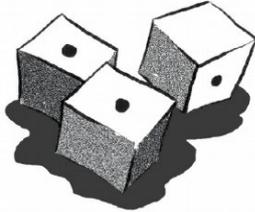


THE POOL

A role-playing game by James V. West



There is no Federation of Planets. There is no Galactic Council. We each fared into space knowing only commerce and conquest. From what followed, everyone lost. This ancient, worthless system is neutral territory because no one wants it. Here in the ruins, the emissaries of a dozen advanced interstellar empires meet at last to talk and negotiate. Now the future will find its shape.

MAKE UP YOUR CHARACTER

Use one of the pictures above, either as is or find an equivalent picture and use that. Earth and humanity are entirely absent from our setting. Write 50 words or less to describe anything about your character's appearance, their status, their origin or background, their biological and technological features, what they can do, their gear or resources, companions, their official mission, or what they want.

- Do not use superlatives or front-loading terms.
- Make up names and words. Make up and include other characters or past events if you want.
- Underline words or short phrases to define Traits, as many as you can or want.
- Give the character a name and title. It does not count toward the 50 words.

Assign bonuses to one or more Traits. It is OK for Traits not to have bonuses.

- You have 15 dice. You may spend up to 14 of them for Trait bonuses.
- +1 Bonus costs 1 die; +2 Bonus costs 4 dice, +3 Bonus costs 9 dice.
- The remaining dice become your starting Pool.

RULES OF PLAY

The GM plays the backstory and the physical qualities of situations in play, begins new situations including cuts in location and time, and plays all non-player characters including those listed in characters' stories. Players' knowledge and backstory input is restricted to content in their characters' stories.

Conflicts (dice rolls) are identified by anyone in play based on what's happening or on what they're about to do. The scope of a given roll and potentially damaging or lethal effects are identified by the GM. Everyone involved rolls [1-3 Gift dice] + [dice equal to the bonus for one Trait] + [Pool dice they choose to gamble]. One or more "1" showing on a die indicates success.

Describe the success or failure, including ordering, causal events, actions, effects, and characterizations. No new information may be introduced except as GM-provided backstory or situation. For the actions undertaken and the scope, the effects are as decisive and conclusive as possible.

- If the conflict is failed, the GM narrates. All gambled Pool dice are lost.
- If the conflict succeeds, either
 - the GM narrates minimally and the player adds one die to their Pool, or
 - the player narrates with greater latitude for effects and consequences.

LATER DEVELOPMENT

During play or between sessions, assign or increase bonuses to Traits as you desire using the same method as above. Bonuses may not be traded back into Pool dice.

Between sessions, add 15 words to your character summary, either as new sentences and phrases, or as additions and revisions to existing text. Underline content as Traits using the same method as above.