

Fantasy

ASTRAY

an erotic roleplaying game
for two players
and no GM

Fantasy Astray is an erotic roleplaying game for two players. Rather than designate one player as the game manager, or GM, Fantasy Astray uses a simple system to share roleplay and narration between both players evenly. This means both players can play as their desired protagonist, while also providing the other player with obstacles and adversity, for the protagonists to overcome (or succumb to).

The system is taken from Avery Alder's "No Dice No Masters", with some modifications. The rules are as follows:

- There is a pool of six tokens, in a communal pile called 'the table'. Both players start with no tokens of their own.
- Both players play a Main Character, or MC, and each MC has Strong, Normal, and Weak Actions.
 - Strong Actions have a '+' in front of them (below), and cost one token, while securing an advantage or resolving a problem for the MC.
 - Normal Actions have a '*', and characterize the MC, and orient them in the world. They do not cost or gain tokens.
 - Weak Actions have a '-', and earn the player a token, while putting the MC at some serious cost, loss, or disadvantage.
- An MC cannot make a Strong Action unless they have a token to pay for it.
- An MC cannot make a Weak Action unless there is a token on the table to take.
- A player cannot have more than three tokens total for their MC.
- When an MC has made three Weak Actions in succession, they are temporarily defeated, and at the mercy of an antagonist. At this point the defeated MC's player should take up narrating an antagonist opposing the other player's MC (see Adversity Characters, below).
- Likewise if a player already has three tokens, and would receive a fourth, the token goes to the table, and that player instead should resolve the current scene with their MC and begin narrating an antagonist or adversity opposing the other player's MC.
 - A player can make a Weak Action, even if they already have three tokens. This would normally give them a fourth token, so the player should resolve the current scene, as above.
- A player can always elect to narrate an antagonist opposing the other player's MC if they want to, at any time. If there is a token on the table, they may choose to take one token for themselves, for use with their own MC.

In addition to the stock NDNM rules, there are also Adversity Characters, or ACs, which resemble MCs but work differently. Adversity Characters represent the antagonists, opponents, and hostile environments and forces that the MCs face. All AC Actions either target an MC, or are used specifically for an MC to take advantage of.

- AC Strong Actions pay a token *to the MC that they target*, while putting that MC in some specific peril or loss to deal with.
 - If the AC has no tokens, then the AC takes a token off the table and pays it directly to the targeted player.
 - If the AC lacks tokens and there are no tokens on the table to take, then the AC cannot make Strong Actions.
- AC Normal Actions present roleplay and plot hooks to interact with, and do not involve tokens.
- AC Weak Actions provide a boon, set up an opportunity, or simply give a lucky break for an MC to take. The AC takes a token off the table and keeps it.
 - If there are no tokens on the table, then the AC cannot make Weak Actions.
 - AC tokens are shared in common among all ACs, no matter which player plays them.

To recapitulate and summarize the token economy:

- You start the game with no tokens, and a pile of six tokens on the table.
- You can make one of your MC's Strong Actions only if you have a token to pay for it. Tokens you spend go onto the table.
- You can have up to three tokens at a time, no more.
- You can gain tokens by:
 - Making one of your MC's Weak Actions
 - Receiving a token from an AC making a Strong Action against you
 - Choosing to play an AC opposing the other player (taking the token is optional)
- ACs take a token from the table when they make Weak Actions, and cannot make Weak Actions if no tokens are available.
- ACs making a Strong Action can take a token directly from the table if the AC has no tokens at all.
- ACs making a Strong Action give their token directly to the MC they target.

Both MCs and ACs can make any combination of Actions at a time as long as the token budget allows for it. An AC (or MC) can make two Strong Actions at once, if they can afford it, or even three Weak Actions if there are sufficient tokens to take and if such makes narrative sense to both players. As long as the character gains and spends tokens in a legal manner, any Actions those tokens represent is a valid combination.

And to reiterate resolving a scene, a player who makes three Weak Actions in succession, or who has three tokens and would receive a fourth, should resolve the current scene with their MC, and take up playing an AC opposing the other player.

Players may always resolve scenes with their characters at any time they consider natural, and a player may always choose to play an AC against the other player at any time. If they do, the AC player may take a token from the table if they wish.

To make an MC, pick any two of the following archetypes, and simply combine their lists of Actions together. For example, your MC can be an Explorer and Thief, and have all of the Strong, Normal, and Weak Actions of the Explorer and Thief archetypes. It's perfectly fine for both players' MCs to have one of the same archetype (such as Explorer+Thief and Scholar+Thief), though you may want to avoid having both of the same archetypes (ie both MCs being Explorer+Thief).

Decide together which ACs interest you both, and feel free to make adjustments to the wording or nature of any Actions, especially ACs' Actions. As antagonists, the nature of their opposition will greatly affect the tone and events of your story.

When you're ready, decide which player will start establishing a scene, location, and the immediate plan of the MCs. Take turns as seems appropriate, and always declare if you're making a Strong or Weak Action, whether as your own MC, or as an AC you play against the other player. Note that you can roleplay and portray your own MC (including Actions) during your turn narrating and playing ACs against the other player. Your turn as narrator means that you should focus on the other player's MC and on providing them with adversity through ACs, but your own MC still exists, and indeed should usually be present in the same scenes, albeit with less narrative focus during your narration turn.

General Guidance

Whether you narrate your own MC, or an AC opposing the other player's MC, each piece of narration should include a forward-moving event, whether a proper Action, a (little-a) action, or even a change or incident in the environment at large. The following examples show ways that a Main Character might interact *without* such a forward-moving event, each listing corrections that include such a forward-moving event, whether as an MC Action, an AC Action, or even the *lack* of a relevant Action.

- I look for secret doors
 - I find one and go through it
 - I can't find one, so I'm cornered here
- I attack it
 - I injure it / I drive it away
 - My attack is blocked or thwarted
 - It strikes and injures me instead
- I look for my Goal
 - I find it
 - I come nearer to it
 - I can't find it
 - Something distracts me
- I smile at her
 - --and I seize her
 - --and I kneel before her
 - --and I boldly praise her beauty
 - --and I pull her up and away from the chasm's edge
- I run
 - I get away
 - I am pursued all the harder
 - The chase enters more dangerous territory
 - I'm caught

These forward-moving events include responses, such as whether the Dire Creature grunts with pain or seems to ignore a wound, or how a side character reacts verbally and emotionally. They also include physical consequences, such as whether you easily fend off a blow and press forward, as opposed to being slammed into the canyon, tumbling over and over, but eventually rising and struggling on to challenge the foe again.

In addition to adding color and personality to MCs and the world around them, these forward-moving events give the other player something evocative to respond to, and to incorporate into their own narration as they take their own turn, and eventually as they take over narration duties.

It bears repeating, each of these improved, forward-moving choices can relate to an Action or *lack* of a listed Action, whether for a Main Character or Adversity Character, whether a Strong, Normal, or Weak Action. If you find that your MC doesn't have an answer or reply to a given situation, and neither does the AC opposing them, describe this impasse in the narration, and have the other player propose something to break the stalemate or stagnancy, so that your story can proceed to exciting events.

As a basic rule, if you find yourself at a loss for what to do with your MC or an AC you control, then make one of the Actions. The Normal Actions especially support interacting with the world, without any specific agenda or goal. Likewise, prompt the other player to make Actions, so that you give yourself and the other player events to react to in the story. In short, both players should make and provoke Actions whenever you don't have something specific to do.

When the other player uses a Strong Action, make sure to describe its effects in full, especially in terms of how their cool, competent, interesting Main Character has solved a problem in a cool, competent, and interesting way. Likewise, when the other player does a Weak Action, describe how terrible, complicating, and (erotically) disempowering it is, to give the other player the most enjoyable time as they're hurt or defeated. When you narrate, you have the job of making the other player's Main Character the star, for good and ill, so always narrate these dramatic turns with detail, and with faithfulness for the Main Character's protagonist status. The Main Characters' Actions should always drive the story and lead to interesting consequences.

Regarding trinkets, gadgets, equipment, and tools, you can fairly assume your MC has whatever items or materials that someone of their archetypes might have on hand for their circumstances. A savvy Explorer+Thief probably has lockpicks, rope, a tinderbox, and other oddments in preparation for an adventure. Conversely, a Scholar+Princess caught completely off-guard might have nothing but the clothes on their back. If you ever have any doubt, just assume your character has what they need in order to do something exciting and interesting, rather than rummage around for a hammer.

As to health and injury, no rules exist for MC death. Your MC dies when you consider it a satisfying moment for your MC to die. *Other* characters die when an MC or AC Action suggests they should, such as the Soldier and Thief's Strong Actions, or the Dire Creature and Dark Sorceress' Weak Actions. Other than death, statuses (such as [feverish]) exist as roleplay prompts and guidance. Some ACs refer to statuses in general terms, to pace the availability of some powerful Strong Actions, but other than this, simply take statuses on your MC's health as suggesting how to play the character: if your MC is [shamed], they probably shouldn't "boast of sexual conquests", or if [feverish], "weather brutal climates" might be unfitting.

As to violence in general, only the Soldier and Thief have lethal violence as a direct way to solve a problem they face. All other archetypes *can* use violence, but in general must use their other skills and aptitudes to make violence into a viable *solution* to a crisis or conflict. Still, this doesn't mean that (for example) an Explorer+Scholar can't also use violence regularly: many Adversity Characters listed below feature minions, enforcers, or other disposable lackeys, and feature Weak Actions that put the main Adversity Character at some loss or disadvantage against Main Characters. If you find it gratifying, you have every right to narrate, for example, the Dread Warlord's "let a captive loose" as carving a bloody path through unprepared footsoldiers to rescue the captive. The actual *Warlord* is still beyond the skills of an Explorer+Scholar to confront, but incidentally dispatching the Warlord's underlings is fine.

Archetypes

Explorer

- + Find and take a route to where you need to be next. Pick two: safe, speedy, scenic.
- + Cite a folkway, remedy, or trick for just this occasion. It's strange, but it works.
- + Study a person, sight, or object intently. Ask: who knows more about this; where can I learn more about this; what can I do about this. The answer is clear and truthful, no ambiguity.
- + Get someone undressed and ready with a story from your travels.
- * Ask probing questions of locals, and tell about places you've been.
- * Say what you can see, and take notes and talk about it.
- * Describe the food and share recipes you've learned.
- * Talk very candidly about the sexual rituals and practices you've seen.
- Get very, very, *very* lost. Maybe more lost than anyone has ever been and come back.
- Earn the ire, outrage, or terror of locals, who wish to drive you off or punish your transgressions.
- Discover a threat or danger the rumors and guides didn't even know about, and might not ever find out about from you.
- Fall victim to the lusts of a legendary plant, animal, or stranger creature. Or maybe it *will* be legendary if you make it back to tell the tale.

Scholar

- + You know just the person, place, or thing that is key to solving the problem of the moment. Say it and head off.
- + You know the best byways, routes, and places to stay and sleep, and have the connections for them.
- + Eureka! You know just the solution to this conundrum, it's simple, really--
- + Turn someone to quivering putty during sex, by reciting a verse or using a technique you've 'picked up' in your studies.
- * Pontificate on the generally accepted academic lore.
- * Give your own radical theory you wish to prove.
- * Test someone's wit, learning, or standing.
- * Make a shrewd guess about someone's private proclivities.
- Face a blunt physical barrier or restraint you cannot argue or theorize away.
- Confront an esoteric depth that your studies never suggested, and which you cannot explain or understand.
- Play into the hands of a wily schemer exploiting your eagerness or arrogance.
- Find yourself suddenly and completely overwhelmed due to your sexual inexperience.

Soldier

- + Strike down a foe with training and physical prowess.
- + Weather brutal climates and environs that would fell a weaker sort.
- + Inspire fear, awe, or loyalty as suits those who see you.
- + Overwhelm someone with sexual stamina and force.
- * Tell stories of the old war, and what you fought for.
- * Ask what measure of honor someone has.
- * Pledge your life to the things you value. Say what those are, and what they mean to you.
- * Tell a ribald joke about your lustful exploits in foreign lands.
- Lie injured and abandoned in some gods-forsaken pit.
- Find no aid or pity from the scornful eyes around you.
- Break, lose, or destroy something precious and irreplaceable.
- Lose your pride and honor as someone ill-uses you sexually.

Thief

- + Quietly take someone out, fatally or not.
- + Slip away from a situation without being followed.
- + Perform an implausible feat of acrobatics or contortion.
- + Find yourself alone with someone influential or important.
- * Name items of value and make passing inquiries about them.
- * Gossip about the wealthy and powerful.
- * Casually fraternize with the underclass.
- * Spread rumors about sexual deviance and depravity.
- Lose to overwhelming numbers or force.
- Suffer betrayal that ruins your cunning plan.
- Make a powerful enemy who takes it personally.
- Fall into the lecherous clutches of someone you've wronged.

Priest

- + Heal an affliction or curse.
- + Rile up a crowd with a moving sermon.
- + Receive guidance or aid from the higher powers.
- + Sway someone's carnal desire into chaste affection.
- * Quote a passage from the holy texts (relevant or not).
- * Attract attention with your distinctive religious garb.
- * Complain that this doesn't sit well with your creed.
- * Hear others' shameful confessions and romantic woes.
- Sacrifice your goals for your convictions.
- Endure hardship and suffering for the sake of piety.
- Take on a burden or dangerous quest from the higher powers.
- Suffer the defilement of a lecherous adversary.

Note: the Priest does not have any *specific* stated religion. The intent is a character defined by their respected standing in *some* faith or tradition, and especially defined by their belief in a higher power, and the benefits that power bestows. With slight modification, the Priest might instead serve as "the Angel", or other divine being.

Witch

- + Blight someone with a terrible curse.
- + Clearly see the nature of someone's past, soul, or destiny.
- + Create mass terror, confusion, or furor with a ritual.
- + Bend someone to your will with your carnal wiles.
- * Describe the dark forces you beseech for insight or favor.
- * Tempt or beguile the unwary and innocent.
- * Offer piercing advice free of charge.
- * Envision the hidden desires of others.
- Falter from your frail health or constitution.
- Flee from murderous villagers.
- Earn the scorn and disgust of someone you cherish.
- Suffer an inquisitor's perverse lusts.

Ingenue

- + Hastily improvise a defense against a threat.
- + Hurry away to short-lived safety.
- + Crawl through hostile terrain despite a hindrance.
- + Inspire someone to help you with grit and determination.
- * Take in your surroundings, and remark on how vastly they differ from home.
- * Remark on how uneventful things are, and go in search of excitement.
- * Ask someone about the locale and its inhabitants, and take it at face value.
- * Flirtatiously allude to your lover or lack thereof.
- Find yourself suddenly isolated and in peril.
- Fall victim to a threat, now eagerly on your tail.
- Beg someone, anyone, for help, to no avail.
- Suffer ravishment from the thing that followed your trail.

Princess

- + Command obedience to your station.
- + Ply someone with opulent finery.
- + Cite the courtly affairs that favor your goals.
- + Appeal to someone to protect you, with your delicate and refined bearing.
- * Misunderstand the coarse manners of commoners.
- * Attract attention with your dress, manner, and etiquette.
- * Speak on courtly affairs, in casual conversation.
- * Blush aghast at an unseemly sexual remark or innuendo.
- Refuse to face an uncaring circumstance, as addressing it requires something unfitting of your station.
- In the absence of anyone to protect you, you are overwhelmed and captured.
- Learn of courtly affairs that seem to crush your goals.
- Suffer degrading ravishment by ruffians and scoundrels.

Goblin

- + Get into somewhere no one's supposed to be able to go.
- + Tinker up a dangerous and exciting gadget to make problems for others.
- + Strike from an unseen or unreachable hideyhole.
- + Impress someone with your sexual openness and eagerness.
- * Ooooh, shiny, what does it do?
- * Run into someone with important things to do.
- * Clamber around in refuse and junk and grimy holes.
- * Make crude remarks about others' loins, at eye-level to you.
- Get summarily chased off by the uppity races.
- Get casually overpowered by the tall races.
- Get injured or waylaid from poking at something dangerous.
- Get humiliatingly used for someone else's gratification.

Note: the Goblin and Ghost serve primarily to illustrate how to create MC archetypes for your own use. [Fantasy Astray](#) makes a number of assumptions about the kind of Main Characters that players will play. If these assumptions don't apply, modify the existing archetypes, or create a new one to better represent the characters you wish to play.

Ghost

- + Ignore a harmful status, condition, or any other effect that would hinder the living. It simply doesn't happen to you.
- + Appear near a character that has afflicted you with a status, regardless of distance or obstacles.
- + Strike terror in those around you in an uncontrolled display of fury.
- + Appear to a character in a time of need or distress, and give intimate emotional comfort.
- * Appear spectral in the light and luminous in the darkness.
- * Get lost in recollections of the time you were alive.
- * Warn someone of the brevity of life and the swiftness of death.
- * Gaze longingly when reminded of the pleasures of flesh.
- Pass immaterially through something that threatens another character.
- Pass immaterially through a character you wish to touch.
- Forget yourself in the moment and pursue meaningless vengeance on long-dead memories.
- Suffer defilement by a person using a technique or condition that is a bane to you (such as sunlight, a holy relic, salt or iron, or a personal memento).

Note: you should probably consider the Ghost to be both tangible and vulnerable to ordinary dangers by default. The Strong and Weak Actions for ignoring physical harm or inability to touch another should have dramatic relevance (hence gaining or costing a token). When the stakes are low, you will likely find it best for your character to be able to hold a dinner-plate without making a scene.

Adversity Characters

The following Adversity Characters will provide conflict and challenge to the players' characters. You should modify them to taste, so that they work in context, but these should give a good selection of useful templates.

In the basic rules, a number of ACs impose statuses on MCs, denoted in [brackets]. Unless expressly referenced by an AC (for example, "a Main Character with two statuses"), these statuses have no explicit meaning within the rules. However, you should consider them strong roleplay prompts and suggestions. For example, a character with the status [shamed] should likely not boast about their sexual adventures.

In the absence of any rule-based method to remove statuses, you can consider them expired if they no longer have relevance to the scene or ongoing events. In particular, if both players forget about a status, it has probably expired.

The Anonymous Nightclub

- + Distract or block a Main Character from fully exiting.
- + Face a Main Character with an illicit vice (status [intoxicated] or appropriate), or disdain for refusing (status [scorned]).
- + Separate a Main Character from anyone supportive or protective.
- + Trap an [intoxicated] character with predatory partiers.
- + Trap a [scorned] character with demeaning, demanding, obstructive gatekeepers.
- + Display a Main Character in the midst of something humiliating or incriminating (status [exposed]).
- + Face an [exposed] character with a future obligation.

- * Entice a Main Character to revelry and abandon.
- * Afflict a side character with any status at all.
- * Circulate tantalizing rumors.
- * Show scenes of excess and hedonism, just barely in view.
- * Show appraising, impetuous, or aggressive desire for a Main Character.
- * Show uncaring, distrustful, or mocking disinterest in a Main Character.

- Provide a damning secret that a Main Character can use.
- Give an opportunity for a coveted vice that a Main Character can trade or barter later.
- Grant audience with someone powerful and influential.
- Start or improve a Main Character's reputation in the club's social stratum.

Note: the Anonymous Nightclub can be seedy, luxurious, or simply niche, its main features are that a different social hierarchy presides over a different set of social norms, and metes out access and punishment over different resources, than the prevailing outside culture.

The City Guard

- + Detain a Main Character in the dungeon until someone releases them (or they escape).
- + Put a Main Character in a pillory in the square for a day.
- + Detain someone a Main Character cherishes.
- + Demand an exorbitant bribe, payoff, or service (status [destitute], [humiliated], or similar).
- + Declare a bounty on a Main Character (status [bounty]).
- + Announce a Main Character as guilty of treason, blasphemy, or another heinous crime (status [traitor] or similar).
- + Confiscate a Main Character's clothing and belongings (status [stripped]).

- * Ask around about a Main Character or their goal, respectfully or menacingly.
- * Declare a danger posed by a recent event, in or near the City.
- * Declare interest in a side character, they are wanted for aid, questioning, or punishment.

- Allow a Main Character to slip away.
- Fail to protect an important something, -one, or -where from a Main Character.
- Entreat a Main Character for help, with a good reward.
- Accept a paltry bribe or service for a favor or lenience.
- Carelessly give up some vital piece of information.

Note: the City Guard has the most ambivalent relationship to Main Characters, as it doesn't *inherently* have assumed hostility, and can potentially cooperate with Main Characters' agendas. However, all Adversity Characters can potentially become allies if the story happens to make that a reasonable and enjoyable outcome.

The Dark Sorceress

- + Mark a Main Character with some ominous sign of your interest and influence.
- + Beset Main Characters with mindless minions.
- + Disable or claim a side-character with fell magic.
- + Bewitch a Main Character with a status such as [drained], [confused], or [pained], to weaken them.
- + Take a marked or bewitched Main Character to your enchanted keep.
- + Enact a dark ritual on a Main Character in your keep (status [enslaved], [transformed], [cursed], or similar).

- * Leave ominous portents of your malign influence where Main Characters will see them.
- * Inspire terrified and despairing rumors among the peasants.
- * Offer enticing bargains at terrible cost.
- * Hint menacingly at your grand schemes.

- Leave a Main Character unsupervised while you prepare.
- Postpone action 'until the time is right'.
- Leave your most dangerous foes alive 'as an example'.
- Leave your most powerful banes around to show your lack of fear.

Note: the Dark Sorceress can serve as a more mundane charismatic leader, such as the head of a cult, or an abusive church. The primary purpose of a Dark Sorceress is to indirectly or implicitly menace Main Characters, without direct confrontation, and then to enact an inscrutable fate on them when the situation suits her.

The Dire Creature

- + Appear near a Main Character without warning.
- + Overpower a seemingly certain defense.
- + Overwhelm and subdue a Main Character.
- + Carry a Main Character you've subdued to your lair (status [trapped]).
- + Afflict a Main Character you've subdued with a status.
- + Suddenly claim a side character and do with them as you like.

- * Make menacing sounds in the distance.
- * Disturb natural flora and fauna in an uncanny manner.
- * Provoke hushed whispers and downcast eyes from those who know of you.

- Cover from some specific, distinct implement of civilization (such as fire, light, silver, sudden loud noises, or otherwise).
- Lose pursuit of a Main Character, even when it should be easy to capture them.
- Neutralize something else that threatened or pursued a Main Character.
- Reveal some vital secret about the land or a specific location, group, or person.

Note: more than other Adversity Characters, the Dire Creature needs specifics to suit personal taste. A patch of tentacle vines differs quite a lot from a werewolf, which differs from a wraith that inhabits the dead. A Dire Creature can even represent a human stalker, slasher, or pursuing brute. Adjust the Strong and Weak Actions to make them specific to the particular creature you have in mind, and especially name specific statuses your creature can impose, and banes that can defeat or drive it away.

The Dread Warlord

- + Breach a protected stronghold or keep.
- + Loot and pillage a populous settlement.
- + Claim the fair maidens/youths for your pleasure.
- + Seize the hardy maidens/youths as conscripts.
- + Best a Main Character in single combat (status [beaten]).
- + Capture a Main Character you've bested in combat (status [trapped]).

- * Announce the Main Characters' location as your next conquest.
- * Challenge a Main Character to a 'fair' fight (or fuck), with yourself or a chosen champion.
- * Display your captive 'trophies' for all to see.
- * Let your warriors enjoy whichever 'trophies' you choose.

- Let a valuable captive loose, through arrogance, oversight, or fighting (or fucking) for their freedom.
- Suffer massive losses due to arrogance, unpreparedness, or an underling challenging your power.
- Open the path or remove a barrier for the Main Characters, as you march to conquest.

Note: the Dread Warlord works for any antagonist consisting of a single powerful leader, whose power comes from a large number of underlings, and whose way of expressing power is brute force.

The Dungeon

- + Mob a Main Character with half-mad prisoners.
- + Degrade a Main Character with a few jaded guards.
- + Debase a Main Character in the sight of a character they care about.
- + Inflict a newly-devised torment on a Main Character.
- + Leave a side character broken, physically or mentally.
- + Offer a morsel or clean clothes or other pittance or real necessity, for a humiliating payment.
- + Escalate a Main Character's status in the progression:
(none), [wavering], [humbled], [fearful], [terrified], [obedient], [broken]
- + Afflict a different status on a Main Character (such as [sickly], [hobbled], [comedump], or as desired).
- * Announce a new torment you have devised, in as little or much detail as desired.
- * Circulate rumors among the prisoners and guards.
- * Make a display of barbarity and cruelty.
- * Show unshakeable solidarity and organization in the prisoners.
- * Show gleeful corruption and vice in the guards.
- Give a Main Character a loyal contact.
- Fall for an obvious ruse or false compliance.
- Give a Main Character an opportunity they could never have outside: free an ally, assassinate or kidnap an important enemy here to gloat, a sample of blood for The Cure, or as appropriate.

Note: by design, the Dungeon supports medium- to long-term 'prison break' narratives (though the 'break' may well be the Main Characters' will). Consider giving any imprisoned Main Character the special Strong Action: "progress toward escape", in which the player spends a token to narrate a phase of an escape plan. Decide in advance how many phases this should take for your tastes.

Note also the 'escalate status' Strong Action: by default, it has six steps, at which point a Main Character is 'broken', however you choose to interpret and roleplay it. You can remove steps to hasten this outcome or increase its urgency, and the Dungeon never *has* to use this Action. But keep the six steps in mind, for pacing any escape. The Dungeon has no way to *remove* progress at escaping, but can 'inflict new torments' and 'break side-characters' to interfere with escape plots as they progress.

In general, the Dungeon 'wants' to break Main Characters down, and reveal them at their worst. Accordingly, a Dungeon need not be a prison, and could even serve as a (dysfunctional and corrupt) mental institution far better than the 'Haunted Hospital', or serve as a town that has fallen to authoritarianism or to chaos.

The Fever Swamp

- + Obscure the path with twisting vines and swaying trees (status [lost]).
- + Afflict a Main Character with a deliriant toxin or unnerving illness (status [feverish] or similar).
- + Waylay a Main Character with restless spirits from the dark (status [haunted]).
- + Take away a Main Character's belongings, with or without recovery (status [stripped]).
- + Attack a Main Character with a wild, uncaring, unclean creature.
- * Sing incessantly with eerie beast, bird, and bug-song. Stop singing as a warning.
- * Disgorge something that a Main Character has never seen before.
- * Show who else was here, and might be still.
- Give a Main Character something useful and unique.
- Provide safety from something outside of the swamp, such as neutralizing a threat.
- Provide tangible headway on a Main Character's goal, completing a phase or milestone.
- Invigorate and revitalize a Main Character, and stir their desires.

Note: the Fever Swamp can reflect many kinds of environments that inherently, passively resist or afflict Main Characters. 'Twisting vines' can instead be rippling mirages, and indeed a derelict spaceship would fit the Actions of the Fever Swamp beat for beat.

The Haunted Hospital

- + Lock a Main Character in the 'secure wing'.
- + Deprive a character of the sense between lucidity and reality.
- + The Nurses surround and accost a Main Character.
- + The Doctor restrains a subdued Main Character.
- + Perform a Procedure on a prepared Main Character.
- + Start the next phase of a previously completed Procedure.
- + Activate or exploit a completed Procedure on a Main Character.

* Reveal a 'secure wing', a hidden layer, or alternate reality, where the true work of the facility takes place.

- * Subdue a surrounded character, or prepare a restrained character.
- * Mumble, chatter, babble, moan, or scream, openly or from locked rooms or around distant corners.
- * Advise on courses of treatment for spurious ailments or deficiencies.

- Leave a Main Character or other patient unattended.
- Leave useful supplies or information out for the taking.
- Remove a harmful status or condition, or apply a desirable one.
- Release a character from the 'secure wing' without warning or context.

Note: the Haunted Hospital can suit any narrative in which a *system* acts to confine, control, and corrupt the Main Characters. It can be a currently-operational clinic, a clandestine cybernetics lab, or even an alien facility. In particular, with some adjustment it can serve well as a Dark Sorceress' 'enchanted keep'. Regardless of setting, however, the Hospital always has a purpose for its subjects, a 'sickness' to treat, or an 'ideal' to conform victims to.

The Procedures are unspecified, but should generally erode the Main Characters' ability to resist, or to function outside of whatever purpose the Hospital has for its subjects. They might involve plain physical punishment, administering drugs, applying shocks, performing surgery, or practicing sorcery, but they always serve the purpose, stated above. Simple options would be 'submission and servitude', but could include 'conversion into another Nurse' (or some other creature), or could even involve direct control over a Main Character, making them part of the adversity.

Make sure to agree in advance on the kinds of Procedures involved, what statuses might reflect them, and especially, how many 'phases' before a Procedure is completed. The Strong Actions leading to Procedures all rely on a single Normal Action, and do not impose any statuses. This is intentional: the AC can choose to immediately secure a step toward a Procedure if desired, or can leave a step unresolved for the moment. Meanwhile, the Main Character can attempt to interrupt progress toward a Procedure, and if so, force the AC to start over. This allows a lot of flexibility for how certain a Main Character's corruption or doom should be.

The Hero

- + Contextualize a Main Character's past actions as evil (status [shamed]).
- + 'Rescue' a side character from the Main Characters' clutches.
- + Arrive where the Main Characters are headed in the nick of time.
- + Match a Main Character in protracted combat, blow for blow, and ultimately defeat them.
- + 'Redeem' a Main Character into adopting an ethos that matches yours by overwhelming them with personal presence (status [swayed]).

- * Pontificate about the nature of justice.
- * Engage a Main Character in banter at an inopportune moment.
- * Behave distractingly to try to steal the show.

- Voice spurious assumptions, which advance a Main Character's investigation of an event or subject.
- Cease hostilities to show genuine concern over a misfortune (having witnessed it before or close enough for them) and offer aid toward removing it.
- Fall to an underhanded joke of a tactic, ready to be pillaged for at least a few useful tools, a weapon, some coin, and a piece of information such as a map or letter.
- Try to redeem a Main Character by engaging in a moment of vulnerability, to your comical detriment.

Note: the Hero serves as something of a self-aware satire, for a self-aware story. It exhibits many stereotypical "RPG protagonist" foibles and follies, and may be most suited to 'isekai' or 'transplanted into a story' narratives, to oppose your true Main Characters.

The Hive

- + Lay bare an intimate secret belonging to a Main Character.
- + Lay bare an intimate secret belonging to a side character.
- + Incapacitate a Main Character with psychic trauma.
- + Add an incapacitated Main Character to the hive (status [infested]).
- + Reveal longstanding influence over a side character.
- + Blot an event from the memory of a group as big and chaotic as a dance floor or market square, and replace it with a vague alternate narrative.
- * Cast out a tumultuous psychic tempest of accrued secrets, devoid of context.
- * Gather mundane resources en masse: paper, cloth, bone, flowers, glass, whatever the hive needs.
- * Drone audibly nearby despite an inclement condition.
- Incidentally expose a fundamental weakness in something a Main Character aims to destroy.
- Compulsively mend something or someone important to a Main Character.
- Submit a hive-taken liaison to parley, laden with secrets the Main Characters aren't meant to know.

Note: the Hive exists to disrupt and overturn an existing order or society with its own. While an alien, eldritch, or infernal hive-mind would clearly best fit the Hive, with some alteration this could also represent a zealous cult, or militant political group.

The Holy Ruins

- + Overwhelm a Main Character with sacred sights and mystery (status [awestruck]).
- + Impose a shocking spiritual epiphany on a Main Character (status [revealed]).
- + Shake a Main Character with how their life or nature is unfit for such glory (status [shamed]).
- + Entrap a Main Character in a compromising, perilous, merciless position.
- + Unleash powerful and unwavering holy guardians to battle the Main Characters.
- * Gleam with ancient splendor and timeless majesty.
- * Reveal the truth of the world in cryptic tableaux, inscribed parables, and sacred relics.
- * Crumble, sag, and threaten to collapse at the slightest false step.
- Reveal a valuable relic that a side character would want.
- Alleviate a harmful status from a Main Character.
- Provide an insight or revelation to aid a Main Character.

Note: explicitly *holy* ruins presents interesting and nuanced directions of roleplay, but the Holy Ruins need very little adjustment to become Unholy, or unearthly and eldritch.

The Professor

- + Let a Main Character know they're under your 'tutelage'.
- + Describe the stigma and adversity threatening your pupil (status [browbeaten]).
- + Describe the risk and hopelessness of failing academically (status [precarious]).
- + Describe your pupil's lack of learning and accomplishment (status [shamed]).
- + Threaten to dismiss your pupil (status [abandoned]).
- + Compel a pupil with two statuses to humiliating sexual use.
- * Pontificate your theories on the latest advancement of the field.
- * Hold forth your own unique perspective on the fundamentals of your study.
- * Complain about faculty gossip and interruptions to your research.
- * Draw an extended barely-veiled analogy to sex in the presence of your pupil.
- Protect your pupil from a rival student.
- Protect your pupil from a fellow teacher.
- Protect your pupil from a hostile faculty member.
- Counsel your pupil to remove a status (especially one you didn't inflict).

The Town Square

- + Identify a character with a relevant status, to pursue, persecute, or similar.
- + Take something important from a Main Character, by guile or force.
- + Subtly remove or block a Main Character's means of escape.
- + Surround and scrutinize a character and bait them into incriminating themselves.
- * Overcharge a Main Character for goods or services.
- * Provide misleading or unhelpful answers to inquiries.
- * Remark that a Main Character seems out of place.
- * Allude to some pervasive threat that bears on a Main Character.
- Present a distraction or obstruction to a threat pursuing the Main Characters.
- Incidentally reveal information the Main Characters need.
- Introduce a side character who may sympathize with the Main Characters or their agenda.

Note: the Town Square serves as a passively but pervasively hostile, yet civilized environment, suitable for scenes in which one or both Main Characters have a status like [traitor] or [wanted], or otherwise have reason to fear public persecution or victimization. It can also serve well for simple "unfriendly locals", when the Main Characters are unwelcome outsiders.

Although the Town Square does not present much *serious* adversity, its presence as a likely hub of activity amplifies the effect of even the Normal Actions, and the Strong Actions combine easily with the City Guard or the Unruly Mob.

The Underling/s

- + Use numbers, trickery, or an unexpected advantage to best a Main Character.
- + Manage to subdue or restrain a Main Character for the moment.
- + Call your superior or stronger forces after subduing or restraining a Main Character.
- + Seize or reveal a side character or something a Main Character values, as a hostage or leverage.
- + Reveal that you were an Underling from the start, when you appeared to be a sympathetic side character.
- * Gloat confidently about your success, potential reward, or what you'll do to a Main Character.
- * Bicker with other Underlings about duties, the spoils, or blame.
- * Ominously allude to what your superior can or will do, to a Main Character or yourself.
- Lose to a Main Character, incapacitated or killed.
- Drop something useful or valuable.
- Reveal crucial information, by accident or under duress.
- Lose the Main Characters for a significant period of time.

Note: many Adversity Characters have their own minions or servitors, and the Underling/s can serve as a default for such low-ranking and low-threat adversaries, especially if Main Characters will repeatedly interact with them (such as Haunted Hospital Nurses or Dark Sorceress Minions). The Underling/s can also serve as an independent minor threat, for Main Characters who have little power against direct confrontation with *serious* threats like a Dire Creature or Dread Warlord, but who might stand up against nameless goons.

The Unruly Mob

- + Surround and attack a Main Character.
- + Subdue a surrounded character.
- + Brutalize a subdued character (status [beaten] or as appropriate).
- + Carry a beaten character to public display or holding.
- + Circumvent or overwhelm a barrier or defense.
- * Concentrate and rally forces to attack.
- * Disperse and spread out to search for victims.
- * Shout, chant, make demands, and brandish weapons.
- * Injure or endanger a side character.
- Provide cover for something covert, dangerous, or illicit that the Main Characters wish to do or benefit from.
- Incidentally destroy an obstacle, place, or person that opposes the Main Characters.
- Let a Main Character escape due to poor coordination.

Note: the Unruly Mob has a fairly long progression before it can deliver decisive harm or incapacity to a Main Character. This is because *escaping* the mob is difficult for many archetypes, and the mob can easily damage or destroy anything *besides* the Main Characters--which the mob can use as leverage, especially when combined with the City Guard, Town Square, or even Dread Warlord, as the mob could just as easily be a band of warriors.

Specific Guidance

Firstly, following is a short example of play, which will refer to two hypothetical players, Alice and Betty, and their Main Characters, Ardella and Belial, respectively.

Alice and Betty first discuss and negotiate their desired kinks and sexual conduct, freely and openly. Both have an interest in demons and corruption, a shared distaste for pregnancy or children, and while Alice is fond of men and women, Betty prefers to leave males out. Together they agree on what events and sex acts they're respectively willing to *receive* as well as what they're respectively willing to *give*.

With this discussion in mind, Alice creates Ardella, a Scholar+Priest, and Betty creates Belial, an Explorer+Thief. They both have an interest in the Dark Sorceress and the Holy Ruins (though they intend to make them *Un*holy for their purposes). After some refinement and other general items they wish to include and avoid, Alice and Betty choose Alice to start narrating and setting the scene.

Mechanically, there are six tokens on the table; Alice, Betty, and the AC budget are all empty.

Alice describes Ardella teaming up with Belial, for help exploring the Unholy Ruins, fabled to house a Dark Sorceress, but to get there, the pair will need to traverse a Fever Swamp. Taking the chance to "gossip about the wealthy and powerful", Belial quickly takes Ardella's measure, and vice versa Ardella tests Belial's wit--

Until Alice describes whispering, moaning specters rising from the mist, trying to tempt the adventurers from the path. This is a Strong Action from the Fever Swamp AC. The ACs have no tokens, but ACs are allowed to *take* a token from the table in order to make Strong Actions. So Alice has the AC take a token from the table, and pay it to Betty.

Betty decides Belial might well take the enticements, over Ardella's protests, so she makes the Weak Action "fall victim to the lusts of a [...] stranger creature". Betty describes Belial open and exposed to the lustful spirits, and takes a second token from the table.

Alice decides this is a good time for the swamp to "take away a main character's belongings". Belial now has the statuses [haunted] and [stripped], and Alice takes another token from the table, and pays it to Betty, leaving three tokens on the table, and three in Betty's budget.

While the spirits have their way with Belial, Betty describes Belial making amazed and excited observations (a Normal Action, "talk candidly about sexual practices"). Finally, the spirits finish with Belial and Ardella--and leaves Belial with the status [lost], amid "twisting vines and swaying trees". This Strong Action would *normally* have the AC pay a token to Betty, except that Betty already has three tokens. Instead, the token goes right back to the table, and narration responsibilities go to Betty.

Fortunately for Ardella and Belial, Belial has a Strong Action to "find and take a route" and ample tokens to pay for it. Betty can roleplay Belial (including any Actions) even during her turn narrating the environment, as long as she still narrates the environment, and plays ACs in opposition to Ardella. So Betty pays a token to describe a safe, speedy, but un-scenic journey through the swamp to the (Un)Holy Ruins.

With four tokens on the table, Betty opts to have the newly-found Unholy Ruins make a Weak Action: as soon as Ardella lays eyes on the crooked spires and canted walls, she receives "an insight or revelation": the Ruins are actively *keeping* a demonic presence here, one strong enough that even the Dark Sorceress might well be fully under the control of demons--but, without the blasphemous temple, the infernal forces would descend back out of the world. Betty puts the token in the ACs' budget.

Alice takes this cue to do a Weak Action, "suffer the defilement of a lecherous adversary". And following Alice' earlier lead, Betty describes demonic visions and whisperings crashing in on Ardella's mind, accusing, taunting, and tempting her to debauched abandon. Alice takes a token, and Betty describes the visions, interspersed with Belial's worried efforts to bring Ardella back to her senses.

Now, the table has two tokens, Alice has one, Betty has two, and the ACs collectively have one. Technically, Belial is still [lost] despite her navigating to the Ruins--but it would be less exciting to have her stumble through the Fever Swamp when more interesting things await at the Ruins. Her [lost] status can always give her trouble when Ardella and Belial leave the Ruins to return to civilization--if they make it that far. Belial is still [haunted] and [stripped] after all, and the two have only just come into view of the Ruins, and not yet even encountered the Dark Sorceress, or whatever other unholy things live within.

Alice and Betty will take turns narrating the world and playing as Adversity Characters opposing each other. If a scene or encounter reaches a conclusion naturally, it's a good time to switch who has narrative duties, but if no such occasion seems obvious, then Alice and Betty will alternate, based on the token economy: whenever someone makes three Weak Actions in a row, or whenever someone *would* receive a fourth token, that player takes up narration duties.

Modifications

Fantasy Astray lends itself well to optional rules and additional systems. The following sections will list some ways to adjust the rules, and approaches to using Actions and Adversity Characters, as well as alterations you can make to Main Characters to support different styles of play.

Foremost, consider adjusting the number of tokens available. While six tokens works well as a default, seven or five impart very different dynamics of play. Since these tokens provide both a means of metering MC success and hardship, *and* a pacing mechanism for alternating narrative duties, both players should first have some familiarity with the default budget of six tokens, before adjusting to their needs.

- Seven: enough tokens for Alice and Betty to have their full capacity of tokens, and leave one on the table or in the Adversity Characters' budget. This allows ACs to use Strong Actions on Alice and Betty's MC's, Ardella and Belial, as often as desired.

This lets whoever's currently narrating decide they want to push narration duty over to the other player, if they ever have three tokens. If Alice is currently playing an AC, she need only make a Strong Action against Belial to trigger resolving Belial's scene and start Betty narrating an AC against Ardella. Betty can then do the same, as long as neither Ardella nor Belial make a Strong Action, placing them below the limit of three tokens.

- Six: Alice and Betty can both have their full capacity of tokens, and ACs can potentially have no tokens available. This will prevent the ACs from making Strong Actions *or* Weak Actions, allowing only Normal Actions.

This *precludes* Alice and Betty from using the tokens to pass narration back and forth as with seven tokens. They may still choose to share or alternate narration, but not through alternating who has most recently 'received' a token they cannot accept. It also implicitly encourages Alice and Betty jointly to make a Strong Action at an AC, if Ardella and Belial both have three tokens, since ACs otherwise will have only Normal Actions available.

- Five: Alice and Betty *cannot* both have their full capacity, and can leave the table and ACs without tokens. More easily than with six tokens, it's possible for Alice or Betty to want a token but not have one available, for their MC or for the AC.

This explores the full space of a token economy, including scarcity. With six or more tokens, it's rare for Alice or Betty to have no tokens, and no way to acquire one. With five, such a scenario becomes more likely without contriving it purposely.

New Actions

You may find that for your given scenario, your MCs may sometimes have no good Actions that pertain to their situation. While you can always roleplay through such an impasse as a diagetic, in-character difficulty, you may find it helpful instead to give both MCs a third archetype, expanding the scope of Actions they can take. Alternatively, you may choose to give both MCs one or several of the following Actions:

- + Persuade a side character to help with information or goods.
- + Slip into hiding or out of sight from an immediate threat.
- + Dress a wound or treat an injury, with time and safe circumstances.
- + Study an enemy or calamity, given time and resources.
- Trip, slip, fall, or otherwise fumble at the worst moment.
- Run into a new and different threat than one you were already facing or fleeing.
- Suffer a critical wardrobe malfunction.
- An unexpected calamity breaks out just as you're securing a goal.

Adding a few of these more general Strong and Weak Actions can make sure your Main Characters never lack for *something* effective to do in order to secure their goals, and for a reliable way to suffer misfortunes that can gain them a token.

Adding Adversity Characters

The selection of Adversity Characters provided tries to give a good variety of possible encounters, and a lot of flexibility. But this means most ACs require some customization, and if you have a very particular idea or plan for an encounter or your story as a whole, you may need to create ACs from scratch.

Firstly, keep in mind that *any* form of adversity can make for an Adversity Character: a swamp, a town, a dungeon, a group of thugs, all examples already given in this book. By simply packaging a selection of Strong Actions that harm, hinder, or degrade the Main Characters, Normal Actions that give character and mood, and Weak Actions that grant the Main Characters a benefit or reprieve, you have an Adversity Character.

Secondly, to make an *effective* Adversity Character, try to keep to a small, simple, coherent theme or modus operandi. While you *can* create an AC that simply bundles together "everything good or bad that could happen to Main Characters in this story", you'll likely find more use from "an AC for a dangerous area", "an AC for a recurring enemy", and possibly "an AC for some harmful condition". That way, both players can keep a specific AC in mind as a character, an entity that takes action against the Main Characters, whose limitations you can plan and predict, and whose agenda you can think of in simple, straightforward terms.

Thirdly, to make a *good* Adversity Character, consider how it can interact with existing ACs. Some ACs can only harm or hinder Main Characters in a particular way (such as The Professor only acting on psychology, or The Dire Creature only attacking physically). Some ACs impose and act on a list of statuses, while others ignore statuses entirely. And several ACs can even directly attack or disable other ACs (such as the Fever Swamp, which could both unleash, and neutralize a Dire Creature).

As an example, the Holy Ruins gives some good general patterns to follow:

The Holy Ruins

The title should hopefully give a sense of the AC's theme.

- + Overwhelm a Main Character with sacred sights and mystery (status [awestruck]).
- + Impose a shocking spiritual epiphany on a Main Character (status [revealed]).
- + Shake a Main Character with how their life or nature is unfit for such glory (status [shamed]).

List the AC's 'preferred' attacks or adversity first. These are the main means by which the AC harms or hinders Main Characters.

- + Entrap a Main Character in a compromising, perilous, merciless position.
- + Unleash powerful and unwavering holy guardians to battle the Main Characters.

More severe or situational Strong Actions should still fit the theme or modus operandi that the 'common' Strong Actions establish.

Other ACs with even more punishing or potentially final Strong Actions usually depend on making preparatory Strong Actions (such as the Dark Sorceress having to mark or enchant someone before taking them to her keep, and having to have someone in her keep before performing a ritual on them).

- * Glean with ancient splendor and timeless majesty.
- * Reveal the truth of the world in cryptic tableaux, inscribed parables, and sacred relics.
- * Crumble, sag, and threaten to collapse at the slightest false step.

Normal Actions help to set the tone and mood, and allow the player narrating the AC to 'do something' through the AC, without always involving meaningful stakes.

- Reveal a valuable relic that a side character would want.
- Alleviate a harmful status from a Main Character.
- Provide an insight or revelation to aid a Main Character.

Like Strong and Normal Actions, Weak Actions should suit the AC's overarching theme. Further, they should always at least represent a loss of power, or lapse in hostility, for the AC. Weak Actions can even present expressly positive outcomes for Main Characters.

The Holy Ruins fit a general fantasy or pulp premise of an ancient and remote location where Main Characters might visit for treasure, knowledge, or healing. Indeed, notice it features an inherent reason that a Main Character would *want* to go here, amid the many reasons not to. While the Holy Ruins don't directly interact with any other ACs (such as the Fever Swamp and Dire Creature do), the Holy Ruins has the uncommon trait of *removing* statuses. Combined with a Fever Swamp, Underlings, and possibly under the rule of a Dark (or Light) Sorceress, the Holy Ruins can make for a rich and varied site for a single adventure, especially one of the 'dungeon delving' genre.

The Holy Ruins embody the theme of an ancient site filled with danger and revelation. It represents a place the Main Characters would likely want to go intentionally, to learn or to acquire some benefit. As a character, it 'wants' to overwhelm and inspire Main Characters, to strike them with awe and make them humble, to punish their arrogance or sense of self, and it may well collapse at any moment--or at least, the part that the Main Characters happen to stand on or lean against at the moment.

Keep this notion of a 'want' in mind for all ACs you create. On one hand, you can use this to simplify design, having Strong Actions that secure what the AC wants from Main Characters and Weak Actions that instead give Main Characters what *they* want; on the other, as with the Holy Ruins, you can have *every* Action reflect what the AC 'wants', but give the AC complex or contradictory wants, such as a 'want' to inspire awe, and a 'want' to decay into rubble (and endanger intruders in the process).

Advanced Actions

The Actions used for both Main Characters and Adversity Characters operate on a very basic principle: Main Characters use Strong Actions to solve problems, Weak Actions bring problems onto Main Characters; Adversity Characters use Strong Actions to harm or hinder Main Characters, and Weak Actions help Main Characters. Ultimately all Actions place MCs at the center of the universe, and ACs simply give a source of Actions outside of the MCs. This section will explore what else Actions can do and reflect.

More Power

You can give MCs new Strong Actions to reflect a new ability, power, or resource they gain during the story. As an example, if Ardella gains favor and influence with a powerful family, Alice could reflect this with a Strong Action for requesting their assistance. As the story progresses, this Action could become more powerful, such as simply *referencing* Ardella's powerful allies in order to sway or intimidate others.

While it would make narrative sense for Ardella to *also* gain a Weak Action reflecting her backers placing demands on her in return, it isn't strictly necessary. Strong and Weak Actions do not directly have any relationship with each other, and a Weak Action does not 'balance out' a Strong one. Indeed, Weak Actions each represent a distinct way or opportunity to acquire a token, and Strong Actions are simply things on which you can spend a token.

As an example of this, Belial discovers she has a demonic lineage, awakened through events in the story. Initially, this merely manifests as a Weak Action of suffering pain when she touches holy symbols or trappings. Betty *does not have to do the Weak Action*, if she decides that for whatever reason, Belial doesn't suffer any harm on a particular occasion. But if Betty wants a better supply of tokens for Belial's Strong Actions, Betty would do well to help guide the story toward interactions with religious figures, sacred sites, and holy relics.

And if Betty pursues Belial's demonic awakening, eventually a new Strong Action might well reflect growing demonic power--but adding in some Normal Actions, such as "sensing corruption" or "casual disrobing" would also serve well to reflect a progression.

More Hardship

On the converse, Main Characters could lose abilities and gain weaknesses, from their encounters with Adversity Characters. As a simple example, Ardella might lose her Priestly "receive guidance from higher powers" Action from her entanglement with that powerful family whose influence she uses. Indeed, if she persists in her shift of loyalty, she might well gain a *new* Strong Action of "defy the will of your backers": this would mean that in order to go against her powerful allies, she would have to spend a token. This would make the 'Strong Action' into a *weakness* for Ardella.

As a more complex example, Belial's awakened demonic heritage may weaken her more than benefit her. As an Explorer, Betty can normally gain a token for "earning the ire, outrage, or terror of locals" and "falling victim to the lusts of a creature". However her growing infernal aura may turn these into Normal Actions--things that simply happen to Belial normally. This reduces Belial's options to gain tokens, and if Belial doesn't nurture any demonic *strengths* as time goes on, then her corrupted aura will only increase, sparking outrage, lust, and fear wherever she goes.

Advanced Adversity

The Adversity Characters included for use in Fantasy Astray have a deliberately simple design for easy, flexible use. Expanding on these designs allows much broader mechanical representation for a greater variety of concepts. Returning to the Holy Ruins, several alterations would enhance it from a simple location to visit, into a fuller setting for continuing encounters.

The Temple Ruins

+ Overwhelm a Main Character with sacred sights and mystery (status [awestruck]). **This includes the Temple's Demands.**

+ Impose a shocking spiritual epiphany on a Main Character (status [revealed]). **This includes revealing a Temple Precept.**

+ Shake a Main Character with how their life or nature is unfit for such glory (status [shamed]). **This includes a quest for redemption or betterment.**

+ Entrap a Main Character in a compromising, perilous, merciless position.

+ Unleash powerful and unwavering holy guardians to battle the Main Characters. **Guards will not attack the [awestruck] or [shamed] or while the Ruins are [peaceful].**

+ **Only if you have a token: advance a Main Character along the progression: (none), [aware], [attentive], [fixated], [swayed], [enthralled], [obedient]**

+ **Only if you have a token: suggest ([swayed]), command ([enthralled]), or compel ([obedient]) a Main Character to your precepts.**

* Glean with ancient splendor and timeless majesty. **Prompt a Main Character to muse on the Temple's Demands.**

* Reveal the truth of the world in cryptic tableaux, inscribed parables, and sacred relics. **Prompt a Main Character to meditate on a Temple Precept.**

* Crumble, sag, and threaten to collapse at the slightest false step.

* **Subtly show favor to the most faithful: bugs don't bite, thorns don't scratch, rain doesn't fall on those who listen to the Ruins.**

- Reveal a valuable relic that a character would want. **It is hard to attain, but suggest how to start.**

- Alleviate a harmful status from a Main Character. **This can include illness and injury.**

- Provide an insight or revelation to aid a Main Character. **This can include anything the Main Character might benefit from knowing or suspecting.**

- **Become [peaceful] through supplication; this lasts until a Main Character knowingly violates a Temple Precept.**

- **Sustain a status from a Main Character's communion.**

- **Become [defiled] through breached Precepts by a Main Character, or aggressive action from impure side characters (including Adversity Characters). While [defiled], give no blessings or benefits to those in the Ruins.**

This expanded version of the Holy Ruins features six new Actions, supporting more long-term involvement from Main Characters and more focus on the Ruins as a setting. Now a fully-fledged temple complex, the MCs have much more to interact with, and the Ruins has more it can do to its new occupants.

Notice that most of the changes only amplify on existing Actions, and give guidance on how to use those Actions to support the agenda and overarching story centered on the Temple Ruins: now the Temple has 'Demands' and 'Precepts', which Main Characters can learn and abide by or violate as an ongoing feature of the story. In particular, the 'holy guardians' now have predictable limitations on whom and when they can attack, which binds the Temple Ruins in a kind of covenant with Main Characters.

Further limiting the Temple Ruins, a new kind of Strong Action depends on the AC *already having* a token. Normally, an AC may 'pay' for a Strong Action by taking tokens directly off the table, without ever making a Weak Action. But two of the Temple Ruins' Strong Actions make this explicit: in order to 'advance the progression' or 'suggest command or compel' a Main Character, the Temple Ruins *must* first make a Weak Action (all of which benefit the Main Characters or their broader goals). The Temple Ruins has to play along with the Main Characters before it can impose its most serious Strong Actions on them.

The Temple Ruins' Normal Actions no longer only convey the theme and agenda of the Ruins: they expressly prompt the player of a Main Character to give feedback and commentary, making the Temple's unstated 'Demands' and 'Precepts' not only more personal, but more prominent in the story. Discovering and negotiating these demands and precepts as Main Characters can now comprise a significant part of the narrative. This also goes to show that while Normal Actions don't gain or spend tokens, they can bear on any other Action where appropriate (such as the more explicit example of the Haunted Hospital, whose worst Strong Actions depend on a single Normal Action).

And while other ACs have Weak Actions that make the AC less hostile or dangerous, or remove the AC's threat altogether, the Temple Ruins features Weak Actions that both expressly subject it to Main Characters' will and agenda, and make it vulnerable to *other characters*. Indeed, the last Weak Action gives Main Characters an incentive to *protect* the Temple Ruins from outside threats, and thus indirectly suggests such threats as a feature in the story. In ensemble, this complicated combination of Actions and the agendas they explicitly and implicitly embody make the Temple Ruins much more like a Main Character than any other Adversity Character. But, the Temple Ruins still functions like an AC, providing adversity and conflict for MCs, presenting challenges and obstacles and drama, even pitting MCs against one another, and requiring MCs to take action in the story.