Final Hour

of a

Storied Age

A Roleplaying Game of Epic Fantasy

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rev 0.4

Final Hour of a Storied Age is a roleplaying game of Epic Fantasy. Using these rules, some dice, some tokens, and pencil and paper, you and some friends can experience a story like those found in your favorite epic fantasy novels. Rather than simply presenting a fantasy world and hoping that the interaction of characters you dream up produces a compelling fantasy story, *Final Hour of a Storied Age* uses the story structure of epic fantasy in order to produce a story of heroes struggling against adversity in the face of world-changing events.

Creating and Populating the World

In epic fantasy, the shape of the world isn't set by plate tectonics but by thematic resonance. Epic fantasy nearly always speaks to eternal themes like duty, love, or truth. The first step in creating a *Storied Age* story is to create some *seeds* from which the story will grow. To begin creating these seeds, each player rolls 2d12 and finds the corresponding entry on a Theme Table, such as the one to the right. Note down the word and the corresponding number on a piece of scratch paper. Roll the 2d12 again, and count down the table that many spaces from the first word, wrapping around to the beginning if you step off the end. Note this word and number as well. Keep going like this until you land on one of the words already on your list. (Think of this like moving a piece around a game board, if that helps you keep track of what is going on).

Theme Table

1. Noble
2. Responsibility
3. Power
4. Greed
5. Rich
6. Poor
7. Farm
8. Inherit
9. Small
10. Large
11. Male
12. Female
13. Corruption
14. Prophecy
15. Learning
16. Winter
17. Summer
18. Fire
19. Ice
20. Duty
21. Ambition
22. Family
23. Division
24. Return
25. Truth
26. Lies
27. Belief
28. Love
29. Hate
30. Sword
31. Ring
32. Throne
33. Crown
34. Mountain
35. Forest
36. Sea
37. Underground
38. Gold
39. Star
40. Blood

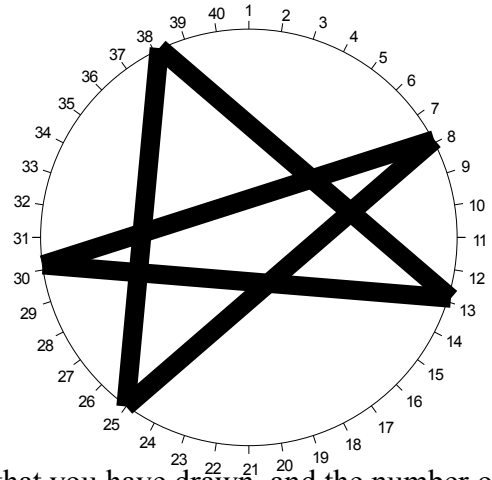
Now look at your list of words and follow these steps:

1. If you have 9 or more words on your list, look at only the first 6 (you'll deal with the rest later)
2. Arrange the words in an order that inspires a sentence or two that describes a character (and possibly a situation that the character is involved in), a fact about the world, or a fact about magic. The sentences should be phrased in either the past or present tense. While these sentences should be evocative, be careful not to invest too much emotion into what you think each sentence means yet – future steps in the world creation process might lead you to interpret them in a different way than you originally intended.
    - Example: The words Prophecy, Sword, Star, Female, and Fire might be arranged as *Prophecy Star Female Fire Sword* and inspire the sentence "A bright blue star has appeared in the heavens as foretold by prophecy, which inspires a woman to seek out the legendary Sword of Flame"
    - Example: The words Poor, Ice, Hate, Crown, Responsibility, and Fire might be arranged as *Ice Crown Hate Responsibility Poor Fire* to inspire the sentence "The king of the frigid northern kingdom is overwhelmed by his responsibilities as the peasants on his lands are

threatened by wildfires."

- Example: The words Male, Lies, Underground, Poor, Ambition, and Gold might be arranged as *Poor Man Ambition Gold Lies Underground* to inspire "A penniless man seeks a fabled treasure that is buried deep underground."
- Example: The words Division, Gold, Blood, Winter, Ring, Inherit, and Love might be arranged as *Winter Division Blood Inherit Gold Love Ring* to inspire "The coming winter has inspired a rift within the clan which can only be sealed by an arranged marriage. Unfortunately, the prospective groom has died and his younger brother must step up to take his place in the arrangement."
- Example: The words Poor, Truth, and Gold could be arranged as *Gold Truth Poor* to inspire a fact about magic like "Wizards can cast the True Names of people or objects in gold, gaining power over them, but must take a vow of poverty in exchange for this ability, and must rely on others to supply the gold."
- Example: The words Rich, Prophecy, and Belief could be arranged as *Belief Prophecy Rich* to inspire "Everyone believes that a golden age is coming in which everyone will live in prosperity."

3. Write the sentence(s) down on a *Seed Sheet*, and note the order of the words that inspired the sentence. Cast the *Star Chart* for this seed.
   - Using a circle with the numbers from 1 to 40 evenly spaced around it, draw a line from the number corresponding to the first word in your sequence to the second word. Then draw a line from the second word to the third word. Continue like this until you connect the number corresponding to the last word back to the number for the first word. (Often this will create a shape that looks like a star)



   - Count the number of *intersections* between the lines that you have drawn, and the number of *points* on your star (the number of points will be the same as the number of words used to create the star). Record the number of intersections and points for this star chart.
4. On the scrap paper where you generated your list of words, cross off the words you used to generate the seed. If you still have words on your scrap paper, go to step 1.

Ask the group to help if you have trouble coming up with a seed from the words you have, but make an effort to create it on your own first. A lot of creative sparks will fly when fully formed seeds play off each other in the next step; there is a risk of blandness if the seed creation process is *too* collaborative. Try just arranging the words in random order to see if a particular sequence of words inspires you. Usually you'll be able to find two or three that work well together easily, and the rest will fall into place around them.

Use the seed to generate the Situation of the World

Once you have the star charts for the seeds, the starting situation and primary plot arc of the story are determined. This is a collaborative process that every player should participate in. The main plot arc of a *Storied Age* story is formed by finding an intersection between a protagonist's starting situation and an antagonist's threat to change the world, so the first step is to identify a *protagonist* and an *antagonist*

by comparing the number of intersections on the star charts for each seed:

- The seed with the *most intersections* will determine who is the *protagonist* of the story as well as inform the current status quo of the world.
- The seed with the *next highest number of intersections* determines the *antagonist* of the story.
- If there are multiple seeds with the same number of intersections, use the number of points in the star to break the tie. If that is tied as well, use dice or some other fair method to break the tie.
- If the same player created both the protagonist and antagonist seeds he or she must pick one and hand the other off to another player.

In an epic fantasy story, a *community* is threatened with a *change in the world* and the story follows the protagonist as he or she tries to thwart that change (sometimes effecting a positive change for the world instead). The *community* is the frame of reference through which the world of the fantasy story can be understood (in The Lord of the Rings, this *community* is The Shire). In *Final Hour of a Storied Age*, the protagonist must *represent* that community. That doesn't mean that the protagonist must be a completely typical member of the community (Frodo Baggins was an uncommonly adventurous hobbit, for example), but it does mean that he or she should not be an outcast or outsider. He or she may not think the community is perfect, but he should feel (or, at least, be willing to be convinced) that the community is fundamentally worth protecting. Positive change in the community might or might not happen as part of a *Storied Age* story, but the protagonist's goal will always be preventing the *negative* change that will occur if the antagonist is not stopped.

At the start of a *Storied Age* story, the antagonist character is doing something (or will do something soon) which will cause the world to change in a way that the protagonist's community would perceive in an extremely negative light (think of words like: destroy, conquer, enslave, exterminate). The antagonist will generally either think this change is positive (such as bringing order to a chaotic world) or be unconcerned about the negative repercussions or side-effects of his or her true goals.

As a group, use the protagonist and antagonist seeds as the main guidelines (sometimes supported by other seeds) and figure out who the protagonist is, where he or she comes from, who the antagonist is, and what he or she is doing that will threaten that community (although this is a collaborative process, give some deference to the players that created the protagonist and antagonist seeds since they will need to roleplay the protagonist and antagonist characters). Sometimes the evocative sentences from the two seeds will seem to fit together in a way that seems obvious – that's great! Sometimes an evocative sentence from another seed will help serve as a "bridge" between the protagonist and antagonist seeds. Sometimes, you'll need to use some creative interpretation to get them to fit together (this is why it is important not to get too locked-in to any specific interpretations for your evocative sentences during the seed generation process – if you think it can mean only one thing you'll have a harder time getting it to work well with all of the other sentences). If you need to, add additional factors that go beyond the sentences written on the seed sheets as long as you don't negate anything that's written there – the seed sheet may say that "a man" is doing something, and that will still be true if you add the detail that the man is a powerful sorcerer.

Once the group has reached a consensus on the starting situation, it is time to stat out characters. The player who created the seed that defines the protagonist must start with that seed, and the player who created the antagonist must start with that seed. The other players must choose seeds from which they will create Supporting Characters (generally these characters will be sympathetic to the goals of the Protagonist, but that isn't a requirement). Try to pick from one of the seeds you created first. If there are no viable characters there (for example, if all of your seeds are facts about the world that don't imply

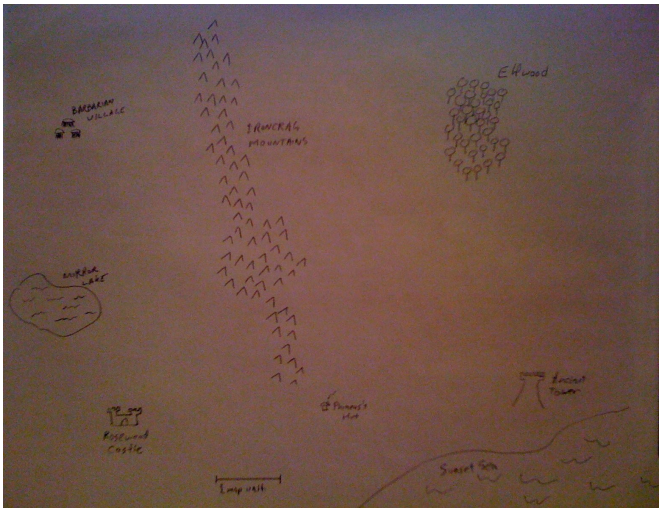
the existence of any particular people or groups) then pick a seed that someone else created. If the other players don't have seeds to can be used to create characters, repeat the seed generation step.

Using the seeds and the agreed-upon setting and situation as inspiration, think up 4 traits for your character. These traits should be broad enough to be useful in many adventurous situations, but not so broad that they are useful in every situation. If it takes you more than a few seconds to think of a situation in which you'll be able to use the trait, it's probably too narrow. Similarly, if it takes you more than a few seconds to think of a situation in which you *couldn't* use the trait, it's probably too broad.

- Be careful not to over-specialize – if all of your traits are about how the character fights, will you be able to deal with adversity like climbing a mountain or crossing a desert?
- The traits should be relatively brief. “Master Swordsman” is fine. “Trained by Master Maksim Terrakovsky in the Royal Academy of Fencing, specializing in sabers but also proficient with rapiers” is too much.
- Be true to the character, but also keep in mind that these traits need to be useful in an adventurous epic fantasy tale. If your character is a farmer, it's probably better to give him a trait like “level headed” rather than “encyclopedic knowledge of potatoes”. They're both perfectly valid traits for a farmer, but one is much more likely to be relevant to the kind of story you're going to tell. That doesn't mean that these other minor details aren't true about your character if that's the way you envision him, just that they generally aren't relevant to the way he overcomes adversity in the story (feel free to throw these minor details in when you are roleplaying your character to add depth and detail to him and the world he inhabits, just don't expect the story to turn on them).
- Don't be afraid to make your character a somewhat broad archetype – the epic fantasy literature that inspires this game is full of characters like that. Once you have your four traits, assign dice to them. Mark one of your traits as 1d10, two as 2d8, and one as 3d6 (These dice will be used in Exchanges when your character faces Adversity).

Draw a map

Many of the seeds will include geographic features, like cities, kingdoms, mountains, deserts, etc. Draw these on a piece of paper that represents the geography of the story. It doesn't really matter where you place the geographic features, unless that was established as part of the situation in the previous step. Each player should also add one to three other geographic features to the map. Whenever you can, try to name these features evocatively – “The Swamp of the Dead” instead of just “swamp”. Don't worry about figuring out too many details about these locations, save that for when you visit them during the story.



Once you have all of the geographic features on the map, use a ruler or other measuring device to find the distance between the two most distant features on the map. Define 1 “map unit” to be approximately one tenth of this distance and note this distance down on the map in an unobtrusive corner. (If you have a map distance measuring tool, such as a compass or dividers, set the distance on them to 1 map unit). The distance defined by a map unit will be important for figuring out which characters can appear in which scenes.

Outline the Plot

Once the you have the characters, world, and major plot arc defined, both the Protagonist and Antagonist need to outline the competing *plots* that each of them will go through. Each will define a three stage plot, with each stage made up of at least three chapters. Each stage should lead up to a significant turning point in the story. Some groups will prefer to figure out the details of these turning points before play so that they know how to guide the individual chapters, other groups will find that putting too much detail into these plots before play will rob them of the enjoyment of discovering the story as they go. If you are unsure, err on the side of using the bare bones outline and only fill in the details if and when you get to them in the act of playing out the story.

Here are some good goals for individual plot stages:

- *Travel*. Epic Fantasies are often world-spanning adventures, and just getting from one place to another is an important part of the adventure. Huge mountain ranges, dark forests, and trackless deserts are all great sources of adversity.
- *Get the Artifact*. Is there a special magic sword that can defeat the villain? Maybe an ancient scroll with a spell that will strip him of his power? Searching for an important object is a well-loved part of many epic fantasy stories. (And feel free to leave the nature of the object undefined until you actually get to it – it can be great fun to come up with something that feels thematically appropriate after you've had some play time to get a feel for the characters)
- *Search out the Wise*. Similar to Traveling or the Artifact quest, maybe there is some person who has the secret knowledge necessary to defeat the Antagonist. Some prophetic crone in a cave? A reclusive wizard? An old foe of the Antagonist who went into hiding?
- *Escape the Chaos*. Sometimes the hero needs to be convinced that action is necessary before pushing back against the antagonist. This kind of plot stage is an opportunity to showcase the status quo of the world and how it will change if the Antagonist gets his way. Perhaps the Protagonist's home is ravaged by the Antagonist's army and he needs to escape from their patrols. Maybe the social structure of the Protagonist's home has been undermined or corrupted, and the Protagonist must feel the weight of that before being driven to action.
- *Alliances*. There are often powerful forces in the world who can help against the Antagonist, once they are convinced to move to action.
- *Gather forces*. A good choice for an Antagonist's plot, it's often necessary to gather lieutenants and armies before you can put your world-shaking plan into effect.
- *Assault on the Enemy.* Sometimes the best way to deal with an antagonist is with cold steel. Probably best to put this one at the last stage of your plot...
- *Destroy the Artifact*. Maybe the key to the antagonist's power is like... a magic ring. And you can destroy it by, I don't know... throwing it into a volcano? That would probably work as part of an epic fantasy plot.
- *Massive Battle*. World-shaking events often include wars, and massive fantasy battles add excellent spice to stories.
- *Unlocking your potential.* Fantasy characters often have untapped potential that they never knew about until the dramatic events of the story bring it forth. This is a great choice for characters that have raw magical power that needs some training to reliably harness.

For example, the player controlling the protagonist Fredo the halfling decides that his plot will start with *Search out the Wise*, so he can figure out how to defeat his antagonist, followed by *Travel*, where he will go to wherever he needs to in order to carry out that plan, and then *Destroy the Artifact*, deciding that it will be fun if he can somehow defeat his antagonist without having to meet him face to face. This rough outline gives the players some guidance about what they'll need to do in the various

chapters before that, such as knowing that they'll need to figure out the details of what artifact needs to be destroyed during that meeting with the wise at the end of the first stage.

Fredo's antagonist, playing Dark Lord Soros, is working collaboratively to come up with a plot of his own that meshes well with Fredo's (and Fredo's player probably got some suggestions from Soros's player when he was putting together his plot outline). He likes the idea that there's a magical artifact that is key to his character, and also likes the idea that they may play out the story without their characters even meeting directly. He decides on *Gather forces*, *Massive battle*, and *Find the Artifact*. His idea is that he will dominate the world with military might and then search his conquered territory for the lost artifact.

Supporting characters get a single-stage subplot. If they complete their plot, they win the right to narrate *how* the world changes if the protagonist or antagonist they support completes *their* plot. For example, the wizard Randolph is supporting the protagonist Fredo the halfling against the antagonist Dark Lord Soros. Fredo's plot outline involves stuff at the level of individual characters, so Randolph decides he wants a higher level, grander scale subplot to provide a bit of a counterpoint. He decides on *Alliances*. If he can successfully unite the people of the world against Soros then he gets to explain the fate of the world if and when Fredo completes his plot. Since the early part of the story will tend to focus on the protagonist and antagonist, Supporting Characters can choose to hold off on establishing their subplot until they get a better feel for the direction the story is headed.

The plots for the protagonist and antagonist should be in direct conflict (only one of them can complete successfully), but the Supporting Characters must be careful when defining their plots since they can be completed in any order with respect to the protagonist's or antagonist's plot.

Get ready to start the story!

You will need a number of tokens in three different colors. They will be used for Spotlight Tokens, Adversity Tokens, and Victory Tokens. Try to map the colors to the different types so that it is easy to remember which is which (For example, if you have red, white, and blue tokens, you might choose white for Spotlight, since they rhyme, and red for Adversity, because Adversity is trying to "stop" a character and red lights are associated with stopping).

Give the player who is controlling the Protagonist 6 Spotlight Tokens. Give the player controlling the Antagonist 3 Spotlight Tokens and 3 Adversity Tokens. Give each player who is controlling a Supporting Character 6 Adversity Tokens.

Designer's Notes: Why do Supporting Characters get no Spotlight Tokens? Players controlling Supporting Characters can only get Spotlight Tokens by winning the bid to be the Adversity Player (see the next section of rules for details). This incentivizes the Supporting Character players to provide interesting adversity for the protagonist, especially early in the story when the antagonist might be saving up his Adversity Tokens for a big hit. Having an incentive for multiple different people to provide Adversity also helps add variety to the progress of the story.

Sequence of Play

Final Hour of a Storied Age is played in a series of *chapters*. The first step is to determine the Spotlight Player for the chapter, who will determine the main character of the chapter. Each player secretly selects a number of Spotlight Tokens from their supply to bid. If a player has any Spotlight Tokens they must bid at least one token. All of the bids are revealed simultaneously. Whoever bid the most tokens is the Spotlight Player and converts the Spotlight Tokens they bid into Chapter Tokens for use during the chapter. Ties are broken in favor of the Protagonist, then the Antagonist, then the player who has spent the longest without having a spotlight chapter (roll dice if there is still a tie). The tokens bid by the players who didn't become the Spotlight Player are returned to the central supply.

The chapter will revolve around the character played by the Spotlight Player (called the Spotlight Character for short). The Spotlight Player gives a rough guide for the kind of thing he wants the character to accomplish in the chapter, informed by his plot stage goal, and the setting or location of the chapter. Everyone must agree that these requests are plausible – if the last time we saw this character was in the middle of a sea voyage, don't ask to start a scene in an underground tunnel!

Next, the Adversity Player is determined. All of the players except the Spotlight Player secretly select a number of Adversity Tokens to bid. If a player has any Adversity Tokens they must bid at least one token. All of the bids are revealed simultaneously. Whoever bid the most tokens is the Adversity Player and converts the Adversity Tokens they bid into Chapter Tokens. Ties are broken in favor of the Antagonist and then the player who has spent the longest without being the Adversity Player (roll dice if there is still a tie). The tokens bid by the players who didn't become the Adversity Player are traded in for Spotlight Tokens and given to the Adversity Player for use in later chapters.

Since the Spotlight Player chooses the location of the action it is possible, even probable, that the character normally played by the Adversity Player will not appear. It is the Adversity Player's responsibility to describe the environment and explain the things that make it difficult for the Spotlight Character to achieve his goals. Spotlight Characters can face two kinds of adversity: the environment and other characters. If the Adversity Player wishes to use characters as a source of adversity, he or she can introduce them into the chapter according to the costs defined in the **Bringing Characters Into the Story** and **Introducing Non-Player Characters**. The Spotlight Player may spend Chapter Tokens to bring characters into the chapter to help him overcome adversity. Both the Spotlight and Adversity players must conserve at least one token for use during an *exchange* (see **Exchanges**).

Why work against the Spotlight Character if I'm on his side?!

Players may find it confusing that they occasionally have to act as the Adversity Player against players that have the same story goals they do. However, this is really an opportunity rather than a burden. There's no rule that says you have to play *well* when you are presenting the Adversity, just that you have to present Adversity! Also, recall that you don't have to use your own character as the source of adversity, even though it can be fun to do so. Remember that many of the Protagonist's friends are sources of problems for them in stories: Mentors force characters to prove themselves worthy, romantic interests present distractions, friends get in trouble and need to be rescued. Adversity like this can be a good way to add fun and complexity to a story.

Characters controlled by Players (called Player Characters or PCs) can only be used as a source of Adversity if the player controlling that character consents to it. For characters not controlled by players (Non-Player Characters or NPCs) only characters with loyalty tracks that indicate they are Unaligned or are Personally or Ideologically Aligned *against* the Spotlight Character may be used as a source of Adversity (see **Introducing Non-Player Characters** for information about the loyalty track).

After having the environment described by the Adversity Player, the Spotlight Player describes what he wants his character to do. If he wants to do something that opposes one of the characters introduced by the Adversity Player, or something that the Adversity Player feels may not be possible because of the environment, an *exchange* begins.

Exchanges

An exchange is played out by using dice derived from the traits of characters. A player must spend one token (from the stack with which they won the bid) in order to *activate* a character. Once a character is activated, any of his or her traits may be used in the exchange, and the player may use as many traits in this manner as he wishes, although he must describe how the trait is useful in the situation (subject to the group's acceptance of the explanation for how the trait applies). The Adversity Player may also introduce problems stemming from the environment. For 1 token, a *passive* environmental hazard (such as a chasm that needs to be crossed, or bitterly cold weather) may be introduced as a 3d6 trait. For 1 token, an *active* environmental hazard (such as nameless monsters that don't warrant a character sheet of their own, or a raging windstorm) may be introduced as a 2d8 trait (these are also subject to plausibility objections from the group). These environmental hazards follow the rules as if they were characters with only a single trait, but they only exist for the duration of the exchange so there is no need to create a full character sheet for them. The Adversity Player must spend *at least one* Adversity Token during each exchange (either to activate a character or introduce an environmental threat).

Once both players are satisfied with the number of dice they have gathered for the exchange they roll simultaneously. Whoever has the die with the highest number showing wins the exchange and takes a Victory Token (if the highest die is a tie between the players, compare the next highest, and so on). However, if *any* of the dice that a player rolled in the exchange show a 1, that means that *every* trait that the player used in that exchange is *exhausted*. A player may not use an exhausted trait until the character is *activated* again. (You pay the activation cost on a per-character basis, not a per trait basis, so it is sometimes advantageous to conserve tokens and wait until multiple traits are exhausted before activating the character again). Whichever player wins the exchange should narrate the action as resolved by the dice. They should use the traits involved in the exchange and whether they are exhausted or not as a guideline for the narration – don't try to talk your way past dice that will still be relevant for future exchanges, that will just make the story confusing. That doesn't mean that you can't narrate action progressing in the story until the end of the chapter, just that you should not describe things that make it seem like certain facts are no longer relevant when they still are from a mechanical perspective.

Victory tokens are usually spent on *permanent effects* at the close of the chapter (see **Ending the chapter** below) but can also be spent during the chapter to achieve some temporary effects. These temporary effects are often helpful in supplying mechanical weight to the things players would like to narrate after winning an exchange. For example, you could add a trait like “injured” or “off balance” after narrating a successful attack. Mechanically, these traits are used the same way that the Adversity Player uses the passive or active environmental threats.

Cost	Purchased Effect
1	Temporary 3d6 Trait (ends when exhausted or at the end of the chapter)
2	Temporary 2d8 Trait (ends when exhausted or at the end of the chapter)

Bringing Characters into the Story

In *Final Hour of a Storied Age*, continuing characters can *exist* and can be *established* as part of the story. In order for a character to exist, he or she must have traits defined. All of the player's characters exist at the beginning of the story. See the section on **Introducing Non-Player Characters** for the procedure used to bring other characters into existence once the story has started.

A Player Character is established either by having his or her own spotlight chapter, or by being introduced as a source of adversity when his controlling player is the Adversity Player. If the character has been established in a different location in a previous chapter, a cost in tokens must be paid to establish them in this chapter based on the distance the character would have had to travel from their last known location (see table below).

If a non-player character already *exists*, he or she may be *established* as part of the action of a chapter. If the character has already been established in previous chapters then that character can be brought into this chapter by paying a cost in tokens based on the distance this character would have had to travel from the last location they were established in (see table below).

If a non-player character is being established for the first time, there is a cost in tokens based on how reasonable it would be to find the character in the location where the chapter's action is taking place. The group should come to a consensus about whether a characters presense is *reasonable and expected* (for example, a king in his throne room), *plausible but unexpected* (for example, the king is in the woods on a hunting trip), or *possible but surprising* (for example, the king in the dungeon of his worst enemy). If none of those categories seem to apply, that character cannot be introduced in that location.

Status	**Cost**
The character has been previously established in the current location	Free
The character was previously established in a location that is within one map unit of the current location, and it's plausible for them to travel here	Free
The character was previously established in a location that is 2 or more map units away from the current location, and it's plausible for them to travel here	N-1 tokens, where N is the distance in map units.
The character exists but has not yet been established, and it's *reasonable and expected* for the character to be here	Free
The character exists but has not yet been established, and it's *plausible but unexpected* for the character to be here	1 Token
The character exists but has not yet been established, and it's *possible but surprising* for the character to be here	2 Tokens
The character does not yet exist	Create the character first.

Introducing Non-Player Characters

Most stories have characters that are introduced partway through the narrative. Sometimes these are bit characters who do their thing and are never seen again, sometimes they become integral to the ongoing

plot. Characters that are not directly controlled by players (called Non-Player Characters or NPCs) have one additional feature that Player Characters do not: The loyalty track. Each character, when established in the fiction, should be marked as Personally Aligned with the Protagonist, Ideologically Aligned with the Protagonist, Unaligned, Ideologically Aligned with the Antagonist, or Personally Aligned with the Antagonist. The group should come to a consensus for which is the most appropriate.

> Example: A character's family member is probably Personally Aligned with them, unless there is some established rift between them in the fiction. A character who opposes the Antagonist but who has not yet met the Protagonist is likely Ideologically Aligned. A troll menacing the countryside is probably Ideologically Aligned with the Antagonist (since he wants to make life difficult for the Protagonist) but probably isn't Personally Aligned.

Other than the loyalty track, characters that are established partway through the story are mechanically identical to those that are established before the story begins, but whoever wants to bring the character into a story must pay a cost in tokens depending on what kind of character they want to introduce.

Cost	**Effect**
1 Token	A character that is directly mentioned on one of the seeds. Take the *seed sheet* and stat the character out as normal.
2 Tokens	A character that is implied by an existing seed, or implied by the fiction established in the story so far. For example, if one of the seeds mentions a prince, that *implies* that there is a king. If the character has been facing adversity from a tribe of barbarians, it is *implied* that there is a barbarian chieftain character that can be established.
2 Tokens	Hold up a dark mirror to an existing established character. In lots of fantasy fiction, themes are explored by having characters who are in some ways identical but in other ways are polar opposites. This contrast helps showcase the theme. In order to introduce a Dark Mirror Character into a game of *Final Hour of a Storied Age,* select an existing established character as a starting point. Copy some of his traits over exactly, but replace one or two of the traits with a thematic opposite.
3 Tokens	Go through the seed creation process and create a new character from one of the seeds created. (Be careful with this one, you never know what you're going to get when you create new seeds!)
4 Tokens	Stat out whatever character you want without being limited by seeds or the established fiction, as long as the character is plausible for the story. (Sure, it costs more, but you get exactly what you want!)

Example: The player of the Dark Lord Soros character has been annoyed at how effective the Wizard Randolph character has been at foiling his plans, so he decides to introduce a Dark Mirror of Randolph. Randolph's traits are *Powerful Wizardry*, *Has Wandered to Many Lands*, *Man of Action*, and *Old and Wise*. Soros likes the wizardry and wisdom traits, so he decides to copy those directly. Instead of *Has Wandered to Many Lands*, Soros decides that his wizard will stay in one place and takes the trait *Lives in a Powerful Fortress*. He decides *Man of Action*'s thematic opposite is to act through others rather than directly, so he takes *Persuasive Voice*. He gives his new wizard a name, Harriman the White.

Ending the chapter

If, at the end of an exchange, one player has no more Spotlight or Adversity tokens remaining the chapter is resolved. The other player converts his remaining tokens into Victory Tokens. Whoever has more Victory Tokens can spend the difference according to the tables below (for example, if the Spotlight Player has 3 Victory Tokens and the Adversity Player has 5, the Adversity Player can spend 2 tokens):

Spotlight Player

Cost	Purchased Effect
1	Advance the plot or subplot of the Spotlight Character by one step (maximum one per chapter)
1	Alter the text of one trait to tweak it slightly (must make sense based on the events of the chapter)
2	Radically alter the text of one trait to completely rewrite it (must make sense based on the events of the chapter)
3	Change the dice value of a trait. • Convert a 3d6 trait into a 4d6 or 2d8 trait • Convert a 2d8 trait into a 3d8 or 1d10 trait • Convert a 1d10 trait into a 1d12 trait
4	Add a brand new trait at 3d6 (must make sense based on the events of the chapter)
*	Bring a new NPC into existence (see section **Introducing Non-Player Characters**)
1	Move an NPC's friendship track from Neutral to Ideologically Aligned
2	Move an NPC's friendship track from Ideologically Aligned to Personally Aligned
1	Declare that two Ideologically or Personally Aligned characters established in the same location are now Traveling Together

Adversity Player

Cost	Purchased Effect
*	Bring a new NPC into existence (see section **Introducing Non-Player Characters**)
2	Move an NPC's friendship track from Personally Aligned to Ideologically Aligned (must make sense based on the events of the chapter)
1	Move an NPC's friendship track from Ideologically Aligned to Neutral (must make sense based on the events of the chapter)
1	Scatter! Break the Traveling Together relationship between two characters
4	Captured! The Spotlight Character is captured by one of the characters introduced by the Adversity Character. The Spotlight Character is no longer "traveling with" any of the characters he or she was previously associated with, but with the character of the Adversity Player's choosing. The captured character is only allowed to appear in scenes involving getting away from their captor until they successfully escape or are rescued.
2	Take 1 Adversity Token for use in later chapters

If the Spotlight Player wins the chapter and spends enough tokens to complete the stage of the plot or subplot he is working on make sure to include the details of completing this stage of the story when you describe what happens in the chapter.

If the Adversity Player wins the chapter, the Spotlight Player is not allowed to ask for a new chapter that starts in the same way. He must change his approach (e.g. If he failed to sneak his way past the enemy army, maybe he can try fighting his way through) or his location (e.g. If he couldn't make it through the mountains by taking the snowy pass, maybe it's time to take the route through the dwarven mines) for subsequent chapters.

Replenish your tokens

Regardless of who the participating players were, whenever a chapter is resolved every player gets more tokens to add to their supply. Protagonists get 2 Spotlight Tokens, Supporting Characters get 3 Adversity Tokens, and Antagonists get 3 tokens but can choose which type to take (e.g. 3 Spotlight Tokens, 1 Spotlight and 2 Adversity, 3 Adversity, etc.).

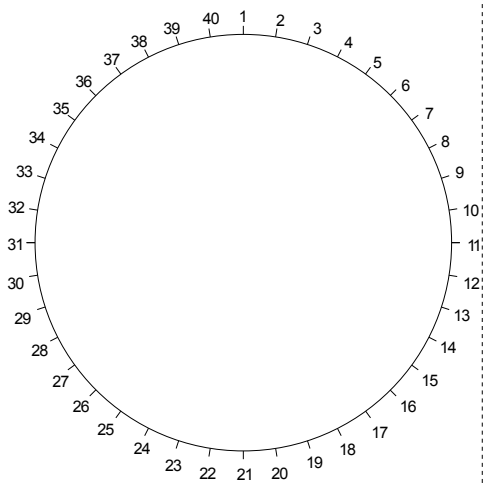
Ending the Game

When either the Protagonist or Antagonist completes his or her third plot segment the game is over. In order to narrate the ending, determine the progress that other players made on their plots. A supporting character aligned with the victorious Protagonist or Antagonist may state one positive (from their perspective) change that happens in the world. If the Antagonist's plot completed, he or she gets to narrate the aftermath of the story. If the Protagonist's plot was completed, he or she gets to narrate the aftermath, but the Antagonist may get to impose some conditions based on how much progress he or she made on the Antagonist's plot. If the Antagonist wasn't able to complete any plot segments, it's a happy ending for the Protagonist and no concessions are required. If the Antagonist successfully completed one plot segment, it's a slightly bittersweet ending. One minor concession regarding either the Protagonist or the Protagonist's community is required (as an example, the Protagonist has been changed by the experience and can not longer be happy in his own community). If the Antagonist successfully completed two plot segments it is a bittersweet ending, and either a major concession or two minor concessions are required.

Future Revisions

I have a number of ideas for enhancing the game that have not yet been incorporated into the design:

- More Theme Tables (Star Wars-style space opera, for example)
- Instructions for creating your own Theme Tables
- Mechanical rewards tied to the plot segments



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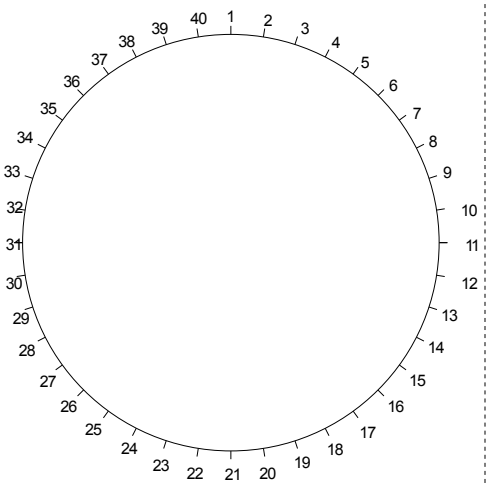

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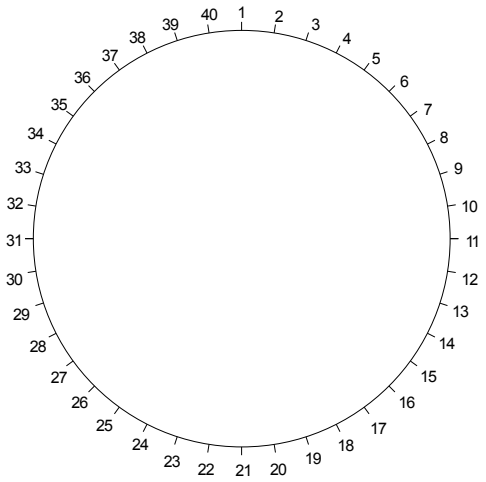

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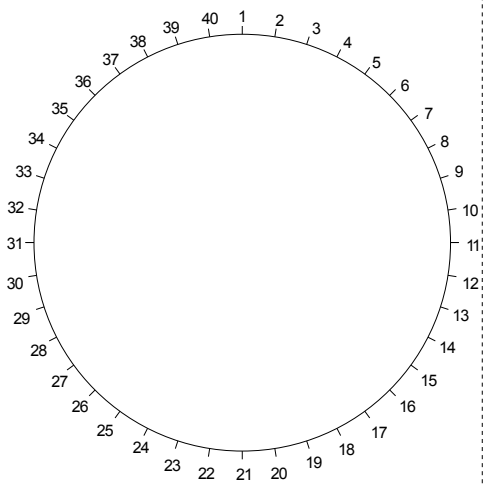

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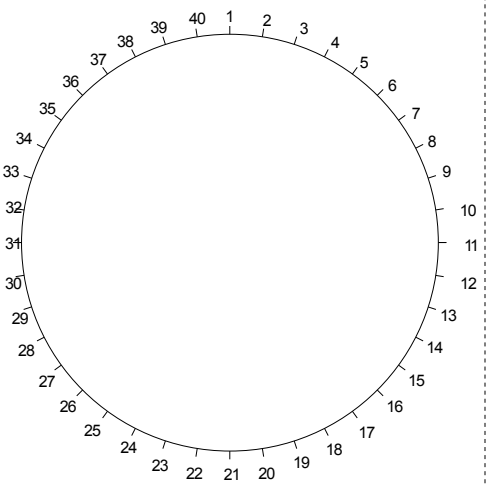

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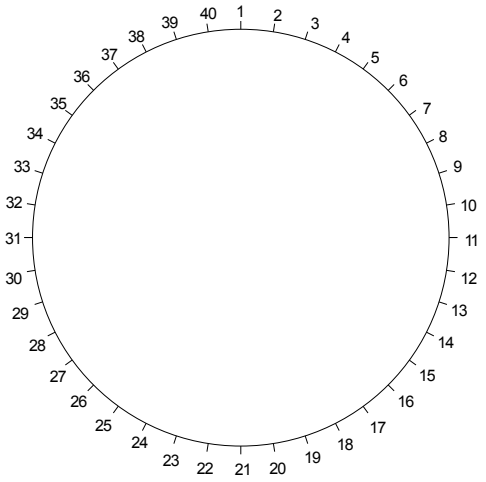

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