



## “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 limiting what the characters can do and how they can do it. This corresponds to the *circumstantial factors* affecting the action.
- 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*.
- The aim is just a vision of a future state of affairs conditioned by the means and external constraints. 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: Circumstantial factors affecting the action**

In order to act 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 circumstantial since they correspond to factors external to the character. We will consider here three types of circumstantial factors: The general context, the external constrains that limit the freedom of the character, the means he can use in his action, and finally the temporal boundaries of the action.

#### General context

Before a player can decide on the course of action for his character, he needs to understand the *general context* on which the character is to act. This corresponds to a broad view of the what, where and when of the action. It's up for the GM to provide the general context. Usually, he will outline who, why and how is involved in the situation, and where and when it is to happen.

*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."*

#### External Constrains

Within the general context we may isolate several aspects that condition the nature and terms of the actions the character may undertake. These are the *external constrains* affecting the characters. Constrains may be unknown to the participants in the action. Furthermore, constrains are not necessarily true facts. The character may work on wrong or false assumptions. Finally, constrains can be positive or negative.

*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.*

It is up to the players to identify within the context of the description of the situation as presented by the GM the potential constrains and to configure whether they may prove beneficial or detrimental to the aims they may define for their characters.

*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*

*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.*

#### CONSTRAINS

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.

Notice that constrains are independent of the action of the characters involved in the situation. 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. We are only looking at constrains that are not the result of the willing action of one of the parties currently involved in the situation.

#### Means

Finally, 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.

#### The time dimension

Action takes time. How long it takes is dependent on the nature of the action. In most occasions we don't need to care too much about this, though. The GM just needs to settle on a reasonable duration for the action. Yet, sometimes it asks for definite units of time. This is especially true in cases of repetitive performances (see below for this concept). The most common time units in TToMP are the *half-creed*, the *creed*, the

used by Fernão Mendes Pinto for the narration of action in his book. Of course, this is not to say that the GM will not resort to other units of time. The night or the day, the week, the month, the year, etc., all have a place in a game of TToMP.

The *half-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, so one half-creed corresponds to roughly 30 seconds. It is used for individual physical action.

*“... so many were the rocks, darts, spears and throwing sticks that fell on us it looked like rain pouring from the sky. In less than a **creed** twelve of the sixteen Portuguese in our party were slain with another thirty-six boys and sailors”, Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 36.* (Notice that we translate into the game unit half-creed the expression “less than a creed” often used by Mendes Pinto.)

*“... in the little more than three **creeds** it took our men to finish them off they killed us two Portuguese and seven boys, and wounded more than twenty...”, Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 43.*

Both the half-hour and the 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, mindless and 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 a half**...”, Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 57.*

There are larger time units that regulate daily life, from the break up of the day according to religious rhythms, days, weeks and months, seasons, monsoon cycles, etc. In any case, the (half)creed and the (half)hour are those that usually will regulate the characters' actions.

*Negotiations are a leisurely affair. The meeting between Álvaro Pires and Pissurlecar will be handled in \_hour units.*

### The space dimension: movement and placement

Space may also play a major role in action. In many occasions it may be treated as a circumstantial constrain, like when a character has to perform in a very narrow place that affects his freedom of action. Yet, space takes a dimension of its own when it becomes a determinant of action. This falls down either to movement or placement.

Movement ...

Placement refers to the relative positioning of the character towards other characters, entities or things. ...

### **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

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".*

*Álvaro dresses his best attire and moves on to Pissurlecar house in the Indian quarters of Malaca. He reaches it by 4 PM, just after the lunch rest. When a slave announces the presence of the Portuguese Pissurlecar is not the least surprised. He already knows about the mercy the Captain Major had granted on the soldier. It is not hard to figure the motive for the visit.*

*After half an hour waiting, Álvaro is introduced into Pissurlecar's office. Before entering, he repeats to himself: "2,000 in spices, that's all you have to lend me, you damn' usurer."*

### **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.

*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 trustworthy, 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.*

The combination of the 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	>= 9b	10
+5 / +8	5b – 8b	9
+3 / +4	3b – 4b	8
+2	2b	7
+1	1b	6
0	BD	5
-1	1p	4
-2	2p	3
-3 / -4	3p – 4p	2
-5 / -8	5p – 8p	1
<= -9	>= 9p refuses to act	

*On what concerns Álvaro we have: circumspection (1p) + values wealth (1b) + knowledge of accounting (1b), for a balance of 1b. Either Marta accepts a commitment rank of 6 (deliberate method), or she rolls BD+1b (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.*

### What you attempt: 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.

### Describing the performance

You define the performance by describing what the character intends to do and what he uses to do it. In this description you may take into account the external constrains that affect the performance and how the latter impact on the former. Notice also that the narrative may include both third and first person sentences. Furthermore, you need to mention the means you want to use in your performance.

*“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.*

*Manuel: After a wait of half an hour, Álvaro Pires is introduced into Pissurlecar’s office. For the next half an hour they chat about the usual generalities while sipping a cup of tea. Finally it’s time to talk about business. (Notice that this first round of conversations is briefly skipped through in “automatic mode”).*

*Marta: Álvaro Pires, confident in the good impression that his outlooks and polite manners certainly made on Pissurlecar, explains that the Captain Major rewarded him for his faithful and diligent services with the ship to Martavão. Basically, he wants to borrow 2,000 in spices from Pissurlecar to trade in that city. He says, “my good friend, I know that for you this is nothing. Yes, it’s almost an insult to disturb you with such a pitiful business that would only be tempting for a lesser merchant. Of course, friendship must be reciprocated so the profits of the venture are to be shared. I am sure that 4,000 Xs. on my return is a fair compensation for involving you in this minor affair.”*

## LINKING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PERFORMANCE TO THE AIMS OF THE ACTION

### Qualifying the performance

You may qualify the basic performance in terms of quality, complexity and timing to describe more precisely what the character wants to achieve:

	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Complexity</b>	<b>Timing</b>
<b>Basic</b>	Poor	Simple	Leisurely
<b>Intermediate</b>	Serviceable	Standard	Normal
<b>Advanced</b>	Excellent	Complex	Rushed

(The exact meaning of these three qualifiers varies with the nature of the performance, so it will be explained later in this book.)

*Manuel and Marta discuss how they should qualify Álvaro's proposal to Pissurlecar. They decide that timing is leisurely; that this is a standard negotiation in terms of complexity (it would be simple if Álvaro only asked for the 2,000 without mention to what he was ready to give in exchange); and that Álvaro is doing his best efforts in terms of trying to convince Pissurlecar to accept the deal.*

### Assigning commitment grades to the performance

You are not free to describe the performance the way you wish, though. What you do is limited to how committed you are to the action. This is accomplished by assigning commitment grades to your description. The basic description of the performance itself costs no grades (unless in the case of multiple performances; see below). Yet, there's a cost in grades on:

#### *External constrains*

Negative external constrains have to be overcome by the character if he wants to achieve his goals. So, each negative external constrain will have a cost of at least one grade (depending on constrain).

*The negotiations between Álvaro Pires and Pissurlecar take place in the office of the latter. Manuel rules out that this works in favour of the trader, so Álvaro is at a disadvantage. This fact costs him a commitment grade.*

Positive constrains have no cost since they exist independently of the will and behaviour of the character. Yet, the player must specify how the character is taking advantage of them.

#### *Means*

Whether you use a mean or not is dependent on your will, so using any given mean requires a commitment grade. Some means may require more than a grade, though.

*Álvaro Pires is using his best dress to impress Pissurlecar. This costs him a commitment grade.*

### Qualifiers

Basic qualifiers have no cost: The character is always expected to be able to perform at the lowest level of quality, complexity and timing. Intermediate qualifiers cost one

*Álvaro's performance costs no grades in terms of timing, costs him one grade in terms of complexity and costs him three grades in terms of quality.*

#### Total cost in terms of commitment grades

The player has to sum the total of grades expended to handle negative external constrains, to use means, and to qualify his performance. If he does not have enough commitment grades to cover his description of the action of his character, he has to change this description accordingly.

#### Multiple performances within a round

You may attempt to do several unrelated things at the same time. But this has a cost in performance grades, since it implies the more things you try to do, the more complex the course of action becomes.

# of performances	Grades per performance	Total cost in grades
1 <sup>st</sup>	0	0
2 <sup>nd</sup>	+1	1
3 <sup>rd</sup>	+2	3
4 <sup>th</sup>	+3	6
5 <sup>th</sup>	+4	10

So, the more unrelated performances you attempt, the higher the commitment to the overall action 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”).

#### Repetitive performance in successive rounds

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 readied everything needed for the treatment [first performance] and moved right away to cure the wounded hand since it looked in a more precarious condition. I used seven stitches... [second performance]; the \_wound in the forehead was smaller so it only required five [third performance]. I covered the wounds with an egg mix and a tissue that I carefully laced, just as I had seen done in India for a couple of times [fourth performance]”*

**Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 137**

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.

TOTAL EXAMPLE WITH ÁLVARO PIRES

#### EXAMPLE FROM FERNÃO MENDES PINTO

*"...I readied everything needed for the treatment and moved right away to cure the wounded hand since it looked in a more precarious condition. I used seven stitches but if the treatment had been done by a surgeon's hand, maybe a lot less would be needed"*

**Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 137**

Translating into TToMP terms:

Fernão Mendes Pinto attempts a surgery. Neither his personality traits nor his values contribute to his commitment (the only trait that might have an 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 2p) but he has been exposed to it in the past (upgrading his ability to 1p). So he has 4 commitment grades (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. Since the means he is using are improvised (he does not have a surgeon's kit), this constrains his task (1 grade). And he is operating a nobleman's son after being accused of attempting to kill him. He knows his life is at stake (1 grade for stressful situation).

He is attempting a serviceable (1 grade in quality) and simple (0 grades in complexity) surgery. He must neither rush nor delay it (1 grade in timing).

Fortunately he has the 4 commitment grades required for the operation.

#### **How things unfold: the outcome**

If nothing interferes with the performance it happens as described.

*"...I used seven stitches but if the treatment had been done by a surgeon's hand, maybe a lot less would be needed... within twenty days he was completely cured, if it wasn't for a small loss of control in the thumb", Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, c. 137.*

Mendes Pinto only made a serviceable job. He was able to save the thumb of the wounded boy, yet he used more stitches than needed and couldn't avoid a minor disability.

*A slave is mindlessly singing a tune while fishing alone in the quay of Malaca. Nobody is listening to him and he himself is more or less oblivious of the fact.*

In some cases the performance just cannot bear fruit, no matter what the character may attempt. For instance, if the action requires something to be there and it doesn't, the performance fails.

This would happen if Mendes Pinto didn't have the materials he needs to perform the surgery.

Sometimes the performance is neither automatic nor impossible, either because some unexpected event takes place, unaccounted external constraints interfere, expected factors don't materialize or the action undertaken by another party interacts with the action of your character. If this happens the characters may not be able to control either the nature or the extent of the outcome of their actions, so it has to be arbitrated.

*A beautiful Malayan lady sings for the Captain Major, trying to attract his attentions. Is the Captain Major sensible to the seduction efforts of the lady? To what point?*

In this case we configure several alternative outcomes. Which should materialize?

Of course, it is possible to configure alternative outcomes in most situations. The option between direct outcome and alternative outcomes has to be based on the dynamics of the game session and the development of events in the game world: Alternative outcomes are usually important in stressful situations, situations where the outcome

implies long range effects to the characters or their environment, or where may it start major causal chains that will lead to sizable changes in the future.

To determine handle alternative outcomes the players need to: a) identify the alternatives; b) adjudicate which of the alternatives identified in a) materializes.

### Potential alternative outcomes

Most often than not, the difference between alternative outcomes is a matter of degree within a continuum that starts with no change to the existing situation and ends with radical, irrevocable change. For game purposes, we may break it up into a limited set of alternatives:

- Fumble;
- No change (other than the passage of time);
- Minor outcome;
- Major outcome;
- Critical outcome.

*The Captain Major orders one of his slaves to clean his favourite china jars. Unfortunately to the slave, he inadvertently drops one of the jars to the ground. What happens? Will it break? How extensively?*

There are several alternative outcomes we may configure: The jar gets stuck on the slave's cloths, suffering no damage at all, so the fall is fumbled (as you can see, fumbles may be unintentional and even positive from the point of view of the character); If the jar suffers no damage, there's no change to the departing situation; if the jar is scratched or slightly broken, but it's still functional and can be repaired, there is a minor outcome; if the jar is broken to the point it is no longer functional but can be repaired, there's a major outcome; if the jar is so broken it cannot be repaired, the outcome is critical.

Furthermore, an outcome may entail a change in the nature of its object.

*A useless broken jar is no longer a jar: it cannot fulfil the role jars are designed for.*

A performance may have several independent outcomes, depending on different perspectives into the consequences of what happens. For instance, it may have both physical and psychological outcomes.

*Besides breaking the jar, the slave has also to be worried about how will the Captain Major react when he knows about it. Even if the jar is repaired, it is likely that the Captain will be mad about it being broken in the first place.*

### Adjudicating the effective outcome among the alternatives

Adjudicating outcomes depends on the method the players are using: automatic, deliberate or random. As was mentioned above, most common actions can be considered automatic since it is unnecessary in most game situations to configure alternative outcomes. This is specially true about simple tasks in non stressful situations. We may safely assume that the character is able to do what he wants and the outcome follows straightforward from the performance as intended by the character (or even if he fails at a first attempt, he will do it at the second or third time).

Whenever there's the need to decide on one among several alternative potential outcomes, the players need to resort to either the deliberate or the random method. In both cases, a minor outcome is considered to be the most likely consequence of the

performance that may lead to it. For this purpose, the players need to identify those factors. They may include:

- The quality of the intended outcome (poor = 1p; serviceable = 0; excellent = 1b);
- Means used / required (from 2p to 2b);
- Circumstantial factors (from 2p to 2b).

*What if the slave broke the jar on purpose, smashing it against the ground? On one hand he attempted to break the jar into a thousand pieces (an excellent performance 1b); on the other hand, the jar is highly breakable and the stony ground couldn't help more (2b for means).*

The sum of the performance and contextual factors that contribute or hurdle the outcome corresponds: Either to the dice-pool the player has to roll if is using the random determination method; or the ascribed outcome if he is using the deliberate method.

<b>RESULTS DETERMINATION</b>		
<b>Type of result</b>	<b>Random roll</b>	<b>Deliberate arbitration</b>
Critical	10	$\geq 3b$
Major	8 – 9	1b – 2b
Minor	4 – 7	Normal
No result	2 – 3	2p – 1p
Fumble	1	$\leq 3p$

*Manuel, who is handling the slave NPC prefers to use the deliberate method (less a dice-pool to roll) and gets a 3b deliberate arbitration that translates into a critical result: the jar is broken beyond reparability.*

### **Combined actions**

Combined actions are situations where there is an interaction among the behaviour of two or more parties, either through joint action, assistance, collaboration or confrontation. In the first three cases the parties are trying to reach a common end; in the last case they attempt to outdo each other in an action / counteraction dynamic.

If there is a combined action situation, all parties involved state their aims and determine their commitment according to the previous rules, under the constraints of a common context. Combined actions only require specific rules for performance description and outcome determination.

#### Performing combined actions

When performing combined actions each player describes independently the performance of his character, including qualifications and the assignment of commitment grades, like if they were acting in isolation. Next, these independent performance descriptions are combined into an overall description of the situation.

#### *Joint action*

What is specific of a joint action is that several parties come together to achieve a common outcome that would be impossible or harder to achieve in isolation by joining their strengths in a similar behaviour.

### *Assistance*

In the case of assistance a party (the author) is trying to do something and gets support from other parties.

### *Collaboration*

In the case of collaboration the parties also come together to achieve an outcome that would be impossible or harder to achieve in isolation but each party performs a part of a common project.

### *Confrontation*

Confrontations are combined actions where one party (active party) is trying to achieve an outcome (principal action) and the other party (passive party) is trying to avoid that outcome through a counter-action.

### Outcome of combined actions

The outcome of combined actions is handled just like for independent performance. The specificity is that you need to identify the contribution for the outcome from the different parties involved. In the case of alternative outcomes, you identify the alternatives just like for independent action.

### *Outcome of assistance*

The performance of the author defines the basic arbitration of outcomes. The performance of the assistants contributes to the performance of the author as a modifier. That means that first, each assistant has to define the outcome of his performance. This outcome is incorporated into the action of the author as a modifier.

<b>Outcome of the assistant(s)</b>	<b>Modifier to the author's outcome</b>
Critical	3b
Major	2b
Minor	1b
No result	–
Fumble	1p

### *Outcome of joint actions*

In this case the players should combine the contributions of the different parties into a single outcome by taking into account what each party has is contributing, both positively and negatively. If there is a result to adjudicate, the factors pertaining for each party are combined into a single adjudication process where you take into account:

- The quality of the performance for each party involved in the action;
- The means used by each party;
- The circumstantial factors that apply to all parties plus those that apply specifically for each party.

### *Outcome of collaboration*

In this case each party is handled as if it was acting in isolation. If their contributions are required and they fail, the overall outcome does not materialize.

### *Outcome of confrontations*

In the case of clashing performances, the players need to account for and balance the factors implied in both performances to determinate the result. First, the passive party

arbitrates the result of his counter-action. This result is incorporated into the principal action as a modifier to the result factors:

<b>Counter-action result</b>	<b>Principal action results modifier</b>
Critical	3p
Major	2p
Minor	1p
No result	–
Fumble	1b

### **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:

#### 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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