Dark Sun

The world is a desert full of lost secrets and fierce monsters. Metal is scarce. Magic defiles the world. The culture is savage. Tribes and enclaves dot the wastelands, developing weird rituals and beliefs. Commerce includes raiding, slavery, and blood sports. Sorcerer-Kings rule the city-states as self-proclaimed gods, wielding magic, fear, and privileges. Any actual gods are silent and probably absent.

Races aren't what you expect. Humans' faces and forms are distorted, and coloration varies randomly. Half-giants are easily-controlled monster humans serving as city-state soldiers. Elves are feared desert nomads and criminals. Dwarves are a hairless minority scattered among other cultures. Muls are dwarf-human hybrids bred into slavery, especially as gladiators. Halflings live in savage cannibal tribes in hidden or remote areas. Thri-Keen are bizarre mantis people who sometimes live among humans.

Everyone is a little bit psionic, including hard-to-control telepathy, telekinesis, or precognition. Honing it into physical technique creates spectacular dance, combat, and other skills. Developing it into rituals and extreme effects is magic ("defiling"), which drains nearby life and growth. The Sorcerer-Kings forbid it even as they use it in various ways to maintain their power.

Our adventures and stories depend on what sort of characters you want to play.

Gladiator	Grifter-Merchant	Caravaneer-Slaver
Ritual Dancer	Mystic	Noble
Defiler (secret)	Templar	Mind-Fighter
Tribesperson	Raider	Beast Master

We'll play in and near Nibenay, City of Spires. Consider the following possibilities for groups and situations you might be mixed up in:

Gulg (neighboring city)
- Ongoing hostilities and intrigue

House Shom
- Slavery and parties

The Shadow Brides
- The struggle for power, or hiding rebellion

The arena
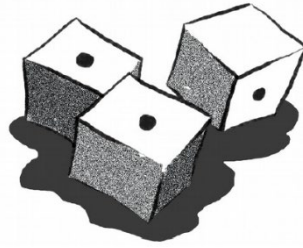- Free gladiators

The Temple of Thought
- High Consort Siekhoum: new defilements

The Hill District
- Crime, thievery, rebellion

THE POOL

A role-playing game by James V. West

MAKE UP YOUR CHARACTER
Write 50 words or less to describe anything about your character's appearance, their status, their origin or background, what they can do, their gear or resources, companions, their obligations, 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 any associated 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.

ONGOING 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.