

Introduction

While planning The Outer Reaches of Who We Can Be, I knew I wanted this game to be accessible, even to people who had limited or no experience with tabletop role-playing games or didn't know what they were. Tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs) can be quickly defined as games where a player acts as a specific character (or characters) and describes their actions through dialogue with other characters and the gamemaster (GM). The gamemaster describes the world and the influence character's actions have on it, and acts out the role of any non-player characters (NPCs). These games can rely heavily on dice, or be diceless; some emphasize telling a collaborative story, others focus on highly technical fight simulations. Embodying characters is at the core of all of these games.



Mechanically speaking, Outer Reaches is a "dice-pool" game system. When you make a move that requires the rolling of dice, you roll a certain number of standard six-sided die, with the goal being to roll at least one 4, 5, or 6 - a success. You are able to add a certain number of dice to each "pool" of dice that you then roll based on adjectives you assign to your character or nouns you give them. The more dice in your pool, the higher your chances of rolling a success.

This setting is open to whatever the player wants it to be (a setting-agnostic system), though it is explicitly fantasy - which here just means that "magic exists." The exact aesthetics and substance of what "magic exists" means will be different game-to-game. Players don't need to choose certain classes, and therefore aren't restrained by the fantasy archetypes that the genre is often tied up in. It instead asks the player to draw from their experiences and the fantasy stories that serve as their touchstones with the genre - whether these be Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, fairy tales, mythologies, or even other TTRPGs and use those to build a world and participate in a story that they feel excited about and comfortable in.



But more importantly, Outer Reaches asks players to make characters that they can identify and express themselves with, with particular emphasis on playing characters that make them feel powerful.

This game has been designed to be lightweight and easy to pick up, even with limited game experience prior to playing. Additionally, this game was written with the intention of being a two-player and one session game, with one person as gamemaster and one person as player, but has the potential to be expanded.

Finally, this game was designed with the explicit goal of helping queer people explore identity, power, and desire in a safe, fantastic environment. If you're cis and heterosexual, I can't stop you from playing, and wouldn't want to try. But I would ask that you reflect on why you want to play this particular game as you read through the rules. The end of this book lists several of the games that inspired this one, and they're written by actual professional game designers. I recommend checking them out!





Setting

Setting refers to 2 parts of the pre-game planning: deciding on a tone and discussing the type of story you'd like to tell, and describing the actual world the story will take place in.

This can be done in a number of ways, including just freely discussing it with the GM, but if you are unsure where to start or it just seems too daunting, begin by filling in the blanks on the next page, either with the words provided or with your own choices.

The tone of this story should be _____.

Adventurous • Dramatic • Lighthearted • Mysterious • Surreal

Magic in this world is _____ & _____.

Available • Bound • Commonplace • Controlled • Elemental • Free
Hidden • Intuitive • Powerful • Unimportant

This story is on the scale of a _____.

City • Community • Country • Region • Village

Within this world, my character is a(n) _____.

Anti-hero • Average • Hero • Villain

Think about the "visuals" you want the game to have as you choose these words - for example, the image on the next page is magic that is
elemental & controlled

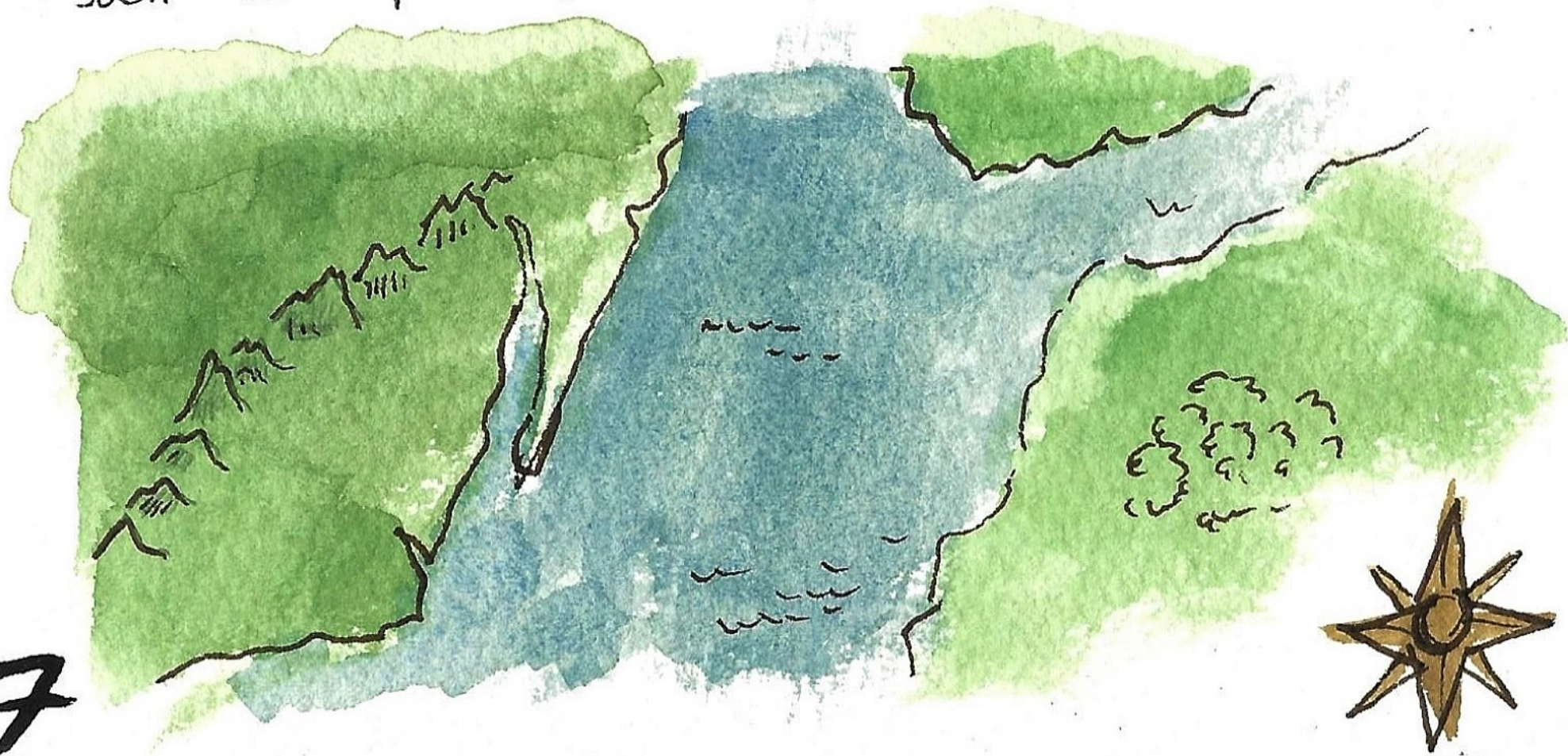




Continue to build up the world by elaborating on any of the blanks you filled in, then answer the following questions if you want to:

- Is there technology? How closely does it resemble the technology of today?
- What natural features come to mind when you imagine the setting, if any?
- What types of people exist here? Are there only humans?
- How is identity treated in this world?

✓ You can reference movies or books as touchstones, or share images. Move onto the next part once you and the GM have a solid setting defined, but don't rush through this section! It's important for everybody involved to be on the same page, since this will shape both character creation and the resulting story. The GM should be taking notes during this discussion, but if the player wants, illustrations such as maps can also help.





Character Creation

While creating a character, keep in mind these questions:
What makes you feel powerful? What attributes do you think best represent power? In a world with no restrictions, would you identify any differently? Look any different? Is your power fantasy simply you but stronger, or an entirely different person? Is a power fantasy simply wish fulfillment, or does it mean something more to you?

The characters in Outer Reaches can be sexy, or intelligent, or strong, or all of these things, or completely different and new. They can be as alike or as dissimilar from you as you want. Trust your gut and go with what makes you feel the best.



Character creation is split into two major categories: attributes and adjectives. Attributes suggest your character's strengths in a particular area, while adjectives that you choose to describe your character allow you to enhance your chances of succeeding in particular situations. Attributes are numbers, and adjectives are words, together they help to fully flesh-out the character you'll play as.

Attributes

You begin with 3 attributes and 3 points to distribute among them. When you roll, you will always select one of these 3 attributes as the base.

2

BODY

is the attribute you'll use to accomplish physically demanding tasks, endure grueling journeys, and maintain stamina

0

MIND

is the attribute you'll use to think through problems, find out information, and use magic

1

BOND

is the attribute you'll use to be charming, make allies, and create connections within the world

You can assign two points maximum to a single attribute, you cannot put all three points into a single one. You do not need to assign points to every attribute, but when you begin with an attribute you have no points in, you begin your dice pool with no dice in it. If you also don't have adjectives or nouns to apply, you make that roll with disadvantage (explained in gameplay section).

Adjectives

Adjectives are broken up into two categories: personal adjectives and object adjectives. Personal adjectives directly describe your character, and object adjectives are applied to nouns your character possesses.

Each of these categories includes a list of suggested adjectives, but you are not limited to using the choices written here. As

shown in some of the examples, hyphenated descriptors are fine

to choose or come up with for your character, but the more specific the adjective, the more difficult it may be to find a good time to use it in play.



Personal Adjectives

Choose two adjectives to describe your character's physical form:

Ageless • Angular • Athletic • Bright-eyed • Built • Devilish
Elegant • Gangly • Handsome • Intimidating • Lithe • Muscular
Pierced • Radiant • Scarred • Sharp • Sexy • Sturdy • Tall
Weather-beaten

Choose two adjectives to describe your character's personality:

Bold • Brave • Caring • Charismatic • Clever • Devoted
Domineering • Eccentric • Excitable • Flirtatious • Focused • Forceful
Gentle • Idealistic • Manipulative • Sage • Seductive • Selfish
Sneaky • Thoughtful • Unpredictable

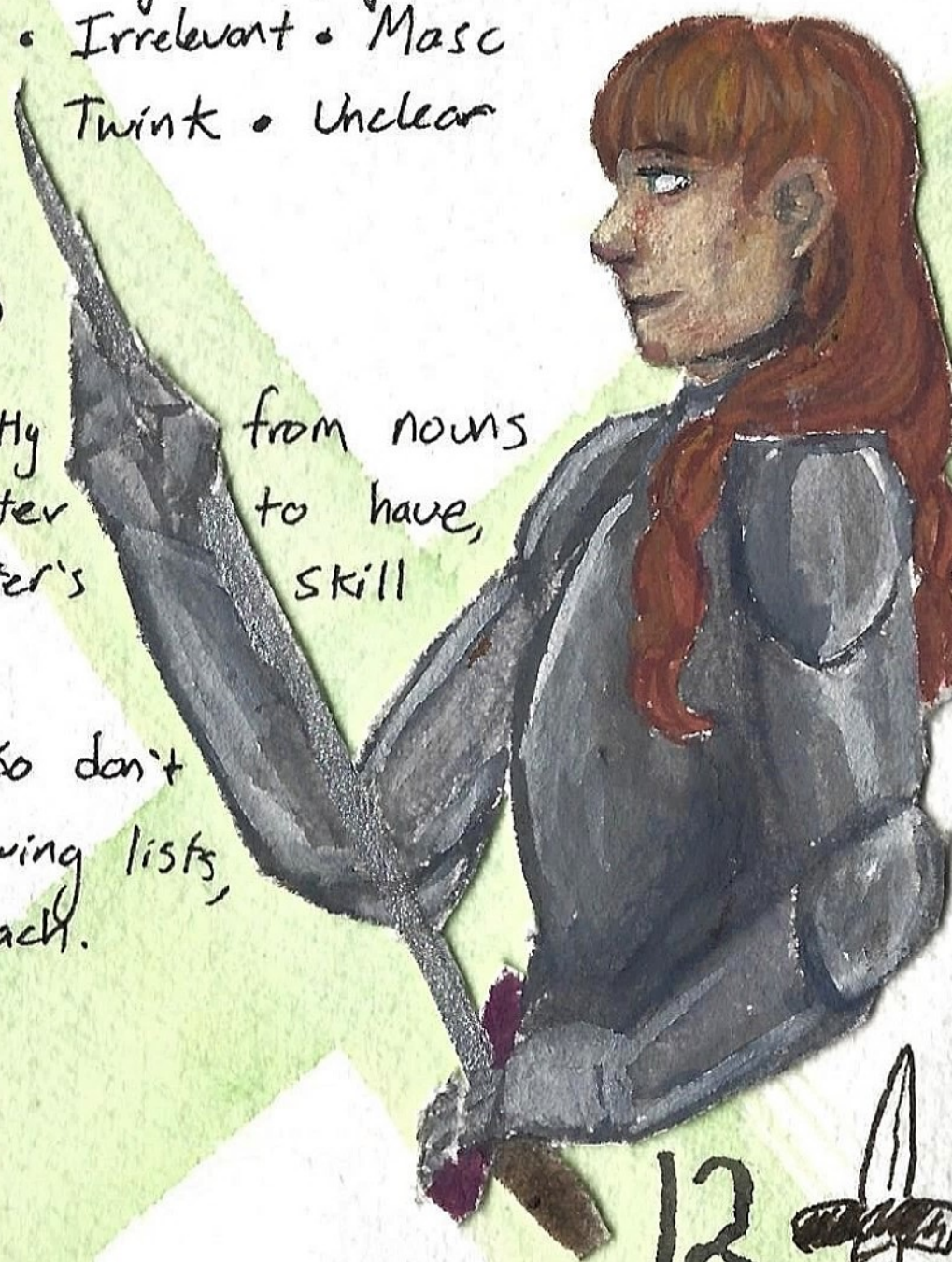
Choose two adjectives to describe your character's gender:

Agender • Ambiguous • Androgynous • Bigender • Borderless • Butch
Camp • Celestial • Comforting • Emerging • Ephemeral
Femme • Fluid • Genderfuck • Irrelevant • Masc
Queer • Soft • Stone • Twink • Unclear

Object Adjectives

Object adjectives come directly from nouns you choose for your character and can expand your character's range or help them further

Choose two nouns, which also don't need to be from the following lists, and two adjectives for each.



Armor

Antique • Bestowed • Charred • Intricate • Gleaming • Heavy
Invulnerable • Non-metal • Well-made • Worn

Magic

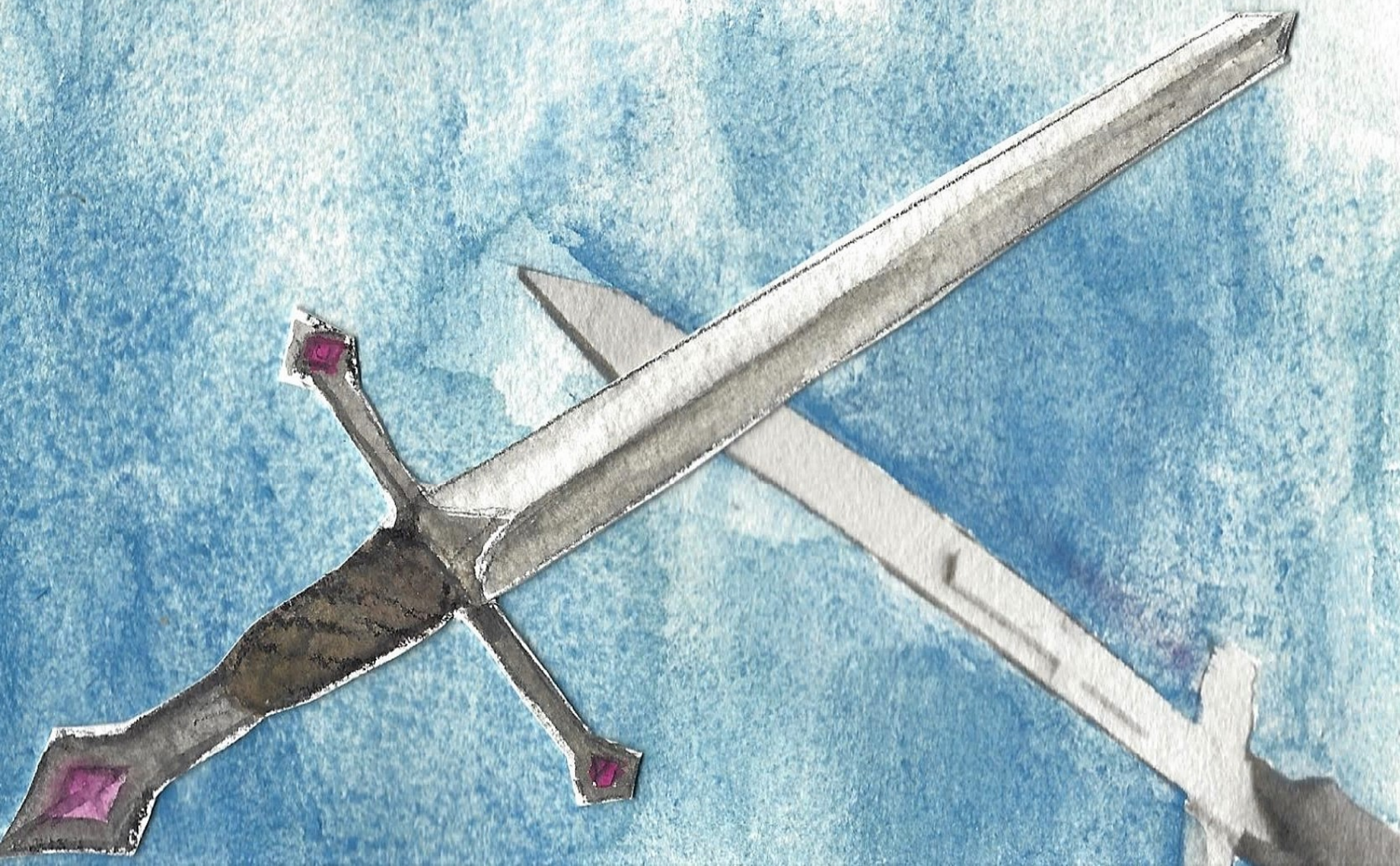
Ancient • Awoken • Controlled • Elemental • Explosive
Forbidden • Illusory • Reparative • Ritual • Wild

Weapon

Bejeweled • Charmed • Cursed • Glowing • Inherited • Invisible
Legendary • Messy • Sharp • Unique • Weightless

History

Adventurous • Battle-born • Educational • Fateful • Memorable
Mythic • Romantic • Safe • Tragic



Story Creation

Story creation consists of questions the player answers to help define their character's relationships and motivations, and the actual story that is told collaboratively between the player and GM during play. These questions directly inspire what story is being told.

Fill out the following from the perspective of your character. For each of these, write down a sentence or two elaborating your choice in the space provided on the character sheet.

Things that you want but lack don't have to be physical - they can be goals your character wants to achieve or skills they wish they had. These things help define your character's motivations.

People that you love can yes, include pets - but more importantly, should help you consider what kind of relationships your character values.

Write down two things that you want but lack.

- 1.
- 2.

Choose two people that you love.

- 1.
- 2.



Before you begin playing, choose one of the things you want and one of the people you love.

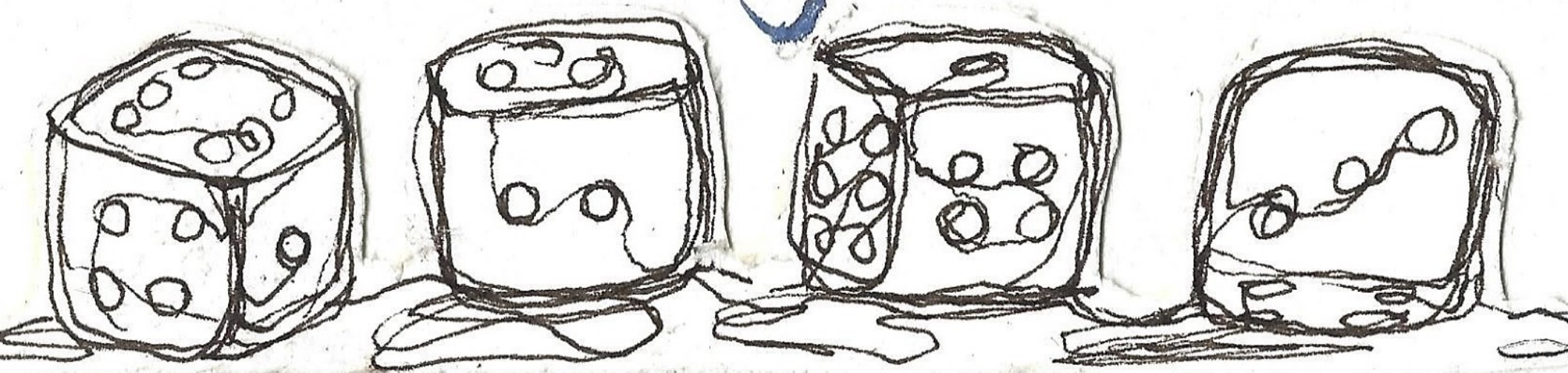
You have an opportunity to gain the thing you want. How?
and

Something has happened to the person you love. What is it?

You don't need full answers to these questions at the beginning of the game. However, you should be talking through your thoughts on these questions (and their potential answers) with the GM, because these questions make up the backbone of the story. By the end of the game, you should feel like both these questions have been resolved.

The other wants and loves will help to flesh out the motivations & life of your character, and may still come up in play, but the story's focus should be on resolving the questions you've chosen and the story arc formed by them.

Play



Play follows a similar structure to many GM-player games. The GM will describe the setting, any other characters in the scene, and conflicts that arise in the course of play. The player then responds as their character.

This game uses the attributes and adjectives you chose during character creation to help describe and dictate the moves your character can make. For most of play, normal dialogue between the player and GM is all that's needed to do something, but moves serve several purposes. One is to allow you to do something your characters would be unable to do otherwise. This could include physical feats, like moving an extremely heavy object out of the way with a **body roll**. Moves also allow you to gain more from your actions than you would be able to otherwise—maybe you can persuade an NPC to help you without rolling, but a **bond roll** might make them more enthusiastic.

You can call for a roll any time you want to try and gain increased effect on a scene. When you encounter a situation that calls for a roll, first describe your actions to the GM. Try not to lead off by saying "I'm going to make a Mind roll." Instead, start by stating what you want the roll to result in within the fiction of the game.

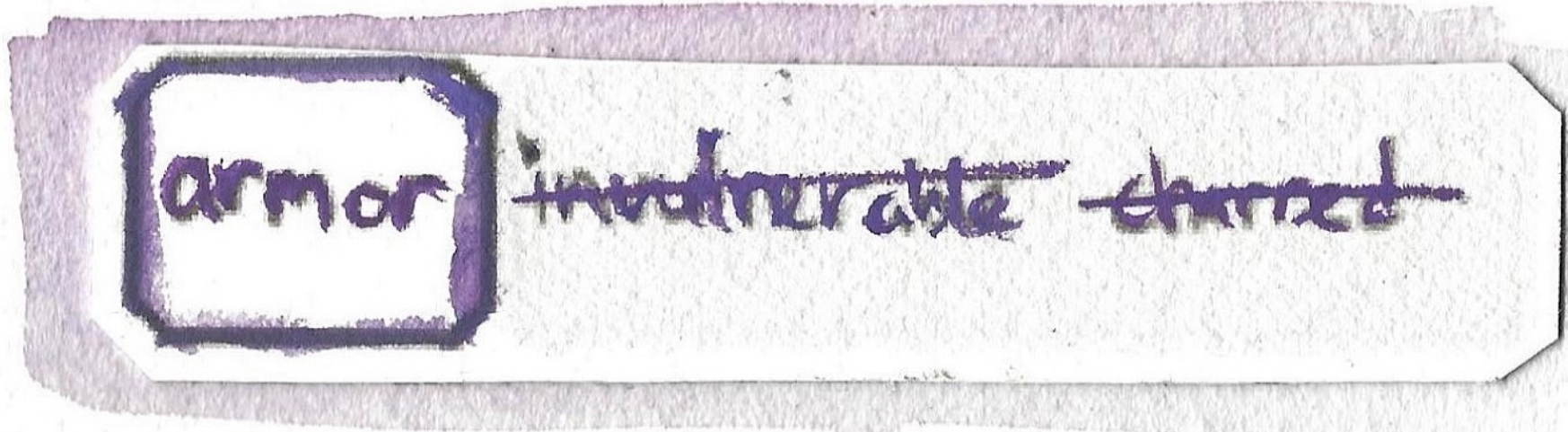
Decide which of your attributes is best suited to the move you're trying to make. Sometimes this will be obvious - Throwing something or swinging a sword will almost always be a body roll, trying to find out information or using magic will be mind, and anything involving being charismatic or interacting with other characters will be bond. If it's unclear what roll is appropriate for the move you want to make, talk through it with the GM.

Once you've chosen your attribute, look at your adjectives and nouns. Can any of them help you make the move you're rolling on? Approach this step with an open mind, and think creatively. It might not always be as obvious as

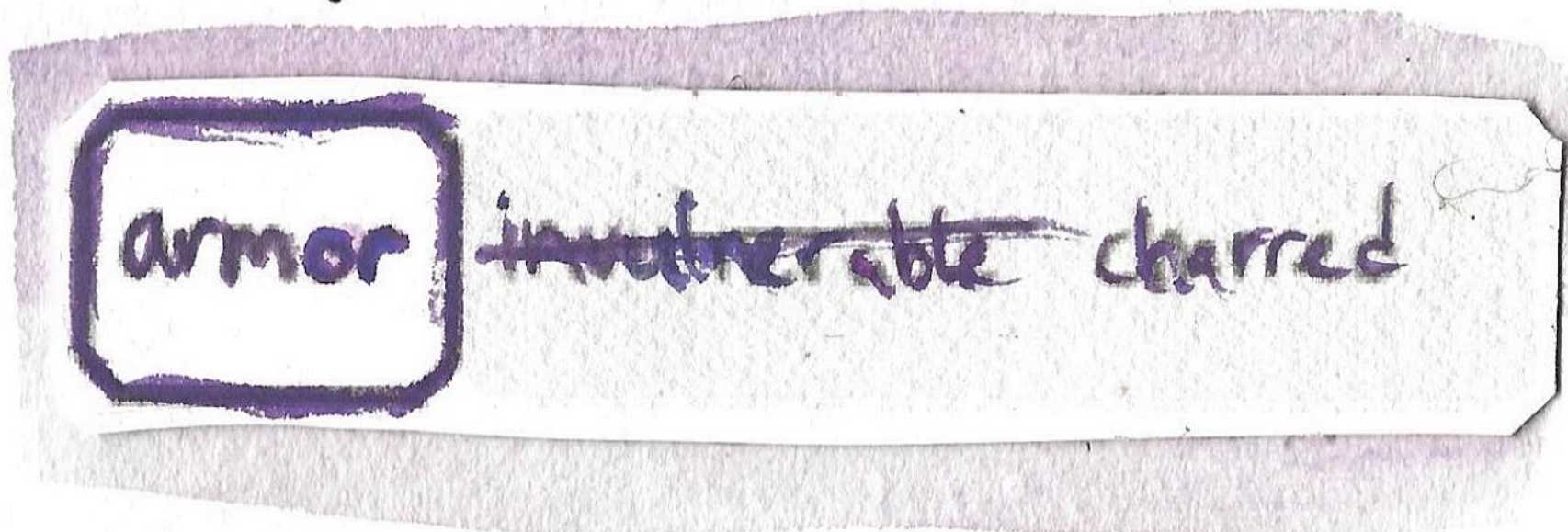


using words like strength for body rolls or smart for mind. Maybe your charred armor can help with a body roll because it shows your character is experienced. A handsome appearance could benefit a bond roll. An educational history could help with a research-based mind roll.

Nouns can only be used on their own if both adjectives are crossed off. For example, if your sheet looked like this:



You could use armor to add a die to a roll. But if your sheet looks like this:



You can only use the adjective charred.

Once you've added all your dice together, roll them all at the same time. If you end up with zero dice - rolling an attribute you have a 0 in and don't add any nouns or adjectives to it - you roll with disadvantage. When rolling with disadvantage, you roll two dice and take the lower number as your result.

There are two results that can come out of your rolls. If any of the dice in your pool result in a **4-6**, that means your move has succeeded. Cross off any adjectives you used in the roll. You do not need to cross nouns off once they have been used. Describe what your character does, and what this success looks like in the fiction.

If all of the dice rolled result in **1-3s**, your move has failed. You describe what the failure looks like, and the GM will describe any consequences. You do not need to cross off adjectives you used if the roll fails.

There is no limit to the number of adjectives you can use in a single roll, but if that roll succeeds, you must cross off all adjectives used.

If you roll two or more dice and at least 2 result in sixes, that is a **critical success**. You can choose one adjective that has been crossed off and reset it, allowing you to use it again in a future roll if you want.

While this game was written to explore fantasies, that doesn't mean every action will be a success. Part of the power of these games is the opportunity to mess up free of material consequences. **Embrace failure when it happens**. You may be surprised by the places failure can take a story, and the rush of success is more satisfying when it isn't a given!



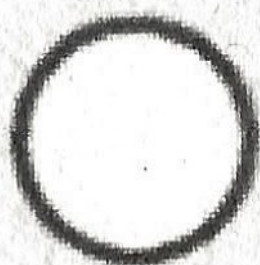
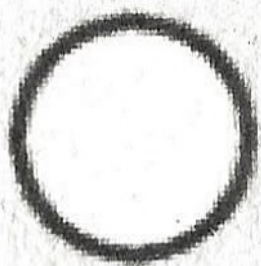
However, if a roll that you really want to succeed doesn't go your way, hope isn't all lost! Your character may muster up all of their strength,

push through, and make the roll into a success by taking a **Strain**. This represents a character pushing their limits and using their reserves to get what they want.

You may also take strain to reset one of the adjectives you have already used and use it again. You may only do this once per game per adjective.

You hitting three strain means that you must make all following rolls with disadvantage, using no adjectives or rerolls. You must continue to make rolls with disadvantage until you succeed, at which point you clear the 3 points of strained. If you have any strain marked off and you roll a critical success, all of your strain is wiped away and the count is entirely reset.

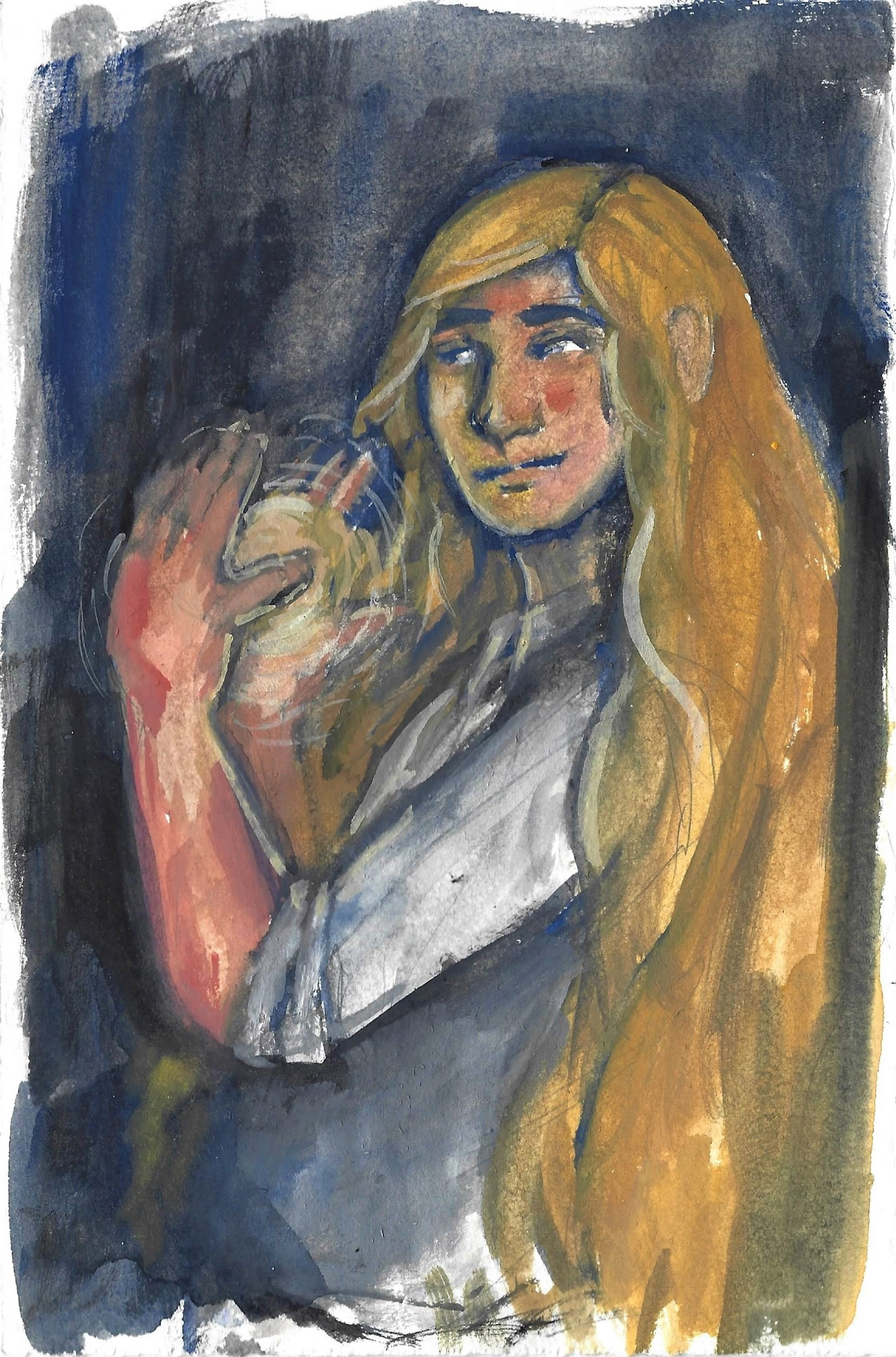
STRAIN



Injury and Death

Unlike many tabletop games, Outer Reaches doesn't have a mechanic to track your character's health. You have full agency over if your character dies. The GM cannot make this decision; you are free to if the circumstances call for it and it is what you want.





General Roleplaying and Gameplay Tips

Methods of roleplaying or embodying a character in a game can take several forms. It might not be the most natural thing for you to step into, and that's fine. If you feel nervous or stuck, here are a couple of things to keep in mind.

- You don't need to speak from the character's perspective or be an incredible actor or do an accent! The important thing is conveying your character's perspective and intentions. You can make it less intimidating, try saying it from a 3rd person perspective. For example, instead of saying "I don't want to fight" directly as dialogue from your character, you could say "I think [character name] says something about not wanting to continue the fight. These are different methods of roleplaying with slightly different phrasing, but the same intentions
- If you aren't sure what action to take, look at your character sheet - do your adjectives suggest a certain reaction? Look at their personality adjectives and think about how these aspects would help them react.
- Above all, you should feel comfortable and safe playing this game. Outer Reaches integrates the X-card as a safety tool. This means there will be a card on the table, introduced at the beginning, with an X on the back. If for any reason you are uncomfortable with the direction the game is headed, or any content that appears, or feel anxious for any other reason, hold up the card and the game will stop immediately. What happens after is up to you - continuing after a break and stopping are both valid options.

Acknowledgements

Several existing TTRPGs helped me think about how I wanted to approach writing this game. *Dungeons & Dragons, 5th edition* (published by wizards of the coast) and *Dungeon World* (written by Sage LaTorra, and published by Sage Kobold Productions), helped me settle the 3 main attributes, which are "compressed" from the ability scores in that game style. *Blades in the Dark* (written by John Harper and published by evil Hat Productions) inspired the strain mechanic and influenced the choice to make this a dice-pool game. *The Watch* (written by Anna Kreider & Andrew Medeiros, published by Northfire Games), *Dream Askew* (written by Avery Alder & published by buried without ceremony), and the nano-game anthology *#Feminism* (published by pilgrim press and store skin press) all helped me to conceptualize the role I wanted gender and identity to play in this game. Additionally, *Tech Noir* (by Jeremy Keller) heavily inspired the use of nouns and adjectives.

Thank you to my tabletop group for all the hours of play that helped me become a better player; they also made me a better game designer. Special thanks to Sierra Carusone - our conversations about tabletop dynamics played an integral role in this project coming together.