

# Hespera 2e

An occult sci-fi RPG by Julia Pitts, with art by JEShields

100 years after all contact with the rest of humanity was cut off, and 70 years after the brutal civil war sparked by the ensuing power vacuum, the few million people who live on the planet Hespera are looking towards the future. As tensions rise between Hespera City in the southern plains and the territories ruled by the city Hephaestus in the north, and the ancient stone gods that predate humanity's arrival on this planet by tens of thousands of years become more active, everyone must decide for themselves whether to rebuild this world... or burn it.

## Characters

Characters in Hespera are represented by two sets of stats: attributes, of which there is a fixed list, and specialties, which are freeform descriptions of the character's history and life. Correctly managing your attributes and specialties in the face of danger is a crucial part of surviving in the dangerous future.

## Attributes

Each character in Hespera has access to the same four attributes: Physique, Intellect,

Charm, and Ritual. Attributes are vitally important, as they determine not only your character's baseline effectiveness, but also how much damage they can take before being incapacitated.

Characters with at least one point in the Ritual attribute are referred to as witches, and carry the brand of the theolith they are sworn to. Witches must take a specialty referencing both that they are a witch and which theolith they're branded to. Put a little star next to that specialty. It's that character's *witchery specialty*.

The Ritual attribute cannot be directly rolled, but instead modifies the witchery specialty.

## Specialties

Specialties, meanwhile, have no fixed list, and function as general purpose descriptors. *Grizzled train guard one day from requirement* and *Football expert* are both perfectly valid specialties. Specialties grant bonus dice and help insulate your character from the full effects of failed rolls, so making sure that they're relevant is an important part of character building.

## Playing the game

As an RPG, Hespera follows the same cycle of "the GM and the players collaboratively tell a story until it's unclear whether a player

character could succeed at something, and then they roll dice."

Each roll begins with the GM stating the difficulty of the roll (generally from 2 to 6) and which attribute it will be based off, which depends on how the player narrates their character approaching the problem. The player then grabs d10s equal to the attribute value (minus any damage penalties). This is the base pool.

After the attribute dice are selected, the player may propose a relevant specialty from their list of specialties. If the GM agrees that the specialty is relevant, the player may add d10s (or smaller dice if the specialty has suffered stress) to the pool equal to the value of the specialty.

Once the pool is set up with attribute and specialty dice, the player rolls all of them at once. Any dice that land on a four or higher count as a success, and if the number of successes equals or exceeds the difficulty of the roll then the roll is successful, otherwise it fails.

A roll of average difficulty requires three successes. Harder rolls require more.

## To the limit

Sometimes a player really needs a roll to pass. After a roll, a player may declare that they're pushing their character to the limit.

Choose the attribute or the specialty (if any) that was used in the roll, and immediately roll an amount of d10s equal to its value, ignoring



stress penalties on specialties, but not damage penalties on attributes.

Once the roll is resolved, the attribute or specialty selected immediately suffers one point of damage or stress, respectively.

### Witchery

When pushing their witchery specialty to the limit, a witch also adds d10s equal to their Ritual attribute, in addition to the usual bonus.

### Failed rolls

If a roll is failed, the GM chooses whether the character takes damage or gets a twist. A twist can be any interesting failure that moves the story forward, but damage is a little more complex.

If they take damage and were using a specialty on the roll, the specialty takes one point of stress. Each point of stress lowers the die size of the specialty by one step. If a specialty drops below d4, it cannot be used until it heals by at least one step.

If they take damage and were not using a specialty, the attribute they were rolling takes damage directly, which lowers it by one. If an attribute hits zero, the character is out of action until healed back to at least one.

Once per session, and again at the very end, a player may take downtime. This lets them heal every specialty and one attribute by one point.

At the GM's discretion, medical aid, inspiring conversations, or the passage of time can also

heal attributes and specialties during a session, on top of the downtime limit.

## Creating a character

New characters start with Physique, Intellect, and Charm at 2, Ritual at 0, two specialties at 1, and have four raises. A raise can be converted into one attribute point or two specialty points. Spending an attribute point increases an attribute by 1, to a maximum of 4. One specialty point can add a new specialty at rank 1, or increase an existing one by 1 rank, to a maximum of 2. Unused raises are lost.

When raising their Ritual attribute, witches must also mark down which theolith their witch



is branded to, and what its spheres of influence are.

## Character advancement

Each attribute and specialty tracks XP separately.

Attributes only gain XP at the end of a session, and increase by one when they reach an XP value equal to their rank. After an attribute increases in value, its XP resets to 0.

Specialties gain 1 XP every time they're used in a roll that fails. A specialty increases by one when its XP reaches triple its current value, and its XP resets to 0. Any extra XP is lost.

At the end of each session, each character may either give one attribute a single point of XP, open a new specialty at rank 1, or may spend two XP among their existing specialties.

## Sample characters

### Helena the Traveling Witch

#### Attributes

Physique 3, Intellect 3, Charm 2, Ritual 1

#### Specialties

*Wandering witch of The Wind 2, Has friends everywhere 1, Dedicated syndicalist 1*

### Richard de Icaza

#### Attributes

Physique 3, Intellect 3, Charm 4

#### Specialties

*Grizzled private eye 1, Never met a drink he didn't like 1*