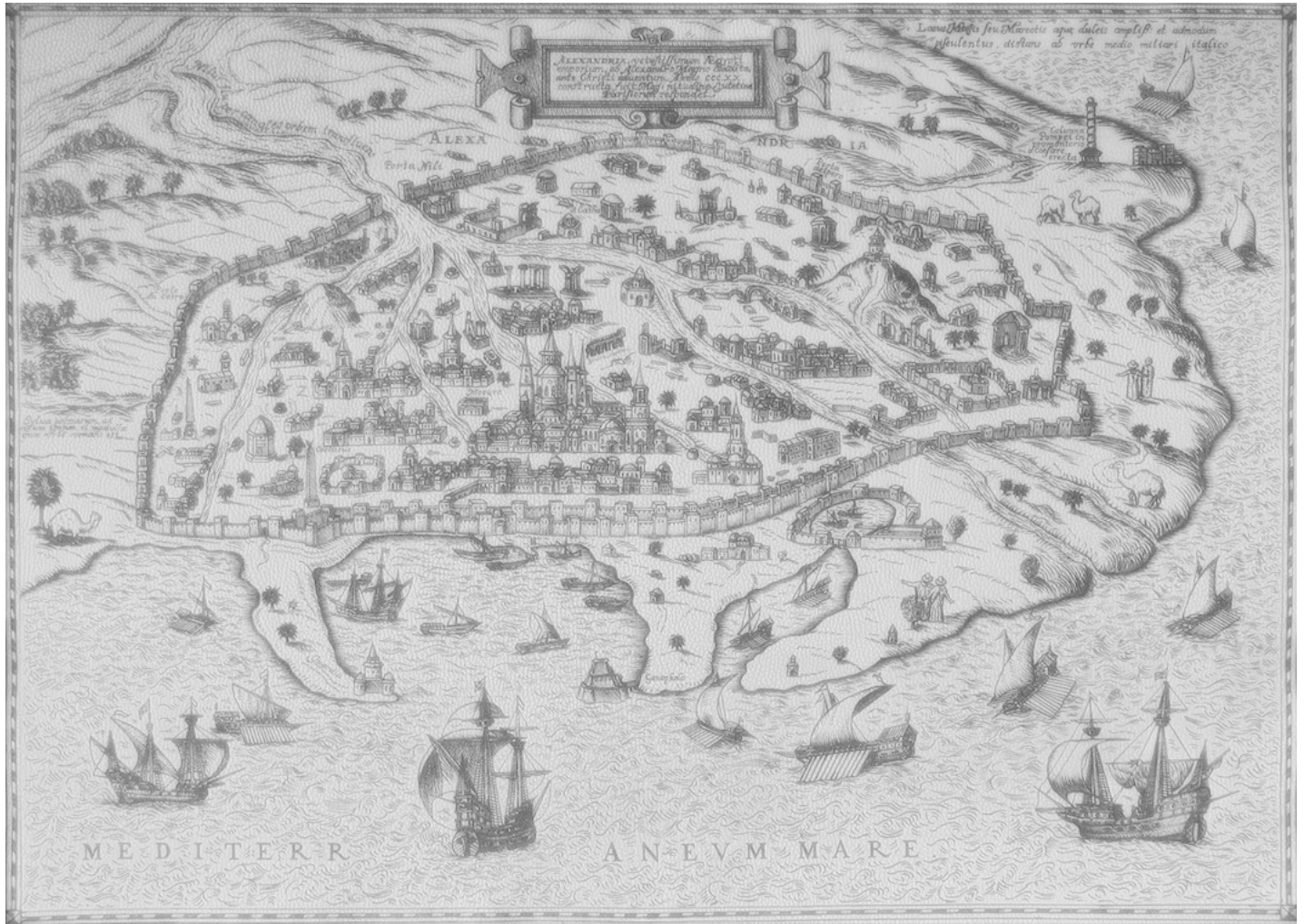


A Sojourn in Alexandria



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Game Chef 2010: Sojourner
Theme: Journey
Ingredients: City, Desert, Edge

On Beginnings

Alexander the Great forged one of the largest empires in ancient history. He was taught a secret wisdom by Aristotle, that to succeed in life one needs to walk the Edge between the Desert and the City. With the assistance of this scroll, you may journey in his footsteps.

A Sojourn in Alexandria is a game examining how a journey can shape a character, for good or for ill. It's meant to tell stories of both the physical voyage and the ethical one. The characters try to walk the knife's edge between the deprivation of the harsh Desert and the excess of the opulent City.

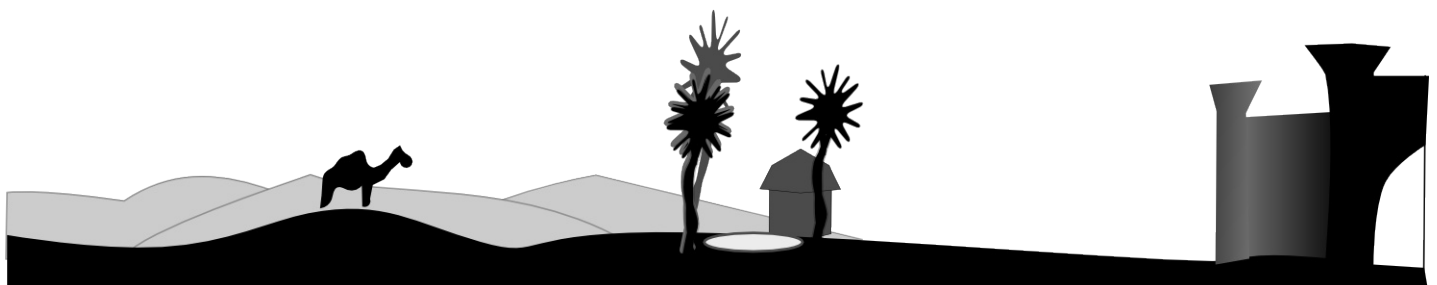
This game is intended for a single session of play; ideally suited to convention play or as an intermission to an ongoing campaign. It involves one Game Master who will one who directs the Desert and the City during the course of play. Additionally, the game requires between one and six players who portray travellers who will work together to reach or flee from the great city of Alexandria. Each participant needs 6 six-sided dice, a character sheet, a writing implement and six small markers or tokens.

How the Play Progresses

A Sojourn in Alexandria is built on a foundation of improvisational theatre. The group first creates characters, as explained in the "Building the Characters" section. These characters then begin their Journey which will consist of a long string of conflicts. The GM frames the first scene then allows the players to seize the initiative. The participants can freely role-play until the point where a conflict arises.

Each time there is a conflict, the participants roll their dice. The individual who wins the conflict narrates it's resolution and frames the next scene. The participants role-play once more, until another conflict begins.

The game will conclude approximately 25 minutes before the end of the allotted time. This time will be evenly split between each of the players, who will each narrate their character's individual final scenes in turn. These final scenes will be inspired by the character's Edge scores and allow the players to explain if they held true to their Reason over the course of their Journey.



Building the Characters

Name

What is the character's name? Is it a strong Greek name, borne by one of Alexander the Great's soldiers? Is the character instead holding the humble name of an Egyptian woman, fleeing desert wolves? Names are important, so choose wisely.

Daemon

Which player is directing the character?

Concept

How does the character live their life? Is she an Egyptian trader from an oasis in the deep desert? Is he a noble Nubian archer with a fondness for the drink? Is she the daughter of an Athenian diplomat with a hunger for power? Decide on the character's way of life and how they present themselves to the world.

Reason

Each character has one central Reason which drives them on their Journeys. Reason is what brings strength and hope to the character when all is lost. The light of Reason shows the way forward. The player should use a single statement to respond this question: "Why must your character make the journey".

Some good Reasons include;

To seek ancient knowledge for the Temple.

To avenge my brother, slain in battle.

To seek my true love in the stone halls of Alexandria.

To save the library from a fire.

To escape my cruel husband.

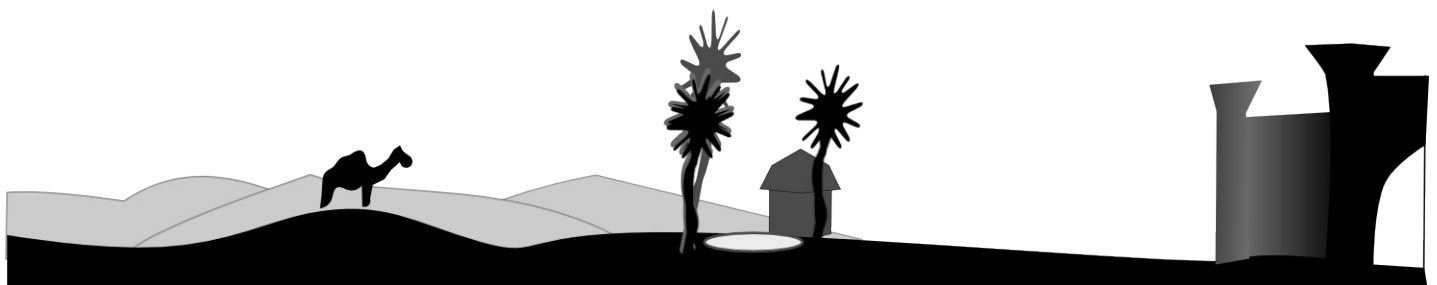
Edge

The Edge represents how much Influence the Desert and the City have on the character.

Every character has a series of numbers from 1 to 6 and the player will draw a line between two of those digits. The numbers on the left of the line are claimed by the Desert, while the numbers to the right are claimed by the City. When the character is in balance, there will be an equal number of digits to the left and to the right of the line. Such a state of balance would be marked like this; 1 2 3 | 4 5 6

For every two Virtues the character has in the Desert, the Edge is moves one space to the right. For every two Virtues the character has in the City, the Edge moves one space to the left.

Each Scene also has an Edge rating which the Game Master keeps track of. The Edge rating of the scene will determine which of the influences are most likely to dominate. The Game Master should tell the group what the Edge of the scene is at the beginning of each as this can affect the how it will be framed.



The Virtues

There are six Virtues which define Travellers and each of these may be in one of three states; Desert, Balance or City.

A Virtue in the Desert indicates a deficiency which may pose problems for the character.

Conversely, a Virtue in the City indicates an overabundance of that trait which may cause other difficulties.

A Virtue which is in the Balance is in accord with Aristotle's secret wisdom and will offer the greatest benefits.

At character creation, each player must choose one Virtue to be in the Desert and one in the City.

The First Virtue of Courage

Conflicts of Courage occur when a character is faced with fear or pain.

Eg. A dockside brawl, a military battle, a raging fire or a pack of ravenous jackals.

Cowardice in the Desert. The character lacks in confidence and is driven to flee from dangers.

Courage in the Balance. The character is brave, yet attentive to danger all the same.

Recklessness in the City. The character knows no fear and will act without regard for consequence.

The Second Virtue of Temperance

Conflicts of Temperance occur when a character is faced with pleasure or temptation.

Eg. A welcoming tavern, an alluring woman in the alley, a festival, lotus fruits and flowers

Inhibition in the Desert. The character is insensible to pleasure or love.

Temperance in the Balance. The character knows pleasure and love, but is not ruled by them.

Passion in the City. The character is a hedonist, seeking pleasure and love above all other concerns.

The Third Virtue of Generosity

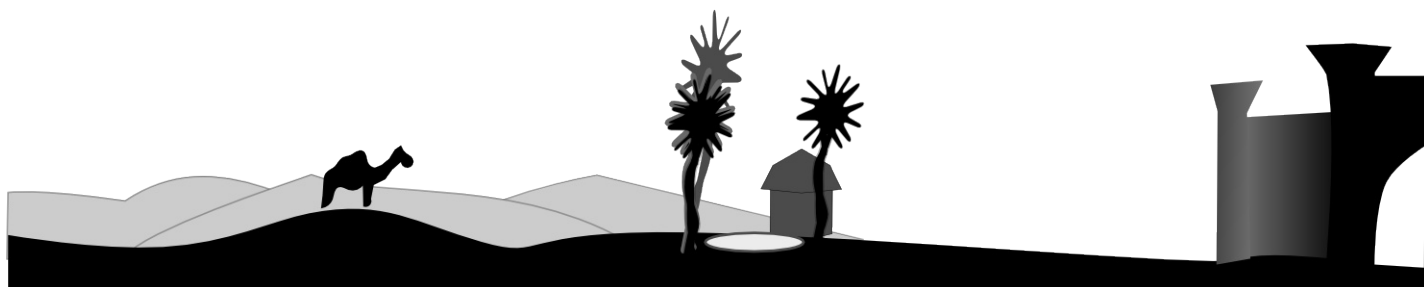
Conflicts of Generosity occur when a character is faced with expense or scarcity.

Eg. Hagglng with a ship's captain, paying a bribe, gifts of tribute, offers of employment

Avarice in the Desert. The character is a miser filled with avarice who spends as little as possible.

Generosity in the Balance. The character is generous with others within the bounds of sense.

Waste in the City. The character spends resources recklessly, saving nothing for the future.



The Fourth Virtue of Patience

Conflicts of Patience occur when a character is faced with irritation or danger.

Eg. Argument with a friend, a sandstorm preventing travel, an enemy soldier, bureaucracy

Apathy in the Desert. The character refuses to act even when faced with irritation or danger.

Patience in the Balance. The character is capable of acknowledging yet managing their anger.

Rage in the City. The character knows no fear and will act without regard for consequences.

The Fifth Virtue of Honesty

Conflicts of Honesty occur when a character is faced with self-valuation or personal competence.

Eg. Betting with a soldier, undergoing a legal trial, an ordeal, attempting a difficult task

Depression in the Desert. The character lacks self-esteem and underestimates their capabilities.

Honesty in the Balance. The character understands their strengths and acknowledges their flaws.

Arrogance in the City. The character is prideful and overestimates their capabilities.

The Sixth Virtue of Grace

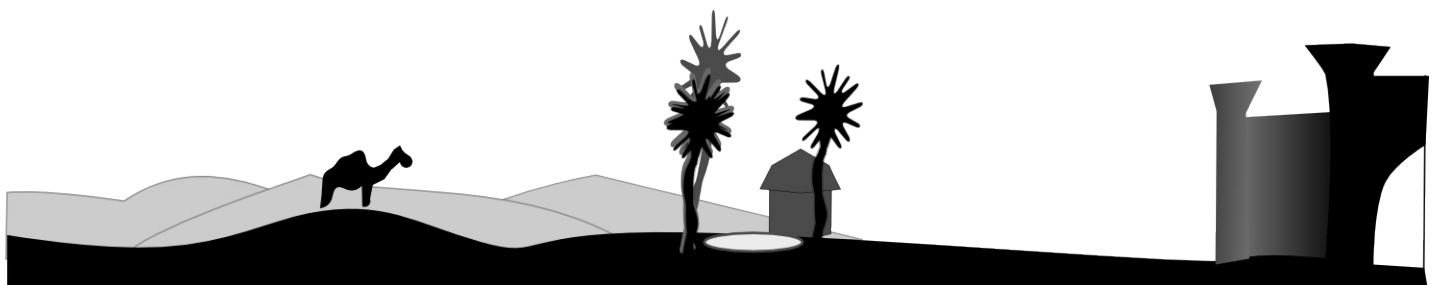
Conflicts of Grace occur when a character is faced with social conflict or etiquette.

Eg. Discussions with an official, impress the bandit who owns the oasis, soothe a beast

Vulgarity in the Desert. The character lacks charm and resorts to crude vulgarity in it's stead.

Grace in the Balance. The character displays social grace and a respectful demeanour.

Sycophancy in the City. The character is effusive in their false praise and prone to blatant lies.



Pushing the Edge: Conflicts

When a conflict begins, the participants each roll 6 dice (D6). Each participant examines the dice rolled and classifies each die as a servant of the Desert or to the City.

This classification is done by examining the Edge of the character (for players) or the Edge of the scene (for Game Masters).

Any die that matches a digit to the left of the Edge serves the Desert, while dice matching digits to the right of the Edge serve the City.

Once each participant has their dice grouped into the two categories, determine which Influence is dominant in the conflict. Count up the total number of Desert dice and compare it to the number of City dice. The Influence with the most dice is deemed to be dominant, affecting how the conflict is finally resolved.

Desert dominant

If there are more Desert dice than City dice.

City dominant

If there are more City dice than Desert dice.

Balance dominant

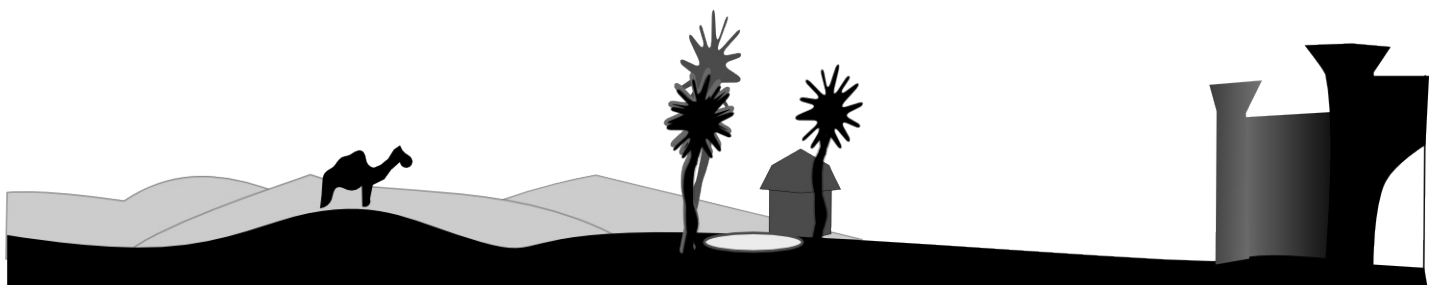
There are the same number of Desert & City dice.

At this point, the particular Virtue which was used can affect the outcome of the Conflict. If a participant used a Virtue in the Desert, discard all of their City dice at this point. If a participant used a Virtue in the City, discard all their Desert dice instead. If a participant used a Virtue which was in Balance, all of the dice remain. The Game Master will always discard the dice which don't match the dominant influence of the conflict.

In order to determine who was victorious in the conflict, each participant adds up the total value of the dice which match the dominant influence. If Balance dominates, add up all of the dice in both pools. The participant with the greatest total wins the conflict and will narrate the outcome.

Example: The travellers are marching through the desert in the cool spring evening when they decide to set up camp. They are settling down to rest for the night, when the Nubian scout hears the padding feet of Jackals in the darkness. Will the Scout is faced with the decision whether to fight them off himself or to call in his weary allies for assistance. His virtue of Honesty, currently in balance, will permit him to assess the situation and determine if he has the skill to overcome these beasts or not.

The Game Master has stated that the Edge of this scene, as it was set in the desert, was at (1234|56). By contrast, the Nubian scout had an Edge of (123|456). Both sides rolled their six dice and examined the results.



The Nubian got a 1, 3, 3, 4, 6 and 6. This meant that the first three are Desert dice and the last three are City dice.

The Game Master rolled a 2, 3, 3, 4, 5 and 6. This meant that the first four are Desert dice and the last two are City dice.

There are a total of 7 Desert dice and 5 City dice in this conflict, so the Desert is dominant. Any character with a Virtue in the Desert, as well as the Game Master, will discard any City dice at this point. If a character in the conflict had been using a Virtue in the City, they would discard their Desert dice instead.

After the dice have been discarded, add up the total values of the remaining dice for each side. The Nubian, keeping all his dice since he was in balance, adds all their values together to get a total of 23. The Game Master had to discard the two City dice and the remaining four dice produced a total value of 12, so the Nubian Scout won.

The Bleeding Edge: Resolution

The participant who wins the conflict is able to narrates how that conflict is resolved. The resolution is informed by both the Virtues rolled and the dominant influence (City or Desert) for that conflict. This narration will in turn frame the subsequent conflict.

Desert Dominant

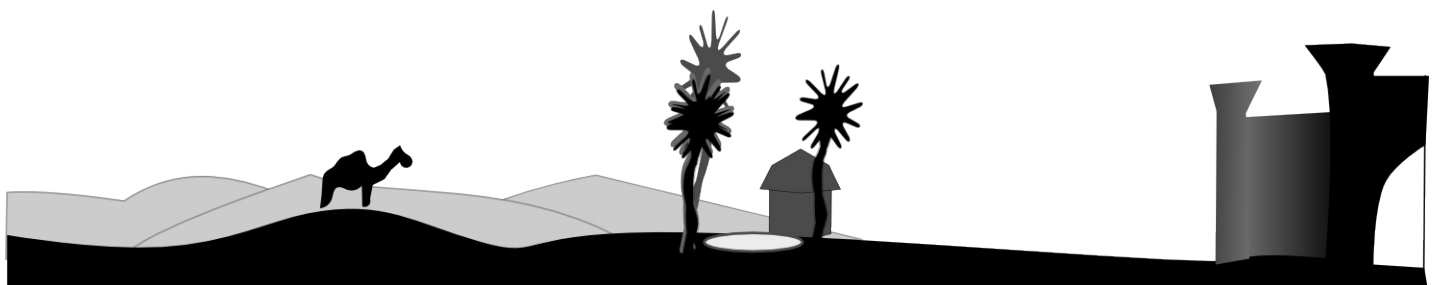
If the Desert's influence is dominant, the conflict will be resolved with deprivation. The Desert leads to introversion, destruction, loss, isolation and the primacy of Nature. For instance, a Desert-influenced conflict may be resolved by a long siege, famine, the destruction of a structure or the the splintering of a social group.

In this case, any character who loses the conflict will have one of their Virtues, of their choice, pushed from Balance toward the Desert. Should there be no Virtues in Balance, they must choose one of their Virtues in the City to be dragged into Balance. The victorious character may, at their discretion, move one Virtue from the City into Balance.

City Dominant

If the City's influence is dominant, the conflict will be resolved with excess. The City leads to extroversion, creation of new structures, cooperation, added energy and primacy of Man. For instance, a City-influenced conflict may be resolved by bold martial actions, great oration, construction of a building or the cooperation of a group.

In this case, any character who loses the conflict will have one of their Virtues, of their choice, pushed from Balance toward the City. Should there be no Virtues in Balance, they must choose one of their Virtues in the Desert to be dragged into Balance. The victorious character may, at their discretion, move one Virtue from the Desert into Balance.



Balance Dominant

If Balance is Dominant, the conflict may be resolved freely as the victor desires. They may choose to combine the cooperation of a group to nurture an oasis, or perhaps teach the value of solitary contemplation to the people of Alexandria. Should Balance Dominate, the each participant may choose to bring any one Virtue into Balance.

Example: The Nubian Scout was victorious in his Desert-dominant conflict of Honesty. His player explains the the scout chooses to dash into the wilderness with the pack of Jackals at his feet. His feet pounding on the rocky ground, he flees alone in the darkness, pursued by vicious predators. Fortunately he had scouted the area in the day's light and he was able to find the sandstone cliffs. The Scout scrambles up the cliff, out of range of the Jackals and begins to hurl stones down upon them.

He looks at his sheet and decides that this act tempers his Virtue of the Waste (in the City) back down to Generosity. The Scout remembers spending all of his coin in the last village on Hellene wine, when in hindsight a bow would have made his life so much easier. He vows to himself to restrain his urges, even if that would mean less of the lovely drink.

The player then frames the next scene, describing how two of the other character awaken to find the scout missing. Perhaps a conflict between Temperance and Courage, as the two lovers examine the scene?

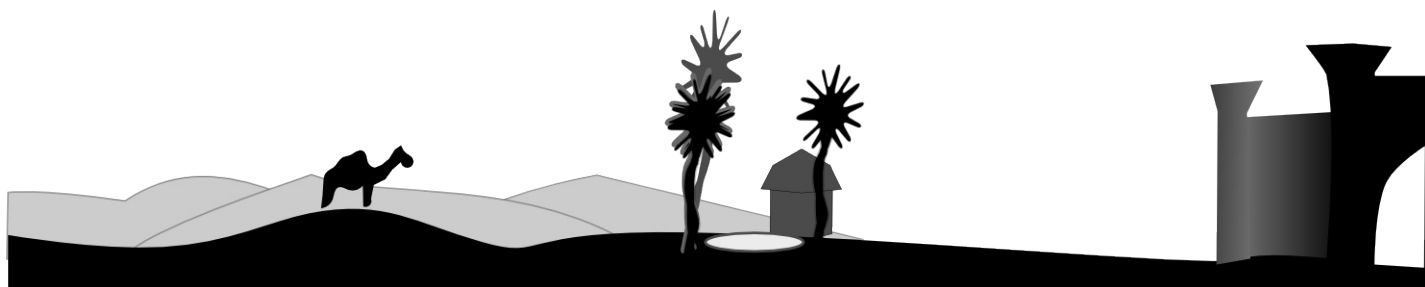
The Edge Cuts: Sacrificing Reason

Each character has a trait called Reason which represents the character's most important drive and the motivation for making the journey. When a character loses during a conflict pertaining to their Reason, they gain a potent ability. The player may interject "Yes, and.." into the victor's narration. This permits the player to contribute to the resolution of the conflict in a fashion which supports their Reason.

If a character is ever completely dominated by either Influence, they lose access to their Reason. Rather than Reason, character becomes driven by the Desert or by the City. When driven by the Desert or the City, the character steps off the path of the journey become servants of temptation for their Patron. These driven characters work to push the other character's Virtues toward their patron's Influence. If at any time all of the characters in the game are driven by the same Influence, the Journey has failed.

Example: In the conflict, which follows, the lustful character wins the conflict. Fortunately the character who lost the conflict has a Reason of "To keep my lover a secret". When the lustful victor narrates the resolution, she contributes her own narration. "Yes, and I suggest that we act out our passions near those cliffs a few minutes away where the others won't hear us. We head in that direction with only one thing on our minds."

If that loss had pushed that character's last Virtue into the City, she would have lost her Reason. She would have worked ceaselessly to "convince" her lover of the resplendent luxury and power of the City to drive him to that extreme as well.



The Journey

There are countless Journeys which may be undertaken over the course of the game. Here are a few sample scenarios and an explanation of how the Edge of a scene can be evaluated.

The Edge of the Scene

Any Scene should have an Edge between 1|23456 and 12345|6 so that there is a chance that a die could contribute to the non-dominant Influence.

1|23456 is suitable for Scenes deep in the desert, where the only hope of survival is to destroy your enemy or flee from them. The desert is harsh and civilization is a distant memory.

12|3456 is suitable for scenes in the desert, but with more exposure to civilization. Perhaps it takes place in the more fertile regions, or on the well travelled roads which span the barren land.

123|456 is the default Edge, a state of balance where both the deprivation of the desert and the excess of the city are kept at bay. Perhaps this takes place at an oasis or a small settlement.

1234|56 occurs in relatively civilized environs, such as a significant settlement or a fertile land fed by the Nile. The corruption of wealth and excess is felt more keenly.

12345|6 is found in the walls of great Alexandria and other cities, where excess and passions are felt most keenly. The masses are driven by politics and passion and the natural world can be dismissed with ease.

Types of Journeys

Founding the Library

A group of disparate scholars have decided to seek out the hidden knowledge of Egypt and collect it in the new city of Alexandria. A great Library, containing the greatest scholarship and rhetoric of Athens and the ancient knowledge of the local peoples could bring true enlightenment, if it could come to pass.

Act 1: Leave Greece by ship

Act 2: Land at the port city and travel to the outskirts of Alexandria.

Act 3: Enter the city of Alexandria and explore.

Act 4: Build the Library

Nubian Investigators

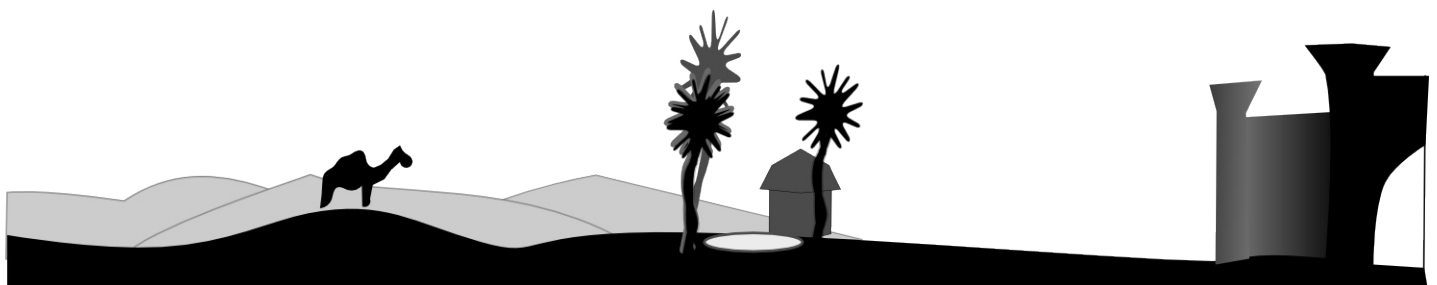
There were rumours of foreign invaders from north of the great sea, enough that we, the warriors of Noba must travel down the river to the salt waters and investigate. The old village of Rhacotis has allegedly been occupied at the mouth of the Nile.

Act 1: Leave Noba along the road along the Nile

Act 2: Interrogate the local people of the Nile

Act 3: Move into the City, now called "Alexandria" by the invaders.

Act 4: Confront the Invaders



Journey to Conquest

Ptolemy the Second has been displeased by the rapacious and expansionist Seleucid king Antichus. Ptolemy's royal command was to strike down that kingdom's soldiers and earn a victory. Say your goodbyes and prepare for the victorious campaign!

Act 1: Say goodbye to friends and family

Act 2: Try to muster as much support as possible within Alexandria

Act 3: Cross the desert

Act 4: Confront the Syrian army

Rescue on the Docks.

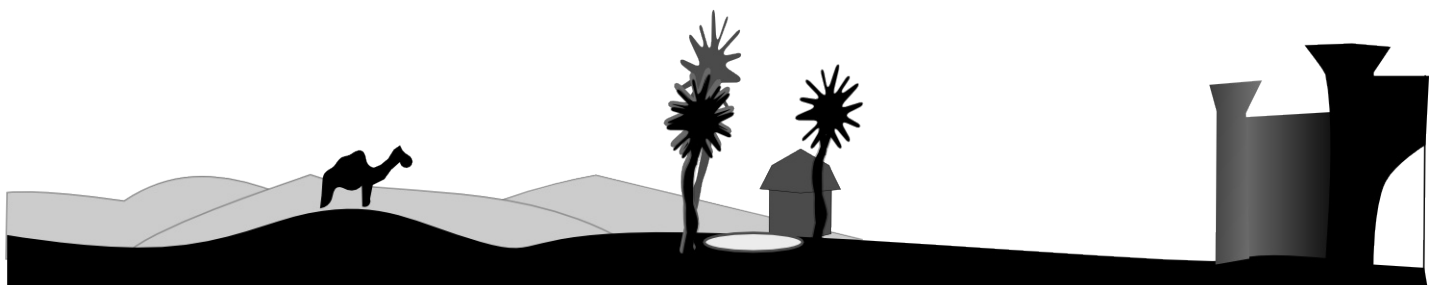
The Caesar Julius has sent his troops against our most noble king Ptolemy the eighth. His ships, laden with flaming munitions, are said to be approaching the docks. Ready yourselves to save the city and protect what is precious within.

Act 1: A sighting of ships and plans made

Act 2: The assault of the docks by the Romans

Act 3: Fleeing the fires

Act 4: Protecting the Library from the fire



A Sojourn in Alexandria Character Sheet

Name: _____

Daemon: _____

Concept: _____

Reason: _____

1 2 **Edge** 3 4 5 6

Virtues
In The Desert

Virtues
In Balance

Virtues
In The City

Cowardice

Courage

Recklessness

Inhibition

Temperance

Passion

Avarice

Generosity

Waste

Apathy

Patience

Rage

Depression

Honesty

Arrogance

Vulgarity

Grace

Sycophancy

