are all considered physical attacks as well.
- **Mental Attacks:** Mental or Mind-Based attacks may be a little less obvious. Something inherently frightening (along with anything characters have *learned* to be frightened of) will produce a *fear*-based mental attack. Any tense or high stress situation will inflict a *stress*-based mental attack. Acting contrary to one's conscience or core drives will result in a *moral*-based mental attack. And, of course, engaging in persuasion or any contest of wills often involves a series of *influence*-based mental attacks.

## Attack Threat Level (TL)

In the course of game play, characters may encounter a wide range of adverse physical and mental conditions. Whenever one of these adverse conditions or stimuli is encountered, it is treated as an attack. Every form of attack has a specific **Threat Level (TL)** assigned to it. The TL indicates the severity of the attack, or how toxic or potent the stimuli is (e.g. a virus for the common cold versus the Ebola virus).

Threat Levels (TLs) are roughly equivalent to the basic Difficulty Levels (DLs), and typically also range from TL 1 to 12. Thus a TL 1 attack would be fairly benign or easy to shrug off while a TL 10 attack would be absurdly toxic or dangerous.

## Defense Rating

Each character also has passive (or, if you prefer, *always active*) Defense ratings. These represent the various factors that enable characters to evade, ward off, or otherwise resist attacks. As there are two types of attacks—mental and physical—there are also two types of Defense ratings—Mind and Body. For most characters, each Defense rating is equal to the *average* of the three highest SNs in each skill category, rounded down (see [Calculating Defense ratings](#) on page 22).

Defense ratings might also be thought of as a *threshold* or *barrier* that attacks must overcome in order to deal damage to a character.

## Calculating Damage

The Threat Level of an attack is compared against the defender's Defense rating. For mental attacks, defenders compare their MD (Mind Defense) against the TL (Threat Level) of the attack. For physical attacks, defenders compare their BD

(Body Defense) against the TL of the attack. If the defender's Defense rating (BD or MD) is *equal to or greater than* the TL of the attack, no damage is dealt—the defender is able to instinctively defend against the attack (i.e., one's immune system resists the disease or toxin, or one's mental faculties remain calm and unperturbed in the face of stress or fear). If the TL of the attack is *higher* than the BD/MD, the character suffers damage equal to the difference.

Thus, if a character had a BD of 2 and had to run through a level 7 fire, he would suffer 5 points of physical wound damage. If the same character ran through a TL 2 fire, he would suffer 0 damage. If a character had an MD of 3 and had to endure a TL 4 stress attack, she would take 1 point of mental strain damage (more on strain and wound damage below).

## Resisting Attacks

Although Mind and Body Defense (MD and BD) are the default mechanisms for mitigating damage from mental and physical attacks, it is possible to consciously resist attacks as well. The FEATS OF ENDURANCE skill may be used to defend against and resist the adverse effects of poisons, disease, cold, heat, and so on. Similarly, the FEATS OF WILL skill may be used to defend against many forms of mental attack, including stress, fear, horror, and influence. Note that choosing such resistance must be consciously engaged in. For example, if a character is unaware that they have been subjected to poison, disease, or psychological influence, they cannot *consciously* resist the effects and must rely solely on their Body or Mind Defense (BD or MD). Whenever a player/character chooses to resist, the number of successes achieved replaces the normal Defense (BD or MD).

Note that when consciously resisting attacks using either FEATS OF ENDURANCE or FEATS OF WILL, the total successes achieved effectively becomes the new BD or MD. Thus, the first successes achieved are needed to merely replace the inherent passive defense. Because of this, in many cases it is often better to simply rely on the passive defense of MD and BD.

## Defending Against Attacks

When it comes to defending against a physical combat attack—also referred to as *blocking* or *parrying*—characters simply use the same or a closely aligned skill to defend (i.e., SWORDS to parry a sword attack, BOXING or MARTIAL ARTS to block an UNARMED COMBAT attack). The DODGE skill may also be utilized to simply try and *avoid* a physical combat attack. In all such cases the goal is to achieve enough successes to match or exceed the successful hits of an attack.

When defending against an INFLUENCE-based attack one can also use a comparable skill (PERSUASION, CHARM, etc.) to defend. Simply make the applicable defense check and cancel damage equal to the number of successes achieved. Also note that such defense cannot be undertaken at the same time as any other action; it must be all or nothing. So if you want to defend or parry an attack you cannot simultaneously attack, though there may be options for an accelerated action (see [Combat Actions](#) on page 46, below).

Note: certain forms of attack cannot be defended against even *with* an equal skill. This is most notably the case with ranged weapon attacks (FIREARMS, MISSILE WEAPONS, and THROWN WEAPONS), though certain advanced Techniques (found in the full Core Rulebook) allow characters to defend even against these attacks. Characters may also attempt to evade or get behind cover to avoid such attacks.

Characters always use an *equal* skill to defend against an attack. *Unequal skills cannot be used to defend against attacks.* In other words, one cannot use DEBATE or CHARM or SLEIGHT OF HAND to defend against a MARTIAL ARTS attack. However, one *could* use an unequal skill to make a *preemptive attack* of one's own to thwart or distract an imminent unequal attack. For example, a character could attempt to argue, seduce, or distract in order to derail or dissuade an adversary's imminent physical attack.

## Strain vs Wound Damage

The default damage for most attacks is **strain** damage. However, virtually all weapons deal **wound** damage. The same is true of fire, acid, electricity, and more brutal forms of mental attack, such as psychological torture. Physical strain damage is dealt to Endurance; mental strain damage is dealt to Tenacity. Physical wound damage is dealt to Vitality; mental wound

damage is dealt to Sanity.

When differentiating the two, it may be helpful to think of physical strain damage as bruises, minor cuts, and abrasions; mental strain damage might entail doubt, depression, and hurt feelings. Wounds are more serious: deep cuts, torn muscles, and broken bones for physical wounds; deep despair, paralyzing fear, and mind crushing woe for mental wounds. For further rules on damage see [Exertion, Strain, and Wounds](#) on page 28 above.

## Persistence Factor (PF)

Some forms of attack and damage linger on, or *persist*. Poisons, acids, and disease will continue to attack the body until they are purged from the system; fire or cold attacks will persist as long as a character remains in the adverse environment or condition. This recurring effect, referred to as **Persistence Factor** (or **PF**), is expressed as a duration or increment of time. The lower the number, the more rapid and potentially lethal the effects. The frequency of these continued exposure attacks often depends on the severity of the stimuli or conditions. Remaining outside in a chilly rainstorm is very different from remaining outside in sub-freezing temperatures. If a character manages to escape the effects of the adverse stimuli and can remain unexposed to it, the physical attacks will cease and characters may begin to recover (see [Rest and Recovery of Spent Endurance and Tenacity](#) on page 29 above). If later on the character were to reencounter the adverse conditions (brave the cold or enter the burning building once more) the attacks would resume.

Each adverse stimuli which includes a PF will be shown in the following format: TL/PF. For example, 8/5 min (a Threat Level 8 attack which recurs every 5 minutes) or 4/2 rnds (a TL 4 attack which repeats every 2 rounds).

## Influence-Based Attacks

Influencing others can take many forms: seduction, deception, intimidation, reasoning, and emotional sway. In some cases, all that is required is a single successful INFLUENCE-based check to overcome any reluctance and persuade (or charm or deceive) another. However, the GM may also rule that a certain threshold of mental strain damage is necessary to break down someone's will and resolve. In this way, such influence-based mental combat is very similar to physical based combat. In such cases, it may take more than one influence-based attack—and a greater threshold of mental strain damage—to wear down a target's resolve and finally push them to concede.

Characters have a natural buffer of physical protection against most adverse stimuli in the three levels of Endurance. If an adverse condition or stimuli is encountered, it will usually first chip away at a character's Endurance. This is the equivalent of being weakened, nauseated, drained of stamina, and eventually physically depleted. Once a character's three levels of Endurance are depleted, things such as poisons and extreme heat or cold will progress to impact a character's health and Vitality.

Some adverse stimuli, such as pathogens and poisons, will remain in a person's body until somehow purged, treated, or cured. In these cases, characters would continue to suffer from recurring "attacks" of the pathogen until treatment or an antidote could be administered. However, some substances have an expiration date and will "naturally" pass through the system (or a natural immunity will be developed) after a certain duration has passed. For example, 4 Strain damage every 6 hours for 48 hours—the 48 hour mark being the final increment of time the damage will be inflicted.

Note that Protagonist Characters are always assumed to have a higher threshold of resistance to influence-based attacks. However, just as players can choose to surrender in a physical fight, they can also choose to give in to influence before suffering a significant amount of mental strain damage.

## Putting it all Together

Whenever a situation arises that could harm or weaken a character—either physically or mentally—first determine the severity or Threat Level (TL) of the attack. Compare this number to the Defense rating (BD or MD) of the defender—MD for mind-based attacks, BD for body-based attacks. If the Threat Level is equal to or less than the applicable defense, the attack is automatically avoided or withstood and 0 damage is dealt. If the TL attack number is higher than the Defense



number, the character suffers damage equal to the difference. Characters may also consciously resist an attack, using FEATS OF WILL to resist a mind-based attack, or FEATS OF ENDURANCE to resist a body-based attack. When consciously resisting, the number of successes rolled becomes the temporary MD or BD for that attack. Characters may also use an applicable combat or influence-related skill to defend against similar attacks. Some attacks, including weapons, acid, fire, lightning, and psychological torture, deal wound damage to Vitality or Sanity; most other attacks chip away at Endurance or Tenacity in the form of strain damage. Influence-related attacks may only require a single check to make the target surrender; at other times, a series of attacks may be required to wear down an individual's resistance. If something persists and continues to deliver an attack over an interval of time, the effect first delivers an initial attack, then repeats the attack and inflicts the damage at every new interval until either the attack stimulus is removed, or the duration of the effect comes to an end naturally.

*Example 1: Darla has just been startled by a rattlesnake, coiled and rattling its tail only a foot away. She suffers a fear-based mental attack with a Threat Level of 3 (rattlesnakes are scary!). Luckily, she has an MD of 3, so she is able to shrug it off and suffers no mental strain damage from the encounter.*

*Example 2: Troy enters a burning building to rescue a child trapped inside. The flames are hot but not yet overwhelming, so the GM assigns them a TL of 3. The more serious threat is the noxious gasses in the air. The GM assigns these a TL of 6. Troy's Body Defense is 2. So immediately upon rushing into the building, he will suffer 1 point of wound damage to his Vitality from the fire (3 TL - 2 BD) and 4 points of strain damage to his Endurance from the fumes (6 TL - 2 BD). However, he still needs to find the child, and both flames and poisonous gasses have a persistence factor as long as Troy remains in the house. The GM rules this factor to be every 2 rounds (24 seconds).*

## Mitigating and Increasing Damage

Certain effects can increase the damage of a successful attack. The most obvious of these are **weapons**, such as swords, spears, and guns. Yet strengths such as **Mighty** and techniques like *Cutting Intellect* may also increase the damage from certain kinds of attack.

Certain effects can also decrease the damage of a successful attack. The most obvious of these is **armor**, yet strengths such as **Level Headed** and **Courageous** (which reduce the damage from certain mind-based attacks), and **Tough** or **Resistance** (which reduce the damage from certain body-based attacks) may also act as a kind of natural armor for characters.

**Successful Attack Required:** It should be emphasized that the extra damage inflicted by weapons and other effects is only added to a *successful* attack—one that overcomes (exceeds) the target's Defense (BD or MD). For example, only rolling 3 or 4 successes in attacking an opponent with a BD of 4 would result in a miss, no matter how high the dmg of the weapon being used in the attack. Only if the attack *exceeds* the BD of an opponent does the additional damage from a weapon come into play.

## Weapon Damage (dmg)

### **BD/MD (Body/Mind Defense) vs AR (Armor Rating)**

It's important to emphasize the difference between armor and strengths like **Tough**—which *reduce* damage—and innate defense and strengths like **Quick Reflexes**—which *increase* the base Defense (in this case, BD). Armor effects reduce the damage of a successful attack, whereas BD or MD make one harder to hit in the first place. The most significant difference between the two can be seen when weapons come into play. A higher BD has the potential to completely nullify a weapon's increased damage (dmg) modifier (if the attack never connects, the weapon can't deal its extra damage). However, if a character's defense is breached, a weapon's full potential for inflicting damage is taken into account—and

Each weapon has a damage modifier indicated by its **Damage** rating (or simply **dmg**). This number is *added* to the damage dealt by a successful attack.

that is also when armor comes into play.

Weapon Damage ratings typically range from +0 (no additional damage) to +4, but certain modern, high-tech, or magical weapons may go higher, and heavy or mounted weapons can have outrageously high dmG ratings.

A list of weapons, along with their Damage ratings, can be found under [Melee Weapons](#) and the various categories of [Ranged Weapons](#) on pages 24-26.

## Armor Rating (AR)

Similar to weapons, each kind of armor is also assigned a number, known as its **Armor Rating** or **AR**. Any damage inflicted by a successful attack is reduced by this number. Thus, if a character was wearing armor with an AR of 4, and an attack dealt 4 or fewer damage, the armor would completely counteract the damage, reducing it to zero. If an attack deals damage greater than the AR, the armor absorbs what it can and the rest spills over to damage the character.

## Extra Successes in Combat

Unlike all other skills characters utilize in the course of gameplay, combat skills have the unique capacity to utilize every success achieved. As long as an attack exceeds the Defense rating (BD or MD) of the target, each success causes an equivalent amount of excess damage. Thus, the higher the total number of successes, the more damage which can be inflicted. However, combatants always have another option. Any attack which achieves an Amazing Success—3 or more successes above the BD or MD of the defender—has the option to either deal the extra damage or to impose some kind of disadvantage on the target. This could be anything from dust or sweat in the eyes to a slight loss of balance to a stupor of thought. This could be thought of as the equivalent of a snag, but usually it simply translates into a +2 DL penalty to the target's next action. Furthermore, this penalty could be compounded for every increment of 3 excess successes achieved. Thus, if 6 additional successes were achieved, the character could impose a +4 DL penalty to their opponent's next action. Also note that this can be used for both offensive (Attack) and defensive (Defend) actions. The exact nature of the disadvantage must be stated by the player.

## Putting it all Together

Damage from successful attacks may be increased by weapons or other effects. Each weapon has a Damage rating (dmG), which is the amount of additional damage the weapon inflicts if an attack exceeds the target's BD/MD (a successful strike). If an attack fails to exceed the target's BD/MD, this extra damage has no effect. Damage from successful attacks may also be reduced by certain mitigating effects. The Armor Rating (AR) of such effects indicates how much damage is negated from a successful attack. If PCs ever achieve an Amazing Success on any attack or defense, they may either: 1) inflict additional damage equal to the difference, or 2) impose a disadvantage on their opponent, which translates to a +2 DL modifier to the target's next action.

*Example 1: Wielding a battle axe (dmG 4), Talek attacks a charging boar. Confident in his skill, he opts not to spend any Exertion on the attack. Unfortunately he rolls poorly and fails to exceed the boar's BD. He deals 0 damage (even though his battle axe would have dealt +4 damage if he had managed to hit).*

*Example 2: Kane, wearing sturdy plate mail armor (AR 5) is struck with a powerful blow from his opponent's great sword, dealing a total of 8 damage. However, because of Kane's armor, the final damage is reduced by 5, meaning only 3 points of Wounds damage will be dealt to Kane. The rest is absorbed by the armor.*

## Adversaries

Every adversary characters confront is also assigned a Threat Level (TL). Similar to other forms of attack described above, an adversary's Threat Level is the number of *automatic successful hits* it gets against all opponents, including characters (though this damage is also reduced by the defender's BD/MD). However, adversaries, by nature, are much more complex than natural forms of attack such as fire or fear. In addition to TL, adversaries may also roll additional dice, have increased Vitality, and have their own strengths (special attacks and/or defenses) and weaknesses (vulnerabilities).

Note: Adversaries may opt to surrender or capitulate before suffering lethal (or insanity inducing) damage. In fact, in the case of mental combat, a few points of strain damage may be enough for someone to “throw in the towel” and submit to influence, argument, or intimidation. It all depends on the situation, and what is at stake.

## Defeating Adversaries

Adversaries can be defeated in one of three ways: 1) inflicting enough damage to fully deplete their Vitality (or Sanity, if applicable); 2) meeting the criteria which triggers an adversary to surrender or flee *before* their Vitality or Sanity is fully depleted; or 3) delivering a brutal finishing blow known as a **Fatality**. The first two are pretty straightforward, but will differ for each adversary. The third method is explained below.

## Fatalities

With a sufficient amount of skill and luck, even the most formidable foes can be slain with a single critical strike known as a **Fatality**. When fighting any adversary, if a player ever rolls enough 12s on any single attack to equal or exceed the TL of that adversary, the attack counts as a Fatality. Such momentous strikes immediately slay the adversary, usually in some stupendous fashion. Players should be given the opportunity to describe such fatal finishing blows.

It should be noted that adversaries with a TL of 0 or 1 only require a single 12 to slay them.

## Putting it all Together

In addition to TL (Threat Level)—which determines an adversary's automatic hits and Defense ratings (both BD and MD), adversaries may also roll additional dice, deal extra damage with a successful strike, and have their own unique strengths and weaknesses. Each adversary may also have certain circumstances in which they will flee or surrender, or specific criteria allowing them to be defeated before sustaining their full Vitality or Sanity in damage. Finally, every adversary has a chance of being slain if a single attack rolls a total number of 12s equal to or greater than the adversary's TL.

*Example 1: the characters enter the lair of a giant cave spider. This terrifying unnatural creature has a Fear Factor of 6, meaning that upon first encountering it, all the PCs suffer a TL 6 fear-based mental attack. This is a one time occurrence (though if they get wrapped in webs, or pierced by its poisonous stinger, the GM may deem it appropriate to inflict additional fear attacks).*

*Example 2: After a grueling battle, the characters decide they must either somehow slay the young dragon they've been fighting (TL 9) or flee and live to fight another day. One of them makes a last ditch attack, spending the last of his Rested and Fatigue level Endurance to roll 27 dice. He rolls 15 successes, including a whopping five 12s. That's incredible!—though it's still not enough for a finishing Fatality blow. But the player gets to add five more dice (from the 12s he rolled)—and he rolls one more 12! That means he's up to six 12s—still three 12s away from the nine required for a Fatality for a TL 9 adversary. Since he received a Hero Point from rolling two 12s in a row, the player immediately opts to spend that Hero Points to add +1 to each die roll, thus converting any 11's to 12's. This raises 3 rolls of 11 up to 12's—making enough to achieve the final 12's needed for a Fatality. Now all that remains is to narrate the amazing killing blow.*

## Action Score

In *Untold*, a PC's *Action Score* represents that character's confidence, speed, and prowess in combat situations. The Action Score consists of various factors which might impact a character's combat capability.

### Factors Affecting the Action Score

Several factors can modify a character's Action Score, all of which are calculated ahead of time as part of character creation (and, as applicable, character progression).

<b>Action Score Factor</b>	<b>Modifier or Value</b>
<b>Base Value</b>	<b>6</b>
Strengths and/or Weaknesses	+ or -1 per applicable strength or weakness
Skill's Second Nature (SN)	+ SN of skill
Techniques	+1 per applicable technique
Weapon Speed	- Weapon Speed (potentially offset by FEATS OF STRENGTH SN)
Armor or Shield Encumbrance	- Armor or Shield mod (offset by ARMOR MOVEMENT or SHIELD skill SN)

These six factors are set values which establish the Action Score. Each of these factors is described below:

#### Factors Affecting the Action Score

- *Base Value*: Each character begins with a base Action Score of 6.
- *Strengths and weaknesses*: Certain strengths, such as **Decisive**, **Agile**, or **Reactive**, raise the Action Score; certain weaknesses, such as **Sluggish** and **Indecisive**, lower it.
- *Skill*: The repetitive nature of training increases reaction times, thus raising the base Action Score. This increase is equal to a specific skill's Second Nature (SN) rating.
- *Weapon Speed*: In most cases, the heavier a weapon, the more damage it will inflict, but also the slower and more cumbersome it will likely be, resulting in a negative modifier to the Action Score.
- *Armor Encumbrance*: Armor is restrictive and heavy. In most cases, every +1 AR will subtract 1 from the wearer's Action Score (see [Armor table](#) on page 23). Note, however, that the SN (Second Nature) of the ARMOR MOVEMENT skill can offset this penalty. Shields are likewise cumbersome (see [Shield table](#) on page 24). Similar to armor, the SN of the SHIELD skill can offset this penalty.

Note that the weapon speed penalty for melee weapons can be offset by a character's FEATS OF STRENGTH SN.

The number of Action Points a character has is equal to  $\frac{1}{3}$  the total Action Score for a given skill (rounded down).

## Combat Rounds and Action Points

In *Untold*, combat is intended to be a dynamic interaction of risks and opportunities, moves and maneuvers, actions and reactions. The foundation of such dynamic combat is built upon two interrelated concepts: the **Combat Round** and **Action Points**.

*The Combat Round:* The combat round (or **round**, for short) is a simple means of summarizing a window of time within combat encounters and other high-intensity situations. Roughly 10 seconds, a round is the length of time allotted to perform a certain number of actions largely determined by a combatant's Action Points.

*Action Points:* Action Points are the most basic currency of combat encounters. They can be spent on any move or maneuver characters or adversaries might perform during the course of a given combat.

## Base Action Points

As part of character creation, each character calculates a base Action Score for their primary combat-related skill. Each character has a number of Action Points equal to  $\frac{1}{3}$  this Action Score, rounded down. Thus a character with an Action Score of 6, 7, or 8 would have 2 Action Points; a character with an Action Score of 15, 16, or 17 would have 5 Action Points.

## Modifying Action Points

In the midst of a combat encounter, it is possible to increase or decrease the base number of Action Points a character has to spend each round. There are two ways to temporarily *increase* a combatant's Action Points: 1) by spending Exertion, and 2) by spending Hero Points. The accumulation of strain or wound damage is the most common cause for *reducing* a combatant's pool of Action Points (AP).

- *Spending Exertion:* Gaining an extra AP using this option costs 3 Exertion the first time it is used. Each additional use increases the cost by 1 more point of Exertion (the second use costs 4 Exertion, the third costs 5, and so on). This cost increase is over the course of an entire combat encounter, not a single round. Also note that the specific type of Exertion used (Endurance or Tenacity) typically corresponds to the nature of the combat (physical or mental). Note that this is only a temporary surge of energy—the character's allotment of Action Points will revert to the norm the following combat round).
- *Using Hero Points:* a Hero Point can be used to provide a one time boost of 2 additional Action Points.
- *Strain and/or Wounds:* Each time characters enter into (lose points in) a secondary or tertiary level of Exertion (Fatigued, Depleted, Injured, or Critical), they suffer a cumulative -1 AP penalty.

The GM may opt to allow characters to spend either type of Exertion (Endurance or Tenacity) to gain additional AP, regardless of the type of combat.

Theoretically, a character who had become Fatigued and Depleted in both Endurance *and* Tenacity, and also suffered wounds in the Injured and Critical levels of both Vitality *and* Sanity would be at -8 Action Points. Note, however, that unless unconscious, a character can never drop below 1 Action Point.

## Turn Order and Action Priority

In general, the combatant with the highest number of Action Points acts first each combat round (see exceptions below). That combatant chooses one action to perform (or waits, holding Action Points in reserve) and play proceeds to those combatants at the next highest number of Action Points. All combatants at that number act until they have all taken an action, and play moves to the next number, and so on. This goes on until all combatants have expended all their Action Points, at which point the combat round ends and the cycle begins again with a new round of combat.

As soon as a combatant spends an Action Point they immediately drop down to the next tier/number of remaining Action Points. Thus if a character had 4 AP and spent 1 point to perform an action, they would immediately drop down to 3 Action Points, and would join the cue (back of the line) of other combatants waiting at that number (spending more than one AP would drop a character down additional tiers).

Whenever there are multiple combatants at a certain number (and eventually they will all be), turn order is handled in the following order:

- 1) Any combatants with holdover/saved points get first priority
- 2) Whichever combatant has waited the longest to act gets next highest priority
- 3) PCs generally act before opponents
- 4) Highest Action *Score* gets priority

Note, because of the way the action economy works, any player who chooses to act at a higher Action Point tier will almost invariably act later at lower tiers.

### *Exceptions to Action Priority:*

There are four exceptions to the turn order rule outlined above:

- **Ambush/Surprise:** If one party is able to surprise or ambush an opposing party, each member of the ambushing party receives one free Action Point to spend. In addition, any attempt to defend, resist, or otherwise mitigate any surprise actions will suffer a +2 DL modifier. Once any surprise actions have been resolved, regular turn order begins.
- **First to Act:** If one individual initiates a combat situation, they will be given the first opportunity to act, even if their normal allotment of AP would be lower than others. In certain circumstances, that character may be granted one bonus Action Point to use before the normal combat round cycle begins, similar to *Ambush/Surprise*, above; however, the GM may also rule that they must use one of their regular allotment of AP on this inciting action.
- **First Strike:** Up until the moment combatants are engaged (close combat distance), any ranged weapon attacks receive action priority. Until melee combatants are within striking distance, their actions are limited (usually to [Charge](#), [Move](#), or [Take Cover](#)). Ranged attacks will continue to receive priority until engagement occurs. Also note that some combat encounters consist entirely of ranged attacks for all combatants involved, in which case turn order and action priority would be resolved per the normal sequence outlined above.
- **Prepared Actions:** If combatants have readied an action beforehand they may be able to perform it before the regular turn order and priority of combat begins. Such prepared actions typically do not cost an Action Point. If they do, the combatant may act first, even if their base Action Points are lower than other combatants.

Note: if any surprised combatants choose to attempt a defensive action, they must use their regular store of Action Points (AP), meaning they will begin with fewer AP once the regular cycle of combat begins—see **Reactive Actions Outside of Turn Order** below).

## Reactive Actions Outside of Turn Order

Certain actions, such as **Defend** and **Resist** are *reactive* actions performed in response to an opponent's action or other outside effect. This means that such actions can be performed outside of the normal turn order. Of course, such reactive actions can only be made if the character has Action Points to spend. And, as explained above, choosing to use these actions reduces a combatant's available pool of remaining Action Points.

## Combat Actions and Maneuvers

### Potential Actions

<u>Action</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Description/Effect</u>
<i>Accelerated Action</i>	.5	May perform action at .5 (½) Action Point, but chance of snags is increased (1's and 2's contribute to snags). Can be used max 2x per rnd.

<b>Aid an Ally</b>	1	Add 5 dice OR -2 DL to ally's action. Describe how aid is rendered.
<b>Attack</b>	1	Make an Attack check with a specific weapon or skill.
<b>Bolster (self or ally)</b>	1	-1 DL/+1 success OR add 3 dice to <i>any</i> other action. Examples include aiming for a ranged attack or focusing for a specific skill check.
<b>Charge</b>	1	Use a rushing Move action to provide either -2 DL/+2 successes OR add 4 dice to next melee Attack.
<b>Defend</b>	1	Use an applicable skill to block, parry, or counter an opponent's action.
<b>Draw</b>	1	Draw a weapon from a holster or sheathe.
<b>Evade</b>	1	Use DODGE skill or equivalent to avoid Attack or other action.
<b>Grapple/Place Hold</b>	1	Attempt to place an opponent in a hold.
<b>Guarded Advance/Retreat</b>	1	Move 1 space while performing Defend <i>or</i> ranged Attack action.
<b>Hinder an Opponent</b>	1	Impose +2 DL penalty to opponent's next action. Describe how.
<b>Knock Back/Down</b>	1	Use some means of knocking opponent back 1 or more spaces, or prone.
<b>Move</b>	1	Move 1 space + ATHLETICS or RUNNING skill check successes.
<b>Provoke</b>	1	Redirect attention of opponents to you, often drawing their attack.
<b>Recover</b>	1	Restore 2 points of Exertion. Each additional use restores 1 point of Exertion.
<b>Reload</b>	1-3	Reload ammunition, nock an arrow, or ready/draw a thrown weapon.
<b>Resist</b>	1	Make a check to resist an opponent's action or an effect.
<b>Special Maneuver</b>	0-2	Perform any special/awesome move or maneuver. Describe it!
<b>Take Cover</b>	1	Get behind obstruction/cover in order to hinder attacks.
<b>Use Item, Skill, or Technique</b>	varies	Use a specific object, skill, or technique. Number of Action Points depends on the nature of the item, technique, or skill.

***Keeping Track of Action Points:*** The tier system of Action Points makes it easy to track who is at which tier. However, you may also wish to utilize some kind of tangible indicator of how many Action Points each combatant has remaining. This could be beads, coins, dice, or anything else that makes

Descriptions for each Combat Action and Maneuver can be found below.

sense. You can also use small cups or bowls to keep track of available and/or spent points.

### **Accelerated Action**

This option allows a combatant to perform an action at half the usual cost. Since most actions are 1 AP, this reduces the cost of most actions to only .5 (or ½) AP.

The downside is that the chance of rolling snags is increased. Any rolls which land on either a 1 or a 2 will contribute to snags. This option can only be used a maximum of two times per combat round. Also note that this option can be used on an action that normally requires more than 1 Action Point, usually a skill check. In such cases, the skill's regular AP cost is halved. Thus, if the GM ruled that picking a lock would normally take 8 AP to perform, using an Accelerated Action on the check would reduce the cost to 4 AP.

### **Aid an Ally**

Characters may use this option to provide some kind of help or advantage to another combatant. The exact nature of the aid must be stated. As long as the GM gives the okay, this action can be used to grant either 5 additional dice or a -2 DL modifier to an ally's next action. Depending on the type of aid given, the GM may also rule that the character giving the aid must make a check. In such cases, the number of dice given would be determined by the number of successes achieved above the DL (typically DL 2).

Normally, only one ally may be assisted at any one time. However, there may be certain cases in which a single Aid an Ally action may increase the effectiveness of *all* allies' actions. For example, giving a stirring speech using ORATION or an inspiring morale boost with LEADERSHIP or perhaps even a rousing battle song with SINGING or INSTRUMENT. In such cases, the bonus would likely be reduced from -2 DL to -1 DL, or 1 extra die for every 2 successes above the DL. However, the bonus would apply to all allies and potentially for up to 1 full round of separate consecutive actions.

### **Attack**

Obviously one of the most common actions, this action is used for any attack made against an opponent. In the course of a single round, this action can be used multiple times. However, for the sake of variety, choosing to intersperse other actions with repeated attacks is always encouraged.

### **Bolster**

This action can be used to increase the effectiveness of any other action, either adding 3 additional dice or providing a -1 DL modifier (+1 success) to the Bolstered action. Depending on the situation, this can encompass a wide range of activities: Aiming for a ranged Attack; focusing one's energy or rage into a melee Attack; putting extra focus into a Defense; adding additional jibes to a Provoke action, giving an even greater boost to Aid to an Ally, and so on. This option can be used a maximum of two times per Bolstered action (e.g., taking even longer to aim). This action may not be accelerated.

### **Charge**

This action can be used to rush an opponent, in order to increase the power and effectiveness of the next melee Attack action. Use of this action provides either +4 dice or a -2 DL modifier (+2 successes) to the next attack. This action effectively combines Move and Attack to greater effect. This action may not be accelerated.

### **Defend**

This action allows a combatant to either block, parry, or deflect an incoming Attack. This can be used either to defend oneself or an ally. However, the ally must be within close proximity (Short distance or closer). The GM may also rule that an Accelerated Action may be required to leap to the defense of an ally.

### **Draw**

This action is used to draw a weapon from a sheath, holster, or other place of storage or concealment. Unless surprised, this action may often be used before the beginning of combat.



## Evade

Similar to Defend, except this action is used to completely avoid an Attack, typically using the DODGE skill.

## Grapple/Place Hold

Combatants may use this action to attempt putting an opponent into a hold. Doing so requires a MARTIAL ARTS or WRESTLING skill check at +2 DL, though each of these UNARMED COMBAT sub-skills has a technique dedicated to performing a Hold action, which eliminates this +2 DL penalty (note that combining this action with the **Bolster** action would halve this modifier).

## Guarded Advance/Retreat

A combatant may use this action to perform a measured and cautious movement. This allows them to move only 1 space (either backwards, toward the outer perimeter of the battlefield, or forward, towards an unknown or enemy position). However, using this action also allows a combatant to simultaneously be able to either 1) perform a free Defend action, or 2) perform one free ranged Attack action.

## Hinder an Opponent

This action can be used to somehow put an opponent at a disadvantage. The exact nature of the hindrance must be stated. Examples include distracting, intimidating, blinding, or otherwise inhibiting an opponent. As long as the GM gives the okay, this action can be used to impose a +2 DL penalty to an enemy's next action.

## Knock Back

This action is used on any attempt to shove, trip, or knock an opponent back 1 or more spaces away. For every two successes achieved in excess of the target's BD, the opponent is knocked back 1 space. If the Knock Back is 3 or more successes above the BD, the target will often be simultaneously Knocked Down as well.

## Knock Down

This action is used on any attempt to shove, trip, tackle, or otherwise knock an opponent down to a prone position. Several UNARMED COMBAT sub-skills have a technique dedicated to performing a Knock Down action. Without such a technique, successfully performing this action requires a check at +2 DL (note that combining this action with the **Bolster** action would halve this penalty).

A prone character—one who has been knocked to the ground—is at a serious disadvantage in combat. Until they can stand up, their BD is reduced by 2, and any melee attacks they make from a prone position are at +2DLs.

## Move

This action allows a combatant to move 1 or more squares within the combat area. This can be advancing, retreating, reaching higher ground, cover, or any strategically advantageous position. Using this action, characters may traverse the equivalent of a Short distance of space on the battlefield. Any distance beyond this would require a successful movement check (e.g., RUNNING). A check may also be required if the terrain is steep, overgrown, or otherwise restrictive.

## Provoke

Characters may use this action in an attempt to draw the attention and ire of an opponent. With a successful check (usually against the opponent's MD) a character may compel a specific combatant to attack or move toward them instead of someone else.

## Recover

This action may be used to restore 2 points of spent Exertion, either physical (Endurance) or mental (Tenacity). This action may be used more than once per combat round; however, each additional use only restores a single point of Exertion. This action may not be accelerated.

## Reload

A combatant would use this action to reload ammunition into a ranged weapon. This could be nocking an arrow, inserting a clip or magazine into a firearm, or loading individual rounds into a rifle, shotgun, or revolver. The number of AP required to reload a weapon can be found in the [ranged weapon tables](#) on pages 25-26.

## Resist

This action may be used in any attempt to resist an adverse stimuli or effect. Typically, this involves either a FEATS OF ENDURANCE or a FEATS OF WILL check.

## Special Maneuver

This option is used for any special move or maneuver not covered in any of the other actions listed.

## Take Cover

Taking this action allows characters to duck, dive or move behind nearby cover (up to a Short distance away). Cover can help block damage and make one harder to hit.

## Use Item, Skill, or Technique

This is a catchall option for utilizing a skill or technique not covered in one of the other options. Typically, the use of a technique requires only 1 Action Point, though skills will often require more than a single Action Point to perform. The exact number of AP required depends upon the skill, technique, or item, and the situation.

## Putting it all Together

Within each combat round, characters and other combatants have a set number of Action Points they can use to perform a variety of moves, maneuvers, and actions. Such actions include attacks, defenses, grappling, moving, and aiding an ally. The number of Action Points—equal to  $\frac{1}{2}$  a character's Action Score—determines the priority of turn order. All combatants at the highest Action Point total act first, followed by each subsequent number counting down. All combatants at a given number of remaining Action Points act starting with whichever combatant has waited the longest to take an action. This cycle continues until all Action Points have been expended, at which time a new combat round begins and the cycle starts over again. Combatants may also use reactive actions to respond to an opponent's actions. It is possible to gain additional Action Points by spending Exertion or Hero Points, or to have base Action Points reduced through Strain or Wounds.

*Example 1: Tina's character, Xanthia, has an Action Score of 10, which means she has 3 Action Points. After the latest gaming session, Xanthia gains enough Experience Points to improve her primary combat skill. This also happens to raise the SN of that skill by 1. This SN affects Xanthia's Action Score, raising it to 11. Xanthia also went up a level, and as a level milestone award Tina opts to gain the **Reactive** strength to raise Xanthia's Action Score by another +1 to 12—just enough to bring her base Action Points up to 4.*

*Example 2: Xander and Vivian have just been attacked by six henchmen with handguns. They've managed to duck behind cover, but know they need to take out these bad-guys in order to make their escape. Xander and Vivian each have 4 Action Points. The henchmen each have 3 Action Points. Xander and Vivian decide to spend 3 points of Endurance each to gain an additional Action Point bringing their total to 5. That will give each of them two consecutive actions before any remaining*

*henchmen have a chance to act.*

*Example 3: Kristi has just managed to escape from some goons, maxing out her Rested level Endurance and pushing herself into Fatigued status in the process. Now she is confronted by a couple more goons and must fight her way past them. Normally, she has 4 Action Points to spend. But now that she is Fatigued, she suffers a -1 Action Point penalty, bringing her down to only 3 Action Points.*

## **Additional Game Play Rules**

Many additional rules related to game play and combat are included in the full version of the Core Rulebook. These include:

1. Progress Clocks and Countdowns
2. Crafting Items
3. Pangs of Conscience and Acting Against Drives and Beliefs
4. Prolonged Physical Activity
5. Movement and Encumbrance
6. Money, Monetary Class, and Loot
7. Vehicles and Vehicle Combat
8. Rules for Handling Chases
9. And much more!

## 4. QuickStart Characters

The final print and digital version of the Quickstart Guide will contain four or five pre-made characters that can be used to immediately dive into playing *Untold*.

**(Sidebar)** These characters are designed for a medieval fantasy setting and can easily be plugged into the sample adventure scenario in the final section of this QuickStart Guide. If you would prefer to use them for a different setting (e.g., Modern or Futuristic), tips for modifying these sample characters to fit those settings are included as well.

## 5. Game Mastering *Untold*

When playing *Untold*, most of the players will take on the role of the game's protagonist characters. However, one player will don the mantle of Game Master (GM for short). This section is intended for that player. Though taking on the role of GM can be daunting, it can also be incredibly rewarding. As Game Master, you are the central creator of the story. You choose the setting and create the basic plot of the game's unfolding story; you forge its villains and adversaries, and bring to life the other secondary characters which populate its locales; you select what kind of obstacles and challenges the Protagonist Characters (PCs) will face as they strive to achieve their goals. It's seldom easy, but the intent of this section is to make your job as Game Master a little more manageable—and a lot more fun as well.

As GM you will don many hats. But your primary responsibilities can be broken down into four important tasks: creating the setting, orchestrating the plot, embodying the characters, and instigating and maintaining the conflict. Each of these distinct roles is broken down throughout the remainder of this section.

### Creating the Setting

As GM, you are primarily responsible for establishing the game world setting. This encompasses all of the various locations and environs in which the game story will take place. In a futuristic setting this might entail a far flung galaxy with robots, faster-than-light travel, and laser weapons. A medieval fantasy setting might include courts and castles rife with intrigue, fae realms teeming with magic, or catacombs filled with terrible monsters and the treasure they possess. A more modern setting might include espionage and assassins, bank heists, or detectives working to solve murders. And you might even combine elements from different genres: modern vampires, assassins who wield magic, or a science fiction setting with noble knights, laser swords, and mystical forces. Any game setting is possible. As GM, you ultimately decide what that game world or setting will be. You may choose to use an existing setting from film, television, books, or even another roleplaying game. Yet you may also choose to create a completely original game setting of your own. Whichever course you decide on, the following questions will help bring the setting into greater clarity.

- What forces, factions, and/or governments hold power or influence? How do they enforce that power?
- Which opposing factions or nations are attempting to undermine, overthrow, or usurp the dominant powers?
- What groups are oppressed—or at the very least believe they are oppressed? How is that oppression manifested? Are there any groups which seek to alleviate or undo that oppression?
- What historical events, both recent and in the far past, have had the greatest impact on the present world order?
- What other denizens or creatures of the world might interact with people? How might these non-human creatures or races have affected the world?
- What other extraordinary forces or advancements (magic, technology, divine powers and influences) exist in the world? How might these have affected the current state of the world?
- What places or landmarks are of note? What role do these places play in the world?
- Above all, what potential conflict resides in the interplay of these various factors, be they denizens, groups, classes, places, or history?

As you answer these questions, the potential story of the game—its central plot, key characters, and driving conflict—will begin to present itself to you.

### Orchestrating the Plot

Most stories—be they immortalized in books or film—have a set and undeviating course. As readers or viewers we may experience any unexpected twists and developments with surprise, but we also know that these “plot twists” have been

mapped out ahead of time. Once part of the story, they are forever set. But the plots you will help orchestrate with *Untold* are very different. You may—and probably should—plan out some encounters, obstacles, and foes. But remember that the stories of *Untold* are meant to be a collaboration. The whole point of the game is that the players make choices that can influence the course of the story. You must always be willing to allow events, obstacles, and foes to unfold in ways you *didn't* plan for. This balancing act of planning and improvisation is at the very heart of Game Mastering *Untold*.

At its foundation, orchestrating the plot can be boiled down to a very simple formula. Based on one or more elements from the list of questions under **Creating a Setting** above, sketch out plans for an overarching plot for the story. This overarching plot should, at minimum, include these 3 elements:

Note that you don't need to intricately map out all of the various details of any obstacles or planned encounters. You only need to jot down a few ideas for now. Trust that the rest will come.

- 1) A compelling conflict and goal, ideally tied in some way to the drives and motivational beliefs of the PCs.
- 2) A central villain or antagonist character whose goals are in direct opposition to that of the PCs.
- 3) A series of obstacles or challenges that will both impede the characters in their pursuit of the goal, while simultaneously allowing them to utilize their skills and strengths.

And, really, that's it. You can figure out the rest along the way. As the story develops—based largely upon the choices and actions of the protagonist characters, you can let inspiration and common sense guide you in determining what happens next. Before each game session, take some time to plan and update any additional challenges, obstacles, and adversaries the characters might face. Above all, stay open to diverging paths and possibilities you hadn't anticipated. Never force the PCs to adhere to a single preset storyline. Make sure the progression of the story and plot is always a collaboration.

## Embodying Adversaries and Non-Protagonist Characters

The setting and plot of your group's collective story must be populated with characters—specifically, characters which enable conflict. The protagonist characters—those characters controlled by the players—have already been established, and, ideally, at least some portion of the game's central conflict should be tied to them. But the other characters of the story—the non-protagonist characters (NPCs) should be connected to the story and its conflict as well.

There are three types of NPCs: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary. Advice for creating and embodying each is outlined below, from least to most complex.

### Tertiary NPCs

Tertiary NPCs are often the most common—and least important—type of character in the story. These are the peace officers, shopkeepers, beggars, waitresses, bartenders, and taxi drivers of the world. They are the nurses, receptionists, construction workers, and cooks. These are the kids playing in the street and their consternated mothers shouting at them to come home. Tertiary NPCs include the myriad of individuals who PCs may only glimpse in passing or only interact with once or twice in the course of the story, yet they are essential to bringing the setting and plot of every collaborative *Untold* story to life. Although they are not central to the story, ideally they should still feel like they are living, breathing inhabitants of your world. Typically, such tertiary NPCs don't even need a name (though at times it also might be appropriate to give them one). Still, here are a few suggestions for breathing life into such tertiary NPCs

**Give them a Personality Quirk or Mannerism:** As a starting point, quickly choose a Fortunate or Unfortunate Trait from the tables found on page 19 of Section 2, Character Creation. Giving tertiary NPCs a simple mannerism, outlook or personality trait will quickly and easily bring them to life.

**Give them a Unique Physical Characteristic or Appearance:** Consider giving them a distinct hair style or make some piece of clothing or attire stand out. This could be as simple as a brightly colored sash to an entire outfit covered in lace, frills, trinkets, or ribbons. Their hair could be tied up in an intricate bun, long and mangy, slick or greasy, or they might have no hair at all. Maybe they wear spectacles, or have facial piercings, or have a noticeable tattoo, birthmark, or scar. They might also walk with a limp, have a missing finger, hand, leg, or just missing teeth. They might have a hump back or other deformity. Even small blemishes—a wart, mole, or freckles may make them a bit more memorable. Making them a dwarf, very tall, or extremely wide may also make them stand out, as will making them extremely old or uncharacteristically young.

**Give them a Unique Voice:** Do they speak slowly or rapidly? With a foreign accent? With high-brow vocabulary or low slang curses? Is the pitch of their voice high or low? Even if you're not comfortable trying to mimic such accents or other vocal traits yourself, just asking your players to imagine the way the person speaks may be enough to transport them and make them buy into the character a little more.

**Give them Choices and Allow them to React:** If something interesting, unusual, dangerous, or offensive takes place while tertiary NPCs are in the scene, they should react in a way that is natural or makes sense for them. They are still people and should not have their individual natures or choices restricted.

## Secondary NPCs

Secondary NPCs are the lesser lieutenants, henchmen, named allies, and any other important figures in the setting and plot you've created. Basically, any character which has stats which might come into play as part of the story would fall into this category. If monsters or beasts are a potential part of your story, this could include those as well.

Each creature and secondary NPC the protagonist characters might encounter has an array of characteristics that define them. These include the NPC's relative power level, primary skills, strengths and weaknesses, and Action Points. Each of these characteristics is explained below:

Using this basic format you can create any number of secondary NPCs, animals, monsters, and foes. However, for a full array of potential adversaries, as well as advice for creating entirely original creatures of your own, check out the *Untold GM's Guide*.

- **Threat Level (TL):** Threat Level indicates two separate factors: 1) the number of *automatic* hits a secondary NPC or creature gets with any attack; and 2) its default Defense ratings (both BD and MD). Thus, a TL of 4 would indicate a BD of 4, an MD of 4, and 4 automatic hits with any attack. If these ratings are ever different, the BD of the secondary NPC will be offset by parentheses next to the TL and the MD will be offset in brackets. If all three are different it will look like this: **TL (BD)[MD]**. If all values are the same, only one number will be present.
- **Action Points (AP):** the number of Action Points the NPC can spend each combat round.
- **Primary Skills:** any skills that define the secondary NPC. (For animals and creatures with only animal intelligence, this aspect will not be present.)
- **Dice:** the number of dice the GM rolls on behalf of the NPC for attacks. This is *in addition to* the automatic hits gained from TL.
- **Minimum Roll (MR):** the minimum number you as GM must roll on any dice for the NPC to achieve additional hits. Note that for adversaries and creatures, each 12 rolled counts as one normal hit *plus* one additional hit which automatically bypasses all forms of armor (AR). Each 1 rolled subtracts one hit from the total.
- **Damage:** any *additional* damage the adversary inflicts if its attack exceeds the target's BD or dedicated defense.
- **Vitality:** the amount of physical or body-based wound damage the NPC can sustain before dying, divided into three levels: Healthy, Injured, and Critical (written as x/x/x).
- **Sanity:** the total amount of mental or mind-based damage the NPC can sustain before being reduced to a drooling gibbering husk, divided into three levels: Healthy, Injured, and Critical (written as x/x/x). Note that most

adversaries will surrender or flee before taking their full Sanity in damage. (Also note that many creatures with animal-level intelligence cannot sustain mental damage.)

- **Flee/Fatality:** any circumstances for defeating an adversary or NPC *before* its full Vitality in damage is sustained. This could be as simple as the amount of damage an individual or creature will be willing to take before running away or surrendering; it might also indicate what unique criteria would allow a creature or NPC to be slain before its full Vitality is depleted. Note, however, that all adversaries have a chance of being slain by a critical finishing blow or **Fatality** if enough 12s are rolled to match/exceed their TL.
- **Fear Factor:** certain predatory or dangerous animals (snakes, spiders, tigers, bears, etc.) and almost all *unnatural* or supernatural creatures (wraiths, demons, dragons, krakens, etc.), will inspire a primal fear response in humans and other character races. Upon first being encountered, these creatures will trigger an immediate fear-based mental attack. The number listed is the TL of this attack. For some creatures this will also include a Persistency Factor (PF), meaning the fear attack is repeated at regular intervals. If present, this will be written as TL/PF. For most NPC adversaries, this aspect will not be present.
- **Strengths:** any special abilities, forms of attack, or innate defenses the creature or secondary NPC possesses. These could include virtually anything: acute senses, poisonous bite, armor skin, horns or spines, bonuses for attacking as a swarm or pack, and so on. Anything that gives an edge to the adversary would be listed here.
- **Weaknesses:** any distinct vulnerabilities or disadvantages the creature or individual has. These could include susceptibility to certain attacks or distractions or anything else that restricts or weakens the adversary.
- **Drives/Motivations:** a brief summary of what drives the creature or NPC. For animals and creatures this could be as simple as food, survival, or protecting young. For secondary NPCs the range of potential motivations is as vast as the human condition.

Below are a few examples of what these characteristics might look like in a secondary NPC or creature adversary.

### Thug/Henchman

**TL:** 2-3 [1]

**AP:** 2-3

**Primary Skills:** (SR 4-6) Specific UNARMED COMBAT skill (e.g., BRAWLING), Specific MELEE WEAPON *or* Specific RANGED WEAPON skill; potentially one HANDLING-related skill (e.g., DRIVING), potentially one AWARENESS-related skill (e.g., STEALTH), potentially one INFLUENCE-related skill (e.g., INTIMIDATION), potentially one ATHLETICS-related skill (e.g., FEATS OF STRENGTH)

**Dice:** 4-6

**MR:** 9+

**Dmg:** +1-3 (based on weapon or just using fists)

**Vitality:** 15-25 (9/4/2)

**Sanity:** 10-15 (7/3/1)

**Flee/Fatality:** 1st level Vitality depleted (though some will continue fighting beyond this).

**Strengths:** *Brutish Strength:* +1 damage in all unarmed and melee weapon combat.

*May wield weapon:* additional damage based on weapon used;

**Weaknesses:** Not very bright

**Drives/Motivations:** Obey lieutenant or overseer

### Lieutenant/Overseer of Henchmen

**TL:** 4-6 [3]

**AP:** 3-5



**Primary Skills:** (SR 6-8) Specific UNARMED COMBAT skill (e.g., BOXING), Specific MELEE WEAPON *or* Specific RANGED WEAPON skill; at least one COGNITION-related skill (e.g., DEDUCTION), at least one AWARENESS-related skill (e.g., OBSERVATION), at least one INFLUENCE-related skill (e.g., PERSUASION), at least one ATHLETICS-related skill (e.g., ARMOR MOVEMENT)

**Dice:** 6-8

**MR:** 8+

**Dmg:** +1-3 (based on weapon)

**Vitality:** 30-45 (20/10/5)

**Sanity:** 15-20 (10/5/2)

**Flee/Fatality:** 1st level Vitality depleted (though some will continue fighting beyond this).

**Strengths:** *Cunning:* makes up for the dim-wits of those he oversees

*Wields Weapon:* additional damage based on weapon used;

**Weaknesses:** Overly confident

**Drives/Motivations:** Obey lord or master

## Wolf

**TL:** 3

**AP:** 3

**Dice:** +2/wolf in pack

**MR:** 8+

**Dmg:** +1

**Vitality:** 6/3/1

**Sanity:** N/A

**Flee/Fatality:** 1/3 of pack number slain (flee)

**Fear Factor:** 2 (+1 for every 5 wolves in pack)

**Strengths:** *Acute Smell:* Can smell and track blood and prey across great distances.

*Night Vision:* Can see extremely well in the dark

*Powerful Bite:* +1 dmg

*Strength of the Pack:* +2 dice for every wolf in the pack

**Weaknesses:** *obedience to pack alpha, cautious*

**Drives/Motivations:** Survival instincts

## Yeti

**TL:** 6 (5) [2]

**AP:** 4

**Dice:** 8

**MR:** 7+

**Dmg:** +4 (claws) +3 (bite)

**Vitality:** 28/14/7

**Sanity:** 4/2/1

**Flee/Fatality:** 1st level Vitality depleted.

**Fear Factor:** 4 (6 if enraged)

**Strengths:** *Camouflage:* natural concealment in snowy terrain; base 3 DL to spot when unmoving;

*Increased Strength:* (+2 dmg, -2 DL Feats of Strength);

*Night Vision:* No negative penalty in low-light conditions;

*Resistances:* Cold: AR 5 (in addition to BD);

*Thick Hide:* (+2 AR figured into BD).

**Weaknesses:** Territorial

**Drives/Motivations:** Protect territory, Survival

**Description and Lore:** ranging from 7-10 feet in height, Yetis are most often found in cold climes and mountainous terrain which experiences significant snowfall throughout much of the year. Highly territorial, Yetis have been known to threaten or even attack those who encroach on areas they perceive as their domain, though in some cases they will only try to scare off the trespassers. Yetis possess some limited intelligence and cunning, though they do not use tools or skills.

## Primary NPCs

Primary NPCs are the most important non-protagonist characters of the entire story. They are the movers and shakers of your setting and plot. Such individuals are most often the villains and central antagonists of the story.

Primary NPCs should be fleshed out and created with the same detail as PCs. They should be given an array of skills, strengths, weaknesses, core drives, motivations, and beliefs. Consider their history, relationships, habits, and quirks. How do they speak, move, think, and act? Make them ruthless, cunning, and deplorable and your players will relish hating them.

Creating your primary NPC antagonist(s) is crucial to initiating the conflict of the collective story. Knowing what your antagonist's motivations and goals are—and especially how those goals are in direct opposition to those of the PCs—will often be essential to the developing plot and conflict of the story.

## What Makes a Great Villain or Antagonist?

Villains can come in virtually any shape or personality. They can be charming and likable or putrid and foul; they can be driven by noble ideals or completely sadistic; they can be mild-mannered and seemingly innocuous or they can exude a palpable aura of power and menace. But no matter what their nature, there are five essential elements every great villain must possess: *Name*, *Purpose*, *Opposition*, *Threat*, and *Action*. Each of these is elaborated on below.

**Name:** This may seem obvious, but it is important to emphasize that any villain worthy of the title must be given a name. Even if a villain is a monster or beast, it will still be a *character*. In JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, they didn't go to slay a dragon; they went to slay *Smaug*. No matter who they are, whether obsequious bureaucrat, goblin king, mafia boss, or leader of an intergalactic smuggling ring—your primary antagonists must be given a name.

**Purpose:** All villains must have a goal. They must be driven by something. This purpose and goal should almost always be linked to one of the five core drives which define all protagonist characters (*Duty*, *Justice*, *Ambition*, *Knowledge*, and *Connection*). It could be subjugating a kingdom, or overthrowing a ruler, or kidnapping the heir and forcing him/her to marry them. But each of these goals would invariably be tied to a deeper motivation and belief (in this case, *Ambition*, *Justice*, and *Connection*, respectively). A core drive should be the foundation of all they do. Your villain's purpose will determine the extent of their resolve.

When considering the relative power and threat level of your primary NPC characters, consider how and when the PCs might eventually face them. If you anticipate it being

many sessions down the road, after the PCs have gained a significant amount of XP and levels, then go ahead and make the villain Threat Level 9 or higher. If you foresee the PCs facing down the villain sooner than that, make their TL a little lower. However, at minimum, the villain should have a TL at least 3 levels higher than the average experience level of the PCs. Thus, if the PCs have an average level of 4, the primary antagonist should have a TL of at least 7.

**Opposition:** The next essential characteristic is that a villain's purpose and goals must be diametrically opposed to those of the PCs. If the PCs are trying to prevent a war, the villain should be doing everything in his power to instigate one; if the PCs are trying to keep the children of the king safe and hidden, the villain should be actively seeking them out and trying to capture them; if the PCs need to retrieve a lost artifact from the bowels of an ancient temple, the villain should want it even more than the PCs do. Find out what the collective goal of the PCs is, and then put the goal of the villain in direct opposition to them.

**Threat:** Every villain must somehow pose a threat to the PCs. This does not mean all villains must be inherently powerful. Power is typically an outward manifestation; threat doesn't necessarily have to be. Threat can be looming and oppressive or it can be subtle and unsuspected. Whether that threat is to the PCs, those they care about, or the world around them, this threat must be present. And the threat a villain poses must challenge the PCs. The challenge is often physical in nature, but it doesn't have to be. Some of the greatest villains of all time challenged the hearts and minds of the protagonists, causing them to doubt their beliefs, falter in their resolve, or succumb to their fears and weaknesses. Regardless of the nature of the primary antagonist, they must represent a significant threat against the collective might of the PCs.

**Action:** The final requirement of all great villains is simply action. They must do things. They must take steps to realize their aims and purpose. A villain may be indolent and lazy in their lifestyle, but they can never be lazy in the pursuit of their goals. Action is what drives the plot of a story forward. Villains must act.

## Villain Points

Primary antagonists—the villains of the collective *Untold* story—are similar to PCs in one other important way. Where PCs have Hero Points to potentially bail them out of unfortunate circumstances, your primary antagonists have Villain Points. Villain Points can be used in many of the same ways Hero Points are spent (see page 8 for a list of the ways both Hero Points and Villain Points can be used). However, villain points can also be used in several powerful ways unique to primary antagonists, as outlined below.

Consider creating a clock for each of your villain's schemes and plans. A scheme which is relatively easy to execute or bring to fruition may have as few as 4 segments; a more complicated plan or scheme may have as many as 20. When such a clock is completely filled, whatever dastardly plan the villain had set in motion is fulfilled and the PCs will have lost any chance of thwarting it. Further rules for creating and advancing clocks can be found in the full version of the GM's Guide.

*Initiate a villainous plan or scheme:* Your primary villain will likely already have a grand and diabolical plan in motion from the very start of the game. This may be the very thing that spurs the PCs to action and launches the collective story. Yet you may use Villain Points to introduce additional schemes and plans on top of the villain's primary goal. Consider what other machinations your villain might put into play to frustrate the progress and plans of the PCs. When you add this additional plan or scheme to the mix, it's only fair that you spend a Villain Point to do so. Then watch your players' mouths open in collective horror and consternation when the new scheme becomes known (that alone will make the expenditure of a Villain Point worth it).

*Further a villainous plan or scheme:* Once your villain's scheme is in motion—whether that be the primary plan that may have been part of what launched the story of your game, or another secondary scheme introduced afterwards—you may choose to spend a Villain Point to advance that scheme by

one. This can be compared to filling in an empty circle divided into 4 or more segments, though it can also be a line of boxes, a small bowl of beads, or any other method you choose.

*Advance a clock or countdown:* Similar to the use above, you may also use a Villain Point to advance any other looming clock or countdown in the game. This could be an advancing army, impending storm or natural disaster, or some other consequence of the villain's plans. It could also be related to the plans and machinations of a faction unrelated to the villain, though if a Villain Point is used on it, the clock should somehow also further the aims of the villain.

*Summon a fresh wave of thugs or reinforcements:* Whether the villain is present or not, you can always use a Villain Point to have another wave of thugs or reinforcements show up to harry the PCs and thwart their progress.

*Kidnap an ally:* You might also use a Villain Point to abduct an important figure in the characters' lives. This could be an ally, family member, friend, or mentor. This use can really feel personal to the players and their characters. Very villainous.

*Achieve a miraculous getaway or survival:* If you don't think the time is quite right for the villain to be captured or defeated, you can use a Villain Point to arrange for their escape or astounding capacity to avoid death or defeat.

## Instigating and Maintaining the Conflict

In every *Untold* story you and your fellow players create, conflict is the driving force. One of your most important tasks as GM is to not only initiate the conflict the PCs must face, but then maintain—and even ratchet up—that conflict. Each of these tasks is elaborated on below.

### Initiating the Conflict

**Assigning Difficulty Level:** Every challenge the PCs face will be assigned a DL. When considering the inherent DL of skill checks, I suggest a simple formula of 3-2-1. For every six skill checks, 3 of them should be assigned a DL of 1; two of the six should be assigned a DL of 2; and only one of the six should have a DL of 3 or higher. Alternatively, you might take into account the experience level of the PCs and make the ratio three checks with a DL 2 steps lower than the PCs' experience level (though still typically no more than DL 2), two with a DL 1 step lower than their level, and only one check with a DL equal to or higher than their level. Also keep in mind that it's okay if a character's SN makes a check irrelevant. That should be one of the rewards for heightened expertise.

From the exercises of creating the setting, mapping out the plot, and formulating the chief villains and adversaries of your collective story, you should already have a clear idea of what the inciting conflict of that story will be. Now you just need to lay it out and bring the protagonist characters into it. There are innumerable ways you can do this, but here are a few suggestions to get ideas percolating in your brain.

***En Medias Res:*** Start with the action already in full swing. Maybe the game begins with the PCs in the midst of an attack, a riot, or a natural disaster. Perhaps they are prisoners in the process of being interrogated, or tasked with guarding a nobleman across robber-infested woods. Whatever the nature of the conflict, the idea is to throw the PCs into the midst of it already in full swing.

***Hit 'Em Where It Hurts:*** This was hinted at in the sections above, but the nature of the conflict should mean something to the PC's. It should matter—a lot. Being tasked with rescuing the princess from the frost giant's tower may be interesting, but what if they needed to rescue one of the PC's sisters instead? Heading off to eliminate the threat of raiders terrorizing the countryside is one thing, but how much more compelling is it if the bandits killed the loved ones of the PCs in one of their raids? The players will be much more invested in the conflict if it really matters to their characters. If you're going to hit them with something, hit 'em where it hurts.

***Attention to Detail:*** When laying out and describing what takes place in the story's inciting incident, take time to provide details—possibly even a lot of details. What smells and odors might be present? What sounds or voices (or silence) vie for dominance in the scene? Are there any sensations, such as wind, temperature, or weather the PCs might experience? What is visually striking? What colors, textures, or gradations of light stand out? Even seemingly insignificant details can bring

this important inciting scene to life in the minds of the players. Do some work to paint a picture in the minds of the players and this critical opening scene will linger in their memories throughout the rest of the story.

**Exertion:** Although exertion points can be restored with rest or healing, the more points and levels that have been dipped into, the longer it may take to fully recover. As GM, you may feel inclined to allow PCs to recover spent points quicker than specified in the rules. However, over-expenditure of exertion points is meant to come with consequences. Allow characters to suffer those consequences. At the same time, when the stakes are high, encourage them to consider burning extra exertion in order to perform heroic feats.

In virtually every circumstance, players roll for their own skill checks. However, in situations where a skill would be used instinctively or subconsciously (i.e., there is no chance Exertion would be spent on the check), you as GM may choose to roll in secret on behalf of the PCs. Skill checks where this could be the case might include certain AWARENESS-related checks, such as those involving OBSERVATION, or certain COGNITION-related checks, such as DEDUCTION or INTUITION. In such cases, simply assign a DL to the check, find out how many dice each character would roll (equal to the applicable SR) and roll in secret. Also note that if a character's SN is equal to or greater than the DL, then the secret roll is moot because they automatically succeed. Also note that such checks should seldom be more than 2 or 3 DL.

## Maintaining the Conflict

Once the conflict of your story is off and running, you need to keep up the momentum. You need to maintain it. Press on the gas and don't let up. Did the PCs just beat up a group of thugs? Throw another wave at them? Did the PCs just narrowly escape pursuit from assassins? Have them reappear and spot them. Obviously there is a limit to how often you can rinse and repeat this kind of thing, but don't be afraid to throw something else at the PCs even if they've just exhausted themselves overcoming the last threat.

There are three central means of maintaining the conflict of the story: *Obstacles and Challenges*, *Adversaries and Foes*, and *Building Tension*. Each of these is briefly covered below.

## Obstacles and Challenges

Putting obstacles and challenges in the path of the PCs is essential to every *Untold* story. In fact, skill checks are at the foundation of *Untold's* design. Players want to utilize their characters' skills, so give them opportunities to do so. Consider the specialized sub-skills the PCs have invested in when designing challenges. At the same time, don't be afraid to throw obstacles in their way that challenge them in areas where their skills are lacking. Above all, allow the story and its inherent obstacles to flow naturally. If the story takes a turn that lands them on a raft going down a turbulent river, or needing to ski down a steep snow-covered mountain, the situation will demand action whether or not the PCs have the requisite set of skills or not.

## Adversaries and Foes

Depending on the game setting, thugs, monsters, and other adversaries may be among the most common opposition and threats the PCs may face. Occasionally (or perhaps frequently) introducing such adversaries is clearly designed to maintain the conflict of your collaborative *Untold* story.

The quantity and quality (i.e., Threat Level) of such adversaries is often a tricky thing to nail down. As a general guideline, *the combined TL of all adversaries should be roughly equal to the combined experience levels of all Protagonist Characters*. However, the inherent nature of TLs means that the higher the TL the more outmatched a group of lower level characters will be. For example, a group of three 4th level PCs has a combined level of 12, yet this group would be woefully outmatched by a TL 12 adversary. They would likely be outmatched by even a TL 9 adversary. The inverse is also true, though: twelve TL 1 creatures will be woefully outclassed by this same group of 4th level PCs. So how do you make this calculation? Consider the following guidelines:

- If each adversary's TL is equal to or 1-3 levels *higher* than each PCs level, as long as their combined TL equals the combined level of all PCs, the number of adversaries shouldn't need to be

adjusted.

- *Example: A group of 4 PCs are all level 3, for a combined experience level of 12. You should be able to pit them against 4 level 3 adversaries, 3 level 4 adversaries, or 2 level 6 adversaries without having to adjust the numbers.*
- If an adversary's TL is 4-5 levels *higher* than the average experience level of the PCs, there should usually only be 1 such creature or foe pitted against the characters, at most 2.
- If an adversary's TL is more than 5 levels *higher* than the average experience level of the PCs, it is unlikely they should ever be pitted against them (though rules for **Fatal Flaws** found in the full version of the GM's Guide may make this possible).
- If each adversary's TL is 1 level *lower* than that of the PCs, consider adding 1 - 3 *more* adversaries than the ratio of combined TL vs PC level would suggest.
  - *Example: A group of 4 PCs are all level 3, for a combined experience level of 12. If the TL of each of their foes is only 2, there should be at least 6 of these thugs, but there could be up to 9.*
- If each adversary's TL is 2-3 levels *lower* than that of the PCs, there should be between 3 and 10 *more* adversaries than the ratio of combined TL vs PC level would suggest (the combined TL of all adversaries should always *exceed* the combined levels of the players).
  - *Example: A group of 4 PCs are all level 3, for a combined experience level of 12. If the TL of each of their foes is only 1, there should be between 15 and 22 of them.*
- If each adversary's TL is more than 3 levels *lower* than that of the PCs, it is unlikely they should be pitted against them (though rules for **Mobs and Hordes** found in the full version of the GM's Guide may make this possible).

## Building Tension

At various times throughout the course of the story, you may wish to build the tension and suspense of the game's ongoing conflict. Here are a few suggestions on ways you might accomplish this:

**Utilizing Language to Heighten Tension and Suspense:** One of your primary means of communicating with your players is through the words you use to describe what is happening. Such words can be one more tool to help heighten tension. Consider the nature of the conflict and scene you are describing. Ask yourself how the words you choose to describe the scene can help build tension.

**Don't Back Down:** At times you might feel that the protagonist characters have their back up against a wall, that things are as bad as they can get for them. At such times you might be tempted to let up the pressure, to reduce the number of threats or obstacles they face. Sometimes, this is exactly what you need to do. But often it's just the opposite. Don't back down. Keep the pressure on, let the PCs rise to the occasion and exhaust themselves in overcoming the challenges and adversaries arrayed against them. When things seem dire, even hopeless, resist the natural tendency to back down.

**Raise the Stakes:** The PCs should already be deeply invested in the conflict of the story. They should already have a stake in the game. But there may be times where you as GM need to raise the stakes. If a magical (or biological) affliction has been affecting random people in the area of the game's setting, have it afflict a person close to one of the PCs—or possibly even one of the PCs themselves. If the PCs thought they had another week to solve the mystery, have the villain cut the time down to one day. Raise the stakes and you will naturally ratchet up the conflict and tension.

## Other Things to Keep in Mind

As GM, you have a lot of things to keep in mind. Just the four main aspects covered here (Setting, Plot, Characters, and Conflict) can at times feel overwhelming. But here are a few more tips that may help in running a game of *Untold*.

**The rule of Mixed Successes:** There will be times when achieving (or at least attempting to achieve) some monumental success will warrant spending extra Exertion. But sometimes you may need to remind your players that barely achieving the DL is still counted as a success, and even falling 1 success short of the DL can still be salvaged and translated into a Mixed

Success. Such results may complicate the life of the character by introducing a snag, but often such an outcome can provide rich possibilities for developing the collaborative story.

***Don't plan solutions:*** As GM, it is your job to place obstacles, challenges, and dilemmas in the path of the protagonist characters. It is never your job to help solve those problems. Even if you may see a clear way out, you must resist the temptation to hint at or proffer it to the players. Let them figure it out. Never plan solutions.

***Don't be afraid to fail:*** This one is certainly easier said than done, but the hard truth is that, as a GM, you will definitely experience failure. Likely a lot of failure. It's okay to make mistakes. Learn from them. Plan ways to avoid the same mistakes in the future. Be open to learning and growing as a GM. You can only get better.

***Have fun!:*** Above all, remember that Untold is meant to be fun, not only for the players, but for you as well. Find the fun and excitement of your players' discoveries, their setbacks, their heroic deeds, and their triumphs. Discover the fun in your role as storyteller, and in your embodiment of the villain and other antagonists.

A wealth of additional resources and advice can be found in the full version of the Game Master's Guide. You can order the Untold Game Master's Guide on our website, [www.untoldrpg.com](http://www.untoldrpg.com), or by joining our community on Patreon.

## 6. Introductory Adventure

This sample adventure is intended to introduce players to the Untold RPG. Although the Quickstart Characters might be ideally suited for the adventure, any characters may be used.

**NOTE:** This introductory adventure is intended solely for the eyes of the Game Master running it. If you are a player, stop reading now.

### The Wolves of Pemsbrooke

*Note: this introductory adventure is written as taking place in a medieval/Fantasy setting. However, it can easily be adapted to any number of different genres and game settings. For advice on how to adapt the scenario, see **Adapting the Adventure to a Modern or a Sci-Fi Setting** (page 73) at the end of this introductory adventure*

**Before starting:** Familiarize yourself with each of the players' protagonist characters. Jot down their most pertinent skills, weaknesses, and motivations/belief statements. As you read through this introductory adventure for the first time, consider how you might incorporate those character aspects into the overarching story.

#### Read to the players at the start of the adventure:

*For the past 2 months, communication from the monks of the monastery of Pemsbrooke has ceased. Twice in that time, messengers were sent to ascertain what had befallen them. Neither messenger has returned. Now the archbishop of Onteris, has hired you to investigate and discover what has befallen the monastery. You have been tasked with journeying to the Pemsbrooke Monastery, which lies about ten miles north of the village bearing the same name, in order to investigate what has befallen the monastery's inhabitants. In token of his gratitude for your service (and in addition to the generous payment he has promised for bringing back word from the monastery), the archbishop also gifts you an amulet blessed by Onteris, bestowed with the ability to heal 4 times (or a number of times equal to the number of PCs)—though each use requires 30 min of contact to complete the healing process.*

#### On the Road

*Now, after three days of uneventful travel, you are nearing the end of the journey. On the evening of the third day, as the last hours of daylight are fading, you have nearly reached the village of Pemsbrooke (only two miles distant), and are eager for a hot meal, warm bed, and any news the villagers may have regarding the monastery (another 10 miles distance from the village). As the sun begins to drop behind the mountains to the west, you experience an uneasy feeling. The surrounding forest has become unnaturally silent, and you have the uncomfortable feeling that you are being watched.*

If the players ask to make an OBSERVATION check:

- (OBSERVATION checks—3 DL):

*1 success: You think you catch sight of movement skirting the edge of the forest, but it may just be a trick of the light as the sun fades.*

*2 successes: There is definitely something moving in the forest, matching your progress.*

*3 successes: You catch sight of fur and what you think may be the muzzle of a wolf. Only it seems to be standing upright.*



If they go to the forest to investigate: The wulven (stats below) will be able to ambush the PCs (see the **Ambush/Surprise** rules on page 46 of the Quickstart Guide).

If they stop and wait: The wulven will wait till nightfall to attack (when they will also have an Ambush/Surprise advantage as well as a low-light [-1 DL] advantage).

If they travel on, no matter at what pace: The wulven will spring from the trees less than a mile from the village attempting to stop them from reaching the village of Pemsbrooke. Only in this last case do the wulven fail to gain an Ambush/Surprise advantage. In fact, if any of the PCs have ranged weapons they will have a 1 shot First strike capability before the wulven close with them (see the **First Strike** rules on page 46 of the Quickstart Guide).

In every case, no matter when they attack, the number of attacking wulven will be equal to the number of PCs. Also note that whenever the wulven attack, the first thing to resolve is the Fear Factor of the wulven—a mental attack with a TL of 4 (though MD can offset this mental strain damage).

## Wulven

**TL:** 3 [2]

**AP:** 3

**Dice:** +5

**MR:** 8

**Dmg:** +1

**Vitality:** 12/6/3

**Sanity:** 5/2/1

**Flee/Fatality:** NA

**Fear Factor:** 4

**Strengths:** Acute Smell (-1 DL);

Night Vision (-1 DL);

Claws/Bite (+1 dmg)—typically, 1 of every 3 attacks will be a bite;

Shifting Sickness Toxin attack: with any successful attack [claw—TL 2, or bite—TL 3] that deals wound damage; if fail to resist, will be infected by toxin with a persistence factor of 10 min; if Endurance is completely depleted, will transform into a wulven.

**Weaknesses:** Madness - will not flee or surrender

**Drives/Motivations:** Kill/maim, Obey master

**Description and Lore:** (DL 3) The foul creation of a dark wizard or malevolent being, wulven share many similarities with werewolves. They transform from a sickened man or woman and—when the sickness has reached its culmination—assume the form of an upright wolf-like beast. However, unlike werewolves, they are permanently bound to this form until either slain or somehow healed. Magical/Faith healing is the only way to eradicate the illness and requires 8 successes devoted to Potency to heal.

If any of the PCs suffer wound damage from a wulven attack (claw or bite): there is a chance they will be infected with the Shifting Sickness (**FEATS OF ENDURANCE** [DL 2 for claw damage; DL 3 for bite damage] to resist). If they fail one of these resistance checks and do not receive magic or faith healing in time, they will transform into a wulven. If the attack occurred when the characters first noticed the creatures stalking them from the woods, there will be 4 additional toxin

attacks in the time it takes them to reach the village (the initial toxin attack takes place when the PC first takes damage), since it will take at least 40 minutes to travel the remaining 2 miles to Pemsbrooke. If the attack occurs when the characters are just under a mile from the village, it will take at least 15 minutes to reach Pemsbrooke, so 2 additional toxin attacks in that time (the initial toxin attack takes place when the PC first takes damage). Opting to increase their pace, they can cut either time in half (only 2 or 1 additional toxin attacks), but each player must make a DL 2 **RUNNING** check to succeed. If carrying an injured companion, the character doing the carrying will take 6 minus their **FEATS OF STRENGTH SN** in additional Endurance strain.

### The Village

**[As the characters near the village, read the following:]** *You reach the top of a rise in the road, and see the flickering lights of the village at the bottom. But the lights are small and dim and seem far too few for what you've heard is a modest though still thriving village. As you begin to descend, a single howl sounds from the woods behind you. You quicken your pace. Another howl sounds from the woods on the far side of the village. Then another howl rings in the night, then another, then another, all coming from different sides. [First, inform them that just hearing the howls counts as a TL 3 stress attack—very disconcerting and anxiety inducing. Then ask the PCs what they do. If they run, ask each PC to make a DL 2 **RUNNING** check (under normal circumstances it might be a DL 1 check, but it's getting dark, and it is getting stressful); Failure and they stumble and take 2 physical strain damage for each success short of the DL.] As you run, the howls increase in frequency getting closer and closer. You enter the village and race toward the large inn at the center of the village. The howls seem to be just at the edge of the village now. You reach the door of the inn—and find it locked and barred. [Tell the PCs you have started a countdown clock with 4 segments and have already filled in the first segment. Also inform them that each time a segment is filled in, they will suffer an ever increasing stress-based mental attack, starting at TL 3 and increasing with each segment filled as danger grows ever nearer. Then ask the PCs what they do.]*

Draw a circle with 4 segments and fill in one.

If they shout and pound on the door and ask (or demand) to be let in, they must make a check [DL 3 **PERSUASION** or **INTIMIDATION**, depending on the approach taken]. IMPORTANT NOTE: If they try to appeal to the innkeeper's sense of benevolence by saying that one (or more) of their number is injured, the Innkeeper will say: *"Injured? How? What happened?"* If they then admit that they were injured by the wulven, the DL of the check will be increased to 5! Success means the innkeeper reluctantly unbars the door and hurries them inside [Go to **Inside the Common Room** below]; failure means the innkeeper refuses to unbar the door, and they must try something else [Fill in one more segment of the countdown clock and tell the PCs you have done so, inflict the next stress attack (TL 4), then ask the PCs what they do next.]

At this point the PCs can try a skill they haven't tried yet to convince the innkeeper to let them in, or they can try something else (a repeat use of the same skill used in the first attempt will be at +2 DL). Regardless of what they decide, after they attempt it (or as they attempt it if it is more time consuming), **inform the PCs that you have filled in another segment of the countdown clock, they suffer a TL 5 stress attack, and that only one segment remains.** When that last segment is filled in the wolf creatures will have converged on this spot.

At this point a girl of perhaps 15 holding a lantern appears from the side of the inn and calls to them. *"This way! Hurry!"* She bolts around the side of the inn [it is assumed that the PCs will follow] There she yanks open a hatch and hurries down

the steps inside. As soon as the final PC has clambered in after her, inform them that the last segment of the clock has now been filled in. The girl shouts, ***“Close and bar the hatch!”*** Just as the PC does so, something crashes against the hatch from outside and they hear snarling and inhuman growling as something claws at the hatch [Inflict the final TL 6 stress attack]. ***“Come on.”*** the girl says. ***“This way.”*** Holding the lantern aloft, she leads them through a cellar, then up a set of stairs which opens onto the inn’s kitchen, and from there, out into the common room. There, a middle-aged man and woman are arguing in barely muffled whispers. They wheel around when the girl enters the room. [There might be some back and forth between them as follows:]

The man: ***“Hannah! What is this? What have you done?”***

The girl: ***“Father, they need help!”***

The man: ***“They’re infected!”***

The girl: ***“Then we should help them! And maybe they can help us too!”***

[You can continue the debate, but hopefully you will quickly arrive at a place where the innkeeper acquiesces to the PCs taking beds in the inn. For example, the PCs might interject that they have the means to heal themselves with Onteris’s amulet, and that would mollify the innkeeper.]

### **Inside the Common Room**

At this point the most pressing concern would be any PCs who have been wounded and infected by one of the wulven. They would be best served by resting in beds and having food brought to them. Obviously the first priority is using the amulet to heal them of the wulven infection. **There is no other available means of curing the disease.**

This is also where the rules for rest and recovery of spent Exertion will come into play. This would likely be considered a Partial Rest, meaning each character can restore 2d12 + their experience level (likely either 0 or 1) to be distributed among their spent Endurance and Tenacity (though it could be argued that with the wulven prowling about outside, they wouldn’t be able to achieve more than a Troubled Rest).

[For a full overview of the rules on [Rest and Recovery](#), see page 34 of this Quickstart Guide.]

If the PCs inquire about other means of healing being available inside the village: the innkeeper would reply that the only ones who might have been able to help were the monks at the Pemsbrooke monastery, and they have not been heard from for 6 weeks. The innkeeper’s wife would add: ***“Theona’s cures might have helped, but . . .”***

If pressed, she will say that Theona is the Tender of the village, but that she’s been in mourning for her son, and has shut herself away in her home. Her apprentice, Valia, has assumed the role of Tender, but she doesn’t have the same gifts for healing and cures. If asked how long Theona has been in mourning, she would say: ***“Oh, some time now. Must be close to two months.”*** If asked if Theona has been shut away that whole time, she’ll say: ***“Oh, no! Of course not. She comes out on occasion. All veiled and wrapped up for mourning. Poor dear.”***

If, by some strange fluke, the PCs are uninjured and think themselves capable of venturing into the night to fight the wulven, the innkeeper and his family will try to dissuade them.

- ***“Don’t be fools! No one can fight those things and live!”***
- ***“Those aren’t normal wolves. They’re unnatural!”***
- ***“They’re possessed of some devils!”***

If the PCs choose to brave the streets: they will almost certainly encounter a virtual non-stop assault consisting of waves of wulven lurking in and around the village. There are thirteen of them in total. Two will appear the first round of combat,

two more the second round, then three more each round for the next three rounds, each new wave drawn by the sound of battle and the smell of blood. Allow this battle to come to its natural conclusion. However, once the PCs leave the inn, their chances of being let back in are slim (baseline 5 DL of influencing the innkeeper to let them back in).

### **The Next Morning**

After resting the night at the inn, it is fairly open as to what the PCs choose to do. **Invite the PCs to consider if their Drives and Motivations might have any bearing on their decisions.** Regardless, here are some possible courses they might take.

If the PCs ask for further information about the monastery: the villagers don't know much, only that there has been no trade or visitation from the monastery for the past 6 weeks. There was a rumor that a terrible plague or sickness might have befallen them and they quarantined themselves. The villagers believed it and didn't think it prudent to go and investigate. Two knights of the order of Onteris rode through here a month ago, but they never heard anything more of them. They think these wolf creatures overran the monastery and slaughtered all the monks.

If the PCs interact with the townsfolk and try to get information out of them: A few villagers will trickle into the common room of the inn, especially in the morning. These might include Mathis, Andril, Heller, and of course Horace, the innkeeper (see People of the Village of Pemsbrooke below). The villagers will likely let slip about the many afflictions that have befallen them.

- 5 villagers have gone missing, all presumed dead.
- Crops are failing.
- Weevils have tainted their grain supply.
- There is an infestation of rats.
- Times when they have milked the cows and the milk turned rancid only minutes after.
- Very few dogs and cats remain in the village to hunt the rats, all presumed dead.
- Any dogs that were not brought into houses during the night barked furiously at first, but were soon silenced. Not even the bodies were found.
- Most disconcerting are the sounds of prowling and howling wolves all around the village—and in its streets—every night.
- They live in constant fear.

If the PCs venture out into the village during the day: There are signs that something is not right in the village as well. The leaves on the trees do not seem as vibrant; the crops seem wilted; they even glimpse rats. Speaking with various villagers (see below) will yield much of the same information detailed above.

### People of the Village of Pemsbrooke

- **Mathis**—Mayor [low voice, speaks with careful deliberation]
- *Town Council* of 6—3 women: **Harriet** (wife of Horace, the innkeeper [gossipy voice, uses “well, let me tell you” a lot]); **Greta** (wife of Zarisham, the artificer [soft spoken, hesitant], **Brienne**—shrewd old spinster [strident, no nonsense: “don't be a dolt!”]; and 3 men: **Andril**—farmer, artist, and husband of Lena, the potter [always has a pipe in his mouth which he speaks around. Can tell his mood by how often he puffs on his pipe. Says “I suppose”

a lot]; **Heller**—farmer [suspicious and dour, frowns a lot]; **Letham**—general goods store owner [upbeat and chipper, always smiling: “Wonderful to see you all. How can I help you?”]

- **Zarisham**—Artificer [absent-minded, intense: “Oh, don’t pay any attention to what is behind the curtain]
- **Horace**—the Innkeeper [pleasant but not fawning. Matter-of-fact: “Oh, I’d steer clear of the monastery. It’s cursed now. Quarantined. Wouldn’t be surprised if they’ve all passed on. Nothing to be gained from heading out there, I can tell you.”]
- **Cedril**—Beggar [smelly, discomfiting: “A copper is all I ask good sirs. No more than a copper. And bless you, bless you for your generosity.” If asked how he survives the nights with the wulven prowling the streets, he’ll admit that he sleeps in people’s cellars.]
- **Bron**—Blacksmith [quiet and soft-spoken. Slow to rouse him to anger, but a whirlwind if you do. “Hmph. No, never had much cause to forge swords before now. But things are looking bleak, I’ll tell you.”]
- **Lena**—Potter [blind, but makes the most exquisite pottery. Her husband (Andril) paints them all, but she crafts all of them by touch.]
- **Theona**—former healer of the town, now in mourning [all in black, veil over her face; seldom emerges from her home]
- **Valia**—Apprentice woman (“It used to be Theona did all the healing. She had a gift. But then . . .”)
- **Uripholes**—The mad sculptor [can hear his hammer ringing clear in town, even though he’s out on the edge of the woods]
- **Fenhier**—Beekeeper, Old grizzled veteran warrior, retired [gruff, swears a lot, spits a red tobacco-like substance from one side of his mouth: “Sure I can still fight. But I’d rather sit by the fire and read. That and take care of my bees.”]

If the PCs decide to leave the village and travel to the monastery: Although the villagers may express some unease and trepidation about the prospect of the PCs going to the monastery, they would also be reluctant to tell them they shouldn’t go. The PCs can definitely reach the monastery in just a few hours (3) of travel. If they do, they encounter no other obstacles or adversaries on the road, though they will expend 3 Endurance in walking the 10 miles there [increasing their pace will save time but will double the amount of Endurance expended].

### **The Pemsbrooke Monastery**

Depending on how early the PCs left the village, they may either have plenty of time to search the monastery, or they may have relatively little time. If they left first thing in the morning, they shouldn’t have to worry. If they don’t leave until late morning, or worse yet, the afternoon, they may have a very difficult time returning to the village before nightfall. Write up a 12 segment clock, with each segment representing 1 hour of the day before nightfall (around 8 pm). Thus, if the PCs depart *before* 8 am, the clock would not start until then. If the PCs depart *after* 8 am, pre-fill an equivalent number of segments. It will take 3 hours to reach the monastery.

If the PCs remain till nightfall: four wulven will return to the monastery, having tracked the scent of the PCs. If they give battle, 2 more will show up after the 2nd round of combat, then on round 5, 2 more will arrive on the scene. These are the only wulven in the general vicinity.

The monastery has been completely ransacked by the wulven. In the beginning, it was just one case of the Shifting Sickness. But one by one, the monks and acolytes were turned by their brothers, or slaughtered by the fiendish creatures they became. The PCs will find the interior of the monastery in shambles and seemingly abandoned, though several corpses remain,

rotting and foul. [The collective gruesome scene will inflict the equivalent of a TL 4 mental horror attack.] The place looks like it has been ripped to shreds. Besides the bodies, there are many other signs of violence and the telltale signs that the wulven wreaked havoc on the place. However, if the players succeed at a DL 3 SEARCH check, they will find a scrawled message from one of the monks on a journal in the Rector's chamber (note that **Collective Effort** can definitely be used for this check—see page 7 of the Quickstart Guide) . This final entry simply reads: *Oneris help us, we have failed. Malefice is the cause. He is in the village, somewhere. The only way to lift the curse is to cast him back to his dark abode. May Oneris help whoever finds him.* [If the PCs achieve an Amazing Success on the SEARCH check, they will also find these other crucial pieces of evidence in the Rector's journal and notes:

*A young acolyte, Korin, barely turned 16, came down with a terrible illness. Its effects were sudden and swift, and even the prayers to Oneris could not save him. His mother was inconsolable when I informed her. But most frightening of all was the look of baleful rage she cast on me. I fear she will not forgive our failing to save him. And . . .*

*Oneris, blessed be her name, has revealed to me the threat of a vengeful demonic spirit known as Malefice the Cruel. This entity seeks to re-enter our realm as he has several times in the past. If he can find a soul consumed by rage and vengeance, he can take possession of them. We must be on our guard.*

If the PCs opt to return to the village: If they manage to reach the inn before nightfall, they can rest at the inn once more. However, the howls of the wulven outside will be even more intense than the night before and the most the PCs can hope for is a **Troubled Rest** (see page 30 of the Quickstart Guide).

Eventually, whether it be the first day in the village or the second, the PCs should be led to visit the home of the village Tender, Theona (who is the true source of the village's troubles).

If the PCs decide to visit Theona's house: The townsfolk would certainly be willing to tell the PCs where Theona lives, but they would feel ashamed at the state of her house, and would likely feel a sense of grave unease about her property as well.

Once at her house, the signs should be apparent. The trees around her house look skeletal and dead. The grass is a putrid yellow, and inside the fenced yard, a simple search (1 DL SEARCH check) will find the bones of over twenty dogs and cats.

During the day, Theona will refuse the PCs entrance, asking them to come back tomorrow. She will sound distraught, tired, but also meek and frail. They can try to persuade her, but any attempts at influence will have to wear down the will of the demonic spirit possessing her (see **What's really going on** below). Malefice has an MD of 6. If they can somehow get her out of her house and into the daylight, she will be at a distinct disadvantage (+1 DL to all actions).

If the PCs somehow make it to Theona's house at night (would require either battling through the wulven or somehow sneaking their way across the village to avoid the wulven [likely requiring 2-3 separate DL 2 STEALTH checks]). Even if they somehow make it to Theona's abode, at night she would be fearless and might even invite the PCs into her house. Moreover, unlike during the day, if Theona/Malefice ever sees the tide is turning against them, they will mentally summon wulven to come to their aid—2 wulven every round starting at round 3 (maximum of 6).

### **What's really going on**

In reality, Theona has become possessed by the demonic spirit of Malefice, the Accursed. The only way to free the town and the poor souls cursed by the wulven sickness is to banish Malefice from Theona's body. The problem is that Theona

gave herself to Malefice willingly in order to avenge her dead son. At her core, Theona is a grieving mother. Her son became a monk at the monastery, then was killed when he contracted a wasting sickness. Now Theona has given herself to Malifice to seek revenge on the monks. The only way to reverse it is to either drive Malifice out of Theona or somehow convince Theona to banish it herself. Because Malefice has such a strong hold on her soul, it would take 4 points of mental strain damage *from Theona alone* to drive the spirit of Malefice out of her. And since Malefice has an MD of 6, it would require a DL 7 **FEATS OF WILL** on the part of Theona just to deal one point of strain damage—and her SR is only 3. However, the PCs can contribute their own will to aid her, in a sense, doing a collective effort of will (+1 die for each player plus an additional +1 die for every SN. Also note that players can spend Tenacity (and Hero Points) to aid her as well. If ten successes are achieved with one check, Malefice will be immediately driven out of her. If less than ten successes are achieved, it will take several checks to drive the spirit out (and it may not wish to wait around for that to happen).

When Theona speaks, she is quiet and seemingly meek and mournful. She might speak of her poor son, but more likely she will just say that she wants to be left alone to mourn. If the PCs can get Malefice to speak, Theona's voice will change to one that is mocking and cruel. This might just be one thing Malefice (speaking through Theona) might say:

***“You think Onteris will save you? She didn’t save this woman’s boy? She didn’t save his acolytes at the monastery. She is not a god who saves anything. She is a destroyer. A pillager of souls. And you are no different. You think any of you can save this woman? She is mine. Her rage is inconsolable.”***

## Theona (Malefice, the Accursed)

**TL:** 6 (4)[6]

**AP:** 4

**Dice:** +6

**MR:** 7

**Dmg:** +2

**Vitality:** 22/11/5

**Sanity:** 16/8/4

**Flee/Fatality:** Critical Vitality (See below)

**Fear Factor:** NA

**Primary Skills:** SR 6: HERBS/PLANT LORE; MIDWIFERY; MEDICINE; all other broad skills at SR 3 [DARK MAGIC 8; DECEPTION 8]

**Strengths:** Claws (Can elongate fingers and nails into shredding claws—both 11s and 12s bypass armor);

Voice of Madness (As an action, can speak in such a way that it actually counts as a mental attack (TL 5 +6 dice), a scraping against a character's mind, like nails on a chalkboard) [alternatively, this could be the voice of Malefice whispering in the mind of the target;

Noxious Breath (Can breathe out toxic fumes that count as a TL 6 poison attack [strain damage] that stays in the air and has a persistence factor of 2 rounds);

Cloud of Darkness (Can summon a dense cloud of darkness. Will cause all OBSERVATION checks to be at +3 DL).

**Weaknesses:** Host Body: If the first two levels of Vitality or Sanity are depleted, Malefice will abandon Theona's body and attempt to flee to another host (likely one of the wulven lurking on the outskirts of the village); at this point, Theona's body would be near death and would need to be immediately administered to if there was any chance of saving her.

Direct Sunlight: will suffer 2 points of wound damage every round any skin is in direct sunlight (which is why Theona stays completely veiled if she ever comes out)

***Drives/Motivations:*** Spread misery, Avoid detection

***Description and Lore:*** Theona used to be the Tender (healer) of the town of Pemsbrook. Ever since the death of her son, Korin, she has been in mourning, donned from head to foot in black. She seldom ventures out amongst the other villagers, remaining confined to her home. In reality, Theona has been overcome by a dark and ancient spirit known as Malefice who wishes to undermine the god, Onteris for some wrong she committed against him many years ago.

Once Malefice is defeated, any remaining wulven will flee (they will not turn back into men until Malefice is banished from this plane). If Malefice leaves Theona's body, he will seek a new host (a wulven) and bide his time to strike back at Onteris—and the PCs who serve him (forging the possibility of further adventures to come).

### **Adapting the Adventure to a Modern or a Sci-Fi Setting**

Even though this adventure is written as occurring in a more Fantasy/medieval setting, it can be adapted to a different game setting/genre with relative ease.

#### **Adapting to a Sci-Fi setting:**

- Instead of being dispatched from a different city, the PCs might travel from a whole different planet and system.
- Instead of a priest of Onteris, it would be some corporate exec wanting to secure their investment (you might come up with a name of the corporation).
- Instead of a monastery, it could be a research station or outpost. The Rector would likely be the head scientist or researcher.
- Instead of a village, it could be a settlement. Ideally, the research station and settlement would be on the same planet, though being two modules of an orbiting space station could be interesting as well.
- Travel to the outpost/station might still take 3 hours, but the PCs would likely have more efficient means of travel (a hovercraft or speeder). If the research station is connected to the settlement/support staff as part of one orbiting station, this would obviously be a moot point.
- If the name of Pemsbrooke seems too quaint, you could always change it to something like “Prosperity” or “Pemsilar 5”.
- If many of the PCs have high-tech ranged weapons, this may provide a slight advantage over the alien creatures. To make up for this, you might consider increasing the number of them in the first encounter by 1 or 2. Alternatively, you might increase their BD (armor) or their base Vitality.
- The Shifting Sickness could be an alien pathogen, and instead of wolf-like creatures, it could result in something far more alien and horrific.
- Instead of a healing amulet, the PCs would have a limited supply of high-tech medicine patches given them by the corporation.
- The journal entry of the head researcher about Malefice would instead reflect the nature of the creature they had been studying and would reveal that the host (the original specimen) was actually able to adopt a human form.
- The biggest change would be with Theona, who, instead of being possessed with some demonic spirit, might instead be the original host for the disease. Perhaps her son was just one of the first casualties. Being the original host has allowed her to maintain her human form, but in the final confrontation, the alien might completely overtake her or slough off the human form it has been hiding in.
- Theona's power of Cloud of Darkness wouldn't fit, though the Noxious Breath may produce a cloud of vapor that also limits vision (or she just might shut off the power).

#### **Adapting to a Modern setting:**



In many ways, a modern setting can be very broad: everything from the old west to 1930's supernatural, from 1980's nostalgia to modern-day contemporary. Whatever you choose, here are some guidelines to adapting this adventure to a Modern setting.

- The PCs could be paranormal investigators sent to a remote village to investigate the strange happenings there.
- Instead of a priest of Onteris, it would be their boss or handler dispatching them to the village.
- It could include a monastery, but, depending on the time period, it could also be an insane asylum, prison, observatory, lab, or any other remote location. It could also be contained entirely in the village.
- The monastery rector would instead be the warden, administrator or head scientist of the place.
- His journal entry about Malefice could be occult-centered or more scientific in nature, depending on the setting.
- The Shifting Sickness doesn't necessarily have to result in a werewolf-like creature. It could really be anything you choose.
- The villagers (inhabitants) would largely be the same, though their complaints might be less about "curses" and more about other mounting stresses and pressures of finding themselves in this precarious situation, and especially about the fear of going outside with those "things" running around.
- Instead of a healing amulet, the PCs might have a limited supply of high-tech medicine or some concoction the scientists at their bureau have cooked up for them.
- Depending on the nature of the setting, Theona might still be possessed with some supernatural entity or curse, but she also might be a carrier for a disease. Perhaps her son was just one of the first casualties.
- Theona's power of Cloud of Darkness wouldn't fit, though the Noxious Breath may produce a cloud of vapor that also limits vision.