

The Wizchan Scrying Guide

A Solo, Diceless, Paperless RPG



By Wizanon

IF YOU ARE IN A HURRY, ARE IMPATIENT, OR JUST WANT TO GET THE GIST BEFORE READING, SKIP TO THE 1-PAGE GUIDE AT THE BACK.

THE REST OF THIS BOOK IS JUST TL;DR FLUFF, IF YOU WANT THE GUTS, SKIP TO THE BACK.

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How to Play

Step 0 -Introduction

The point of this book is to introduce a diceless, paperless RPG. The idea is that if you were in an empty room, a long boring car ride with endless expanse of road, etc., you'd be able to entertain yourself with this game.

Please keep this in mind when looking at the design and mechanics of this game. The game's system to generate random outcomes is not really random—this is to reduce cognitive load, and make it so you don't have to use dice. Some oracles (a mechanic you use to figure out what is, what to do, or what has happened) are not specific—this is to reduce cognitive load, and make it so you don't have to consult an outside reference. Some game mechanics are overly simplistic—this is to reduce your cognitive load, and make it so you don't have to take notes.

Everything in this system is designed to try to minimize the cognitive load required to play, and keep it simple enough to do so completely mentally. This is a requirement because otherwise it is simply pragmatically impossible to play. Therefore, elements that seasoned TTRPG players might be used to—stats table, THACOs, hit tables, monster/spell compendiums, etc.—are left out. Some mechanics give an answer that requires heavy interpretation instead of a solid answer. A lot of this might seem barebones, but that is by design.

Because of this, it is also a very generative and evolving setting. Just like you don't learn everything at once about a new place you move into, you don't learn everything about your new adventure. It's meant to require frequent consultation of oracles to figure out what's going on, and build it up as you slowly come to understand prior steps.

For some people, it may be better to think of this as almost “guided imagination.” Then again, we're all doing that anyways to some degree when reading a book, listening to a story, or even playing a game.

Step 1 – How to Roll a Die

“And you would, naturally, as you began on this adventure of dreams, you would fulfill all your wishes. You would have every kind of pleasure you could conceive. And after several nights of 75 years of total pleasure each you would say ‘Well that was pretty great. But now let’s have a surprise, let’s have a dream which isn’t under control, where something is gonna happen to me that I don’t know what it’s gonna be.’”

- Alan Watts, *The Dream of Life*

One needs a random element in order to play with oracle systems that help make solo RPGs interesting. In order to do this, we need something equivalent to “rolling a die.” One way to do this is as a computer would, which would be to use a pseudorandom number generator. There are many algorithms and methods to do this. However, to satisfy the goal of being able to play completely mentally, one needs this method to be incredibly simple. Therefore, many of the warnings about poorly programmed versions of pseudorandom number generators do not apply here (see Knuth’s [The Art of Computer Programming](#) for these warnings). When you are playing by yourself, with no dice, an absolutely faithful representation of “randomness” is not needed. There is a good chance that you will be at the cusp of having to remember a great many things, so that the perception of something not being “truly random” is not the important element of gameplay for you. As such, this guide focuses on keeping the method of “rolling a die” dead simple, and it is suggested to use a heavily modified version of a “[Fibonacci] linear feedback shift register.”

At all times, you must remember two “seed” numbers. Throughout your gameplay, the two numbers will change every time you roll the die (e.g. access an oracle device), allowing the numbers to change “sufficiently randomly.” Call these seed numbers (or “registers”) “A” and “B.” As an example:

A	7
B	6

As you add the numbers, you “shift” onto these two “registers,” placing the added number onto B, and the number that was in B into A—but be sure to drop any tens digit if there are any:

A	6
B	7+6=13->3

In this way the process can be repeated:

A	3	9	2	1	3	4	...
B	6+3=9	3+9=12->2	9+2=11->1	3	4	7	...

And so on.

This is not truly random because the sequence will eventually repeat. However, in the course of a typical game, not only will you likely not notice, but more importantly you’ll probably make arithmetic mistakes that you didn’t even notice, or you’ll forget your seed numbers (just make up two if that happens and don’t worry about it). The nice thing about this method is that the element of human mistakes in using it actually makes it better at its job. So don’t worry if you screw it up.

Please keep in mind that this is a “count from 0” system. So, rolling a ‘0’ really honestly does mean rolling a ‘0,’ not ‘10.’ It is done this way so that odds can be easily checked to be more or less than 3:7 or 7:3 odds when using the fate oracle below.

Step 2 – How to Consult Oracles

“A wall of wood alone shall be uncaptured, a boon to you and your children.”

-The Oracle of Apollo at Delphi

This step appears difficult at first, but if you keep in mind that it is meant to try to avoid having to memorize incredibly long lists, it starts to make more sense.

You consult an oracle when it's not clear to you what to do and generally feel lost in what to do (if you do know what to do, then don't bother with the oracle!). This generally falls under the following, but use how you feel is appropriate:

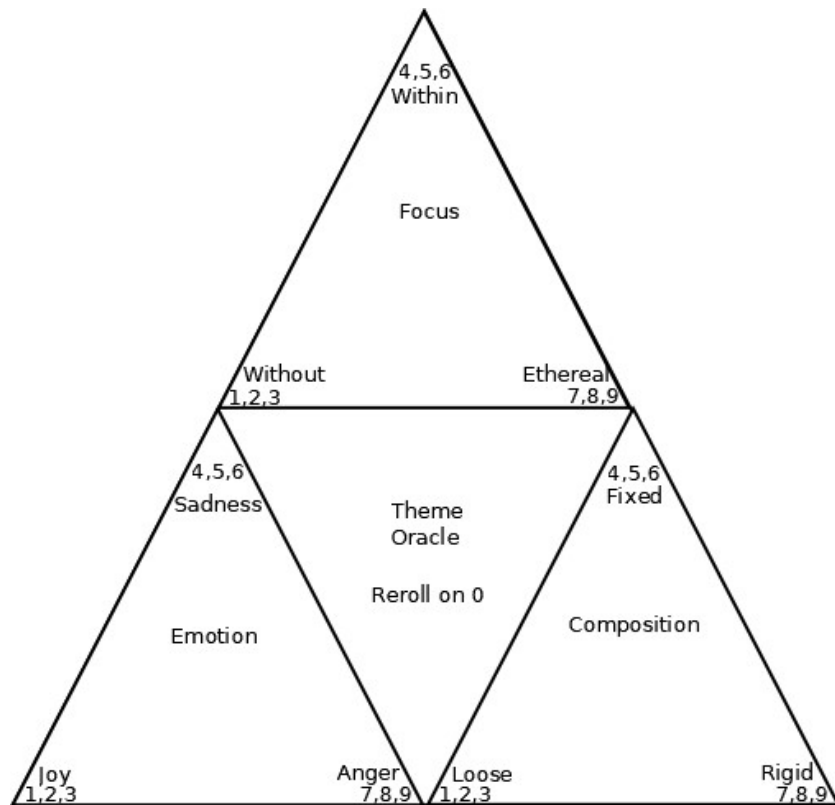
- You need a setting, description, character—a 'noun/adjective.'
 - o Use the “theme” oracle.
- You need an action, direction, plot—a 'verb/adverb.'
 - o Use the “action” oracle.
 - o Plot hooks should use this in conjunction with 'contexts' described in the next part.
- You need a result, check, outcome—an 'answer.'
 - o Use the “fate” oracle.
 - o If you're looking to do ability/combat checks, use this.

If you still don't know what to do—roll again.

The theme and action oracles are based around Sierpinski triangles (“triforces” to you Zelda nerds), or three smaller triangles nested in a larger triangle. Each vertex contains a word. It's done this way solely for organization and to help memorize it since the smaller triangles of the oracles are arranged with similar, associated words.

To consult the theme/action oracles, roll a die for a vertex of each of the smaller triangles, and the combination is your answer. We combine the words because by compounding the words together, we can “multiply” the words together, allowing us to have a much larger possible space of responses from the oracle with less required memorization (3x3x3=27 possible responses from the oracle, so 9 “organized” words need to be memorized, as opposed to 27 “unorganized” words needing to be memorized).

Theme Oracle



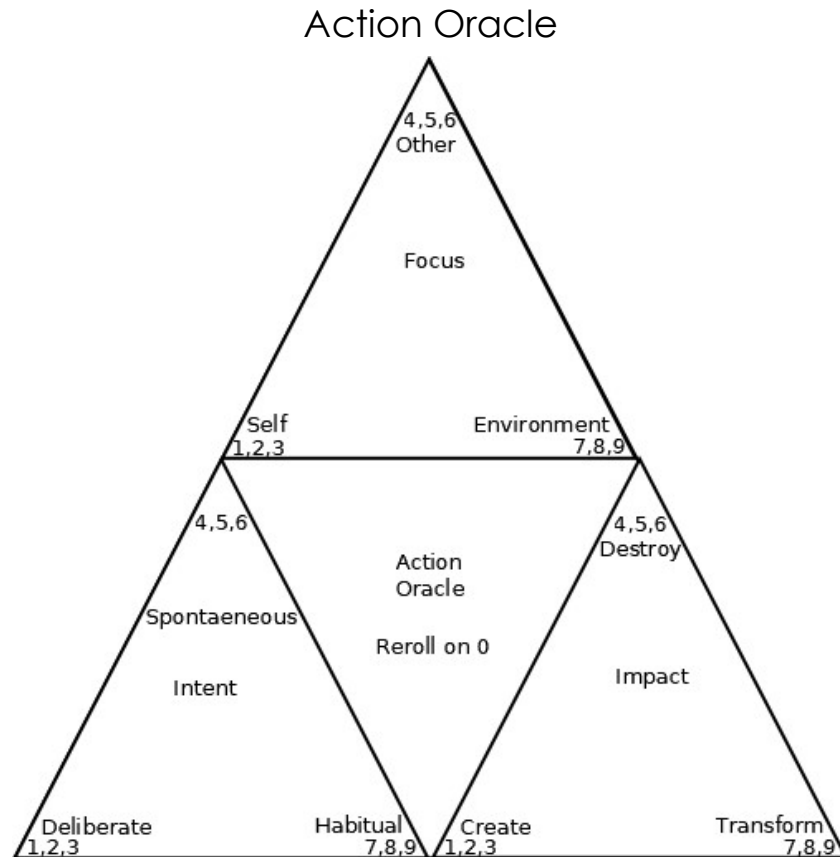
It may also be organized more succinctly as a table:

Theme Oracle	Emotion	Focus	Composition
1,2,3	Joy	Within	Loose
4,5,6	Sadness	Without	Fixed
7,8,9	Anger	Ethereal	Rigid
0	reroll	reroll	reroll

So, say you're looking to describe a new character, and roll 2,5,9. That corresponds to the words joy, rigid, and within. This could mean that they're a happy person (joy), but they've a set routine (rigid) and are introverted (within)—like a monk.

Say you're looking to describe a new village, and roll 7,1,2. That corresponds to the words, anger, loose, and without. This could mean that the city is a harsh place to live (anger), lots of crime (loose), and is a metropolis (without).

As you can see, a lot of the use of this oracle revolves around first choosing the type of noun that seems appropriate (person, place, thing, or idea), and then after rolling creating some sort of reasonable interpretation of the words from them.



Again, as a table:

Action Oracle	Intent	Focus	Impact
1,2,3	Deliberate	Self	Create
4,5,6	Spontaneous	Other	Destroy
7,8,9	Habitual	Environment	Transform
0	reroll	reroll	reroll

Say you have a new character, and are trying to give them something to do. You roll 7, 3, 1—or deliberate, other, create. A ‘deliberate act of creation for someone else.’ E.g., someone makes a gift for someone.

Your party might be in a city, but you don’t know what to do and want a plot hook. You roll 2, 8, 8—or deliberate, environment and transform. Perhaps a number of places in the city (environment) have been defaced with graffiti (transform), and your party is approached to figure out who did it (deliberate).

As you can see, in general the action oracle is a good “What do I do now?” device, but like any other oracle, requires heavy interpretation.

Fate Oracle

The goal of a fate oracle is to answer “yes or no” questions. “Does John cross the chasm?” “Does he hit the orc?” “Was the ruse successful?”

The fate oracle consists of a chart to roll under. The chart is constructed by starting at a base roll of ‘5.’ Then you consider whether what you would like to do has bad, average, or good odds and the “momentum” (explained further below); which both successively adds 1, nothing, or subtracts 1 from your target roll:

Difficulty\Momentum	Bad (-1)	Neutral (+0)	Good (+1)
Hard (-1)	3	4	5
Neutral (+0)	4	5	6
Easy (+1)	5	6	7

In the case you roll “0” it is an ‘exceptional yes’ and “9” is an ‘exceptional no.’ Or in different TTRPG parlance, treat them as critical success and failure.

The “momentum” is based on your previous fate roll. If it succeeded, add 1 to the “momentum” and if BOTH A and B registers on your roll failed subtract 1.

If you are wondering if it's possible to have better than the 3:7 or 7:3 odds in this system: no. In these cases, consider whether you really need to consult the fate oracle. The reason is that if you find yourself wanting better odds than that, then you as GM should just say that WILL happen, that you don't want to actually roll a fate check/it doesn't make sense to, and just continue narratively.

Psychological research indicates that anything less than 3:7 odds is discouraging to continued play. Likewise, anything greater than 7:3 odds is often too easy, and likewise discourages play. Therefore, this system only considers giving three base possible options for odds: 3:7, 5:5, or 7:3.

The “momentum” mechanic is likewise based in psychology. The idea is that this creates a series of highs and lows throughout the adventure, but is slightly biased towards keeping things high simply because players tend to find having lucky streaks more fun than depressive losing streaks.

Other fate oracles have a much “higher resolution” chart. Because this game has to be possible completely mentally, it is reduced to simple modifiers.

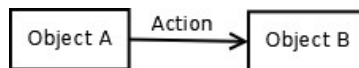
Step 3 – How to set up a world

“If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first invent the universe.”

- Carl Sagan

To set up a world in a single phrase: don't do it all at once. The Wizard RPG is meant to create the play world in an evolutionary, iterative fashion. This is primarily to make the experience less overwhelming, but mainly to take advantage of how human memory works, as pieces can slowly come into play and be given proper time for the mind to solidify them into longer term memory.

Beyond using the theme oracle to create new objects, fleshing them out in the setting is done by establishing “contexts” for people, places, and things in the setting. A “context” in the scope of this game refers to how two things relate to each other. Beyond using the action oracle to create new contexts, the relation is defined in terms of what things one wants from thing two, what is stopping them, and vice versa.

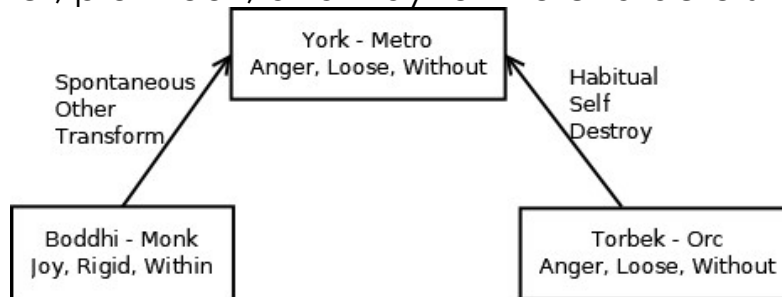


The main use of ‘contexts’ is that because of their dependence on action oracle, they automatically suggest things to do next. It is also important in that it helps enmesh the objects in the game and makes them feel more purposeful and therefore “real.” The context mechanic is not a dice or resource-based mechanic, nor arguably ‘mechanic’ at all, but rather a narrative exercise device.

However, establishing contexts for everything pre-existing when a new NPC, setting, etc. appears would make it so that an exponentially increasing number of contexts would need to be remembered, making it unfeasible to work with. To this end, only two or three contexts to pre-existing objects are created, and also not rigorously remembered. It's more to help gain a footing of the character or setting just introduced.

Limiting this to two or three per object in the universe allows discovery of other contexts via association. Further, two or three are just enough to provide interconnectedness to the rest of the objects in the universe.

As an example, say you already have two characters: Boddhi the monk, and Torbek the orc. You introduce a new city “York,” and therefore create some contexts between the new city and these two characters to figure out how they can connect with the city. You use the action oracle to create the context of “Spontaneous, Other, Transform” and “Habitual, Self, Destroy.” Suggesting that perhaps Torbek is in the city to have a wild bender, and Boddhi is there to wander the streets, ready to proselytize. This could suggest that Boddhi finds Torbek in the middle of his bender, creating a natural conflict, plot hook, and way for the characters to meet.



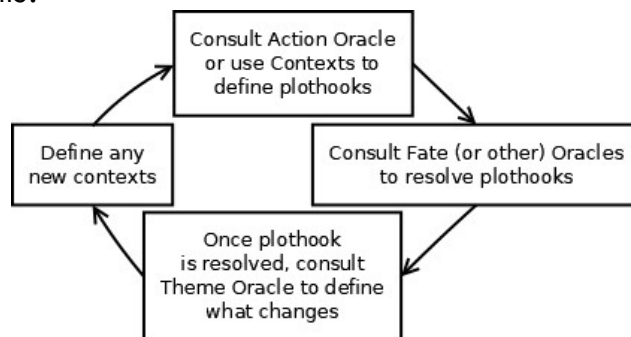
It may be the case that as you play you frequently forget the contexts between objects or the specific attributes of characters. You might forget all of them. That's fine. After all, in any world, things should ebb and flow. So, use it as an opportunity to reestablish new contexts, objects, and relations.

Step 4 - Summary

"When I discovered Reincarnation it was as if I had found a universal plan. I realized that there was a chance to work out my ideas. Time was no longer limited. I was no longer a slave to the hands of the clock. Genius is experience. Some seem to think that it is a gift or talent, but it is the fruit of long experience in many lives. Some are older souls than others, and so they know more. The discovery of Reincarnation put my mind at ease. If you preserve a record of this conversation, write it so that it puts men's minds at ease. I would like to communicate to others the calmness that the long view of life gives to us."

- Henry Ford

With the dice rolling method from step 1, you can use the fate, theme, and action oracles. With the theme and action oracles, you can flesh out a world, and with the theme and the fate oracle, you can play out a game. In brief, a general cycle of play looks something like this:



This flow chart is not set in stone. You should be able to call upon the fate, theme, or action oracles, create contexts, and be creative in interpreting them as needed. Have fun!

Applications

This game could be used for more than just entertainment. We spend some time to make a few suggestions beyond a standard RPG in case the initial play interests you, and you wish to expand your horizons further. It is rather lofty, but in theory, it could be used for the following applications.

Mental Training

Maybe you feel like you've lost your ability to daydream, this system can act as a sort of 'guided imagination' practice. Or, more likely, perhaps you feel like you're in a state of brainrot from constantly being in front of novelty device screens and wish to bring back some of your mental abilities and abilities of attention. Although this is designed to be diceless and paperless, there's nothing to say you can't use those materials if you're having trouble. If you're having difficulty with the arithmetic step, use a dice while playing until you slowly build enough mental aptitude on the other components. If you're having difficulty focusing your attention, keep random one-word notes to keep track of where you are until you've trained your mind up to a point again where you can play a game like this in your head. Once you can, hopefully you can reach a state where the brainfog starts to go away as you use this as a tool to practice.

Insomnia

You may have trouble going to sleep because...it's boring! If you're one of the types who don't fall asleep the moment their head hits the pillow, this gives you something to do while your eyes are closed, yet you aren't asleep yet.

Asceticism

Say tomorrow you lose every physical possession you have. As this system is designed to be completely memorized, you will never lose it. You could be on skid row and still have this to carry with you.

Story Writing

If you are writing a story, you may hit a creative block. You can't think of how the story would naturally progress. In this case, this system might help. If the creative block is due to not knowing how the characters act, then graphing out the contexts might help. If you don't know what they should do, consulting the action oracle can help. If you don't know where they should go, consulting the theme oracle can help. If you don't know whether it's realistic for them to do something, consulting the fate oracle might help. If you need a steady progression to follow through in the creation of a story, then following the circular progression of this system might help, too.

Simulation/Planning

In theory, you could use this system to "wargame" a possible event in your life. In this case, the system works "backwards" as you take concepts from the case you're trying to simulate and fit them back into this system. In the case you're trying to study, pick out a few of the objects, describe them as you would if they came from the theme oracle. Think of some of the context maps, and how they would be described as if they came from the action oracle. As you slowly think through and put together in your mind the web of context and actionable desires between objects of your case of study, then you can work forward as if you were playing this game normally, seeing what sort of consequences the oracles would result in.

The Occult

Traditionally, many aleatory systems formed the basis of many schools of divination, such as taromancy or other forms of cleromancy. One suggested method of use is to try to envision your own life as it is, and then to use this system as a method of divination.

It is arguable whether the ancient Oracles of Delphi really were diviners with holy providence, or they simply were well-read, and then went into a chamber with noxious gases that induced their subconscious to provide enviable solutions to the problems of antiquity. Likewise here, it is unknown whether this is truly a method of divination or some sort of mental cleromancy, or whether any insight from such play is merely a byproduct of what happens when using it as a tool for simulation.

To do this, simply do the same thing as previously suggested in the simulation/planning section. In the end it is the same as that section. The only difference is that it is fun to feel or at the very least imagine that what you are doing is probably the closest you could get to a wizard practicing the ability of scrying.

Credits

This took heavy influence from other TTRPG systems:

- Chaos Oracle systems, e.g. Mythic GME's.
- Theme/Action Oracle system, e.g. Ironsword's.
- Personality Typing, e.g. Utopia's Compass
- Hillfolk's Dramasystem/Golden Sky Stories' Connection system.
- General Computer Science is kind of like a TTRPG.

This would not exist were it not for these systems. We take a little bit of time discussing what was incorporated from each of these, and why.

Chaos Oracle

This is the grandfather system that makes all current solo RPGs possible today. One of the reasons we depend upon a GM in TTRPGs is because we are too biased. This bias leads to predictability in storylines, and therefore uninteresting, drab, and outcomes lacking novelty that would otherwise pique our interest.

Theme/Action Oracle

It isn't enough to be able to answer a yes/no question in a non-deterministic way. Sometimes, we simply need help to be creative. Narrative techniques using randomness—aleatory techniques—to help creativity can be traced back to ancient times.

Personality Typing

Utopia's Compass system is fairly similar to other pseudoscientific personality description systems, but the reason we're interested in it has **nothing** to do with personality-types, or some sort of MBTI astrology. We are interested in it insofar only as it approaches problems of taxonomy.

It arranges concepts in a “multiplicative” fashion. E.g., Compass requires 4 different “types” in a multiplicate manner to describe 4^2 many “types.” Thereby simplifying the system from needing to remember 16 types to 8, and not even really requiring a full ‘8’ since the ‘8’ is paired into two groups of four, taking advantage of how the human memory uses association to remember things. There are many other systems that do this, and more broadly many concepts from library and information science that describe these concepts.

We needed a system like this because one of the issues with the theme/action oracle system is that you need a pair of really large charts to make a diverse range of interesting settings or possibilities. If our goal is an easy to memorize, paperless system, that poses a challenge. While it is theoretically possible to memorize large theme/action tables (e.g., using method of loci), in practice your mind will be juggling a number of other tasks to keep the narrative going. Therefore, anything that can be done to minimize the amount needed to hold in memory helps.

By arranging words “multiplicatively” as they do in the Compass systems, we can achieve a logarithmic compression of the number of concepts necessary to memorize.

Dramasystem/Connections

Creating plot hooks is hard, and a frequent source of creative blocks. The issues in creating this system do not purely lie in computational or memory problems. There needs to be aids to increase creativity as well. More than a theater or improv technique, dramasystem and other “relational” systems, help with creativity as the other techniques above help with what one needs to remember.

Further, more than creativity, purpose is arguably defined in an evolutionary manner. The purpose of an object is related to its context in the environment as much as if not more so the nature of the object itself. In this way, dramasystem, relation systems, etc. create a graph theory object that well describes the universe of play and imagination.

General Computer Science

This is more of an aside, but a lot of the design of this book are concepts borrowed from computer science:

- The diceless system is a very particular pseudorandom algorithm.
- The theme/action oracle uses a tree data structure.
- The fate oracle is a low-rank matrix compression.
- The context system is a graph structure, and is built using an iterative algorithm.

In general, a lot of the thought and design behind this book had in mind the principle, "We need to reduce the computational complexity, memory references, and memory storage utilization." Because of this, it was natural to introduce a lot of concepts that are really concepts in computer science.

If you've never heard of this and these systems interest you, or in general these sorts of topics interest you, then consider studying computer science. Not necessarily professionally, just for elucidation

CHEAT SHEET

"ROLLING" DICE

A	B	7	4	1
B	A+Bmod10	4	1	5

"B" is the outcome of the roll

THEME ORACLE

Roll\Type	Emotion	Focus	Composition
1,2,3	Joy	Within	Loose
4,5,6	Sadness	Without	Fixed
7,8,9	Anger	Ethereal	Rigid
0	reroll	Reroll	Reroll

ACTION ORACLE

Roll\Type	Intent	Focus	Impact
1,2,3	Deliberate	Self	Create
4,5,6	Spontaneous	Other	Destroy
7,8,9	Habitual	Environment	Transform
0	Reroll	reroll	reroll

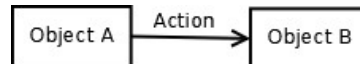
FATE ORACLE (ROLL BELOW)

Difficulty\Momentum	Bad (-1)	Neutral (+0)	Good (+1)
Hard (-1)	3	4	5
Neutral (+0)	4	5	6
Easy (+1)	5	6	7

If A & B rolls fail, -1 to momentum, if B succeeds +1 to momentum

'0' is crit success/yes, '9' is crit fail/no

CREATE CONTEXTS



GAME FLOW SUMMARY

