

“TRAVAILS AND MISFORTUNES”

By the time we arrived here [at the kingdom of Quedá] the King was celebrating the funeral of his father with all the pomp one can offer the dead like music, dances, cries and feeding the poor, a father that he himself stabbed to death in order to marry his mother that carried his son in her womb. ... This moor Coja Ale that was with me was by nature outspoken and always willing to utter whatever crossed his mind, thinking that by being a foreigner and that by carrying the name of factor of the Captain of Malaca he would have more freedom to speak than the locals. On being invited by a relative, a moor from Patane, when the banquet was half-through they came to comment the events in such an heightened tone that the King, through the many ears he had for the purpose, was informed right away. With no further delay he had the moor's house besieged and all the guests, the seventeen of them, taken to him duly bounded. As soon as he saw them, without any semblance of justice or a wait to listen to their good or bad motives, he had them slain by an extremely cruel death they call “gregoge” by having them sawn alive – the feet first, second the hands, next the throat and finally the chest – as afterwards I was able to witness.

The King, fearing that the Captain might be displeased by having his factor killed with the other convicts and that he would retaliate by arresting some of the goods he had in Malaca, summoned me in the middle of the night while I was sleeping, oblivious of what was going on. And past midnight, when I reached the external ground of the [King's] houses, I spotted countless men carrying swords and shields and spears, a sight that, being to me an unexpected novelty, left me in the utmost confusion ...

I was by then surrounded by fifteen or twenty of those armed men. They had me encircled in their middle until the morning started to lighten up. Then they sent a notice to the King that they had me there. He summoned me immediately and only God knows how my poor self was carried to his presence more dead than alive. When I reached the inner ground I found the King atop of an elephant accompanied by more than one hundred men, not counting the guards. As soon as the King saw me he said:

- Jangão Tacor, ‘don't be afraid’, come, know why I ordered you to my presence. And by waving his hand he made ten or twelve of these men to step aside so that he could make me look to a spot where I could see many dead bodies laying in a pool of blood – among which I was able to recognize the moor Coja Ale, the factor of the Captain that came with me. This sight left me so transfixed and confounded that, like a mindless man, I threw myself in front of the feet of the elephant where the King stood and shouted crying:

- I beg you, my Lord, to rather keep me for your captive than to put me to a death like the one you sentenced to those I see laying in that corner! I swear, by the law of a Christian, that I don't deserve such an end. Don't forget that I am the nephew of the Captain of Malaca. He will give you as much money as you want for my life and person and there's also my boat, packed with rich merchandise, take if it serves you well!

To this the King replied:

- God forbidden! How come? Am I such an evil man to do what you say? Fear nothing, sit and rest, I can see you are stifling. When you get hold of yourself I'll explain why I ordered the death of that moor you were carrying around. Be certain that if he was a Portuguese or a Christian, I swear upon my law I would not have it done, not even if he was the slayer of my own son. ... It thus happens that yesterday the moor you see laying in that corner, while drunk among other dogs like himself, uttered such damaging words to my reputation that I am ashamed to repeat it to you, ... I was forced, for my honour, to summon justice to befall upon him ...

Then I, a little more appeased while still not completely master of my senses, replied that His Highness, by ordering that moor to be put to death, had shown the greatness of his friendship to the Captain of Malaca, his brother, since the moor had stolen all the trade goods the Captain entrusted to him, and twice had attempted on my life with poison to ensure I would not report his misdeeds, and he was always drunk, always speaking whatever crossed his mind like a dog barking at whomever crossed the road. This coarse and mindless answer was so pleasant to the King that, calling me to his side, he said:

- I have no doubt that in that reply you show how good a man you are, and how much you are my friend, since you see no objection to my deeds and no wrong in me having these dogs handled the way you can see in that corner.

And he gave me a gold-covered criss that he was carrying on his belt, and a letter for Pêro de Faria with many wicked excuses for his deeds.

Discharging myself as well as I could, and promising to stay around for another ten or twelve days, I headed right away to my boat and, with no further delay, loosen the cable with my own hand and sailed as swiftly as possible, like if all of Quedá was coming upon me, so extreme was the fear of death and the risk for my life that had fallen on me so shortly before.

Peregrinação, c. XX

From role to play

In a TToMP game you and your fellow players “become” the characters created according to the guidelines of the last section. While playing you are to act and behave in-character within the game context. This behaviour is purely imaginary and results from the interaction among the players.

The present section provides a system of guidelines and rules devised to facilitate the smoothest interaction between you and the other players while ensuring that the unfolding of game events and actions is consistent with the setting. We hope that it will also fuel your imagination by providing ideas and options for your in-character decisions.

In other words, the present section provides the basis for *game action resolution*.

In TToMP game action resolution follows the next guidelines:

- Action doesn't happen in a vacuum. It happens within a concrete temporal, geographical and social **context**.
- Action is performed purposefully, there's an objective or aim to it. What the character actually does is instrumental in achieving that objective. So the player has to define the character's **aim**.
- For a player to decide on the course of action for his character he needs to know what's happening around, what can influence his behaviour. He also needs to know that is there that the character may use in the course of action. He has to identify the **means and external constrains** of the action.
- The aim is just a vision of a future state of affairs conditioned by the means and external constrains. Whether the character wants to achieve it or not and how involved he will be with that aim depends on his personal traits. The third step is to define the character's **commitment**.
- To aim and take no action is simple wish making. The character attempts to reach his aim with a concrete behaviour. This is the character's **performance**.

- Usually what really happens is not at the discretion of a single party. It is the result of the interaction of the independent performances by the different characters and other events. All of this has to be conciliated into an *outcome*.

The where and when of your action: Context

Before a player can decide on the course of action for his character, he needs to understand the context on which the character is to act. It's up for the GM to provide that context.

*Manuel, the GM to Marta: "Pêro de Faria summons Álvaro Pires [Marta's character] and tells him that, due to Álvaro's past good services, he wants to honour him and show his friendship by granting to Álvaro the mercy of the command of the ship to Martavão."
"I am sending a letter to the King of Martavão – says the Captain-Major. You are to deliver it and ensure that the hold friendship between Our Lord the King D. João and the King of Martavão endures. You are also to deliver the ship's cargo [comprised of spices from Indonesia and porcelain and silk goods from China] to our factor. He will re-fill the ship with rice that we are in dire need in Malaca. I expect you to be back within two months, before the monsoon."*

What you want to achieve: the aim of the action

This is to a certain extent self-explanatory: Your character wants to achieve something with his behaviour. Yet, what your character aims at may change widely from action to action. Sometimes he may concentrate on the behaviour in itself (and probably the pleasure one can extract from it), like when one is dancing or listening to music. In other situations he may target a change in the environment, like when he wants to produce something new like a poem or a change in the mindset of another character. It may even happen that your character is only concerned with the maintenance of the status quo. Furthermore, a character's aim doesn't need to be his own alone. He may be sharing on the aims of another character or characters (either he wishes it or not).

Álvaro Pires accepts the mission, thus accepting to share the aims of the Captain-Major. At the same time, he defines his personal aim: to carry a load of spices in his coffer to trade in Martavão since spices are valued commodities and, being heavy, represent the best usage of the space he has available. He "knows" (in fact this is just his expectation) he will be able to sell the goods in Martavão for four or five times their price in Malaca, thus getting a fat profit from his travel. There is just a problem: Álvaro does not have either the spices or the money to buy them. So he decides to approach Pissurlecar, a rich Decanese merchant settled in Malaca, to get 2,000 cruzados worth of spices on credit. He is willing to pay 100% interest. He says to himself: "I sell 2,000 Xs. in spices for 10,000 in Martavão. I pay back 4,000 to Pissurlecar and keep 6,000. The voyage may cost me some 2,000 so my profit will be 4,000. I'll have to offer a mass to Our Lady of Good Fortune when I come back. Now, let's see Pissurlecar, that bloody shark".

The boundaries for your action: Means and external constrains

In order to fulfil your aims you need to define a course of action. Your ability to do this is defined within boundaries that can either limit your freedom or serve your purposes. These boundaries are by nature part of the context since they do not depend on the personal traits of the character. If they are items the character may use for his advantage they are called *means*. If they are limitations he has to live with we call them *external constrains*.

Means and constrains are independent of the will of the participants in the situation. Notice that this is a critical point: if the current behaviour of character A limits the behaviour of character B, in a certain sense it constrains B. But this is not what we refer

to here. Here we are only looking at constraints that are not the result of the willing action of one of the parties currently involved in the situation.

Manuel explains that Álvaro is not only entitled to his honoraries as a captain but also gets the privilege to use his personal coffer to carry goods for private trading. Álvaro is to be a captain of a boat, a diplomat, a merchant. He knows that there will be people that will ask him the favour to carry messages or goods for relatives in Martavão. This is definitely a very great honour that Pêro de Faria is doing him, a clear sign of friendship and a can't-miss opportunity for economic improvement.

Álvaro knows that spices are traded in Martavão at a price that's 4 to 8 times the wholesaler price in Malaca. What Álvaro Pires does not know – and Manuel does not tell Maria – is that there's a major shortage of spices in Martavão (since a trading fleet that was heading to this port had been captured by privateers from Achem), so they are at a prize right now. Yes, he knows the trade fleet went to Martavão.

Being a soldier Álvaro does not have spices to trade but he is in good relations with Pissurlecar, a daquenese merchant settled in Malaca that is very active in the spices trade.

You should notice that constraints may be unknown to the participants in the action. Furthermore, constraints are not necessarily true facts. The character may work on wrong or false assumptions. Finally, constraints can be positive or negative.

Álvaro considers his options. Some things he cannot avoid:

First and foremost he has to fulfil his mission: to further the diplomatic ties between Malaca and Martavão; to deliver the ship's cargo to the Portuguese factor; to return to Malaca with a cargo of rice.

Next there's the time factor: he needs to be back within two months.

Third, there's the limit on the goods he can trade on his own: his personal coffer.

Finally he is constrained by not possessing the goods to trade in Martavão.

CONSTRAINTS

1. Order of priorities: 1) deliver cargo to factor; 2) deliver letter to king of Martavão; 3) get cargo of rice; 4) personal matters.
2. Time: he has two months to go and come back.
3. Maximum personal cargo: personal coffer.
4. He does not have the spices.
5. Pissurlecar has the spices.

Furthermore, you need to consider whether there are things the character may use in the course of action, his means. Of course, his first instrument is himself. In many situations you he use external instruments that may further his ability to fulfil his aims, be it tangible means (like weapons, tools, cash, goods, etc.) or intangible instruments (such as knowledge – all the more effective the more secret it is).

You can select as many means as you wish provided you can employ them in a useful and meaningful way. The means can be used either to further the purposes of your character or to hinder his opponent's performance.

Álvaro considers what he can use to convince Pissurlecar to accept the deal in the course of the negotiation. First, he needs to impress Indian trader by transmitting an image in accordance with the importance of the deal. For that purpose Álvaro uses his best dress, so that Pissurlecar may see that he is not some destitute begging for his help.

He also knows that traders are sensible to nice words of aggrandizement. He plans to embellish the importance of Pissurlecar, the "prince of traders" ("these Indians just crave for nice titles and endless politesses").

He has to use his knowledge about the trade conditions in Martavão to his advantage, so Álvaro may or may not mention the trade fleet that went to that port. He will mention it if

Pissurlecar asks for an higher interest rate (“the prices of spices are low in Martavão nowadays since it was flooded with spices not long ago.”). Remember that the truth about the shortage of spices in Martavão is unknown to Álvaro, so he cannot take it into account.

MEANS

1. “Rich” and “noble” dress to impress Pissurlecar.
2. Nice words to soften the merchant.
3. Knowledge about the conditions of the spices market in Martavão: the large cargo going there will lower the prices.

Action is a personal affair: how committed you are to it

An aim is nothing else than wishful thinking, the expression of a desire, if not backed by a will to act on it, by the definition of a precise course of action and by the correspondent performance. On what concerns the will to act, it is dependent on the personal traits of the character. These define his commitment: how much involved he will be with the action, how much he will invest into fulfilling his aim. This involvement is measured in a grading that goes from 0 to 10 where 0 means no commitment (refusal to act) and 10 means total commitment.

In game terms commitment requires the player to identify the combination of the most relevant personality trait, value and ability for the purpose of fulfilling the aim within the limits imposed by the external factors. The combination of these personal and external factors is expressed as a BD modifier. The ensuing dice roll determines the exact value of the character’s commitment. Alternatively the player may opt for deliberate determination of the commitment grade according to this table:

COMMITMENT GRADING		
Balance of external and personal factors expressed as BD + mods	Random grading	Deliberate grade
>= +9	>= 9D	10
+5 / +8	5D - 8D	9
+3 / +4	3D - 4D	8
+2	2D	7
+1	1D	6
0	BD	5
-1	1d	4
-2	2d	3
-3 / -4	3d - 4d	2
-5 / -8	5d - 8d	1
<= -9	>= 9d refuses to act	

Álvaro intends to negotiate with Pissurlecar 2,000 Xs. on credit. How far will he take this negotiation? That depends on his commitment. Marta decides that Álvaro’s reliability is his most relevant personality trait: it means that Álvaro is trust worthy, something that a merchant should take into account when striking a deal. She considers that, since Álvaro values wealth, he will be prepared to maximize any situation that may improve his material situation. Finally, she reasons that Álvaro, with his knowledge of accounting, has the required expertise for this type of negotiations.

Manuel is not completely happy with this. He points to the fact that Álvaro is circumspect, a personality trait that does not come handy at the time of negotiations. Furthermore, Álvaro may be trustworthy, but does Pissurlecar really know about this? They don’t have a past experience of mutual agreements that could create that impression on the trader. So, he rules that Álvaro’s circumspection takes it over his reliability. He accepts Marta’s reasoning on Álvaro’s values and abilities. though.

So we have: circumspection (1d) + values wealth (1D) + knowledge of accounting (1D), for balance of 1D Either Marta accepts a commitment rank of 6 (deliberate method), or she rolls BD+1D (random method). She opts for random and rolls a 5 and 6. Ironically she gets the same rank in the random method that she would get in the deliberate method.

How you do it: your performance

The performance corresponds to the dynamics of the action. It is guided by the aim; has the means and constrains as its inputs; the commitment sets its breadth; and the outcome corresponds to its output.

Repetitive performance

In the simplest situations one action requires one performance. This is not always so, though. Sometimes the character needs to repeat the performance several times before reaching his aims while external constrains, means available and commitment remain constant. In this case the players go through performance iteration after performance iteration until either the character achieves his aims, changes these, or needs to re-evaluate the external constrains or his commitment.

“...I prepared everything needed for the treatment [first performance] and started with the ferida in the hand (since it looked more dangerous) where I expended seven pontos ... [second performance]; the ferida in the forehead was smaller so it only required five [third performance]. I covered the feridas with an egg mix and a tissue that I carefully atei, just as I had seen being done in India for a couple of times [fourth performance]”

Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 137

Timing your performance

Performance takes time. How long it takes is dependent on the nature of the performance. In most occasions we don't need to care too much with this, though. The GM just needs to settle on a reasonable duration for the action. Yet, sometimes the performance asks for definite units of time. This is especially true in cases of repetitive performance. The major time units in TToMP are the *Creed* and the hour/half-hour. The reason is simple: These are the most common time units used by Fernão Mendes Pinto for the narration of action in his book.

The *creed* is the smallest time unit used in TToMP. It is based on the time it takes to say the *Creed*, the Christian prayer where the faithful enunciates his belief in God. A *creed* corresponds more or less to one minute. It is used for physical action at a personal level.

*“... so many were the rocks, the darts, the spears and the throwing sticks that fell on us it looked like rain pouring from the sky to the point that in less than a **creed**, from the sixteen Portuguese in our party, the twelve died on spot with another thirty six boys and sailormen.”*

Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 36

*“... in the little more than three **creeds** it took our men to finish them off they killed us two Portuguese and seven boys, and feriram more than twenty...”*

Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 43

Both the hour and the half-hour are units of time used for major collective action. It is the case of battles more often than not. Furthermore, it's the time unit for psychological action and reaction:

*“And, since António de Faria waited for us or for news of his trade goods with longing eyes, as soon as he saw us and realized what happened he froze trespassado, unable to utter a word for the next **half-hour...**”*

Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 38

*“After an exchange of gunnery that lasted for close to **one hour and an half...**”*

Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 57

Describing the performance

You define the performance in terms of complete sentences that describe what the character does.

“Then I, a little more appeased while still not completely master of my senses, replied that His Highness, by ordering that moor to be put to death, had shown the greatness of his friendship to the Captain of Malaca, his brother, since the moor had stolen all the trade goods the Captain entrusted to him, and twice had attempted on my life with poison to ensure I would not report his misdeeds, and he was always drunk, always speaking whatever crossed his mind like a dog barking at whomever crossed the road.”

Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. XX

While framing the sentences you need to take into account the external constrains that affect the performance. Since the external constrains are independent of the character’s will, they have no cost in commitment ranks.

EXEMPLE FROM FMP

Furthermore, you need to mention the means you want to use while performing. Whether you use a mean or not is dependent on your will, so using any given mean requires a commitment rank. Notice that in repetitive performance you only need to pay for any given mean the first time you use it. You don’t need to pay in the subsequent performance iterations.

EXEMPLE FROM FMP

The number of sentences you can frame is dependent on your commitment rank according to the next costs:

# of sentences	Ranks per sentence	Total cost in ranks
1 st	1	1
2 nd	2	3
3 rd	3	6
4 th	4	10

So, the more sentences you want to use to describe your performance, the higher the commitment you need.

Furthermore, you can organize your sentences either as a sequence in time, as alternatives dependent on some circumstantial factor (“or”), or as parallel courses of action if these are mutually independent (“and”).

EXEMPLE FROM FMP

Modulating the performance

You may qualify each sentence in terms of quality, magnitude and timing. Each qualification has a cost in commitment ranks:

Quality	Magnitude	Timing	Rank cost
Poor	Minimal	Leisurely	0
Serviceable	Standard	Normal	1
Excellent	Maximum	Immediate	3

(The exact meaning of these three modalities varies with the nature of the performance, so has to be explained latter in this book.)

“...I prepared everything needed for the treatment and started with the ferida in the hand (since it looked more dangerous) where I expended seven pontos but had he been treated by a surgeon’s hand maybe a lot less [pontos] would suffice”

Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 137

Translating into TToMP terms:

Fernão Mendes Pinto attempts a medium-sized surgery. Neither his personality traits nor his values contribute to his commitment (the only trait that might have in impact is his security value but it works both ways: this is a risky situation and a failure may spell danger; yet not to act also spells danger). He does not have the surgery ability (meaning that he should do the surgery at 2d) but he has been exposed to it in the past (upgrading his ability to 1d). So he has 4 commitment ranks (deliberate method).

He got everything prepared before actually starting the treatment in a previous performance slot. That implies that when he performs the surgery he already has the means for the surgery ready so he needs not expend commitment ranks for this purpose.

To perform the surgery he expands one commitment rank for the performance sentence. He also needs to spend one performance rank for magnitude (it’s a medium-sized surgery). He has two ranks left, not enough to do an excellent job. He has to stick to something serviceable.

TOTAL EXAMPLE WITH ÁLVARO PIRES

What really happens: the outcome

If nothing interferes with the performance it happens as described according to the intended order of the sentences.

“...I expended seven pontos but had he been treated by a surgeon’s hand maybe a lot less [pontos] would suffice ... within twenty days he was completely cured, if it wasn’t for a small esquecimento in the dedo polegar”

Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 137

Mendes Pinto only made a serviceable job. He was able to save the dedo of the ferido, yet he used more pontos than needed and couldn’t avoid a minor disability.

Sometimes this does not hold true, though. Either some unexpected event takes place, unaccounted for external constrains interfere, expected factors don’t materialize or the action undertaken by another party interacts with the action of your character. If this happens, the outcome has to be arbitrated.

If the action requires something to be there and it doesn’t, the action fails. If the action is enhanced by something that is not present, the action is diminished.

The first case would take place if Mendes Pinto didn’t have the materials he needs to operate. The second case would occur if, for instance, he was using improvised tools.

If something unaccounted interferes with the action, the action has to be changed accordingly.

EXAMPLE

Clashing performances

The most important situation where outcome does not match performance results from conflicting performances. These are situations where two or more parties try to outdo each other in an action / counteraction dynamic. When this happens the outcome has to be arbitrated by combining the intended performances of the different parties into a single narrative.

Alternative rules for action

In the system above the player determines the external constraints first, defines his character commitment next and decides on performance in the end. Sometimes it may be more interesting to work things out in a different way. Here are some alternatives:

Automatic behaviour

Many situations are so simple, mundane or uncritical that don't require all the above process. Just do it has you say it.

Complete surprise and routine behaviour

If the character is completely surprised, the GM may require the player to define performance before disclosing the external constraints. ...

The same happens if the character is doing something out of routine: the player has to disclose performance first. ...

Uncertain performance

If the player knows how committed the character is before defining performance, he will exactly match the performance to the commitment. It may be interesting to infuse some uncertainty into this process. This requires random commitment determination and works like this:

- The player defines the personal factors that affect performance but does not roll these right away.
- The player defines the intended performance of the character up to the 10th rank.
- Only in the end does the player actually roll his commitment. The intended performance ranks he defined above his roll are discarded.

Changing the aims of the action

Framing lively performance descriptions

TO BE CONTINUED