HESPERA

OCCULT SCI-FI ROLEPLAYING

Second edition, playtest 1

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Hespera 2e playtest! I'm really excited for this one, because Hespera was my first real game, way back in 2015, and Ikaros has my favorite rules of all the games I've made, so migrating Hespera to the Ikaros ruleset is something I've been thinking about for a long time now.

10,000 foot view of the setting

Hespera is an occult sci-fi roleplaying game, set on a distant planet (the eponymous "Hespera") 140 years after they got cut off from Earth. With tensions about who should lead the colony already high, this sudden cut-off from Earth fractured the planetary government into four separate regions (roughly from south to north): the southern plains, the mountains, holdover, and the reach.

War between the regions (primarily the plains and the mountains, but occasionally holdover and the reach) burned off and on for 100 years, only ending a generation ago with the Treaty of Four Corners. Though the war is over, tensions between the four regions remain high.

Within regions, inter-city organizing is still done on the city-state level. Hespera City in the southern plains and Hephaestus in the mountains exert a large level of influence over their neighboring cities, but to date both have been unable to consolidate their power into that of a proper nation.

The planet's greatest mystery is the presence of the *theoliths*, indestructible god-statues that have been resistant to all forms of age dating, but which are confirmed to be at least several million years old. Other than the theoliths, there are no signs of any potential previous intelligent inhabitants this planet might have had.

Theoliths have a curious effect on humans, able to implant those who follow them with colonies of microorganisms that show up on the skin with the theolith's symbol, known as a *brand*. Those who are branded are

known as *witches*, and the theolith they are sworn to is able to grant superhuman (though not supernatural) abilities through the brand's link.

10,000 foot view of the vibes

Hespera is occult, a little bit gothic (in kind of a muted 1800s way, not an "everyone could be an extra on The Crow or Warhammer 40k" way), and, due to war destroying much of the planet's industrial base and advanced technology, very used-future. Basically, *imagine Trigun, but if the real-world vibes came from early 20th century occultism instead of westerns*.

Powered flight is readily available, but the regions depend on the rail network for moving large numbers of people and goods between cities. Spaceflight is roughly on par with the real world circa 2010, with very little in the way of human flight and sattelite-placement flights only just beginning to become cheap enough to put up anything other than governmental sattelites from Hespera City and Hephaestus, the two cities with working spaceports.

Due to differences between the regions, they can each have a different vibe to the "default" type of story they tell:

The southern plains Due to this region's status as both the oldest region as well as the primary producer of food needed by the other regions, adventures in this region suit themselves well to political intrigue.

The mountains This region forms the technical basis of the planet, with the best colleges, factories, and the like. This region lends itself well to adventures relating to research and discovery in a harsh environment.

Holdover This region separates the reach from the mountains and the plains, and thus lends itself well to adventures based off meeting new people and new ideas.

The reach As the furthest away and most recently settled region, the marshes and fjords of the reach are perfect for adventures related to exploration and having to make do without the population levels and established systems that the other regions have access to (particularly the rail network, which terminates at the southern entrance to the reach).

10,000 foot view of the rules

Hespera 2e is based off the Ikaros ruleset. Ikaros is a Fate-inspired system, where characters are still made up of aspects (which Ikaros calls *traits*, and which are handled differently, mechanically-speaking, than aspects are), skills, stunts (which Ikaros calls *talents*), and conditions (which Ikaros handles completely differently).

Differences with Fate

- Uses a 2d6 roll and keep system instead of Fate dice, where players roll two or more d6 (depending on how many traits they've tagged in) and keep the two highest (or two lowest if they used a trait against themself).
- Elides Fate points in lieu of using a special form of damaging condition that characters accrue and heal as they use traits for and against themself, respectively.
- Has no tied rolls, and uses dynamic thresholds for when rolls succeed with style, rather than always being 3+.

If you've played Fate, picking up the Hespera rules will probably be fairly easy (unless it ends up being one of those "just similar enough to trip you up" situations, in which case I apologize). Since the probability curve of 2d6 is almost identical to that of 4dF+7, conversion of existing Fate material should also be straightforward.

Appendix N

- Blood Ceremony (the band, not the movie)
- Trigun
- Infinity (Corvus Belli)
- Magna Carta Cartel (band)
- O. Children (band, not the song)
- The House on the Borderland (1908)
- The Magician (1908)
- Fate
- Mouse Guard/Burning Wheel
- Apocalypse World and its children

BASIC RULES

Players needed

- One Seer, whose job it is to create the adventures and play the part of the world and the people in it
- One or more players, whose job it is to play as the main characters that are focused on

Materials needed

- One character sheet per player character
- Four to six six-sided dice per player, plus the Seer

Anatomy of a character

Characters are made up of the following:

Traits

Freeform narrative descriptors that can be used to gain bonuses on relevant rolls, at the cost of taking a special type of damage called Desperation. In addition to their mechanical bonuses, any traits approved by the Seer are also narratively true.

Skills

Skills are the primary mechanical . When rolling, the Seer will say which skill to use, based off what you're attempting to do. That skill's value is added to the roll.

The skill die

The skill die, written "1dS (*<skill name>*)," is a special 1d3 which is weighted more towards lower results when rolled against a skill with a low value, and weighted towards higher results when rolled against a skill with a high value.

To roll a skill die, roll a d6, then compare the number the die rolled against the value of the skill you're using to roll. If the number on the die is higher than the skill level, the skill die counts as a 1. If it's equal to the skill level, it counts as a 2. If it's lower than the skill level, it counts as a 3.

Skill die value by die roll and skill level

Skill value	⚀	⚁	⚂	⚃	⚄	⚅	Avg
0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.00
1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1.17
2	3	2	1	1	1	1	1.50
3	3	3	2	1	1	1	1.83
4	3	3	3	2	1	1	2.17
5	3	3	3	3	2	1	2.50
6	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.83
7+	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.00

For skill values of 3 and below, the skill die provides less of a bonus than a raw d3, but it provides more of a bonus than a raw d3 at skill levels of 4 and higher.

In practice, though, it's very rare for skills to go higher than 5 unless the campaign is quite long.

Talents

Cool little special things you can do. Unlike traits, they come from a list and have defined capabilities.

Gear

Stuff that you have in your possession. Sometimes required in order to even attempt a roll. Other times it provides a bonus specific to that piece of gear.

Conditions

The amount and type of damage that you've taken. Most conditions heal with rest. Desperation only heals at the end of the session or when you use a trait against yourself.

Checks

Whenever you attempt something where the Seer feels there's a chance of interesting failure, the Seer can call for a check. Decide, with the Seer,

what your goal is and which skill to use. Both you and the Seer must agree on the goal and the skill.[1]

Once the goal and the skill have been chosen:

1. The Seer sets the Target Number (TN).
2. You roll 2d6 and add your skill's value. If the total equals or exceeds the TN, you succeed, and attain your goal, guaranteed. If it doesn't, then you fail, and either take damage or suffer a story–based complication.

Of course, the reality is much more complicated than those two steps. Advantage, disadvantage, traits, talents, gear, helping: all of these can affect how rolls are made. Each one is covered in its own section below.

Choosing the skill and setting the TN

When a roll is made, it's usually obvious which skill will be used. In cases where it's not, err on the side of allowing skills to be a little broad rather than narrow.

Target numbers start at 6 for easy tasks, then go up to 9 for average tasks, 12 for hard ones, and 15+ for brutally difficult ones.[2]

Advantage and disadvantage

Situational advantages increase the die roll, while situational disadvantages increase the TN. Minor advantages and disadvantages give a +1, while major advantages and disadvantages give a +2. Sum up the total advantage and disadvantage values, cancel them out 1 for 1, then cap the result at +2.

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[1] "I want to use *Persuasion* to convince the train guard to put down her rifle" and "I want to use *Persuasion* to start and complete a successful grassroots campaign to overthrow the mayor" are both perfectly valid goals, which is why it's important for you and the Seer to agree on what the goal will be *before* the check is actually made. Narrower goals will make things feel more tense and action–packed, and will use up more player resources. Broader goals will make things feel more abstract and high level.

[2] Don't bother setting the TN below 6, because it's trivial to hit the point where only a natural 2 will fail. With a TN of 9, a character only needs a +2 to have a greater than 50% chance of success. TN 12 only requires a +5, which can be had with a +3 skill and +2 advantage. Add in traits, and characters can roll a lot higher than you might think!

Traits

Traits can be used to both help and hurt your chance of succeeding at a roll.

Before the roll is made, you may invoke one relevant trait as a hindrance, if it would apply to the situation. If you do so, roll 3d6 instead of 2d6 on the roll, and drop the highest die. After the roll is complete, reduce your Desperation by 2.

After the roll is made, if you did not already invoke a trait as a hindrance, you may invoke one or more relevant traits as inspiration. Roll an extra die for each trait invoked, and once all of the dice have been rolled, keep the two highest among all dice rolled. After the roll is complete, increase your Desperation by 1 per trait invoked.

You may only choose traits to invoke once during each roll. After those traits are rolled, no further traits may be invoked. Choose wisely!

> ## This rule is new to Hespera 2e, and needs playtesting!
>
> Hespera only has one resilience pool, not two, so the cost of invoking to inspire was reduced.

Talents and gear

Talents and gear affect rolls in different ways, and each specific one will say how in its own rules.

Helping

You may also receive help from other characters on your rolls. Each helping character proposes a skill to help with, and if the Seer agrees that that could help, the helping player provides a +1dS *helping* bonus on the check. Only the highest *helping* bonus applies.

If the roll is still a failure, all helpers face the same consequences as you.

Bonuses

Bonuses do not stack with other bonuses of the same type, with the exception that if a bonus and a penalty have the same type, keep both the largest bonus and the largest penalty.

Rerolls

Rerolls happen at the very end of the roll, after any bonus dice from traits, talents, and gear have been added. When rerolling dice, each individual die can only ever be rerolled once. The second result stands.

Snake eyes and boxcars

If the final two dice in a check are both ones, the check is an automatic failure. If the final two dice in a check are both sixes, the check is an automatic success.

Success

On a successful roll, you get what you want. Yay!

Failure

The two consequences of failed rolls are injury and escalation. If the Seer chooses *injury*, you take damage but still achieve your goal. If the Seer chooses *escalation*, you don't take damage, but you fail to achieve your goal in an interesting way that propels the story forward.[3]

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[3]If you're familiar with Mouse Guard or Torchbearer, this is exactly the same. If you're familiar with PbtA, escalation is the equivalent of a soft GM move.

Escalation can't hurt you, but it *can* cause situations that place you or your allies in imminent danger!

Injury values are usually 1d3, but can be increased in particularly dangerous situations. When weaponry is involved, injury damage depends on the margin of failure and your armor value. If the Seer is feeling particularly nice, they can give injury damage as Fatigue, which is a special condition that heals faster than others. More information on Fatigue and injuries can be found in the **Conditions and Injuries** chapter.

Untrained failures

The first step to learning how to do something isn't learning how to do it well, it's learning how to do it *safely*. If you fail a roll in which you had a skill value of 0, you suffer both an injury *and* an escalation, and do not achieve your goal.

Margins

Some rules depend on the margin of a roll, which in the case of successful rolls is the total value rolled minus the TN, and in the case of failed rolls is the TN minus the total value.[4]

Failed combat checks, achieving your goal through an injury consequence on a failed roll, and rolling snake eyes on a trivial roll or boxcars on a supremely difficult one (if a 2 would have succeeded or a 12 would have failed) are the usual ways to get a negative margin. If you do, you don't need to track the numerical value of a negative margin, just that it's negative. If a rule needs the value of a margin, count a negative margin's value as –1.

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[4] Note that this always gives a positive margin, regardless of whether you succeeded or failed, as long as it didn't trigger any of the negative margin conditions.

CREATING A CHARACTER

Now that you know the basics of what the parts of a character do, it's time to learn how to make one. Making a character consists of six steps:

1. Come up with your traits
2. Choose your skills
3. Choose a talent
4. Calculate resilience and max carry
5. Acquire gear
6. Name!

For each section, we're going to watch as Autumn, a player in the upcoming game, creates Helena, the traveling witch.

Come up with traits

Each character has three traits: their identity, their struggle, and their drive.

The identity trait is who you are, summed up in a single sentence. If you're making a witch, you must include your theolith in your identity trait, turning it into a witch trait.[5]

The struggle trait defines your main problem, either internal or external. It's the thing that will make your life difficult.

The drive trait is *why* you keep going, despite your struggle. Drive traits are usually either philosophical or goal-oriented.

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[5]Witch traits still count as identity traits in every way, but there are some ritual rules which affect them.

Autumn has always been in love with the idea of a wandering do-gooder ever since watching too many cartoons as a kid. She's also excited at the possibility of playing a witch and having a chance to play around with all the fun little mechanical knobs and goodies they get. After discussing it with the table at the start of session zero, she decides to make Helena, a witch who wanders the land, fighting injustice wherever she goes.

Helena is a witch of The Wind, a theolith in the shape of a soaring bird that commands its witches to go out into the world and experience what it has to offer, trading freely in both goods and knowledge. She also has a strong moral compass and no patience for those who would hurt others, so we can work both of those into her identity trait: "Wandering firebrand witch of The Wind." This can also dovetail nicely into giving her a good struggle trait: "No friend to authority," to represent how her unwillingness to compromise can make life more difficult for her. Her final trait is her drive, which in her case can lean more towards the philosophical: "The strong must protect the meek."

Putting these all together, we get:
· **Identity:** "Wandering firebrand witch of the Wind."
· **Struggle:** "No friend to authority."
· **Drive:** "The strong must protect the meek."

Choose your skills

Place a +3 in one skill, a +2 in two skills, and a +1 in four skills:

· Athletics	· Might	· Ritual
· Combat	· Nature	· Subterfuge
· Contacts	· Perception	· Technology
· Education	· Performance	· Wealth
· Empathy	· Persuasion	· Willpower

Ritual can only be taken if you choose *Branded* as your first talent. Descriptions of what each skill does can be found in the **Skills** chapter.

Autumn knows that she wants being a witch to be a major focus of her character, so right away she puts Helena's +3 into Ritual.

Wilderness survival is an important part of wandering a frontier, so she puts one of her +2s into Nature, then puts the other +2 into Willpower to support her Ritual skill.

Finally, Autumn distributes the +1s among skills she thinks might have come in handy for Helena during her travels: Athletics, Contacts, Empathy, and Perception.

This gives Helena the following skills:
· Athletics: +1
· Contacts: +1
· Empathy: +1
· Nature: +2
· Perception: +1
· Ritual: +3
· Willpower: +2

Choose a talent

Each character starts with one talent, giving them a special little ability that other characters don't have access to by default. Talents are listed in the **Talents** chapter, but be aware that many talents have prerequisites that could prevent them from being taken at character creation.

As a witch, Helena must take the *Branded* talent.

Resilience and max carry

Your resilience is a measure of how much damage, both physical and mental, you can take before your life is in danger. Its value is equal to 12 plus double your Might and double your Willpower. If you have the *Branded* talent, reduce your resilience by 1 for each point by which your Ritual exceeds your Willpower, as your brand burns too hot for your psyche.

Your max carry is the maximum amount of Bulk you can carry. Its value is equal to 7 plus your Might. You're generally assumed to have whatever you need for making your skills on hand without having to include it in your carried load, but some skills that require particularly bulky or expensive materials and tools will call out cases where you do need to track Bulk in order to use the skill.

> Helena has a Might of 0, a Willpower of +2, the *Branded* talent, and a Ritual of +3. This gives her a resilience of 13:
>
> 12 (base) + 0 (double Might) + 4 (double Willpower) – 1 (Ritual/ Willpower difference) = 13
>
> and a max carry of 7.

This rule is new to Hespera 2e, and needs playtesting!

Ikaros uses two separate resilience tracks (that started at 10, not 12), and Hespera 1e didn't use resilience at all.

In addition, Sorcery ranks in Ikaros didn't reduce resilience in the same way that Ritual ranks do in Hespera 2e. Instead, failing to cast a spell in Ikaros would cause a special type of mental damage called Burn, in addition to the usual consequences for failure. Since Hespera isn't a nitty gritty game in the same way that Ikaros is, I wanted to get rid of that bookkeeping, while also keeping witches balanced in a game where it's not uncommon to have fairly lengthy timeskips where injuries and conditions have a chance to fully heal between every check.

As far as using both Might and Willpower together in order to hit some absurdly high resilience, it's definitely something I'm concerned about, but I'd like to try it this way first to avoid penalizing characters who want to spread their points out a bit more.

Acquire gear

Start with one piece of gear with a Wealth TN of 9 plus your Wealth, or two pieces of gear with a lower Wealth TN than that.

Name them!

Give your character a name and pronouns.

> *TO DO: Give Helena a name. She'll need pronouns too.*

SKILLS

Athletics

All non-raw-strength forms of physical fitness.

Combat

Doing violence unto others. This covers both melee and ranged combat.

Contacts

Knowing someone who knows someone. Finding people you need.

Education

Book learnin'.

Empathy

Forming an emotional bond. Knowing someone's emotional state. Convincing someone by using your emotional connection. Telling if someone is lying.

Can only be used during direct conversation, whether in person, video conference, telephone, etc.

Might

How strong you are. Affects resilience and melee weapon damage.

Nature

How in tune you are with the natural world. Wilderness survival. Animal handling. Riding beasts of burden.

Perception

How well you can notice the world around you. Affects ranged weapon damage.

Performance

Being the center of attention. Distracting or inspiring others. Convincing someone by playing a part.

Persuasion

Convincing someone through logic or by making an offer they cannot refuse. Wheeling and dealing.

Doesn't require forming an emotional connection. Can be used over letters or email.

Ritual

Used to perform Rites. Requires the *Branded* talent to learn, and lowers your resilience.

Subterfuge

Sneaking around. Making disguises. Forgery.

Always counts as a helping skill when helping someone else use Empathy, Performance, or Persuasion to lie.

Technology

How in tune you are with the created world. Crafting. Driving vehicles. Covers all human-created things, not just fancy future tech. Yes, even a bow or a plow would fall under technologist.

Wealth

How much money you have. How well you can navigate financial sectors. How many people with money owe you favors or loans.

Willpower

Mental fortitude. Affects resilience and some Rites.

TALENTS

Talents are little tips and tricks you know which provide a more structured mechanical effect than traits do. You get one talent at character creation, and can learn more as time goes on.

> Seer's Note: they're just stunts from Fate or feats from d20.

For the playtest, the following talents are available:

Skill Specialization

Choose a skill and a situation. When making a check for that skill in the situation you chose, gain a +2 *specialization* bonus. This talent may be taken multiple times, as long as either the skill or situation are different.

> Example: Skill Specialization (Orator): gain a +2 *specialization* bonus on Persuasion checks when speaking to a crowd.

Useful Background

Choose three skills and corresponding situations, as in *Skill Specialization*, but only gain a +1 *specialization* bonus on checks. If you would later get a talent that would give a higher *specialization* bonus to one of those skills, you may replace it with another skill/situation combination.

> Example: Useful Background (Train Guard): gain a +1 *specialization* bonus on Athletics to keep your balance on a moving platform, Combat to fight on a moving platform, and Technology to jury-rig vehicular repairs.

Distinctive

Gain another trait.

> **Example:** *Distinctive (Boxing champ of '22)*

Branded

Requires: Witch-related identity trait

You are branded as a witch in service to a theolith. You may take the Ritual skill. This also affects your resilience, as explained in the **Creating a Character** chapter. More information on rituals can be found in the **Rituals** chapter.

CONDITIONS AND INJURIES

Conditions are the way that damage you take affects and sticks with you. Conditions are split into special conditions and injuries, which are further split into normal and critical injuries.

Each condition has a name and a value, or two values in the case of critical injuries. The value of a condition doesn't affect you directly, but bad things happen when the total value of all your conditions exceeds your resilience.

Special conditions

Special conditions are conditions with unique rules for their increase and decrease.

Fatigue

Fatigue is a special condition that can be taken when the Seer chooses the injure consequence of a failed roll, if they don't want to deal a full injury. Minor NPCs also deal half of their damage (rounded up) as Fatigue.

Fatigue reduces by 2 when you have food and an hour's rest, and by 6 when you sleep in a bed in a building, with progressively fewer points reduced if your sleeping conditions are worse. You may only benefit from each kind of rest once per day.

Desperation

Desperation is a special condition that functions as an extra-effort/metacurrency mechanic.

Desperation increases by 1 every time you invoke a trait to inspire, and reduces by 2 every time you invoke a trait to hinder, as well as once at the end of each session.

Taking damage

When taking damage with no type specified, the Seer will choose whether you take that damage to an existing injury, increase Fatigue by the damage value, or take a new injury.

If the damage has a given type, the target condition must have the same name as that type. If you already have such a condition, deal damage to it instead of taking a new one.[6]

For example, if you take 5 *bleeding* damage, you must increase an existing *bleeding* injury by 5 if possible, or take a new one at rank 5 if not.

Each type of injury has its own rules for how it's affected by damage, which are given in its respective section later in the chapter.

Healing damage

When receiving healing without a specified condition, you may choose one injury to heal by that amount. Any overflow healing is lost.

Each type of injury has its own rules for how it's affected by healing, which are given in its respective section later in the chapter.

Injuries

When you gain a new injury, compare the total value of all of your conditions (including the new injury) to your resilience. If the total is lower than or equal to your resilience, your new injury is a normal injury. If it's higher than your resilience, your new injury is a critical injury.[7] If it's higher than

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[6]These are described far differently than in Ikaros, even though they're mostly the same.

[7]This is slightly different from Ikaros, where hitting your resilience score exactly would still result in a critical injury.

double your resilience, you become incapacitated and will die if you don't receive medical attention within the next few minutes.

Normal injuries

Normal injuries have no effect beyond counting against your resilience. When you take a new normal injury, its value is equal to the incoming damage. When a normal injury takes damage, its value increases by that amount, and when it receives healing its value decreases by that amount. When its value is reduced to 0, it's removed.

Critical injuries

Unlike other conditions, critical injuries have two condition values: the critical value and the recovery value, split with a slash: "*<critical>* / *<recovery>*."

When gaining a new critical injury, both of these values are set to the amount of incoming damage. After gaining a critical injury, you must roll Willpower against a TN of 7, plus 2 for every critical condition you have. If you fail, you pass out until at least one of your injuries receives at least one point of healing.

You take a stacking –1 penalty on all checks for each critical injury with a critical value above zero. When any rule needs the value of this condition, such as for comparing condition values against resilience, use the recovery value.

When a critical injury takes further damage, increase the critical value by 1 and the recovery value by the amount of damage taken. This can reopen a partially healed critical injury.

When a critical injury is healed, reduce its critical value by the amount of damage taken, with any overflow going into the recovery value. The injury is not removed until both values are zero.

Injuries are traits

All injuries count as traits, and can be invoked for inspiration or hindering (although, in practice, being invoked for hindering is much more likely!).

Healing injuries

Once per day, when you sleep for eight hours you may choose three different injuries and heal each by 1.

COMBAT

Combat checks

When you're attempting a check to achieve a goal despite active opposition, and that active opposition is willing and able to harm you, that check becomes a combat check. There are two kinds of combat checks, depending on whether you're willing and able to harm your opposition in turn.

Engage

If you're willing to take the fight back to your opposition, make your skill check as normal.

On a success you achieve your goal and deal a hit to your opposition with your margin of success.

On a failure you do not achieve your goal, you deal a negative margin hit to your opposition, and your opposition deals a hit to you with your margin of failure.

Avoid

If you're only trying to escape harm, not deal it, make your check as normal.

On a success you achieve your goal.

On a failure you either achieve your goal and receive a margin 0 hit from your opposition, or you fail to achieve your goal and take no damage.

Hits

Hits are a special source of damage you can take during a combat check.

Each hit has a margin and a weapon. To determine how much damage a hit deals, compare the margin to the target's armor:

If the margin is less than the armor deal damage equal to the weapon's glancing hit roll

If the margin is equal to or greater than the armor deal damage equal to the weapon's solid hit roll

If the margin is negative deal damage equal to the minimum possible roll of the weapon's glancing hit, without the benefit of bonus damage from skills. Negative margin hits also do not apply any weapon effects, and do not count as a hit for the purpose of rules or talents.

Some weapons also have special effects that can be resisted. If two TNs are listed, separated by a slash, use the first TN on glancing hits and the second TN on solid hits.

Example: Richard de Icaza is working as a train guard when bandits riding dune buggies pull up alongside the train he's on, guns blazing. He ducks behind his armored vestibule until he has a chance to shoot, then pops up and fires a shot at one of the drivers.

Richard's player, Michael, states that his goal is to injure the driver enough that they'll be unable to continue chasing the train, reducing the number of vehicles he has to worry about by one. Since he's willing to use violence in pursuit of his goals, this combat skill check is an *engage*.

Richard has a Combat of +3, Perception of +2, and is firing an assault rifle, which has a damage profile of 1d3+1 / 2d3+1, an armor reduction of 1, and adds half of his Perception to its damage. The bandit driver has a Technology skill of +1, is wearing light armor (Armor 3), and is sitting behind an armored windshield that gives a +1 bonus (which is cancelled out by the assault rifle's armor reduction).

Once the bonuses have been tallied, the Seer and Michael both roll. With all bonuses included, the Seer rolled a 9. The final result of the roll, depending on what Michael rolled for Richard, is:

If Michael rolled an 8 or lower after bonuses   Richard is unable to injure the driver enough to lose the car, but still deals 2 damage (the minimum glancing hit, without his Perception bonus) to the driver. In exchange, he takes a hit with his margin of failure as the riders in the car pepper him with bullets. Note that the driver and the riders were all covered under the same roll! If you're familiar with the Fate Fractal, this is identical.

If Michael rolled a 9 through 10 after bonuses   Richard deals 1d3+2 damage to the driver, and the falls back.

If Michael rolled a 11+ after bonuses   Richard deals 2d3+2 damage to the driver, and the falls back.

GEAR

The next playtest will have a wider selection of gear, but for right now, here are some weapons and armor. You can handwave everything else.

Weapons

Weapon effects

Armor reduction

The *armor reduction* trait directly reduces the target's armor by the trait's value, to a minimum of 2.

Extra ammunition

Ranged weapons can benefit from keeping extra ammunition on hand, so that you can increase your likelihood to hit by being less careful with your ammunition. Unlike other weapon effects, ranged weapons are only marked when they *don't* have the Extra Ammunition effect, not when they do (usually because they're too slow to reload). Extra Ammunition takes up 1 Bulk and can be discarded to reroll a single die on a Combat skill check, as long as the type of extra ammunition matches the weapon.

Fully automatic

When firing a *fully automatic* weapon, you may discard up to three Bulk of Extra Ammunition before making your combat skill check. Each discarded Bulk lets you choose a different effect from this list:

- Roll 1dS (Perception) and gain that as a *spray and pray* bonus on your skill check.

- Roll 1dS (Combat) and gain that as a *spray and pray* bonus on your damage roll. You gain this bonus damage even if you dealt a negative margin hit.
- You may engage another target within two yards/meters of your original target. Only roll your combat skill check once, and use that value against both targets. Whether you succeed or fail in achieving your goal for the roll depends only on whether the primary target beats your roll. Calculate your margin and roll damage separately against each target.

> Note that in the first two cases, the skill die you roll corresponds to the skill whose value you're *not* usually adding to the roll.

Spread

When firing a weapon with the *spread* effect, negative margin hits deal 2 points of damage per d3 in the glancing hit damage roll instead of 1.

> ### *This rule is new to Hespera 2e, and needs playtesting!*
>
> The fancy gun rules are new to Hespera 2e, and were not present in Ikaros or Hespera 1e.

Projectile weapons

Projectile weapons add half your Perception to damage.

Weapon	Damage & effects	Bulk	Wealth TN
Hunting bow	2d3 / 3d3	2	9
Crossbow	2d3+1 / 3d3+1 *Armor reduction: 1, does not benefit from extra ammo*	3	10
Pistol	1d3 / 2d3 *Armor reduction: 1*	1	10

Weapon	Damage & effects	Bulk	Wealth	TN
Submachine gun	1d3 / 2d3 *Armor reduction: 1, fully automatic, uses pistol ammo*	2	11	
Shotgun	2d3+1 / 3d3+1 *Armor reduction: 1, spread*	3	9	
Assault rifle	2d3 / 3d3 *Armor reduction: 2, fully automatic*	3	12	
Hunting rifle	2d3+1 / 3d3+1 *Armor reduction: 3*	3	10	
Machine gun	2d3+1 / 3d3+1 *Armor reduction: 3, fully automatic*	5	13	
Anti-materiel weapon *Recoilless rifle, autocannon, etc*	3d3 / 5d3 *Armor reduction: 4, solid hits instantly kill human-scale and smaller targets*	6+	15	

Thrown weapons and explosives

Non-explosive thrown weapons add half of your might to damage. Explosive weapons do not add any skill to damage.

Unless otherwise specified, don't bother tracking how many individual throwing items you have. Just assume that you have enough. However, all thrown weapons also count as extra ammunition for themselves, so you can discard the weapon as you use it in order to reroll.

Weapon	Damage & effects	Bulk	Wealth	TN
Bundle of small thrown weapons	1d2 / 1d3+1	1	8	

Weapon	Damage & effects	Bulk	Wealth	TN
Bundle of large thrown weapons	1d3 / 2d3+1	2	9	
Dynamite	3d3 / 4d3 *Ignores armor, single use*	1	9	
Grenades	2d3 / 3d3 *Armor reduction: 2*	2	11	

Melee weapons

Melee weapons add half your Might to damage.

Weapon	Damage & effects	Bulk	Wealth	TN
Unarmed	1d2 / 1d3	–	–	
Light 1h weapon	1d3 / 1d3+1 *+2 damage against unaware targets*	1	7	
Medium 1h weapon	1d3 / 2d3	2	8	
2h weapon	1d3+1 / 2d3+1 *Armor reduction: 1*	3	9	

Armor

Armor imposes a penalty on Athletics rolls equal to one less than its Bulk (minimum 0).

Type	Armor	Bulk	Wealth	TN
Unarmored	2	–	–	
Light armor *Motorcycle leathers, welding outfit, etc*	3	1	8	

Type	Armor	Bulk	Wealth	TN
Medium armor *Kevlar, flak jacket, etc*	4	2	9	
Heavy armor *Kevlar with plates, bomb squad suit, etc*	5	3	11	
Riot shield	+1	2	10	

RITUALS

"Ritual" is the catch-all term for any powers granted to a witch by their patron. Every witch has access to *Minor ritual*.

Minor ritual

You may invoke your witch trait for inspiration on any check where you're acting within your patron's sphere. If you do so, rather than rolling an extra die, roll a number of 1dS (Willpower) skill dice equal to your Ritual, then keep the highest. Gain its value as a *ritual* bonus to your current check. In all other respects, including Desperation gain, this is exactly the same as a regular invocation for inspiration.

> ### This rule is new to Hespera 2e, and needs playtesting!
>
> **This rule is completely new for Hespera. I'm also planning on adding more, but my big design goal for rituals is that none of them can be explicitly supernatural, and must all be at least quasi-explainable by a witch's brand just granting them superhuman abilities.**
>
> **For the first playtest, though, I think just having *Minor ritual* is fine.**

Theoliths

Each witch serves a single theolith, and in return their theolith patron grants them astounding abilities. Theoliths take the form of large, indestructible stone statues, which have been positively dated to be at least one million years old.

Theoliths are incapable (or unwilling) of direct communication with their witches, instead communicating through dreams, emotions, and visions. While they can only communicate during waking hours with those who bear their brand, theoliths can enter the dreams of anyone whose life matches their spheres closely enough. Sometimes that kind of dream re-

lationship ends with the human becoming a witch, but sometimes it doesn't. Theoliths are inscrutable.

The bodies of theoliths slowly leak a viscous liquid, so dark red that it's nearly black, which witches refer to as "wine" and most others refer to as "blood." This liquid is highly chemically complex, and primarily consists of an extreme density of unicellular organisms of unknown origin. This wine (occasionally mixed with animal or human blood) is a common component of rituals, and drinking it is the final step to becoming a witch, as those unicellular organisms are what makes up the actual brand.

Not all theoliths take on humanoid form, but for those that do, their physical form is that of a swine-headed humanoid with long claws and fingers that are webbed up to the first joint. In dreams, those that take humanoid form look almost, but not quite, indistinguishable from humans.

The Magician

The Magician, colloquially nicknamed "Haddo," was the first theolith found on Hespera, twenty-four years after the initial colonization, back when the planet was under Earth Exoplanet Discovery Corps control. The Magician is in a small seacave on the southern coast of the southern plains, and is jealously guarded by a secretive cult. Worship of the Magician is popular among the foundries in the mountains, but its single-minded focus on power makes it an unpopular theolith everywhere else.

Physical appearance

A 5 meter tall wizened swine-headed humanoid, wearing long robes and a crown that looks like it's made of looping wire. Its wine drips from the crown.

Dream appearance

An alchemist, accompanied by a strong feeling of unease and danger.

Spheres

- Seeking esoteric knowledge
- Acquiring and using power over others
- Chemistry and life sciences

Brand (placeholder)

The Harvest

The Harvest was found at the top of a particularly fertile mountain valley where the mountains meet the Holdover, and is easily the most worshiped theolith to date, with almost ten thousand followers and over a hundred witches. Witches of the Harvest are considered an amazing boon in frontier towns, and are frequently on the municipal payroll.

Physical appearance

A 17 meter tall aleut, sitting down and holding out a bowl filled with carvings of fruits. Its wine overflows from inside the bowl.

Dream appearance

Usually a cornucopoia sitting on a table in the sun, but occasionally a farmer. Very rarely appears as a great wheel. It has an aura of contentment.

Spheres

· Agriculture and animal handling
· Community
· Weather prediction

Brand (placeholder)

The Hunter

The Hunter is the second most recently discovered theolith, found ten years ago on a mountaintop in the Reach. Not much is known about the Hunter yet, apart from its love of spears and that its witches are consummate ambushers. Physicists in the Samantha Lagat University in Hephaestus have been attempting to get a witch of the Hunter as a research subject for five years in order to further their research in optics and detection, but so far none have come forward.

Physical appearance

A dusker the size of an elephant, bedecked in carved jewels, frozen mid-leap. Its wine drips from its fangs.

Dream appearance

A dusker, a swine-headed humanoid with a spear, or a powerful hunting bird. Regardless of form, it is accompanied by a strong sense of being watched.

Spheres

· Avoiding detection
· Fighting a foe stronger than you
· Learning everything you can about a target

Brand (placeholder)

The Merchant

The Merchant was discovered early in Hespera colony's history, at the confluence of the two major rivers that carve their way through the southern plains. Witches of the Merchant are known for their shrewd negotiating skills, to the point where some businesspeople refuse to negotiate with them entirely.

Physical appearance

Roughly three meters tall, humanoid, robed, and bedecked in carvings of jewelry. Its wine drips from its necklace and rings.

Dream appearance

A merchant, an elderly shopkeeper, or rarely a chariot. Those in its presence feel at ease.

Spheres

· Wheeling and dealing
· Networking with other people
· Identifying what something is and how much it's worth

Brand (placeholder)

TO DO:

The Obelisk

The Wind

The Druid

NPCS AND WILDLIFE

Hespera is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, particularly of the megafauna kind.

The term "creatures" is used to represent both human NPCs and wildlife (basically, any living thing that isn't a player). Creatures on Hespera are built the same way that player characters are, with a few key differences:

1. Creatures only have one trait, not three. Their traits are narratively true, and can also be invoked in the same manner as a player trait.
2. Resilience is based off of a new value called *sturdiness*, which is equal to the higher of the creature's Might and Willpower.
3. The creature's base resilience and skill-based resilience multiplier is based off which type of creature it is:
   - *Minor* creatures have a resilience of 8 + Sturdiness. This is the category of small animals and nameless NPCs.
   - *Major* creatures have a resilience of 12 + (2 x Sturdiness). This is the category of human-sized animals and named NPCs.
   - *Monster* creatures have a resilience of 16 + (3 x Sturdiness), and are considered to be vehicle-scale for the purpose of any rules that differentiate between human-sized vs larger targets, such as anti-materiel weapons. This is the category of animals that are far larger than humans.
4. Creatures have access to creature-only talents, given below.
5. *Minor* creatures deal half of their damage (rounding up) as Fatigue.

Creature talents

Swarm

Requires: Must be a non-player creature
This creature is made up of a multitude of smaller creatures acting as one. It takes double damage from any damage source that effects multiple targets.

Monstrous Resilience

Requires: Must be a non-player creature
Increase Sturdiness by 2.

Tough Exterior

Requires: Must be a non-player creature
Increase armor by 1. This talent may be taken multiple times.

Creatures

Aleut

Monster

The shy and elusive aleut, so named because its curved chin horn looks like the Aleutian island chain, was first discovered high in the mountains above Hephaestus, where it lives a solitary existence of eating shrubs, berries, and whatever it can forage from under the snow and dirt with its chin horn. Aleuts are roughly the same size and shape as an American bison, but with clawed, bird-like feet. Their thick pelts make them prized targets for hunting in the frigid mountains, for any hunter skilled enough to bring them down.

Trait: Giant shy herbivore with sharp claws and a curved horn.
Skills: Might +6, Perception +4, Athletics +4, Combat +3, Subterfuge +3, Willpower +2
Talents: *Tough Exterior (thick fur)* x2
Resilience: 34
Armor: 4
Weapons: Curved horn (1d3+4 / 2d3+4, armor reduction 1), vicious claws (1d3+3 / 2d3+3)

Cemetery Bird

Major creature

If it weren't for the flat, bony shield guarding its head and thick neck, venomous bite, and razor sharp beak, these birdlike creatures could almost be mistaken for a larger, stockier ostrich. They roam the edges of human settlement in the Reach, hunting whatever they can get their beaks on. During incubation season, the males and females trade off egg duty on several day shifts, while the other half of the pair uses its paralyzing bite to bring live prey back to its mate.

Trait: Giant predatory bird–thing that can run at incredible speeds.
Skills: Athletics +4 (includes incredible land speed), Perception +3, Combat +2, Might +1
Talents: *Distinctive (Paralyzing bite)*, *Tough Exterior (thick feathers and head plate)* x2
Resilience: 14
Armor: 4
Weapons: Paralyzing bite (1d3+1 / 2d3+1, armor reduction: 1, TN 9/12 Might check or be paralyzed for 1d3/2d3 minutes)

Dusker

Minor creature

When children of the Reach misbehave, the Duskers are who the parents invoke to scare them into obedience. While not physically large or powerful, Duskers are incredible ambush hunters, and are known for their tendency to steal cats, dogs, and occasionally even children from the local farms. Duskers are about the same size as a lynx, but are much wider and flatter, and their fur is a deep purple color that blends in perfectly with the plants of the Reach. The favored strategy of Dusker packs is to have half the group burrow under the ground while the other half chases prey directly to them.

Trait: Lynx–sized ambush pack predator.
Skills: Perception +2, Athletics +2 (includes burrowing), Combat +1
Talents: *Distinctive (Rapid burrowing)*
Resilience: 8
Armor: 2
Weapons: Powerful bite (1d3 / 1d3+1)

Holdover Night Monster

Monster

Of all the megafauna encountered on Hespera so far, the Holdover Night Monster is by far the most lethal. Seven meters long and shaped roughly like a bear, with gigantic claws, large eyes, and vicious cutting teeth, Holdover Night Monsters are not to be fucked with. Holdover Night Monsters were first discovered in the Holdover, where the mountains split to allow the plains of the south to meet the Reach, stalking among the giant sulfur trees. Many a farmhold has been found in the morning, gates torn asunder and nothing but blood and bullet holes to remember the inhabitants by.

Trait: Dire bear from hell (figuratively speaking)
Skills: Might +5, Combat +5, Perception +4, Willpower +3, Subterfuge +2
Talents: *Distinctive (Night vision)*, *Distinctive (Infrared-masking fur)*, Tough Exterior (thick fur) x2
Resilience: 31
Armor: 4
Weapons: Raking claws (1d3+2 / 2d3+2, armor reduction: 2), crushing jaws (1d3+2 / 1d3+3, ignores human-scale armor)

Komodo Beetle

Monster

A huge carnivorous beetle-like creature the size of a landcar with a meter long forked horn that it uses to flip competition during its complicated mating rituals. Komodo beetles are known for their appetite and aggression, and are more than strong enough to flip over an armored van. Some hardened train guards have even reported seeing two working together to flip train cars in order to get to the cargo inside.

Trait: Giant hungry beetle that can get incredible leverage with its flipping horn
Skills: Might +4, Athletics +3, Combat +3, Perception +2
Talents: Tough Exterior x4
Resilience: 28
Armor: 6
Weapons: Blunt forked horn (1d3+3 / 2d3+3, armor reduction 2)

Strigan Bloodbeast

Minor creature

Strigan bloodbeasts, hyena–sized hairless creatures with hooked pro-bosces and barbed claws, were one of the first predators encountered on Hespera. They roam the plains around Hespera City in packs, latching onto komodo beetles and sucking their hemolymph out through the joints in their carapace.

While komodo beetles make up their primary prey, they aren't picky in what they'll feed on, frequently leaving nothing but desiccated husks in their wake. Bloodbeasts are also known for their enhanced regenerative abilities, which enable them to heal from all but the most grievous wounds in minutes.

Before Earth fell, they were captured in huge numbers to send to med-ical and biological schools as research subjects, but with the loss of Earth (and the Astral Beacon with it), their numbers have rebounded and they've transformed once more from pest to threat.

Trait: Bloodsucking hyena–sized pack predator.
Skills: Athletics +2, Combat +1, Perception +1
Talents: *Distinctive (Rapid regeneration)*
Resilience: 8
Armor: 2
Weapons: Hooked proboscis (1d3 / 1d3+1, TN 8/10 Athletics check or take +2 damage from blood loss)

Theobyte

Special

Not every theolith is found unguarded. Sometimes a theolith will choose an animal that wanders into its radius to be a witch, and will bless it with a minor brand. The animals then perform some duty for the theolith, such as guarding it or retrieving items from the nearby area. No one knows yet why some theoliths create theobytes, but it does seem to be relegated to small or weak theoliths that have few to no human witches.

Trait: As base creature
Skills: As base creature
Talents: As base creature, plus *Monstrous Resilience* and *Branded*
Resilience: resilience
Armor: armor
Weapons: weapons

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