

BESM

ROLE-PLAYING GAME

FOURTH EDITION

KICKSTARTER PREVIEW

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WHAT MAKES BESM AN ANIME/MANGA RPG?

Since the first edition of BESM was published in 1997, the same question arises repeatedly: “What makes BESM an anime and manga RPG? Isn’t it really just a universal game system?”

Yes, it’s true that BESM functions as a universal RPG system in a similar way as other effects-based games. For over two decades, many groups have used it as their go-to generic system, completely divorced from any references to anime or manga. What separates BESM from other universal RPGs (such as HERO or GURPS or FATE or Savage Worlds) and establishes it as a universal anime and manga game is the fundamental design foundation of its Tri-Stat System. In short, BESM is an anime and manga game because it was designed with that foremost in mind.

The Tri-Stat System is the mechanics while BESM is the game, much in the same way that d20 is the system for Dungeons and Dragons and HERO is the system for Champions. Unlike most RPGs, BESM only has

three primary game statistics (called Stats): Body for all things physical, Mind for all things mental, and Soul for all things spiritual. Contrast this with six stats (“Ability Scores”) in Dungeons and Dragons — Strength, Constitution, Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma — and you’ll see the intention with Tri-Stat was to provide a balance to all aspects of a character that doesn’t value physical over mental. Furthermore, a character’s combat prowess in BESM (known as Combat Value) is determined by averaging the character’s Body, Mind, and Soul Stats. Again, this purposeful choice to derive fighting ability from all aspects of a character (rather than just physical aspects) reflects a decidedly Eastern philosophy about harmony of the Complete Self. Balance in the Tri-Stat System was an intentional decision at its inception.

There are other aspects of BESM that give it a distinct anime and manga feel, too. The artwork sets a strong visual tone, of course, and this fourth edition has some spectacular pieces by extremely talented illustrators. Also, some story and character elements that are common in anime and manga — but are not as common in Western stories — do provide

additional flavour, such as combining giant mecha (the Merge Attribute) and characters that attract a swarm of admirers (Magnet Defect). Finally, the game of BESM, rather than the Tri-Stat System, provides excellent guidance for playing and game mastering campaigns to help you create an evocative anime-style flavour in your stories (see Chapters 12, 13, and 14).

That doesn’t mean you are required to use BESM solely to play games with anime or manga stylings. Although the game mechanics were designed with anime in mind, BESM is still a universal system that is a perfect choice for diverse scenarios that feature comic book superheroes, high fantasy worlds, campy horror movie elements, Western sci-fi epics, and so much more. BESM Fourth Edition embraces its anime roots, but encompasses a much larger RPG landscape.

WHAT'S NEW IN BESM FOURTH EDITION?

BESM Fourth Edition reflects an elegant evolution of the Tri-Stat System, the game mechanic system that powers your anime and manga action. Transformation from the third to fourth editions is not as substantial as the changes from second to third, though a rebalancing and new presentation were necessary to provide a better framework for both BESM newcomer and seasoned player alike.

The list below outlines major improvements and changes to BESM, both from the previous Third Edition (2007) but also from the popular Second Edition (2000).

- » switching to a more-intuitive roll-high game system instead of the roll-low from BESM Second Edition
- » rebalancing Points for all Stat, Attribute, and Defect costs, while simultaneously reducing the Character Point totals presented in BESM Third Edition to more manageable numbers
- » expanding Attribute and Defect options from BESM Second Edition (little change from the previous edition)
- » renaming select Attributes and Defects to make them more inclusive of different genres and styles
- » removing the individual and separate Skill System in favour of more dynamic and streamlined Skill Groups Attribute
- » emphasising both Race and Class Templates in character creation by inserting them into the earliest stages of the process and expanding the list of options available
- » incorporating most Attribute customisation into a standard system of Enhancements and Limiters that elegantly changes an Attribute’s effective level instead of Character Point cost (this reflects a new take on Variables and Restrictions from BESM Third Edition)
- » returning clear Attribute Level descriptions to all entries, which were removed when transitioning from the second to third editions
- » adding a new Social Fault Defect to address social disadvantages for characters, which in previous BESM editions were relegated to role-playing opportunities only
- » changing how damage is calculated and applied compared to BESM Second Edition
- » streamlining the flow of combat by focusing more on core actions, with a wide range of optional rules moving to the BESM Extras sourcebook instead
- » unifying dice roll difficulty modifiers into a new concept of “edges and obstacles”, which instead adds extra dice to the standard two six-sided dice roll and requires the player to only use the two highest (edge) or lowest (obstacle) dice to determine the final roll value
- » expanding on character companions by including a chapter with animal and supporting character stats
- » providing a sneak peek into the Anime Multiverse, BESM’s vast multidimensional and multi-genre campaign setting that was introduced in Third Edition (the setting will be fully presented in the BESM Multiverse sourcebook)
- » establishing a holistic approach and presentation to the core game book and essential expansion sourcebooks (including BESM Naked, BESM Extras, and BESM Multiverse) to provide a firm foundation for the BESM Fourth Edition game line

Enabling all of these dramatic changes means that BESM Fourth Edition is not directly compatible with any previous edition of BESM. Your first, second, and third edition characters and mecha will certainly convert to this new edition with some effort, but they will need to be reworked and balanced to reflect the new system.



COLLECTIVE CREATION

When preparing for the launch of a new role-playing campaign, players typically create their characters in isolation based on the setting information the GM provides. This tendency may not produce the best results for a strong start to the adventures, though, since both the characters and the players lack cohesion for this innately social activity.

Consider the benefits that a group character creation session provides to the team. Discussing the nature and roles of everyone's character ideas together ensures that the group dynamic is balanced and that every character has unique benefits that will allow them to shine during the game. Establishing character connections is also easier in this initial group meeting, since you can co-develop resonant backstories to provide friendship contexts in the game setting. Finally, group character creation reduces the chances of missed opportunities when designing your team (ie. having a hole in your party). In a traditional swords-and-sorcery RPG, for example, adventures may be significantly more challenging if your group is missing a spell caster, healer, fighter, or thief!

After scoping the game, spend the rest of session zero talking about the ideal composition of your character team and the strengths and individuality that each character member can bring to the group. Everyone should ideally be open to ideas they may not have considered earlier and look at their character's role in the larger context of the game. Spending additional time with the players and Game Master at this stage of character creation will yield great benefits compared to the typical isolated development tendency.

POWER LEVEL

Once the GM and players together have outlined the general framework of the upcoming adventures, it's time to discuss your characters' power level. The characters' relative capabilities and aptitudes determines the Character Point total from which they are constructed (covered in detail in Chapters 3-7). Consider which of the eight power rankings described herein best align with the vision your group created for your characters.

SUB-HUMAN (0-24 POINTS)

Role-playing underpowered characters can be a highly rewarding experience, with the game typically focusing more on drama and less on action. Such roles may include younger teens and children, wee creatures (such as pixies and sprites), or sentient small animals (like bunnies and squirrels).

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CHARACTER POWER LEVELS

Power Level	Character Points
Sub-Human	0-24
Human	25-49
Adventurer	50-99
Heroic	100-124
Mythical	125-149
Superhuman	150-199
Superpowered	200-249
Godlike	250+

HUMAN (25-49 POINTS)

This power level is suitable for games in which most of the characters will play brave but low-powered roles (such as those described above), with a few special abilities or powerful items to aid in their quests. It can also be used for games featuring normal humans like detectives, high school students, scientists, and soldiers.

ADVENTURER (50-99 POINTS)

The adventurer power level is suitable for games in which most of the characters are valiant and courageous but otherwise normal humans or near-humans. They may have some special abilities, but rarely exceed the power of a typical action movie hero. It is also suitable for games where the characters play low-powered characters (for example, elementary school students) who have some powerful abilities, such as pet monsters or the knowledge to cast magical spells.

HEROIC (100-124 POINTS)

BESM players may find this power level the "sweet spot" for a wide variety of adventures, since heroic characters have a decent selection of moderate abilities plus some nifty items and other resources. At the same time, the power level and Character Point totals aren't so high that they might cause power balance issues or difficulties presenting challenging adventures for every character in the group. Heroic characters may reflect humans at their peak performance with moderate special abilities, or capable non-human characters with significant technological or paranormal advantages.

MYTHICAL (125-149 POINTS)

The mythical power level is most suitable for games where the characters are notably more impressive than normal humans, but can still be challenged by ordinary opponents (especially in large numbers). The characters may still be human but are typically exceptionally

talented, such a legendary martial arts master, the toughest cop in the city, or an elite secret agent. They could also be characters with significant supernatural or psychic powers, such as a magical girl or an experienced mage or psionic. Mythical level is ideally suited for individuals with moderately powerful racial abilities: a vampire, a ghost, a cyborg, a demon, etc. Finally, a mythical game can also cover characters that are above average in capabilities, but individually or collectively have access to very powerful gear. Examples character types include a squad of giant robot mecha pilots or the captain and crew of a starship.

SUPERHUMAN (150-199 POINTS)

This power level enables the characters to possess abilities far beyond the norm. A "human" individual built at this power level will have legendary abilities — a contender for the title of the world's greatest thief or the world's best martial artist, for example. Alternatively, the character may have true superhuman abilities, such as an arch-mage sorcerer, a dragon, an elder vampire, a powerful psychic, an advanced combat android, or a magical girl that has fully awakened her abilities. A superhuman character could also be a competent but otherwise normal individual with a destiny and super powerful items such as a towering robot mecha or a mighty magical artefact.

SUPERPOWERED (200-249 POINTS)

Similar to superhuman power level, but the characters are so powerful that ordinary humans seem like ants underfoot. As with superhuman power, the character's abilities might come from paranormal powers, magic, racial abilities, or items ... or often a combination of all of them. Such amazing characters will not always be very experienced at wielding this power, however. Anime is full of ordinary teenagers who were granted the power of a demigod thanks to: suddenly inheriting an ultra-powerful mecha; awakening psychic powers; a scientific experiment gone awry; or some other twist of fate. How the characters handle these enhanced responsibilities — or spectacularly fail to handle them, with tragic results for all concerned — can be more important than the power itself.

GODLIKE (250+ POINTS)

With this challenging power level, the character's abilities are potentially forceful enough to single-handedly change the world (or even worlds). Players should be cautious about starting their adventures at this level of ability, since with great power comes great responsibility ... and also great complications. Nevertheless, godlike does reflect the power levels of some popular anime shows.



MAGICAL GIRL/GUY

The forces of light sometimes choose the least likely candidate to be their defender. Enter the magical girl (or magical guy) — once a normal person with normal worries like snagging a romantic partner, preparing for exams, or just eating the right food. With the appearance of a strange little creature (often from the Prime World of Aradia), however, everything changed. Now wielding a strange artefact that grants weird and wonderful powers, the magical girl is charged with protecting friends, family, and often the rest of humanity. Oddly, nobody seems to recognise her under the costume.

MAGICAL GIRL/GUY

VALUE	POINTS	STAT
3	6	Soul Stat
LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE
1	1	Alternate Identity (Normal Human)
3	12	Companion (Animal Companion; 30 Points)
2	2	Exorcism
3	3	Features (Animal Empathy, Appearance: Cute, Famous)
2	2	Inspire
	5	Item (10 Points; Various Weapons)
3	9	Massive Damage (Targetted: Select Type)
3	3	Mind Shield
4	4	Mulligan
2	2	Ranged Attack (Magical Attacks)
2	2	Ranged Defence (Personal)
1	1	Sixth Sense (Select One Aspect)
1	3	Skill Group (Action: Select One)
2	2	Skill Group (Background: Select One)
4 (3)	8	Weapon: Magical Attack (Drain: Soul -3; Selective -1; Area +1; Range +2)
RANK	POINTS	DEFECT
1	-1	Easily Distracted
2	-2	Nemesis (One Enemy)
2	-2	Skeleton in the Closet (Magical Identity)
60		TOTAL

MARTIAL ARTIST

The idea that one's own body is the best weapon is central to the martial artist's philosophy — and they make a very convincing argument when they break a wall with their bare fists. Products of rigorous training and discipline, martial artists are masters of unarmed combat, achieving with punches and kicks what others need weapons to do. A martial artist is protective of their abilities, treasuring their master's teachings and upholding the honour of their fighting school against any opponent (especially other martial artists). Their mystical awareness also allows them to fight under the most adverse conditions.

MARTIAL ARTIST

VALUE	POINTS	STAT
2	4	Body Stat
LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE
		Combat Technique (Blind Fighting, Brutal, Concealment, Deflection, Judge Opponent, Lethal Blow, Lightning Reflexes 2, Reflection, Tournament Encyclopaedia: Martial Arts)
10	10	
1	4	Extra Actions
2	2	Heightened Awareness
1	1	Jumping
2 (3)	6	Massive Damage (Focused: Unarmed +1)
4	4	Melee Attack (Unarmed)
4	4	Melee Defence (Unarmed)
3	3	Ranged Defence (Personal)
2	6	Skill Group (Adventuring)
1	2	Skill Group (Street)
4	4	Tough
3	6	Weapon: Finishing Move
		Weapon: Ki Blast (Drain: Body -1; Enervation -1; Hands +1; Range +1)
2	4	
60		TOTAL

MASTER THIEF

With years of dedicated experience and a larger-than-life reputation that matches their greatest heists, the master thief is the foil to dozens of law enforcement agencies around the world ... and possibly across the Multiverse! Smooth, suave, and wealthy, such masters of subterfuge live a luxurious lifestyle at the expense of those unfortunate enough to become a target. When hired to undertake a job, though, these consummate professionals can become deadly serious.

MASTER THIEF

VALUE	POINTS	STAT
1	2	Body Stat
1	2	Mind Stat
2	4	Soul Stat
LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE
3	3	Features (Ambidexterity, Appearance, Eidetic Memory)
3	3	Gear (Thieving Supplies)
5	5	Heightened Awareness
2	2	Mulligan
3	9	Wealth
2	2	Skill Group (Academic)
1	3	Skill Group (Adventuring)
3	6	Skill Group (Social)
3	6	Skill Group (Street)
2	4	Skill Group (Technical)
5	5	Skill Group (Occupation: Thief)
RANK	POINTS	DEFECT
2	-2	Nemesis (One Enemy)
2	-4	Wanted (Law Enforcement)
50		TOTAL

MECHA PILOT

The field of battle looks very different when commanding a large, powerful war machine. Mecha pilots know that they are the elite of any army, even if they stumbled upon their mecha by accident or they were saddled with the responsibility to pilot it. The mecha pilot's life is marked by growth both as a warrior and a person, learning the controls of a great machine at the same time that they try to understand the basics of human behaviour. Although the mecha gives meaning to the mecha pilot's existence, they must learn that real life starts once they leave their cockpits.

MECHA PILOT

LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE
2	2	Attack Mastery
3	3	Connected (Select One)
	30	Item (Mecha and Equipment; 60 Points)
2 (3)	6	Massive Damage (Focused: Mecha Weapons +1)
2	2	Ranged Attack (Mecha Weapons)
1	1	Ranged Defence (Mecha Movement)
3	3	Skill Group (Occupation: Mecha Pilot)
1	3	Skill Group (Military)
50		TOTAL



SPECIAL MOVEMENT

Attribute Cost: 1 Point/Level
Relevant Stat: Body

The character may select one Special Movement type for every Level of this Attribute. The movement abilities may be the result of genetics, mystical forces, supernatural talents, or intense training. Several examples are given below but the GM and players are encouraged to develop additional abilities as well. Many other Attributes provide alternate methods of movement, including Flight, Ground Speed, Jumping, Spaceflight, Superspeed, Teleport, Tunnelling, or Water Speed.

BALANCE

The character never loses their balance, even when running on a narrow rope or beam.

CAT-LIKE

The character will take half damage (round down) from most falls and always lands on their feet.

FAST

The character's Body Stat is doubled for each assignment of this Attribute when calculating running speed (see page ???).

LIGHT-FOOTED

The character can skim over sand, snow, or ice at full speed.

SLITHERING

The character can slither along the ground at normal walking/running speeds. This allows a character to move quickly while maintaining a very low profile.

SWINGING

The character can swing through forests and cities (areas with natural or artificial structures above swinging height) using vines, ropes, webbing, or simply their arms.

UNTRACKABLE

The character never leaves footprints or tracks when they walk or run. Eliminating the character's scent as well is a Feature (page ???).

WALL-BOUNCING

For the duration of a dramatic scene, the character can move at regular walking speed without touching the ground by bounding back and forth between nearby vertical surfaces (walls). For example, they can proceed down hallways or climb an alleyway between two buildings (bouncing from wall to wall).

WALL-CRAWLING

The character can cling to walls or ceilings as though they were on the ground or floor. Due to the enhanced utility of this type of moment, it counts as two Special Movement abilities.

WATER-WALKING

The character can walk or run over water as if they were on land. Due to the enhanced utility of this type of moment, this counts as two Special Movement abilities.

ZEN DIRECTION

When the character opens their mind to the natural world, they will always move in the right direction. The right direction is not always the direction the character wants, but it is the direction the character needs.

- Level 1 1 Special Movement ability
- Level 2 2 Special Movement abilities
- Level 3 3 Special Movement abilities
- Level 4 4 Special Movement abilities
- Level 5 5 Special Movement abilities
- Level 6 6 Special Movement abilities

SUMMON CREATURES

Attribute Cost: 2 Points/Level
Relevant Stat: Mind

The character can summon a wide variety of natural animals from the surrounding area (up to 1 km radius) and command them to perform a variety of simple activities such as attack, confuse, hunt, defend, track, etc. for a duration of approximately one minute or one dramatic scene. Dominion over humans is best handled by the Mind Control Attribute (page ???) instead. The Attribute Level determines the maximum number of animals that can be summoned and multiple different types of animals can be summoned at the same time. If fewer animals are in the surrounding area, only those nearby will obey the summons. Additionally, the animals do not appear magically and instantaneously; they must find a way to travel to the summoning character and consequently summoning turtles or snails may not produce the fastest results.

► ENHANCEMENTS

SUPERNATURAL

The animals are summoned through supernatural means. The character can always summon the maximum number of allowable animals (as determined by the Attribute Level) and the animals arrive at the summoner's side within a single round. When the duration expires, the animals instantly return to their original locations.

DIMENSIONAL

Counts as 2 Enhancements (Attribute effectiveness reduced by 2 Levels). The character is not limited to summoning only natural animals but can also summon the maximum number of a variety of weak creatures from other dimensions or planes of existence. When the duration expires, the creatures instantly return to their original locations.

► LIMITERS

NARROW CATEGORY

The summoning is restricted to a narrow category of animals or creatures, such as mammals, insects, reptiles, amphibians, fish, avians, micro-demons, fae, etc.

SPECIFIC CATEGORY

Counts as 2 Limiters (Attribute effectiveness increased by 2 Levels). The summoning is restricted to a specific category of animals or creatures, such as dogs, cats, rodents, ants, bees, large reptiles, frogs, sharks, birds of prey, imps, pixies, etc.

SINGLE CATEGORY

Counts as 3 Limiters (Attribute effectiveness increased by 3 Levels). The summoning is restricted to a single category of animals or creatures, such as poodles, tigers, rats, fire ants, crocodiles, tree frogs, hammerhead sharks, eagles, blood imps, water pixies, etc.

- Level 1 Summon up to 10 creatures
- Level 2 Summon up to 30 creatures
- Level 3 Summon up to 100 creatures
- Level 4 Summon up to 300 creatures
- Level 5 Summon up to 1,000 creatures
- Level 6 Summon up to 3,000 creatures

SUPERSENSE

Attribute Cost: 1 Point/Level
Relevant Stat: Mind

Supersense gives the character one sense (assigned during character creation) that functions beyond the scope of normal human capability that can detect objects at a distance, in the dark, and invisible to normal sight. The detectable objects (or at least the radiation they send out, in the case of some Supersenses) must be in direct line of sight, though, and not blocked by a solid barrier or the curve of the planet's horizon. Supersenses can include: echolocation, infrared vision, radar, sonar, magnetic field detection, microscopic vision, ultravision, vibration detection, x-ray vision, and more exotic or magical detection forms. Active Supersenses that send out pulses of energy (such as radar and sonar) should also be assigned the Detectable Limiter (page ???).

Multiple different Supersenses with varying ranges can be represented by assigning this Attribute multiple times.

- Level 1 Supersense can detect objects within a range of 10 m
- Level 2 Supersense can detect objects within a range of 100 m
- Level 3 Supersense can detect objects within a range of 1 km
- Level 4 Supersense can detect objects within a range of 10 km (maximum horizon range)
- Level 5 Supersense can detect objects within a range of 100 km
- Level 6 Supersense can detect objects within a range of 1,000 km

SUPERSPEED

Attribute Cost: 3 Point/Level
Relevant Stat: Body

A character can sprint up to 3 metres/round (or 3 kph) multiplied by their Body Stat over short distances. A character with Superspeed can move much faster than this, as well as perceive the world at an increased pace. This Attribute is usually supernatural in nature (since it progresses well beyond realistic speed physics) and consequently is usually only appropriate for augmented or magical characters and not regular vehicle or mecha Items. For a more realistic form of movement for Items, see the Ground Speed Attribute (page ???).

In most genres, a fast-moving character can still interact with the world. This means that the character will not run into buildings along city streets because they can perceive them early enough and make appropriate turns to avoid them. The character can also read books quickly, write at incredible speeds, and perform normal chores and activities at enhanced rates.

Superspeed is a modular Attribute that does not provide the character with many other Attribute benefits typically associated with speedy characters, however. This allows for maximum player flexibility when designing their character concept. Many characters with Superspeed will also possess one or more Levels in the following Attributes: Change State (incorporeal to vibrate through solid objects), Combat Technique (Lightning Reflexes), Extra Actions, Extra Defences, Heightened Awareness, Massive Damage (Superspeed attacks), Regeneration, Special Movement, and Weapon (tied to Superspeed through the Dependent Limiter).

- Level 1 Top speed is 100 kph
- Level 2 Top speed is 300 kph
- Level 3 Top speed is 1,000 kph
- Level 4 Top speed is 3,000 kph
- Level 5 Top speed is 10,000 kph
- Level 6 Top speed is 30,000 kph

▶ APPROPRIATE DEFECTS

Defects include both normal character flaws and some that are more appropriate for more-than-human characters or equipment. Most Defects are appropriate for all characters with the following exceptions: Achilles Heel, Awkward Size, Bane, Involuntary Change, and Vulnerability. These Defects are most applicable to nonhuman or superhuman characters as well as to Items.

▶ DEFECTS AND DUAL IDENTITIES

If a character maintains a dual identity through the Skeleton in the Closet Defect, some other Defects may not affect them in one of the identities. For example, a masked vigilante may be wanted by the police on murder charges (the Wanted Defect), but their alternate identity may be a respected member of the Tokyo political assembly. In these instances, the character will receive fewer Points back from the Defect.

If either the character's normal or secret identity (but not both) suffers from a Defect, the value of the Defect is worth 1 Rank less. For example, if a character's secret identity has the Magnet Defect at -3 Points, it is only worth -2 Points to the character though it functions at -3 Points. In this way, single-identity Defects function in a similar way as Attribute Enhancements (page ???). If both identities suffer from the identical Defect, at the same or different Point values, use the one that returns the greatest number of Points. If a character only has one identity, the Defects return Points as normal.

DEFECTS & SOCIAL AWARENESS

Assigning Defects can align the game mechanics of BESM to your vision for your character, as well as create excellent opportunities for engaging role-playing beyond hack-and-slash combat. It's important to approach the portrayal of Defects with maturity and sensitivity when touching upon many real-life physical and social issues that have far-reaching implications and impacts on others. Anime stereotypes can provide many laughs around the gaming table, but being mindful of the emotions and sensitivities of others should always take priority.

Role-playing is about having fun with friends. No one should ever feel marginalised, ridiculed, or targeted because a character's portrayal fails to consider how it may impact others.

ACHILLES HEEL

A Greater Defect. The character loses twice as many Health Points as normal from a particular attack form, which must fit with the character concept. It might be something with appropriate mystic resonance, such as wooden stakes for vampires or silver for werewolves. It could also reflect the character's nature, such as a fire-based monster taking extra damage from water attacks, or an alien's weakness to weapons from their home planet.

- 2 Points The attack form is rare
- 4 Points The attack form is uncommon
- 6 Points The attack form is common

AWKWARD SIZE

A Greater Defect. This Defect only applies to non-living Items, since characters and creatures should acquire a Size Template instead (page ???). Awkward Size means the Item is notably larger and more massive than an ordinary human. An Item with Awkward Size may have trouble fitting through openings and moving through narrow alleys, and is much easier to notice. The larger the Item, the more Points this Defect will be worth (-2 Points/Rank). Size usually refers to the Item's longest dimension.

Additionally, larger Items make bigger targets in ranged combat. For every Awkward Size category the target is larger than the attacker, the attacker gains a +2 bonus to hit with a ranged weapon. Conversely, for every Awkward Size category the target is smaller than the attacker, the attacker receives a -2 penalty with a ranged weapon. For example, if a Huge Size 2 Item and a Gigantic Size 4 Item are in ranged combat, the Size 2 Item gains a +4 bonus to hit while the Gigantic Size 4 Item gains a -4 penalty to hit.

Table ?? shows the progression of mass and height. Select a size and then assign an appropriate mass (usually within the range provide). Size 0 (the usual human-sized Medium standard) is shown for comparison purposes.

BANE

A Greater Defect. A character with the Bane Defect is vulnerable to an otherwise non-damaging substance such as water, sunlight, or a specific element, material, or object. The Bane should relate to the character's background or Attributes in some way. The character suffers damage if their skin is physically touched by the Bane. If the Bane does not require direct physical contact (such as sunlight, seeing one's reflection, hearing the noise of a temple bell, or having the Bane in close proximity), the exposure damage is halved. Alternatively, if the Bane only affects the character when

ingested, the damage is doubled. Finally, the damage inflicted assumes that the Bane is common, such as water, sunlight, steel, or wood. If it is less common, such as a holy symbol, Buddhist scripture, or rare element, the damage is also doubled. If it is even more rare such as one particular artefact, the damage may be tripled or quadrupled as determined by the GM.

- 2 Points The Bane causes the character minor damage: 10 damage per round of exposure
- 4 Points The Bane causes the character moderate damage: 20 damage per round of exposure
- 6 Points The Bane causes the character major damage: 30 damage per round of exposure

BLIND FURY

A Greater Defect. Under specific conditions selected by the player (and approved by the GM), the character will enter a state of unbridled anger. While enraged, the character will furiously attack the closest person, whether that individual is a friend or foe. Once that person is defeated or flees, the berserk character will attack the next closest "threat." Examples of conditions that might initiate Blind Fury include: receiving a certain amount of damage, sight of blood, a specific sound or smell, being outnumbered in combat, seeing a friend in danger, confrontation with a specific opponent, etc.

The character can only return to a normal emotional state under another specific conditions. This return could involve a Soul Stat roll, or could be an automatic reversion over time. Examples of return conditions include: no targets in the vicinity, a specific calming technique performed by an ally, solitude, injection of a particular drug, being knocked unconscious, etc.

- 2 Points Initiating the Blind Fury is difficult; reverting to a normal emotional state is easy
- 4 Points Initiating the Blind Fury and reverting to a normal emotional state are both moderately difficult
- 6 Points Initiating the Blind Fury is easy; reverting to a normal emotional state is difficult

CONDITIONAL OWNERSHIP

A Lesser Defect. This Defect can only be assigned to a Companion or Item, indicating that the person or object actually belongs to another individual or organisation instead of the creating character. The Companions or Items may be issued to the character but the organisation imposes mild, strict, or severe conditions on their use.

MILD CONDITIONS

The character can use the objects or allies for some personal business (such as travelling or recreational use), but if they are released from the organisation or disobey direct orders, the objects can be taken away. The character can also be assigned different objects at any time at the discretion of the organisation. For example, a police detective might have conditional use of an unmarked police car.

STRICT CONDITIONS

The character is only permitted to use the objects or allies for activities as ordered by the organisation. This is the way most military and police equipment is issued. If the character is caught using the objects for personal activities, they will receive a severe reprimand.

02

AWKWARD SIZE

Rank	Size	Points	Height	Typical Mass Range
0	Medium	0	1 - 2 metres	50 - 150 kg
1	Large	-2	3 - 4 metres	200 - 1,200 kg
2	Huge	-4	5 - 8 metres	1.5 - 8 tonnes
3	Mammoth	-6	9 - 15 metres	10 - 60 tonnes
4	Gigantic	-8	16 - 30 metres	75 - 500 tonnes
5	Gargantuan	-10	31 - 60 metres	550 - 4,000 tonnes
6	Colossal	-12	61 - 125 metres	4 k - 30 k tonnes
7	Enormous	-14	126 - 250 metres	40 k - 250 k tonnes
8	Monstrous	-16	251 - 500 metres	300 k - 2 M tonnes
9	Titanic	-18	501 - 1,000 metres	2 M - 15 M tonnes
10	Monumental	-20	1,000 - 2,000 metres	15 M - 125 M tonnes

GAME TIME

The “in game” passage of time in a role-playing game is fluid, just as it is in a story. In some situations, such as a conversation between two characters, the flow of game time normally matches real world time. More often, the amount of time that passes depends on the characters’ activities as set by the players’ actions — things happen as soon as dramatically appropriate. Climbing a high mountain may just take a few short minutes of description, or a few die rolls, to resolve. It does not take the many hours that climbing a mountain would really take. The GM should telescope time until something interesting happens: “Two weeks pass while you investigate the crime. Then the terrorist broadcasts a message, announcing his plans to destroy Tokyo Tower if his demands are not met.” GMs may go back in time as well to employ flashback scenes, which are useful tools to establish the background for a story without simply recounting the information in dry fashion. Finally, in very dramatic situations such as combat, the GM may keep very precise track of time by using individual “combat rounds” (see Combat, page ???).

SCENE, ROUND, AND INITIATIVE

Two common measures of game time are a dramatic scene and a round. A dramatic scene is any situation where the events remain linked, moment-to-moment. Think of it in movie terms — a scene lasts until the camera cuts to an entirely new setting, potentially with new characters. If, for example, a player-character is speaking with an informant in a diner, the entire conversation constitutes a scene. Once the GM switches scenes to the character entering a back alley, following up on the informant’s lead, the diner scene ends and a new scene begins in the back alley. If the conversation was interrupted instead by a villain attacking the informant, intent on shutting him up before he could reveal any important information, the scene would not yet end when the character chased the villain down a back alleyway. Since the events are still linked moment-to-moment, it is still a part of a singular dramatic scene even if the setting has changed.

A round is a measure of time of approximately 3-4 seconds in length, while an Initiative is one specific moment in time. A round is primarily used for combat situations and is the amount of time in which an average person can react to a situation, make a decision, and perform a significant action during a battle or other stressful situation.

When combat occurs, characters roll Initiative (page ???) and each character is allowed to act in order of their Initiative (with those characters with higher Initiative numbers acting earlier in the round than those with lower Initiative numbers).

DICE ROLLS

BESM uses standard six-sided dice (also known affectionately as 2d6) during game play. When a random number needs to be generated, two dice are usually rolled (see Edges and Obstacles, page ???, for exceptions to this). By adding the two numbers shown on each die, values between 2 and 12 are generated. The range of dice rolls produces a triangular distribution (a cousin to the bell curve), with the middle value of 7 generated most frequently (one-sixth of all rolls).

Rolls are made during a BESM game to determine the success or failure of important actions performed by the player characters or by NPCs interacting with them. Rolls are only needed for actions where the character’s success is uncertain. The GM can decide that an action succeeds or fails without a roll, and many routine or minor actions should be resolved this way. See Should I Make My Players Roll Dice? (page ???)

If the GM decides a dice roll is required, the player rolls two dice and adds the relevant Stat, Combat Value, or Attribute Level modifier to the number rolled. The resulting sum is called the “total roll.” The higher the total roll, the better the character’s attempt. The total roll is compared to either a Target Number (page ???) or opposed roll (page ???) to determine if the task was successful.

WHO ROLLS THE DICE?

In most cases, a player rolls dice to determine the success of an action their character performs, while the GM rolls the dice to determine the results of NPC actions when they impact the characters. In situations where NPCs are only involved with other NPCs, the GM should simply decide what happens rather than rolling dice.

In some circumstances, the GM may roll the dice to determine the results of a character’s action instead of having a player roll to keep the actual dice roll — and the reason for rolling — secret. This is normally done if having the player roll would give away an event that should remain unknown to the character. For example, if there is something hidden that the character may or may not notice, the GM can secretly roll dice to see if the character spots it. If the GM allowed the player to roll the dice, the player would know that a clue existed even if the character did not succeed in noticing it.

03 TARGET NUMBERS

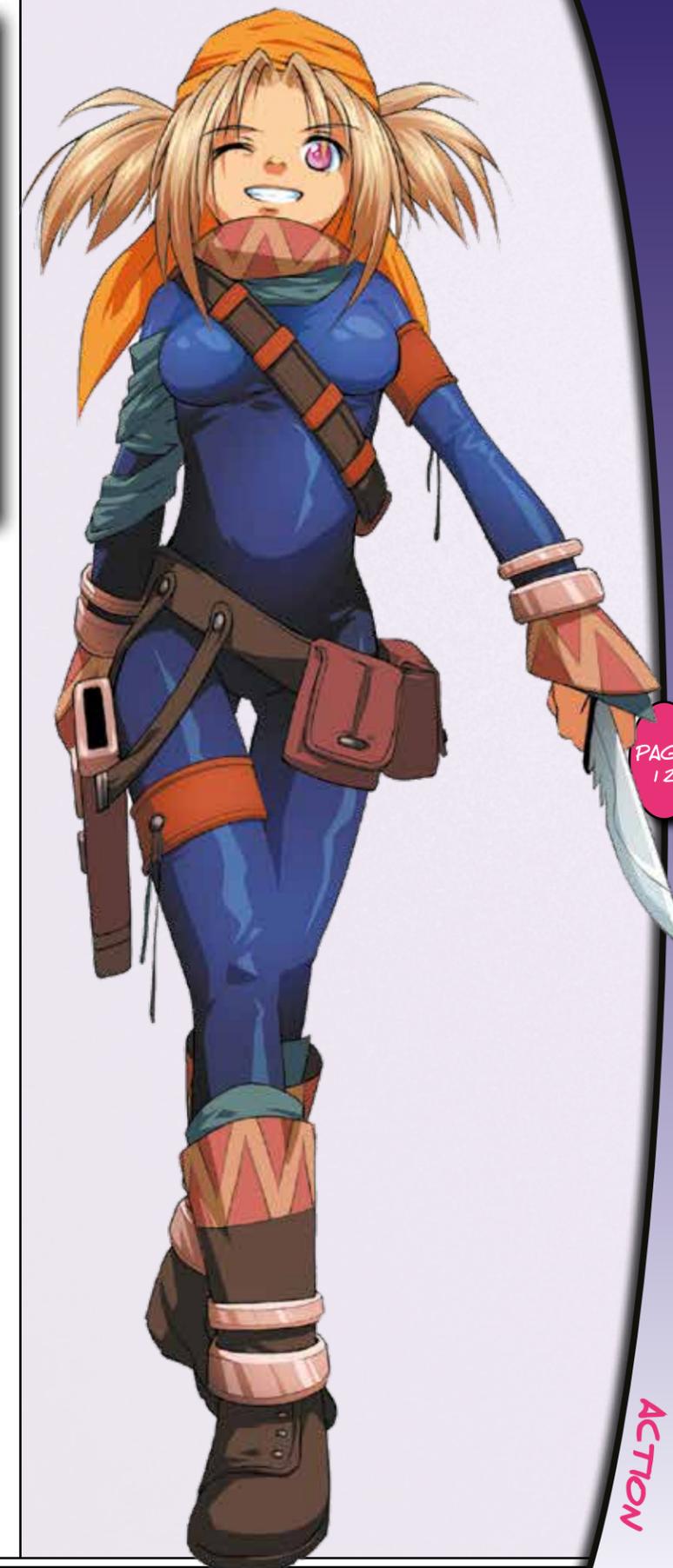
Difficulty	Target Number	Interpretation
Very Easy	6	Almost everyone will succeed
Easy	9	Characters will very rarely fail
Average	12	Success often requires some talent or training
Difficult	15	Success often requires above-average ability
Challenging	18	Success often requires significant ability
Unlikely	21	Success requires exceptional ability
Improbable	24	Success requires unparalleled ability

TARGET NUMBERS

The success of most non-combat rolls is determined by comparing them to a Target Number or TN (see the table above). The GM assigns the task under consideration a Target Number before the roll is made. If the total roll is equal or higher than the Target Number, the task succeeds. If it was lower, it fails.

GMs should assign Target Numbers based on how easy or difficult the task is to perform. When in doubt, assign an average difficult Target Number of 12. For example, driving a car along a busy highway would not normally require any dice rolls for most people in a modern setting, since driving is routine. Driving on the highway at high speeds during inclement weather might require a dice roll, though ... probably a Very Easy task (TN 6) or an Easy task (TN 9). Racing along in a complex construction zone in ideal weather conditions is perhaps an Average task (TN 12) or perhaps a Difficult task (TN 15) in inclement weather. If the car’s brakes no longer work, racing along the highway may become a Challenging task (TN 18) or Unlikely task (TN 21) instead. Attempting to do so while blindfolded — and merely using the sound of the traffic to guide the wheel — is an Improbable task (TN 24).

The GM usually tells the player the task’s Target Number before the player rolls. In some instances, though, the GM can keep the Target Number a secret to create dramatic tension and only reveal it after the character’s total roll resulted in success or failure.



ARADIA

Aradia is sometimes called the “Living Heaven.” It is an Earth-like world, with two-thirds of it ocean and six continents, most of which are covered with dense sylvan forests. The land is unspoiled by sprawling cities or mines, and breathtaking in its natural beauty. The air is clear, and a billion stars glitter in the night sky. Surrounding the planet is a ring, which is visible as a great arch from much of the surface (except in high winter, where it is a dark band that partially eclipses the sun, leading to a long twilight), or as a shimmering halo from space. This is the Tiara of Aradia, a shattered moon of ice and rock. Four tiny “shepherd moons” also orbit the planet, and are visible from the surface as moving sparks of light.

The flora and fauna resemble those of Earth, but Aradia is also home to many exalted mythical creatures. There are unicorns, winged horses, griffins, and sea serpents, for example. Some are fierce beasts that will think little of snacking on an unwary native or traveller, but none are innately evil.

Aradia is not just a beautiful planet, though — it is a living being. The natives of Aradia believe it is a manifestation of the Weaver and call it the Womb of Life. In turn, the planet communicates its desires and wishes — the Wisdom of Aradia — through the movement of clouds and storms upon its surface. These patterns form a unique language of symbols that its priests, the Oracle of the Wind, interpret.

The dominant species on Aradia are the Asrai. They resemble humans, except for their small feathered wings that can expand out to full size as necessary. The Asrai are highly magical, but some are more talented than others. They are born “from the dreams of Aradia.” When two Asrai mate, the female does not become pregnant; instead, their passion triggers a lightning storm in the clouds, and eventually an egg forms in the sky. The egg will fall into the ocean, wash ashore, and eventually hatch.

Asrai civilisation is largely pastoral. Guided by the Oracle of the Wind, the Asrai farm, build, herd, hunt, and so on, but do not do much mining. Most Asrai live in small villages or isolated houses scattered across the world. There is no economy as such, just exchanges of goods for mutual benefit.

Other sentient beings also live on Aradia. The Elarad is a collective term for animals that can speak (Elarad means “wild companions”). About one in 10,000 animals on Aradia are Elarad. They protect their own interests, but some go to live with the Asrai, and study in their schools or even work as emissaries.

Fairies are not native to Aradia, but there are now as many living there as there are Asrai. Fairies are tiny 20-30 cm tall insect-winged pixies. They were rescued from Arcadia, an Outer World which was being transformed and corrupted by the Bane, a demonic power that sucked away its life. The surviving fairies are now allied with the Asrai. There are about half a million fairies on Aradia, most of them living in the woods. They are typically good folk, though somewhat mischievous, but a few of these were tainted by the Bane and turned to evil. The Asrai and the fairies' own Bane Hunters deal with these problems as they occur.

Directing the Asrai are two powerful institutions. The Council of Aeons is the ruling body. It meets in the Chamber of Aeons in the Vale of Thorns. Its 101 members are elected at the Festival of the Arch, which is held on the first day of spring each year. The College of Emissaries is another major body. Part of the Wisdom of Aradia is the knowledge that there are many worlds, some of them not “awakened” like Aradia is. This, according to their belief, is because the world-spirits are frightened by the evil that exists in those worlds, and are sleeping, trapped in nightmares, and afraid to awaken. In order to fix this, it is the responsibility of the Asrai to help overcome evil in those worlds. Here, specially selected Asrai go to school, where they are carefully trained in the role of Emissary. There they will be sent to other worlds to further the cause of good. Often an Emissary will be sent to act as a mentor, partner, or guardian to a particularly promising individual on Earth or Ikaris.

The Sabaoth was constituted recently, about 600 years ago, after the world of Aradia was faced by a demonic incursion known as the Bane. It is the armed Host of the Asrai, a fighting order of “warrior angels” that have undergone extensive military training. They report directly to the Council of Aeons, but also instruct other Emissaries in fighting. Asrai of the Sabaoth are also Emissaries, and are trusted with difficult and dangerous missions such as fighting demons.

The unique “living planet” nature of Aradia means there are dozens of unusual places on the world. Here are two examples:

The Whirl is a natural dimensional gate that leads to Earth. It is a whirlpool that sometimes appears in the ocean. Every so often an Asrai egg will fall into the Whirl instead of landing in open sea. When this occurs, the egg will be carried through the gate and reappear somewhere on Earth, washing ashore. Often the egg will drift for some time before being found. Once touched, it usually dissolves into nothing, leaving a baby who can easily be mistaken for a human, since away from Aradia it takes the wings a long time to form (usually not manifesting until adolescence). One of the jobs of

Emissaries visiting Earth is to search for the occasional “lost angel” but often they do not find them until years or even decades later.

Wormwood Blight is part of the price that Aradia paid to rescue the fairies. It is a cosmic cancer that inadvertently “crossed over,” an entire forested mountain valley that has become infected and corrupted by the evil Bane. The area is small, and the energies of Aradia have been able to contain it. Evil forces do exist within it — terrible illusions, dark fairies, cannibal unicorns, wyverns, and other creatures of evil. The Asrai and others have only managed to contain it, not destroy. Wayward seeds of Wormwood Blight have occasionally sprung up elsewhere, but the Asrai have always managed to destroy these.

ARADIA AND THE COSMIC WEB

Aradia has seven waylines: one connects to Earth, two to Inner Worlds, and four to all the other Prime Worlds save Bazaroth.

Emissaries of Aradia often visit Earth and Ikaris (although usually in stealthy fashion). In addition to direct intervention by the Asrai, those Elaran who have attended the College of Emissaries are sometimes sent to Earth, often with items of power, to act as familiars and mentors for “magical girls” who fight for love and justice against those the minions of Bazaroth, exiled evil sorcerers, or other malign powers.

