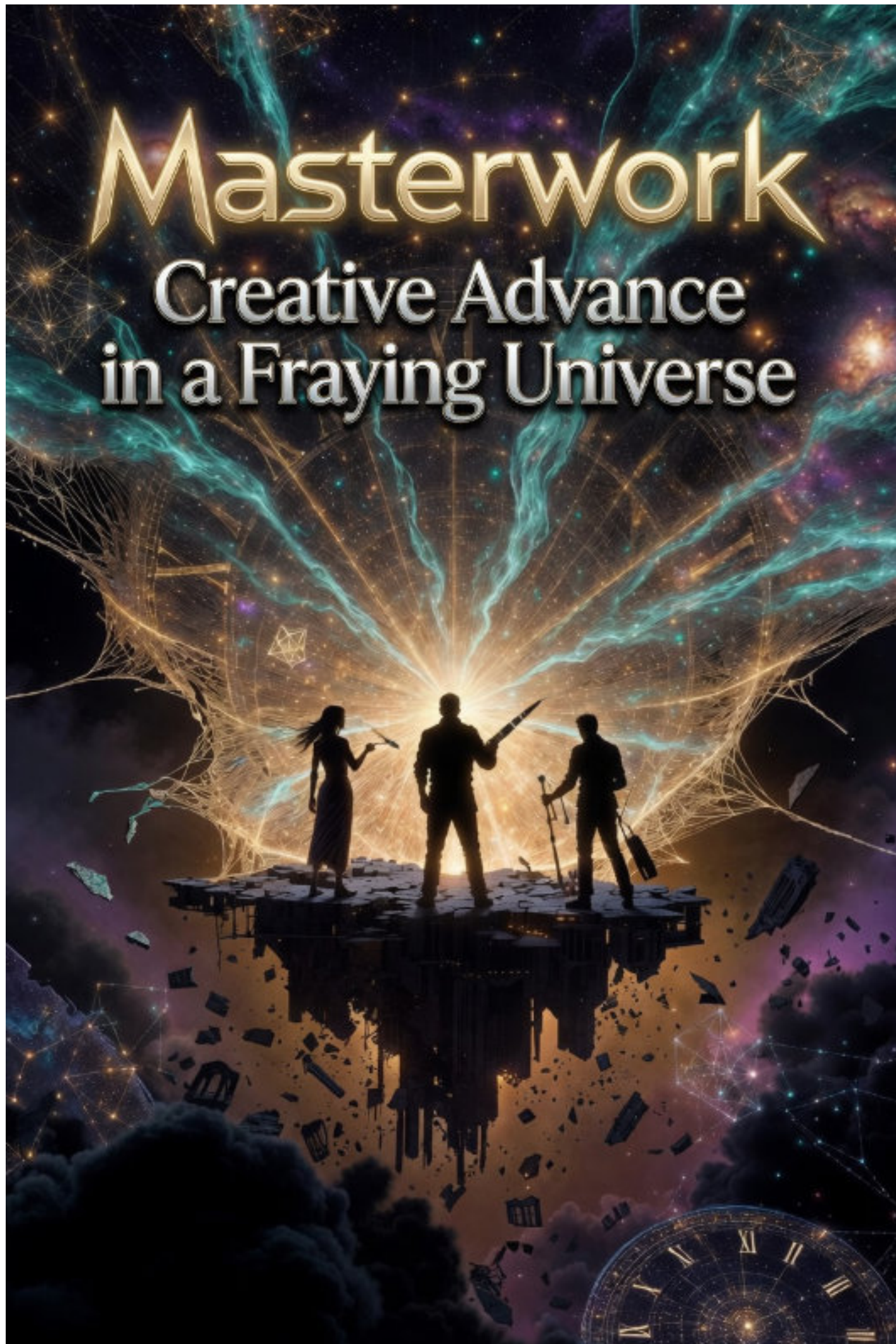


Masterwork

Creative Advance in a Fraying Universe



Core Concept:

The Universe is coming apart at the seams. You are a Creator—a master artist, thinker, or maker whose work has begun manifesting impossible effects. Poetry that reveals secrets. Sculptures that bend space. Music that stops time. Your gift connects you to the Universe’s deepest foundations, giving you power to reshape existence itself. But every act of Creation feeds Entropy—the force dissolving the Universe. You must master your power to confront Entropy and achieve balance, or become the architect of oblivion. When you use your Creative powers, you roll dice – a modified d10 for your primary obsession (your Calling), a modified d8 for your hobby or profession (your Avocation), and a variable number of d6 for Entropy. Success reshapes reality—but succeed or fail, Creation always generates Entropy.

In this game, you will:

- Create works of art, science, or craftsmanship that channel supernatural power
- Interpret symbolic visions to uncover hidden truths
- Manipulate time, space, matter, and energy through your Calling
- Navigate conflicts with rival Creators, Agents of Entropy, and reality itself
- Balance power and restraint as the Universe hangs in the balance

Your gifts manifest through three Spheres of activity and power:

Sphere	What it does	Cost
Knowledge	Learn truths	Low Entropy
Influence	Manipulate reality	Moderate Entropy
Theurgy	Rewrite the Universe	High Entropy

What a Session of Masterwork Looks Like

You and your fellow Creators belong to a Circle — a community of artists, thinkers, and makers who have discovered that their work does something impossible. A poem reveals a hidden truth. A sculpture bends light. A calculation predicts something that hasn't happened yet. You don't understand where this power comes from, but you instinctively realize two things about it: It stands in opposition to the fraying of reality, and its use contributes to the fraying of reality.

A session opens with a problem. Something is wrong in the world — an object has gone missing, a person is in danger, a pattern of strange events points toward something larger. Your Circle has reason to care, and reason to act.

Your first move is usually Creative. You sit down with your work — your canvas, your notebook, your instruments — and you open yourself to the Universe. This is a Calling roll. You're not asking a question so much as listening for an answer you didn't know you needed. What comes back will be oblique: an image, a feeling, a metaphor that needs interpretation. Your group will argue about what it means. That argument is part of the game.

Then you investigate. Armed with symbolic insight and mundane curiosity, you go out into the world. You talk to people, search places, follow threads. This uses your Traits — your Charisma to draw someone out, your Intuition to notice what's wrong, your Action when something goes sideways. These rolls are faster and more direct than Calling rolls: you either succeed or you don't, and the world responds accordingly.

Conflict arises. Not always violence — though sometimes it is — but opposition. Someone doesn't want you to find what you're looking for. An Agent of Entropy has goals of her own. A rival Creator sees things differently. When it comes to a confrontation, you can fight physically or creatively. Creative Combat costs you — a Creation Point spent, Entropy generated — but it leverages your Calling to create extraordinary or even supernatural effects.

Entropy accumulates throughout. Every Calling roll generates it, win or lose. Every supernatural effort adds more. You won't see the total — that's the referee's burden — but you'll feel it. A stranger gives you a cryptic warning. Your dreams turn strange. Something flickers at the edge of vision that no one else seems to notice. The Universe is paying attention.

The session ends with resolution and consequence. You recovered the object, or you didn't. You stopped the Agent, or she escaped with something. Either way, the Entropy generated during play shapes what's coming next. If you have Creation Points left over, you can spend them to grow — a deeper mastery of your Element, a Trait honed by experience.

The larger arc is about balance. Every creative act you perform is also an act of dissolution. You are trying to hold the Universe together using the very power that's tearing it apart. Whether that's possible — whether balance is achievable or only delay — is a question the campaign will answer.



Character Creation:

Character creation is fast. Follow the steps below and trust your creative instincts.

Below is a six-step process to create your character. It may be helpful to think of the process in three larger stages:

- Establishing Your Creative Identity (Steps 1-3):
 - Calling/Avocation: Your supernatural Creative gifts
 - Element: How these manifest (Time / Space / Matter / Energy)
 - Passion and Style: What drives you and how you work
- Setting Your Mundane Capabilities (Step 4):
 - Traits: Your physical, mental, and social abilities
- Resources and Connections (Steps 5-6):
 - Creation Points: Supernatural fuel
 - School/Circle: Your Creative community

Your Calling is your primary supernatural power. Your Avocation is a secondary, weaker power that broadens your abilities. The Callings are divided into four categories, or **Pneumas**: Logos (the word), Techne (the craft), Nous (the mind) and Psyche (the soul).

Pneumas			
Logos	Techne	Nous	Psyche
Writer	Painter	Scientist	Philosopher
Poet	Sculptor	Engineer	Explorer
Chronicler	Craftsman	Architect	Performer

Character Creation – Step 1: On your character sheet (found at the end of this chapter), choose your Calling and Avocation. Because of the all-consuming nature of your Calling, your Avocation must be in a different Pneuma than your Calling. The labels for the Callings and Avocations may be interpreted broadly; for example, a Painter might be a Photographer or a Digital Artist, a Writer might be a Pulp Author or a Composer, etc.

Character Creation – Step 2: Callings and Avocations are focused through Elements:

- **Time:** Duration, memory, anticipation, rhythm
 - **Example:** A Poet – Time writes of moments that seem to suspend themselves in eternity.
- **Space:** Distance, location, boundaries, connection
 - **Example:** An Explorer – Space navigates the hidden connections between places.
- **Matter:** Substance, form, physicality, creation
 - **Example:** A Craftsman – Matter creates extraordinarily supple yet nearly indestructible leather satchels and pouches.
- **Energy:** Force, spirit, transformation, power
 - **Example:** A Scientist – Energy discovers new properties of intensity for light and heat.



Choose an Element (Time, Space, Matter, or Energy) for your Calling and one for your Avocation, and mark a “1” under that Element in the Knowledge Sphere for your Calling and your Avocation. At this point, a character concept should be forming that will guide these choices to be complementary, as in the following examples:

- **Calling: Poet – Matter, Avocation: Performer – Time:** Writes visceral erotic poetry, recites it with perfect rhythm
- **Calling: Scientist – Energy, Avocation: Explorer – Space:** Uses readings of anomalous energy to track ley lines

Character Creation – Step 3: Choose a Passion and a Style and write them in the appropriate spots on the character sheet:

Passion: Your specific obsession within your Calling.

o **Examples:**

- Poet: Erotic poetry, political manifestos, nature mysticism
- Scientist: Quantum mechanics, astrophysics, consciousness studies
- Painter: Portraiture, abstract expressionism, sacred iconography

• **Style:** How you approach your work.

o **Examples:**

- Methodical and precise vs. Intuitive and wild
- Classical forms vs. Radical experimentation
- Intimate and personal vs. Grand and universal

Between these and your Calling and Avocation, your character's fundamental Creative motivations should be clear.

Character Creation – Step 4: On your character sheet, choose and circle a position on the Trait tracks for each of the following:

- **Action <-> Reflection** (Physical doing vs. Mental planning)
- **Fortitude <-> Will** (Body toughness vs. Mind toughness)

- **Intuition <-> Charisma** (Awareness vs. Social skill)
- **Resources <-> Luck** (Wealth vs. Fortune)

As the track makes clear, choosing a higher Trait value on one side of the pair causes a correspondingly lower Trait value on the other side of the pair. The values are die modifiers; for example, circling the -1/+1 pair under Action <-> Reflection results in die modifiers of -1 for Action rolls and +1 for Reflection rolls.

Character Creation – Step 5: You will have a spendable resource called Creation Points, which are used to improve your character and sometimes influence events. You begin with two Creation Points, but you have the option of spending one now to improve your character in some way. Your options:

- Improve your Calling. Either choose and note a second Element or mark a “+” next to the Element you’ve chosen, indicating a deeper mastery (+2 die modifier to that Calling/Element pair).
- Improve one of your Traits. Improving a Trait does **not** decrease its paired Trait; it shifts that specific side of the scale upward, providing a permanent net bonus to your character. For example, using this option to reduce the penalty to an Action roll in exchange for a higher Reflection bonus would look like this:

Action <-> Reflection				
-1	0	0	+1	+2
+2	+1	0	-1	-2

The -1 and -2 values for the Action Trait track are modified to 0 and -1, but the Reflection Trait track is unaffected.

Point can open some unexpected options during gameplay.

This advancement is optional; the added boost can personalize your character and provide some advantages early on, but an additional Creation

Character Creation – Step 6: Your character belongs to a School or Circle, an artistic or intellectual group that connects you to the other characters. Choose a name and general concept with the other players, and discuss amongst



yourselves which of you know each other and how.

Character Creation Summary

Choose:

1. Calling
2. Avocation
3. Element for each

4. Passion

5. Style

6. Traits

7. Creation Point spending (optional)

8. School or Circle

You are ready to play.

Masterwork Character Sheet

Name: Age: Sex:

Passion:

Style: School/Circle:

<i>Sphere</i>	Knowledge				Influence				Theurgy			
<i>Entropy</i>	1d6				2d6				3d6+			
<i>Elements</i>	T	M	S	E	T	M	S	E	T	M	S	E
Calling/Pneuma:												
Level:												
Avocation/Pneuma:												
Level:												

Action <-> Reflection				
-2	-1	0	+1	+2
+2	+1	0	-1	-2
Fortitude <-> Will				
-2	-1	0	+1	+2
+2	+1	0	-1	-2
Intuition <-> Charisma				
-2	-1	0	+1	+2
+2	+1	0	-1	-2
Resources <-> Luck				
-2	-1	0	+1	+2
+2	+1	0	-1	-2

Creation Points:

Core Mechanics:

There are two core mechanics at play in *Masterwork*, one for Creative life and one for daily life:

- The Creative mechanic centers around Calling rolls, a catchall that also includes Avocations. Calling rolls are not instantaneous; they are made in the production or enhancement of a Creative work, so they take time to complete. The target number for a Calling roll is 7.
- The more typical mechanic is the Trait roll, employing one of the eight Traits mentioned above. These actions are usually mundane, but the expenditure of Creation Points can elevate them to Extraordinary and Supernatural efforts. The target number for a Trait roll is 5.

As mentioned above, the only difference between rolling for a Calling and an Avocation is that Callings use a d10 and Avocations a d8. Here is the basic Creative sequence:

1. Describe how you are attempting to use your Creative power.
2. Roll for either your Calling (d10) or Avocation (d8).
3. Target number is 7.
4. If successful, you have understood or changed the Universe.
5. Regardless of success or failure, Entropy is generated.

The declared action of the Calling roll must fit either your Calling or Avocation, and an Element within the Calling or Avocation that you have selected. Calling rolls can be modified by spending Creation Points as shown below:

When Spent	Effect	Entropy Generated
Before roll	+2 Modifier	1 Entropy Point
After roll	+2 Modifier	1d6 Entropy Points
At character creation (“+”)	Permanent +2 Modifier	None



A successful Calling roll indicates that you have achieved a supernatural effect in one of three Spheres, which will be briefly discussed in the next section. Beginning characters operate exclusively in the Knowledge Sphere, so a success means that you have gained a preternatural insight into the object of your query. This means that Quickstart characters cannot yet alter reality – they can only uncover its hidden truths. The results of a successful Knowledge Calling roll will be symbolic and indirect rather than precisely answering a question; part of your role as a Creator is interpreting such symbols. Knowledge Calling rolls may also be made with no object in mind, simply engaging in Creative activity to become attuned with the Universe; this can be the source of prompts to action or Adventures.

Calling rolls generate Entropy, *whether or not they are successful*. Failure still generates Entropy. For the Knowledge Sphere, 1d6 Entropy Points are generated by every Calling roll. Additionally, if you spend a Creation Point before a Calling roll, 1 Entropy Point is generated; if you spend one after the roll, a second 1d6 Entropy Points are generated. Entropy Points are the referee's secret resource, and it accumulates; as players, you will not be directly privy to the current Entropy Point total, but will feel it through the escalating nature of omens and threats.

Calling rolls may also generate Creation Points. On a success, you receive a number of Creation Points equal to the amount by which your roll exceeded the target number. Calling rolls and Creation Points are critical to your efforts to hold off Entropy and achieve some sort of equilibrium

in the Universe, but remember that in each Creative effort, Entropy is generated. You may gain insights, you may gain power, but in so doing you are contributing to the dissolution of the Universe. And eventually, it will notice you.

Trait rolls are similar to Calling rolls, but for daily life instead of Creative activity. Trait rolls are made using a d10, with a target number of 5. Trait rolls are modified by the track of the Trait being used. For example, if you are trying to befriend someone using Charisma and your Charisma Trait track is set to +1, you receive a +1 on your Trait roll. For Trait rolls related to any kind of skill, they must relate to the character's Calling or Avocation and relevant Elements, or a -3 die modifier is incurred. Creation Points may also be spent to modify Trait rolls as follows:

Spending	Die Modifier	Entropy Points	Effect Level
After roll only	+1	None	Skilled
Before roll	+2	1	Extraordinary
Before and after (for bonus)	+3 (total)	2 + visibility (total)	Supernatural
After roll (for re-roll)	Re-roll	1	
Visibility Entropy			
Visibility	Entropy		
Private	1d6		
Public (subtle)	2d6		
Spectacular	4d6		

As noted, spending a Creation Point before the roll elevates the effort to Extraordinary (peak human or a little above), which may draw notice at the referee's discretion. Spending a Creation Point before the roll and a Creation Point after for the maximum bonus elevates the effort to Supernatural, which will entail a visibly uncanny effect; this will result in the additional Entropy dice indicated under "Visibility Entropy."

The exception to the target number of 5 for a Trait roll is an Opposed Roll, representing a contest or struggle. In an Opposed Roll, the NPC rolls first to set the target number, then the PC rolls against that target number to determine success or failure.

A modified roll of 3 or higher more than the target number is an enhanced success, an added effect to be determined by the player and referee. An unmodified roll of 10 (8 for Avocation) is an automatic success and also earns a Creation Point; an unmodified 1 is an automatic failure.

A one-page summary of Calling and Trait rolls can be found at the end of the Quickstart.

Spheres:

There are three Spheres of true Creative activity, each of which is more powerful and dangerous than the last: Knowledge, Influence, and Theurgy. As noted above, Quickstart characters will only have access to the Knowledge Sphere, but a brief description of each is provided below:

Sphere	What you do	Scope	Entropy	Quickstart access
Knowledge	Learn hidden truths	Personal	Low	Yes
Influence	Change reality locally	Area	Moderate	No
Theurgy	Rewrite universal law	Unlimited	Extreme	No

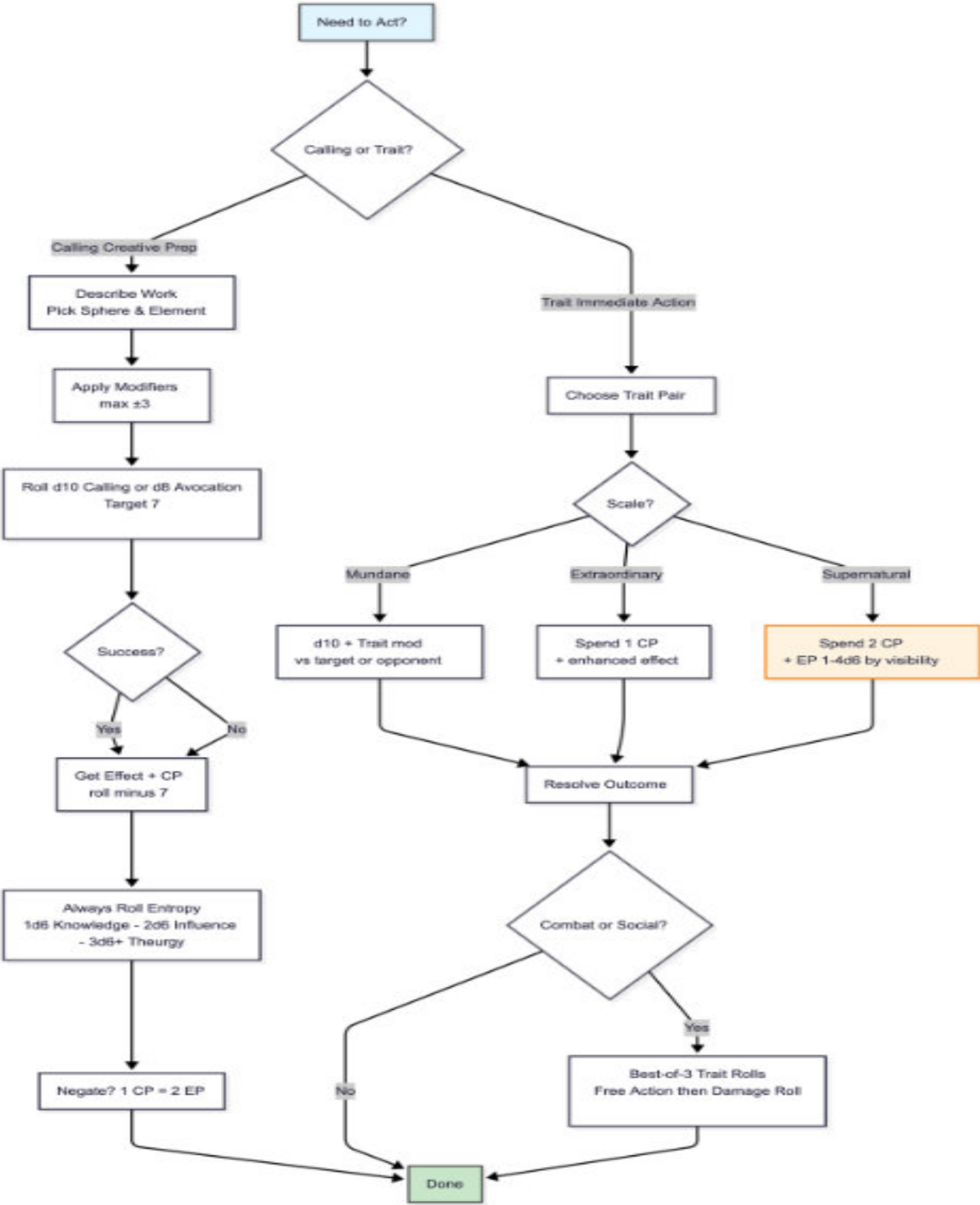
Knowledge (Quickstart): This does not refer strictly to information or data, but to the deeper intuitive understanding of hidden meaning and connections within the Universe. Creative Knowledge is never as direct or simple as an address or a yes-or-no answer, and frequently it doesn't even directly answer the question that was asked. Intuition speaks the language of symbols, not syntax, and interpretation will always be required to make sense of what is learned in a Knowledge Calling roll. For example, a Painter making a Knowledge Calling roll might find himself looking at a painting of a mirror reflecting an empty chair, with heavy storm clouds visible in the distance through an octagonal window; he and his group might then have to do some traditional investigation to put

the image into the proper context. However, such Knowledge will also make intuitive leaps beyond what can be found in a library or a search engine, and operate on more levels than that of the question that was asked. A Knowledge Calling roll can be made concerning a particular topic or situation, or you can just open your mind to the Universe and see what it has to say – it will frequently point you in the direction you need to go.

Influence and Theurgy (Advanced): Building on the Knowledge Sphere, Influence allows the Creator to manipulate or bend the existing rules of the Universe for a limited area and duration, while Theurgy partially rewrites the existing rules or creates new ones. Rules for Influence and Theurgy can be found in the full rules.



Basic Decision Tree



Combat:

Combat is an extension of Opposed Rolls, and is at its core a best-2-of-3 contest. The basic combat sequence is shown below:

Step 1: Declare Intent

- Each side declares whether it chooses to fight or withdraw
 - If both sides withdraw, Combat is over.
 - If one side withdraws, the side that remained may make an Opposed Action roll to prevent the withdrawal.
 - If the remaining side wins the Opposed Action roll, Combat proceeds and the remaining side gets a +1 die modifier for the first round of Combat.
 - If both sides fight, Combat proceeds.

Step 2 (Creators Only): Choose Mode of Combat

- Each Creator involved in the Combat chooses either Physical or Creative Combat.
 - Entering Creative Combat mode (or re-entering it after choosing Physical Combat in a previous round) costs 1 Creation Point and generates 1 Entropy Point.
- Physical Combat uses the Action Trait, and Creative Combat uses the Reflection Trait..

Example:

A guard (Action / Reflection: +1 / -1) confronts a trespassing Poet (Action / Reflection: +2 / -2). Neither chooses to withdraw, so combat begins. The Poet chooses the Creative Combat mode, spending a Creation Point and incurring an Entropy Point, using his Poetry to inflict psychic/spiritual damage. Not being a Creator, the guard is limited to the Physical Combat mode.

Step 3: Resolve Combat Round

- An Opposed Roll occurs between the opponents, and the high roll takes the round.
- Ties are discarded for Combat purposes, but are noted for Resolution.

Step 4: Repeat Steps 1-3 Until Either One Side Wins Two Rounds Or A Successful Withdrawal Is Executed.

Step 5: Resolution Rolls For Loser

- Loser makes two Resolution Rolls, a Damage Roll and a Free Action Roll.
- Failing a Damage roll results in escalating injury.
 - Trait depends on Combat mode employed by winner
 - Physical: Fortitude
 - Creative: Will
 - A successful Damage roll results in a Battered status; the character suffers no penalties to actions but receives a cumulative -2 penalty to future Damage rolls until either a Damage roll is failed, a Healing roll is made, or the end of the Adventure is reached.
- Failing a Free Action roll entitles the winner to immediately re-engage in Combat, including calling in any available reinforcements
 - Trait depends on Combat mode employed by winner
 - Physical: Will
 - Creative: Fortitude

Round 1: The referee rolls for the guard to set the target number. Since the guard is engaging in Physical Combat, he makes an Action Trait roll and rolls a 5 (6 with his +1 Action modifier). Since the Poet entered Creative Combat, he makes a Reflection Trait roll and rolls a 6 (8 with his +2 Reflection modifier). The Poet wins the first round.

Round 2: Neither side withdraws, so the guard rolls a 7 (modified 8) and the Poet rolls a 4 (modified 6). The guard wins the second round and the combat is tied at 1-1.

Round 3: Again, neither side withdraws, so the guard rolls an 8 (modified 9). With a higher target number to beat, the Poet spends a Creation Point, receiving a +2 in addition to his normal +2 Reflection modifier and raising his action to an Extraordinary effort. He rolls a 6 (modified 10). The intensity of his effort increases the chance that it was noticed by someone else; if he had rolled one lower, he might have had to spend a second Creation Point for an additional +1 bonus, which would raise it to a Supernatural effort and generate some sort of tangible effect and incur an Entropy roll.

The Poet wins the best-of-3 contest, and the guard must make a Damage roll (Will Trait check) and a Free Action roll (Fortitude Trait check). With a Will / Fortitude of 0 / 0, the guard makes a flat roll for Damage and a roll at a -2 modifier (for the combat reaching 3 rounds) for Free Action (if the combat had been resolved in 2 rounds, the Damage roll would have received a -2 modifier and the Free Action roll would have been flat). The guard rolls a 6 for Damage and is Battered, meaning that he suffers no immediate effect but his next Damage roll will incur a -2 modifier. He rolls a 5 for Free Action, which with the -2 modifier is a failure. This means that the Poet may either resume the combat immediately or flee without interference; he chooses the latter option and moves past the guard into the complex.



Healing:

Healing is performed via a Reflection Trait roll; as with other Trait rolls involving skill, the healer must be able to justify his skill via his Calling or Avocation, or receive a -3 die modifier. A successful Healing roll reduces the most severe Wound “level” (i.e., the consequences of a third

unsuccessful Damage roll are reduced to those of a second, those of a second to those of a first, etc.).

A one-sheet Combat summary with basic die modifiers can be found at the end of the Quickstart.



Advancement:

At the end of each Adventure, any character with remaining Creation Points may take either one or two Advancements. One Advancement costs one Creation Point; a second Advancement at the same time costs an additional Creation Point and in addition generates an Entropy Point.

Advancements can be chosen from the following options:

Callings:

- ☐ A new Calling/Element pair may be selected.
- ☐ An existing Calling/Element pair may be improved (a “+” may be placed there). As mentioned above, this provides a +2 die modifier to Calling rolls using this Calling/Element pair.

Traits:

- ☐ Move one Trait pair either left or right. For example, if your Resources/Luck Trait pair is -1/+1, you can move it to either 0/0 or -2/+2.
- ☐ Increase one Trait by +1 as in character creation. You can either change the penalty end of the Trait track for that Trait to 0 and -1 or the bonus end of the Trait to +2 and +3. Note that this does not affect the paired Trait; for example, you can change the Trait track of either Resources or Luck, but changing one does not change the other.
- ☐ Add a column to a Trait pair. For example, for your Resources/Luck Trait pair, you could add a column for -3/+3, or +3/-3. On a subsequent Advancement, you can move to this column.

Sample Characters:

Xenia Katsaros, Calling: Poet – Matter, **Avocation:** Performer – Time

Passion: Sapphic Poetry, **Style:** Intense, evocative imagery of yearning and loss

School / Circle: The Tantalus Pool

Traits: Action <-> **Reflection:** +1/-1; **Fortitude** <-> **Will:** -1/+1; **Intuition** <-> **Charisma:** -1/+2 -- Intuition raised one step via Advancement; **Resources/Luck:** -1/+1

Creation Points: 1 (spent one on Advancement to improve penalty end of Intuition Trait track)

Marcus Locane, Calling: Sculptor – Energy, **Avocation:** Engineer – Time

Passion: Plasma Sculpture, **Style:** Slow, powerful animation of lightning

School / Circle: The Tantalus Pool

Traits: Action <-> **Reflection:** 0/+1 – Reflection raised one step via Advancement; **Fortitude** <-> **Will:** 0/0; **Intuition** <-> **Charisma:** 0/0; **Resources/Luck:** +2/-2

Creation Points: 1 (spent one on Advancement to improve penalty end of Reflection Trait track)

Joseph McCabe, Calling: Craftsman – Matter, **Avocation:** Philosopher – Energy

Passion: Emergency Medicine, **Style:** Treating body and spirit together as one work

School / Circle: The Tantalus Pool

Traits: Action <-> **Reflection:** -1/+1; **Fortitude** <-> **Will:** +1/-1; **Intuition** <-> **Charisma:** +1/0 -- Charisma raised one step via Advancement; **Resources/Luck:** 1/+1

Creation Points: 1 (spent one on Advancement to improve penalty end of Charisma Trait track)

Valentine Kennedy, Calling: Explorer – Space, **Avocation:** Performer – Matter

Passion: Investigating the Unknown, **Style:** Two-fisted force of nature

School / Circle: The Tantalus Pool

Traits: Action <-> **Reflection:** +2/-1 – Reflection raised one step via Advancement; **Fortitude** <-> **Will:** +1/-1; **Intuition** <-> **Charisma:** +1/-1, **Resources/Luck:** -2/+2

Creation Points: 1 (spent one on Advancement to improve penalty end of Reflection Trait track)

Cynthia Callender, Calling: Chronicler – Time (+), **Avocation:** Philosopher -- Energy

Passion: History, **Style:** Studies hidden psychic/spiritual forces behind past events

School / Circle: The Tantalus Pool

Traits: Action <-> Reflection: -2/+2; **Fortitude** <-> **Will:** -1/+1; **Intuition** <-> **Charisma:** -1/+1;

Resources/Luck: +2/-2

Creation Points: 1 (spent one on Advancement to add + to Time Element in Calling)

Jim Kelly, Calling: Writer – Space, **Avocation:** Scientist – Energy

Passion: Metaphors of Personal to Cosmic Connection, **Style:** Slice-of-Life Drama

School / Circle: The Tantalus Pool

Traits: Action <-> Reflection: 0/0; **Fortitude** <-> **Will:** +1/-1; **Intuition** <-> **Charisma:** 0/0;

Resources/Luck: -1/+1

Creation Points: 2



Sample Adventure – The Stolen Work

Characters: Use Sample Characters above.

Setting: Chicago, IL, USA

Referee Synopsis:

- A Creative Artifact, created by one of the characters and the most prized possession of the Tantalus Circle, has been stolen from its secure location.
- The Artifact has been stolen by a low-level Agent of Entropy and a small mercenary unit that she hired. It is being kept at a hotel in downtown Chicago, near Lakeshore Drive and Ontario Street, while the Agent waits for further instructions from her mysterious masters.
- The characters must use their Creative gifts and mundane Traits to locate and retrieve the Artifact before the Agent leaves the city with it.

Act I:

The Tantalus Circle is a Circle of Creators that is defined by their desperate searching for things that always seem just out of their reach, and meets in the hope that creative friction from differing perspectives might spark a breakthrough moment. Within the last month or so, just such a breakthrough occurred when a Creative Artifact was produced by one of the members.

Creative Artifacts:

A Creative Artifact is a rare Creation of such exquisite craftsmanship that it channels to a minor degree the raw Creative power of the Universe.

- In game terms, a Creative Artifact typically provides a +2 die modifier to a Calling or Trait roll related to the Calling and Passion of the

character who created it. It can be used by anyone, even normal people or Agents of Entropy, if it isn't specifically restricted to Calling rolls or to an aspect of a Calling.

- The referee should design the Creative Artifact based on the Calling and Passion of one of the PCs. For example, if Xenia is in the Circle, it might be the manuscript of a poem that boosts a Calling or Trait roll to find someone; if Joseph is in the Circle, it might be a healing crystal or exotic medical device that boosts a Reflection Trait roll to heal someone; etc.

The Adventure begins when a member of the Circle discovers that the Artifact has disappeared from their salon (this location can be whatever the players like within the constraints of the highest Resources Trait of the characters; if Marcus is in the Circle, it might be a luxury condo on Lake Michigan or a small estate in the suburbs, while if all of the characters have low Resources Traits it might be a leaky warehouse loft in a sketchy part of town). The Artifact's hiding place has been opened with considerable skill: Mechanical and electronic locks and alarms have been bypassed, and Creative efforts of concealment and warding attempted by the Circle have been broken by some power. The players can use their Traits to perform a mundane investigation; depending on the success of the Trait rolls, they should be able to determine some basic information (there were 4-6 intruders, at least one was a skilled break-in artist, they entered through the window, they departed in the direction of downtown, etc.).

Beyond this, they should inevitably use their Knowledge Calling rolls (even if this requires a prompt from the referee). Remember, the result of a Knowledge Calling roll should be indirect,

symbolic, and tailored to the character's Calling, Passion, and Style. A suggestion for each character is provided below:

Character	Result
Xenia	"You write a poem in which a woman cries out for her lover as Niagara Falls thunders behind her . . ." (the hotel where the Artifact is currently held is at Lakeshore Dr. & Ontario St.; Niagara Falls empties into Lake Ontario)
Marcus	"You work on your latest plasma sculpture, and a long slow tongue of lightning crawls away from it and spreads into a map of the River North district of downtown Chicago, with wispy tendrils creeping in an electric mist across the lake . . . " (possible foreshadowing of the Agent's next planned move)
Joseph	"Your crystal glows (or device hums) softly as it detects the bare remnants of an exhalation. It pulses as it attunes with the spirit of the breather, and your eyes are drawn toward downtown as you experience a moment of disorientation and nausea" (the Agent's Entropy momentarily corrupting the signal)
Valentine	"Opening a map of Chicagoland and finding your salon on it, you feel a visceral urge to move toward the River North district <i>right now</i> . A frisson of danger and possible violence only whets your appetite, and a sense of wrongness piques your curiosity."
Cynthia	"Pulling down and idly penciling notes in a draft monograph on heists and capers, you feel that the most likely course of action for the thief is to lie low for a time to avoid official notice, which may be your opportunity. And your instinct whispers that someone who can afford this kind of professional services won't stay someplace cheap . . ."

Character	Result
Jim	“You write another chapter in your latest story of a prodigy and his rival, reflecting on the idea that sometimes corruption of a creation can look on the surface like creation itself . . .” (pointing to an Agent and the possibility that the Agent might disrupt the Artifact toward her own ends)

These prompts can be modified to suit the referee’s taste, or expanded if not all of the characters are in play or if some fail their Calling rolls. Some of the prompts that involve specific knowledge (Xenia’s prompt, for example) can be explained as character knowledge by the referee, either automatically or via successful Reflection or Intuition Trait rolls. In any event, the characters should come away guided by the following general insights:

- The Artifact is located in the general location of Lakeshore Drive and Ontario Street in the River North district of downtown Chicago, whether or not that specific intersection is called out.
- The Artifact is guarded by a physically capable and dangerous force.
- Someone involved in the theft has an exotic power that feels wrong to the characters.

Quick reminder of the steps of a Knowledge Calling roll:

- The player describes what he wants to do.
- The player rolls a d10 with a target number of 7. The player receives a +2 die modifier if he has a “+” in his Calling. At the discretion of the referee, the player may also receive a +1 die modifier due to intimate familiarity with the object of the query.
- If the roll succeeds, the player gains the information he seeks (as described above),

along with a number of Creation Points equal to the modified roll minus the target number.

- Whether the roll succeeds or fails, the player generates 1d6 Entropy Points. A modified Omens table from the full game will be provided at the end of the Adventure so the referee can provide narrative feedback to the players based on Entropy Points; in the full game, the Entropy Points would also be used to determine the Threat level of the following Adventure.

Act II:

Armed with the information they’ve gathered from their initial investigation and Knowledge Calling rolls, the characters can now work to pinpoint the location of the Artifact and plan their approach. This should take the form of a standard investigation, although the characters can spend Creation Points on their Trait rolls as desired. Bear two things in mind here, though:

- Characters can use Creation Points on Charisma rolls to home in on the most receptive member of a group to their questions or proposals, or even to incline someone more favorably toward them, but even Supernatural efforts are not the same as mind control; characters can’t compel subjects to cooperate.
- Spending Creation Points automatically elevates a Trait roll to Extraordinary or Supernatural (1 for Extraordinary, 2 for

Supernatural). Extraordinary efforts may draw unwanted attention (notably from one of the guards or even the Agent), and Supernatural efforts generate Entropy Points (1d6 in a private setting, 2d6 for a subtle public effort, and 4d6 for an egregious public effort).

If Xenia's Knowledge result is used, it will become readily apparent that there is a luxury hotel near the location she "saw"; otherwise, an Intuition or Luck Trait roll will find someone who remembers a van going into the hotel's parking garage at a high rate of speed the previous evening, and a Charisma or Resources Trait roll will convince them to share the information. Once the hotel is located, the characters can then attempt to determine where in the hotel the thieves are at, again using their Traits. They should eventually learn that the thieves are on one of the top floors of the hotel, which are keycard-locked in the elevator, in a group of four rooms.

Act III:

The opposition is as follows:

Mercenary Leader: Creative Artifact: Glowing Pendant (+2 die modifier if attacked with Energy), **Action/Reflection:** +2/-1, **Fortitude/Will:** +1/-1, **Intuition/Charisma:** +1/-1, **Resources/Luck:** 0/0

Obstacle – Mercenaries: Damage Causing (+1)

Sybil Shaw, Agent of Entropy: Sense Ability – Energy, Disrupt Ability – Energy, Action/Reflection: -1/+1, **Fortitude/Will:** -1/+1, **Intuition/Charisma:** -1/+1, **Resources/Luck:** +1/-1

Notes:

- The opposition is built per the Weak Threat guidelines in the full rules.
- The mercenaries attack as a group, so they are handled as an Obstacle from the full

rules rather than as individual actors. Any character encountering them makes a Trait roll (usually Action or Reflection, but in stealth situations Intuition may be used) with a -1 die modifier for the size of the "mob"; if he fails, he makes a Damage roll at -1 for their skill. Only one roll is made and no Free Action roll is required.

- The Agent Sense and Disrupt Abilities are also borrowed from the full rules:
 - **Sense:** Sybil can make an Intuition Trait roll to Sense any unusual fluctuation in Energy in her area, including a Creative effort. Consciously, she can determine the type and intensity of an Energy source with a Reflection Trait roll.
 - **Disrupt:** On a successful Reflection roll, Sybil can cause any mundane source of Energy to behave unpredictably but to her benefit (referee's discretion). As an action, Sybil can Disrupt a Creative effort based on the Energy Element; her roll becomes the Creator's target number (in Combat, she cannot initiate the Creative mode but can follow a Creator into that mode to use this Ability). This Ability has other applications but these are outside the scope of the Quickstart.

If the characters have drawn Sybil's attention in any way, including overt uses of power in the vicinity, she and all of the mercenaries will be in her room with the Artifact. If not, the mercenaries will be in the hallway, and only Sybil and the leader will be with the Artifact (the adjoining door to their rooms will be open).

Other than the above notes, any Combat unfolds according to the standard rules above.

Epilogue:

Sybil's goals are as follows:

- ☐ **Major (10 Entropy Points):** Escape with the Artifact
- ☐ **Minor (5 Entropy Points):** Capture one of the characters
- ☐ **Minor (2 Entropy Points):** Escape

If any of these are achieved, add the indicated Entropy Points to the total. If the Artifact is lost, the characters will certainly want to pursue it. If

it is recovered, the characters will likely want to engage or at least learn about their new opponents. That is the purview of the referee and the players; in the meantime, this Adventure is concluded and the characters may choose Advancements if they have Creation Points available.

Below is an Omens table customized for this Adventure. The referee should consult this table whenever Entropy is incurred, and introduce the indicated Omen when that Entropy Point threshold is reached.

Entropy Points Held by Referee	Visible Effect
5	A character experiences nightmares or waking visions
10	Minor encounters in real world (e.g., random person stops in street to issue a character a cryptic warning) – affects many Creators, including non-party NPCs
20	Supernatural manifestations visible only to Creators (phantoms, strange lights or forces, temporal/spatial shifts, etc.)
35	Localized and temporary but highly visible manifestation (locusts, frogs, blight, etc.)

MASTERWORK QUICKSTART REFERENCE

CALLING • TRAITS • CREATION POINTS • ENTROPY

THE CORE RULE

When you attempt something risky, roll:

Die + Modifiers ≥ Target Number

An unmodified 10 (8 for Avocation) is an automatic success and earns 1 Creation Point; an unmodified 1 is an automatic failure.

CALLING ROLLS (Creative Power)

Use when reshaping reality or seeking supernatural insight.

Roll:

- **d10** = Calling
- **d8** = Avocation

Target Number: 7

Success

You gain symbolic insight (Knowledge Sphere in Quickstart).

You also gain:

Creation Points equal to amount exceeding TN

Example: Roll total 10 → gain 3 Creation Points

Entropy Cost (Always)

Every Calling roll generates:

+1d6 Entropy

Even on failure.

CREATION POINT USE — CALLING

When spent	Effect	Entropy
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Before roll	+2 modifier	+1
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After roll	+2 OR reroll	+1d6
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Permanent Element mastery	+2 modifier	none
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TRAIT ROLLS (Normal Actions)

Use for physical, social, and mental actions.

Roll: d10 + Trait modifier

Target Number: 5

CREATION POINT USE — TRAITS

Spend Timing	Bonus	Entropy	Effect Level
Before roll	+2	+1	Extraordinary
After roll only	+1	0	Skilled
Before AND After		+3	+2 + visibility Supernatural
After roll reroll	reroll	same as above	—

Supernatural Visibility Entropy

If Supernatural:

Visibility	Entropy
Private	1d6
Public subtle	2d6
Spectacular	4d6

OPPOSED ROLLS

Used for conflict.

NPC rolls first.

Their result becomes your Target Number.

Roll normally to beat it.

CREATION POINT SUMMARY

You gain Creation Points from:

Calling success

You spend Creation Points to:

Improve rolls

Reroll

Enter Creative Combat

Improve your character

Creation Points represent Creative energy.

Using them may increase Entropy.

MASTERWORK QUICKSTART COMBAT REFERENCE

Combat Overview

Combat is a **best-2-of-3 Opposed Roll contest**.

Winner forces consequences. Loser suffers Damage and must attempt escape.

STEP 1: DECLARE INTENT

Each participant chooses:

- **Fight**
- **Withdraw**

If both withdraw: Combat ends.

If one withdraws: Opponent may challenge with **Action Trait roll**

- Success: challenger gains **+1 in Round 1**
-

STEP 2: CHOOSE COMBAT TYPE (Creators only)

Choose one:

Combat Type	Trait Used	Cost
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Physical Combat	Action	none
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Creative Combat	Reflection	Spend 1 Creation Point → generates 1 Entropy
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Creative Combat represents supernatural creative force.

STEP 3: RESOLVE COMBAT ROUNDS

Both sides roll:

d10 + Trait modifier

Higher roll wins the round.

First side to win **2 rounds wins Combat**

Tie:

- No winner
 - Record tie (affects escape later)
-

STEP 4: REPEAT STEPS 1-3 UNTIL WINNER IS DETERMINED OR SUCCESSFUL WITHDRAWAL OCCURS

STEP 5: LOSER MAKES RESOLUTION ROLLS

Loser makes:

1. Damage Roll
2. Free Action Roll

Apply modifiers below.

DAMAGE ROLL

Determines physical and mental harm.

Trait used:

Winner used Loser rolls

Physical Combat Fortitude

Creative Combat Will

Target Number: 5

Damage Roll Results

Result Effect

Success Battered: -2 to next Damage Roll (cumulative)

1st Failure All Traits -2

2nd Failure All Traits -3, cannot initiate combat

3rd Failure Comatose

Healing removes one level per successful Reflection roll.

FREE ACTION ROLL

Determines ability to escape.

Trait used:

Winner used Loser rolls

Physical Combat Will

Creative Combat Fortitude

Target Number: 5

Free Action Results

Result Effect

Success Escape safely

Failure Opponent may immediately re-engage

RESOLUTION MODIFIERS

Apply to Damage and Free Action rolls as appropriate.

Combat Length

Length Damage Free Action

2 rounds -2 —

3 rounds — -2

Last Round Result

Condition	Damage	Free Action
Failed Withdraw-1	-1	
Each Tie	—	-1
Winner exceeded TN by 2+	-2	—

CREATIVE COMBAT SUMMARY

Creative Combat:

- Costs 1 Creation Point
- Generates 1 Entropy
- Uses Reflection
- Causes Will damage

Creative Combat is powerful—but dangerous.

HEALING

Reflection Trait Roll

Success reduces wound level by one.

Unskilled healer: -3 penalty

QUICK EXAMPLE

Poet (Reflection +2) vs Guard (Action +1)

Round 1: Poet wins

Round 2: Guard wins

Round 3: Poet wins

Guard loses Combat.

Guard rolls:

Damage Roll → Fortitude

Free Action Roll → Will

Apply consequences.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Combat is decisive.

Combat is dangerous.

Creative Combat accelerates Entropy.

Even victory has consequences.