

Unending Clouds

Quick Play Edition

Unending Clouds is a steampunk roleplaying game with fantastical and Gothic inspirations. Take on the role of a valiant adventurer or a devious scoundrel and make your place on the continent of Velle or the colonies in Ikkal as a time of change threatens the Empire and the centuries of law and order it has brought to a once-divided people.

This Quick Play Edition contains the essential core rules of Unending Clouds; many elements are left out for the sake of remaining concise and focusing on crucial core features. The full version of Unending Clouds should be available in 2015.

What you Need:

In order to play Unending Clouds, you will need to have a number of six-sided dice as well as character sheets for each character, either digital or pencil and paper. It is also handy to have a screen for the GM to roll behind, and a copy of this booklet or the full Unending Clouds book (coming when it's done to 1km1kt!). You will also want to have enough players to have a Game Master as well as at least three players; in a pinch the Game Master can run a character themselves, but this is not recommended.

The Setting:

Velle is a continent ruled by the Empire, but the influence of the monarchy has been falling apart over the years. Its five major noble houses have been able to constantly weaken its influence in favor of its own until it has come to the verge of collapse; the current Empress, Elana Vier, is the last heir of the Laurentan Dynasty, and what will happen when she marries or dies is a matter of heated debate. Alek Barstoy, who was heir to both the Barstoy noble family and the Throne of Velle prior to his sudden abdication and subsequent disappearance, remains a wildcard in the mix.

Further complicating matters are a rapid change in Velle's society; the advent of steam-powered tools has served to make greater resources available to the masses, and the declining piety and faith of the people led to a cold war between the Empire and the Church, which eventually resulted in a reconciliation of the two factions but led to the magical secrets of the Church being made available to the public.

Read on for a brief section on each of the factions, and their relationships with each other.

The Throne

The Throne has held, at least in theory, the reins of Velle for the past couple centuries. Loyalists, as the Throne's political supporters are known, are faithful to the Laurentan dynasty instead of any particular ideological force or noble family. The Throne is currently ruled by Elana Vier.

Faction Relations:

The Throne: It is our duty to rule through strength and keep the people of Velle from tearing each other apart.

Vier: Current heirs of the royal blood, they pose a major threat to its continued rule.

Barstoy: Stoic, manipulative, and useful, but too driven by their ideals.

Encaster: They should save their ideals of nobility for real nobles.

Ravici: They'll sell anyone (or anything) for a bag of gold.

The Church: A threat and an asset. We are the old guard, standing against chaos, and they recognize our right to rule.

Rebels: Disloyalty is punished as is most just. We do not need to kill *all* of them, just make those who can see the light.

Ikkalians: Our subjects. End of discussion.

Vier

The Vier are known for alternating between decadence or pure innocence, with enough specimens from each camp to make them hard to pin down. They are passionate and prone to impulsive actions, but are also fiercely loyal. They have a nasty tendency to demand that favors be returned, though. The Vier do not have a single leader.

Faction Relations:

The Throne: We sit on it, but it still defies us.

Vier: We'll have your back if you have ours.

Barstoy: They are much like us; drunkards or saints. They're just less fun in either case.

Encaster: Those who know how to party are fun, but their honor gets in the way of both the pursuit of fun and the pursuit of righteousness.

Ravici: Good friends, so long as they know who's in charge and will overlook gold to pay back a favor.

The Church: We have a complicated relationship with them.

Rebels: Those who aren't disloyal are fine. There are few disloyal traitors.

Ikkalians: Are they our problem? No? Fine by us.

Barstoy

The Barstoy have long inhabited Thaw and the Frozen Highlands, and live short, dangerous lives with drinking, ceremonial dueling, and a surprising amount of piety. Deadly serious in all but the most festive of times, the Barstoys have one the best intelligence apparatus in Velle, especially since it's hard to tell whether they're drinking vodka or water. Officially, Alek Barstoy is their leader, but since he has disappeared his cousin Ivan has taken over control of the family.

Faction Relations:

The Throne: We preferred Alek. Elana is fine, but it was our turn.

Vier: They're good friends, but it's hard to approach them. They also replaced our prince, though that was not their doing.

Barstoy: We live hard lives, but we make our own paths.

Encaster: Some are truly noble, the others make great pawns when blackmailed.

Ravici: They are little better than traitors, and this can be exploited.

The Church: They lead us to our salvation, and we owe them our faith.

Rebels: The ones we like serve us, the ones we don't are easily eliminated.

Ikkalians: Not our concern, yet. We're keeping an eye on them.

Encaster

The Encasters run the Ikkal Mercantile Company as well as a variety of different mercantile enterprises. Unlike the Ravici, however, these focus more on power and influence than on money itself, keeping capital firmly in Encaster control. The Encasters place a high value on the image of nobility, often above the actual practice of being noble.

Faction Relations:

The Throne: We are the Throne's loyal servants, as all nobles should be.

Vier: They are uncultured, but they can at least host a good party.

Barstoy: Spies and fighters, a Barstoy makes a good friend and they usually keep up appearances.

Encaster: We are more cultured, and improve society, more than anyone else.

Ravici: They are little better than dogs who will debase themselves for a treat.

The Church: We keep up appearances with a tithe now and again and they leave us alone.

Rebels: A true noble would never turn traitor.

Ikkalians: They are our tool, regardless of what they have to say about it. We even give them civilized culture in exchange.

Ravici

The Ravici procure anything for a price, regardless of how rare or unusual it is. If they weren't so useful, everyone would want to eliminate them for doing things that offend them. A good Ravici measures every dealing in gold, and positions of power in the house are bought and sold on a daily basis; the true power in the Ravici house comes from wealth, rather than prestige.

Faction Relations:

The Throne: Crowns can still be bought and sold like anything else.

Vier: They prefer loyalty over money, which makes them poor business partners.

Barstoy: We're not sure what to think about them. They're too poor to matter anyway.

Encaster: They hold such great assets just outside our reach. If only we could get what they had...

Ravici: We hold the real power in Velle.

The Church: They are frustratingly devout; they think they don't need us but they are wrong.

Rebels: Their money is as good as anyone's.

Ikkalians: Hey, if it hurts the Encasters, it helps us. They'll be in our pocket soon enough.

The Church

The Church serves as a major social organization, as well as the central conduit to the Pardoners. While faith in the Pardoners and the power of the Church have been declining as a result of generalized magical studies and an increase in the power of smaller, secular, factions, the Church has still managed to hold on to a lot of power, and the fact that its clergy are made up of ranks of powerful magicians is a major bargaining chip. They are, implicitly, human-only, and typically only recruit Vellathans to their senior leadership.

The Throne: We are the source of their power; they would do well to remember this.

Vier: They need a revival of faith, but some of the Vier are our most loyal servants.

Barstoy: Fiercely loyal to us, but their rough lifestyle makes them unreliable.

Encaster: They're more concerned with appearance than fact, which reflects their failings in piety.

Ravici: Curs who need to be reminded that humanity is not supreme.

The Church: We spread the light of the Pardoners in the world.

Rebels: We will not embrace them. Some are righteous, many are wicked.

Ikkalians: They must be shown the Pardoners, of whom they are ignorant.

Rebels

Rebels fight the influence of the Throne in modern Vellathan life. Some fight their own battles with a variety of other nobles. Most Rebel factions have the covert support of at least one noble house, and a couple are even splinter sects of the Vellathan Church.

The Throne: An ancient and useless vestige of a past age.

Vier: If you can get on their good side, they'll stick with you to the end.

Barstoy: Snakes and wolves in sheep's clothing. They'll get hooks in you and never let you go.

Encaster: Their image and pride come above their true convictions; some may be sympathetic.

Ravici: If you've got more money than your bounty is worth, they're your friend.

The Church: They support the Throne, but that is their main failing.

Rebels: We represent a new age for mankind.

Ikkalians: Potential allies, they share our convictions but have different needs and desires.

Ikkalians

The Ikkalians are not unified under a single banner, but all this might change. Even now each of the smaller clans and tribes in the Ikkalian archipelago have begun to unify despite the best attempts of the Ikkal Mercantile Company, and they may soon be too powerful for any faction to ignore.

The Throne: They oppress us and enslave us. A great enemy.

Vier: They aren't willing to risk themselves to help us.

Barstoy: Unlikely to side with us, but certain to try to manipulate us.

Encaster: Their false nobility means nothing; they deserve destruction for their crimes.

Ravici: They seem more generous than they should be given their reputation.

The Church: Obsessed with their gods, but largely harmless.

Rebels: Potential friends, but also liabilities.

Ikkalians: Our cause is just and our freedom is inevitable.

Rules

Unending Clouds uses a single dice mechanic; exploding d6 dice. What this means is that the game is played entirely with six-sided dice (as are commonly found in most board games that use dice). If any die comes up with a result of “6”, it is re-rolled, and that value is added to the previous value of the roll. For instance, if someone were to roll a 6, a 6, and a 5, their (lucky) total would be 17 for that roll.

Unending Clouds is played as a series of “targets” or “challenges”. These may be annotated something like “(5/3, R, Decieve/Convince)”. The first number is the “difficulty” of a target. If a die that is rolled comes up equal to or greater than the difficulty, the roll is considered a success. The second number is a target's “complexity”, and relates to the number of successes required to actually have a character succeed at the action. The middle component of the challenge tells us whether the skill check is sustained or rushed (see The final part of the target is the character's proficiency used for actually undertaking the test. As illustrated here, it is possible to have multiple options for which specialization or career to use.

Unending Clouds uses a three-tier system of attributes, careers, and specializations. A complete table of these is on the next page. Do not worry too much about having every specialization or career on the list for your character. Most tests allow for multiple skills to use. Should a skill not be officially listed as a part of the test, the Game Master may determine that the skill is “linked”, meaning that you can attempt to use it instead of the listed skill, taking either no penalty or a very small penalty of one or two dice.

Characters have a special attribute called “Guts”. This represents their grit, determination, and luck. When dice are rolled, a character may temporarily expend a point of their Guts attribute in order to reroll any dice that did not come up as successes (the roll does not need to be their own).

Characters

Characters in Unending Clouds have a number of ratings and resource pools that are determined by their prowess and skill.

Health:

Health is a resource pool used to determine a character's ability to resist damage, the maximum value of which is equal to a character's ratings for the following:

$(\text{Strength} * 2 + \text{Endurance} * 3 + \text{Thick Skinned} * 2 + \text{Guts})$.

A standard level 1 character will have 9 Health if they choose not to buy any ranks in any of these attributes or specializations (starting value of 1 for attributes).

Energy:

Energy is a resource pool used to determine a character's reserves of physical and mental fortitude. Energy is equal to a character's ratings for the following:

$(\text{Strength} + \text{Endurance} * 3 + \text{Willpower} * 2 + \text{Stamina} * 2 + \text{Guts})$

A standard level 1 character will have 5 Energy if they choose not to buy any ranks in any of these

attributes or specializations (starting value of 1 for attributes).

Initiative:

Initiative is a rating that is used to determine characters' orders in combat. The following scores are used to determine a character's initiative:

(Speed*2+Street Smarts+Perception+highest of Brawler, Soldier, Gymnast, or Duelist).

The default value of Initiative is 2, because attributes start at a rating of 1.

Note: Pools differ from ratings in that the value listed on the character sheet is a maximum value for a character's fluctuating current value for the respective statistics. The only attribute that functions as a pool is Guts. Each pool recovers at its own rate, and has its current value modified based on a variety of different criteria.

Attribute	Career	Specializations	Attribute	Career	Specializations
Strength	Brawler	Unarmed, Fray	Smarts	Burglar	Countersecurity, Sleight of Hand, Forgery
	Soldier	Edge, Blunt, Thrust		Alchemist	Medicine
Endurance	Athlete	Running, Stamina, Lifting	Influence	Con Artist	Deceive, Seduce, Blackmail
	Survivor	Willpower		Socialite	Gossip, Etiquette, Convince
	Tough	Shock Resist, Thick Skin		Figurehead	Leadership, Diplomacy, Negotiation
Speed	Gymnast	Jumping, Escape Artist, Climbing	Magic	Invoker	Restoration, Deception, Death, Elementalism
	Duelist	Bow, Gun, Finesse Weapons			
	Sneak	Quiet Move, Hiding			
Prudence	Traveler	Perception, Street Smarts, Judge Intentions	Guts	None	
	Scholar	Book Knowledge (Field) (+)			
(+) indicates user-specified or additional specializations.					

Attribute Descriptions

Strength

Strength is the raw physical ability of a character, and their ability to apply it in situations that do not require terribly much grace, as well as some strenuous tasks that rely more on muscle memory than on flexibility. It contributes to characters' Health and Energy.

Endurance

Endurance is the cornerstone of many characters, serving to provide them with a larger Health and Energy pool. Endurance is also used for some physical challenges, such as shock resistance and lifting large weights.

Speed

Speed contributes to a character's Initiative and governs a number of skills; most notably mobility skills, light weapons, and most ranged weapons.

Prudence

Prudence is a measure of a character's worldliness and levelheadedness. It is used to measure how observant someone is, as well as contributing to their ability to grow deep depths of knowledge about the world around them.

Smarts

Smarts reflects a character's raw intelligence and cunning. It governs many forms of larceny, including forgery and sleight of hand, as well as the healing arts and other alchemical and scientific pursuits.

Influence

Influence rates a character's ability to interact with others. It covers a large array of interactions, from conning people to leading them into battle.

Magic

The Magic attribute governs a character's general magical aptitude; it does not, by itself, do anything unless a character has learned an arcane art with which to practice their innate abilities.

Guts

Guts determines how determined, lucky, and generally unstoppable a character is; by temporarily expending Guts they may reroll any dice that did not succeed on any roll.

Career Descriptions

Brawler

Brawlers have a less refined version of the art of war than Soldiers, but they're able to hold their own in a fight, something that they tend to do frequently, albeit usually with lower stakes than their martial counterparts.

Unarmed- Attack without weapons in combat.

Fray- Push through crowds or use them to make your escape; also used when attacking during a grapple.

Soldier

Soldiers are masters of the art of war, or so they would like everyone to believe. Trained in traditional weapons, Soldiers fight hard in close quarters, and count the most devastating shock troopers of Velle among their numbers.

Edge- Skill used when attacking with a sword or other weapon with a long exposed blade.

Blunt- Skill used with clubs, hammers, maces, and other weapons that rely on their mass to deal physical trauma to an opponent.

Thrust- Skill used with spears, lances, and other weapons that depend on a direct thrust to penetrate armor and cause grievous wounds.

Athlete

Athletes have honed their muscles and reflexes to the point where they can move like machines, carrying out feats of endurance and grace that can amaze onlookers.

Running- Skill used to determine a character's ability to run in a chase.

Stamina- Skill that contributes to a character's Energy and ability to remain awake/resist fatigue for long periods.

Lifting- Skill that is used to allow a character to lift large objects or carry a heavy pack for an extended period of time.

Survivor

Survivors are forged in the roughest parts of Velle and the Ikkalian islands, and put their hardiness and resourcefulness to good use in Vellathan society.

Willpower- Allows a character to avoid certain spell effects, contributes to their Energy, and gives them a second line of defense against interrogation or seduction in certain circumstances.

Tough

Toughs learned life's lessons the hard way, and quickly became hardened against the challenges that awaited them in the world.

Shock Resist- Shock Resist is used to prevent characters from taking shock penalties from injuries.

Thick Skinned- Thick Skinned adds to a character's Health.

Gymnast

Gymnasts are flexible and agile, known for their ability to perform stunts for the public, but they can also put their skills to good use getting into or out of any situation.

Jumping- Gymnasts can use their abilities to jump across gaps, or even achieve great vertical height from a standing jump.

Escape Artist- Escape artists can find their way out of restrains or chains,

Climbing- Climbing is used to determine what a character can scale, and also reflects a character's ability to keep their balance in precarious situations.

Duelist

Duelists focus on avoiding direct combat when possible. When they must fight in close quarters, they use light weapons, though they usually eliminate their opponents from a distance using ranged weapons.

Guns- Governs the use of powder-loaded firearms used throughout Velle.

Bows- Governs the use of man-powered projectile weapons in the bow and crossbow families.

Finesse Weapons- Governs the use of weapons specializing in landing precision strikes.

Sneak

Sneaks are adept at getting into and out of places unseen, and can hide in almost any situation.

Hiding- The skill of finding concealed areas or otherwise moving without arousing suspicion from an observer.

Quiet Move- The general skill of a character in running, jumping, or climbing quietly even when lightly burdened with gear.

Traveler

Travelers have seen the world, and their experiences. Because of their extensive journeying, they have learned to keenly observe their surroundings, and can read environments and people easily.

Perception- Perception is the skill of noticing things, whether small or large, that may not be immediately apparent.

Street Smarts- Street Smarts is the ability to figure out where a desired destination is in a city, as well as feeling out neighborhoods and finding underground connections.

Judge Intentions- Judge Intentions allows a character to guess at the motives of another character.

Scholar

Scholars have formal university training in several artistic and scientific fields, and typically have at least one further specialization in a particular field of knowledge.

Book Knowledge (Field)- The character has a deep background of information regarding a certain subject; this may be difficult to act upon, but allows them deeper insight nonetheless. Examples of possible fields include Vellathan Theology, Imperial History, Economics, or Biology.

Burglar

Burglars specialize in getting past security and making a decent payday for themselves, whether the task involves picking a lock, palming a wallet, or giving a guard some fake papers.

Countersecurity- Governs bypassing locks and traps.

Sleight of Hand- Governs stealing from another character's person, as well as covertly passing items to a willing or unwilling target.

Forgery- Governs the creation of convincing fake documents and other objects of value.

Alchemist

Alchemists bring ancient arcane knowledge and modern science together to a variety of applications; they are often cited as one of the driving forces in Vellathan progress.

Medicine- Governs healing wounds and preventing and treating diseases.

Con Artist

Con Artists specialize in presenting a false face to people in order to instill confidence and manipulate them.

Decieve- Governs the ability to tell a lie and present it as truth.

Seduce- Governs a character's ability to instill romantic interest, as well as lie about their own romantic interests.

Blackmail- Governs a character's ability to turn another character's dark secrets against them.

Socialite

Socialites are skilled at working in Velle's social circles; nothing they do seems particularly dangerous or subversive, but a savvy Socialite can change the progress of world affairs.

Gossip- Governs the gathering of knowledge on people, and the attempt to verify this information through publicly accessible means.

Etiquette- Governs a character's ability to avoid and recover from a social *faux pas* and maintain proper decorum at all times.

Convince- Governs a character's ability to convince others of the rightness of their opinion or to adopt a particular belief or theory that is not blatantly false.

Figurehead

Figureheads are those who have the ability and aptitude to lead, whether as an officer, politician, or even a company's executive.

Leadership- Governs a character's ability to lead followers, either by the force of charisma and an air of leadership or by keeping them in line through other means.

Diplomacy- Governs a character's ability to reconcile multiple factions.

Negotiation- Governs a character's ability to broker deals and reach mutually agreeable outcomes.

Invoker

Invokers are the most common variety of mage in Velle. Anyone can become an Invoker with the proper training, and almost every member of the Church is an Invoker. In addition, the Crown maintains its own corps of Invokers, and much of the magical texts that allow Invokers to train have become increasingly available in recent years. Invokers prepare their spells ahead of time, but benefit from being able to “cast” the spell at preparation and at use, allowing them to take advantage of better conditions at different times.

Spellcasting School- The Invoker is particularly adept at casting spells from this particular school; they may prepare additional spells that use only Effects from this school as they would normally be able to

at each Invoker level.

Character Creation

Character Creation in Unending Skies is done using a point-based system. In the full version of Unending Skies, this process is sped up using packages, which represent a character's background and provide a foundation for their growth.

One thing to note is that each character starts out with 1 in each attribute (Strength, Endurance, etc.) except for Magic, which starts at 0. Careers and skills cannot be advanced beyond the attribute that governs them (furthermore, skills cannot be advanced beyond the profession that contains them).

Characters are built from a pool of 100 points. Each character also receives 100 Crowns for starting gear at no cost. Not every system in Unending Clouds is present on the list above, but those that are utilize content in the Quick Play Edition of Unending Clouds.

Table: Costs of character creation.				
Attribute (Rating X)	Career (Rating X)	Specialization (Rating X)	Spell Component	Crowns
7(X) points	4(X) points	X points	3 points	1 point/10

While making your character, remember that all attributes and careers relevant to a particular skill are rolled when you roll for a challenge. Having an increased attribute or career is very difficult during character creation, but can pay off hugely in the end. In addition, Unending Clouds treats having any points in a career as sufficient training to use a skill; a soldier can use any weapon, though not necessarily well. The notable exceptions to this are the careers of Expert and Scholar, which do require a specialization in a given area to grant any value (though this may change at the GM's discretion).

Example Character:

James Lanfield specializes in one thing; getting in and out without anyone being the wiser. He's handy in a fight, having done his training and early service in the Ikkal Mercantile Company as a guard, but he specializes in never needing to draw a blade.

With this in mind, I've scoped out some potential careers for Lanfield. He'll have Soldier 1, which costs 4 points. He'll take another specialization in blade, to give him a pool of 3 when fighting with a bladed weapon. I'll also give him a second level in both Speed and Smarts, costing 14 each. This leaves him with 67 points to spend, which he will spend to buy two ranks each in Burglar and Sneak. At twelve points for two ranks, buying both careers leaves him with 43 points. He buys 2 ranks each of Quiet Move and Countersecurity, dropping him to 37. I decide that two ranks of Gymnast will help him get where he needs to be (and leave him with a neat 25 points) and figure out ways to flesh out the character. He's a rugged Encastrian, so I buy him the second rank of Endurance, leaving him with 11 points. He'll get one point of Athlete and one point of Tough, then spend the remaining three points on one rank each of Running, Stamina, and Thick Skin.

James Lanfield: Health: 13/13 Energy: 10/10 Initiative: 5 Attributes: Strength: 1 Endurance: 2 Speed: 2 Prudence: 1 Smarts: 1 Influence: 1 Magic: 0 Guts: 1 Careers and Specializations: Soldier 1, Blade 1; Sneak 2, Quiet Move 2; Burglar 2, Countersecurity 2; Gymnast 2; Athlete 1, Running 1, Stamina 1; Tough 1, Thick Skin 1.

Adventure

Unending Clouds has a variety of systems that come together to form a play experience; many of these systems have single-purpose applications.

General Skills

General Skills make up the majority of play; the GM sets a challenge based on what they believe the difficulty and complexity of a task to be, as well as whether or not the task can have multiple sequential rolls applied or if only one attempt at the action is possible.

For instance, a 4/1 roll (requiring one result of at least 4) is considered to be a “baseline” activity; something that could be failed but which should be simple for anyone who is proficient with it. A 4/3 (requiring three results of at least 4) roll is not necessarily more difficult, but is substantially more complex-if it has to be done in a hurry it may need a more skilled character, but a novice can still attempt it over a long period of time.

The primary difference between a “rushed” and a “sustained” check is that that a rushed check must have all its successes required rolled at once or it fails, while a sustained check can have multiple rolls performed over time (often over long periods) so long as there is at least one success on each roll.

Task	Difficulty	Complexity	Type	Skill
Pick a standard-issue lock	4	1	Sustained	Countersecurity
Jump across an alleyway	6	1	Rushed	Gymnastics
Fast-talk a guard	5	2	Rushed	Decieve
Hide in the middle of a deserted, well-lit street	12	2	Rushed	Hide
Forge a royal pardon	8	5	Sustained	Forgery

For most skill challenges, the difficulty and complexity are determined by the GM-the hardest challenges have a Difficulty rating approaching 12, and the most complex tasks can reach a Complexity of 5.

Healing Characters

Healing is a Medicine challenge with a difficulty equal to the desired Health restored with a minimum difficulty of 4 prior to any Trait modifications, and a complexity of 1 or the number of Shocks that are to be removed from a character, whichever is greater. A Healing challenge can be made for a target shortly after that character has received injuries, as well as once per day for that character. A failed Healing challenge has no effect other than preventing further Healing attempts.

Characters heal Health equal to their Endurance and replenish all their Energy every day, whether or not a Healing challenge is made. Shocks only are removed in this manner after all Health has been healed, at the rate of one per day.

Using Social Skills

Social skill challenges draw their difficulty from the extent of what a character is trying to convince another character of (for instance, convincing someone that the Empress is in the next room will be much more difficult than telling them that their most recent order from the Ikkal Mercantile Company

has come in). The complexity of manipulating someone is always relative to their hostility-or trust-to the person talking to them-a friendly audience would have a complexity of 1, a stranger might have a complexity of 2 or 3 depending on how similar they are to the person approaching them, and an enemy may have social challenges with a complexity of 4 or higher. The person being interacted with may make a Judge Intentions check with a difficulty of 4; if they get more successes than the person trying to manipulate them, they know that they are being manipulated purposefully.

Shock

Shock can be gained in combat or as a result of some environmental hazards. It represents grievous injuries that inhibit a character; for each point of Shock the character has accrued they either lose a die for all rolls, or, if they only have one die remaining after Shock modifiers, increase the Difficulty of a roll by 1.

Combat

Combat in Unending Clouds is a function of a number of criteria. The complexity of an attack is determined by the distance between a character and their attacker (relative to their weapon's operational ranges), while the difficulty is determined by a weapon's Accuracy rating. All attacks are considered to be rushed skill rolls unless a character has a trait that suggests otherwise.

A Short ranged attack has a Complexity of 1, a Medium ranged attack has a Complexity of 2, and a Long ranged attack has a complexity of 3; Impossible ranged attacks are not possible unless a trait is present that suggests otherwise. Melee weapons have a Complexity of 1 for all hits. Any attack made over a distance less than a range value is considered to be made at that range; an attack from five feet away with a Scattergun is a Short ranged attack, while an attack eleven feet away is considered a medium ranged attack.

Weapons reduce a target's health by an amount equal to their Damage rating, and for each success beyond the ones an attack needs to hit there is an opportunity to cause a Shock to the target.

Table: Weapons						
Name	Range (S/M/L/I)	Damage	Traits	Ammunition	Skill	Cost (Crowns)
Scattergun	10'/20'/40'/80'	14	Falloff (2)	1/load powder and shot	Guns	50
Bow	20'/40'/80'/160'	8		1/load arrow	Bow	10
Longsword	Melee	8	Man-powered	N/A	Edge	20
Spear	Melee	10	Man-powered, Reach, Thrown (10')	N/A	Thrust	15
Mace	Melee	5	Man-powered (x2)	N/A	Blunt	25

Rapier	Melee	6	Man-powered, Finesse	N/A	Finesse W.	40
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Traits:

Falloff: This weapon loses the specified amount of damage for each range increment; doing full damage at Short range.

Man-powered: This weapon does additional damage equal to the wielder's Strength.

Reach: This melee weapon can be used with an additional 2' range over the standard 2' range of melee weapons.

Thrown: This weapon can make a medium range attack at the range specified; it cannot be used for attacks outside this range with any accuracy.

Finesse: Finesse weapons can be used to make a called shot without any additional difficulty.

Called Shots

Called shots allow a character to gain a special bonus on a hit. Making a called shot increases the complexity of an attack by 1. Called shots can do one of the following:

Bypass 6 points of Armor

Add 1 Shock damage to an attack

Stun an opponent for one round

Death and Incapacitation

Characters suffer the effects of Incapacitation when they have run out of Health, or when they have suffered Shocks equal to twice their Endurance. While Incapacitated, characters are incapable of fighting, though they may still take non-strenuous actions, such as attempting to escape from combat while an opponent's attention is elsewhere. Should both criteria for Incapacitation be met, a character is dead.

Magic

Invocations:

Invocations are passed on directly to the mortals by gods. No mortal in recorded history has ever succeeded in coming upon an invocation by themselves, though a rare few have been able to learn invocations that they have witnessed being cast without having formal training in the act of casting them.

Invocations, unlike sorceries, can be shared between people through written or spoken instruction, and does not require practical magical exercises. Many invocations are passed between the faithful of the Vellathan Church in the form of liturgies sung in secret chambers, but just as many are found in tomes and archives of Velle's universities and noblemen's libraries.

Invocations are favored by the Vellathan Church, being part of their liturgical traditions. Invocations are not cast like sorceries, but rather are invoked in a time of contemplation and rest prior to being unleashed. While they take as long to unleash as an equivalent sorcery, they do not cause any fatigue,

and must be prepared prior to use.

The Invocation skill determines not only the effectiveness of an invocation but also the number of invocations that can be prepared by a caster at any time. Casters must take a half-hour to prepare invocations, though the restrictions for doing so depend on the Will of the caster; a highly disciplined invoker can meditate and prepare their magic in the middle of a roaring battle, so long as they are not struck and focus entirely on their work, while novice invokers can be distracted by a passing cat's meow and have to start over again.

Invokers can prepare a spell at a Rank equal to their Invocation skill, plus one at the rank below it. This continues down through all ranks, but doubles for every two Ranks below the current skill level (for example, a Level 3 Invoker can prepare one Rank 3, one Rank 2, and two Rank 1 invocations).

Invocation can have specializations in each school of magic, and may prepare spells from these schools at the same rate (i.e. a Level 4 Restoration Invoker can prepare a Rank 4, Rank 3, two Rank 2, and two Rank 1 spells from the Restoration grimoire, in addition to the number of spells of any Invocation family they may prepare).

Invoked spells are technically cast when they are prepared; the user of invocations will recite a lengthy liturgical utterance in a tongue incomprehensible to man, and then have the ability to utilize the spell's effect once in the next waking period with only a little effort. Any time the caster stops an incantation they must start from the beginning to receive its benefits. Novices can take a whole day to prepare a single spell, while masters typically learn some form of meditation to let them clear their mind and can cast an invocation in minutes, only being interrupted if they are physically attacked or thrown about.

Using an invocation is as simple as making an Invocation roll, with an additional number of dice equal to the specialization in the school of magic that the spell comes from. The Difficulty of the roll to use the invocation is equal to 4 or the Rank of the spell, whichever is greater. Whether the spell succeeds or fails, it is no longer prepared and cannot be cast again until the invoker has prepared it again. This reflects the effort made to invoke the spell, and is not subject to any penalties that the user was not subject to when they cast the spell. Casters tend to be able to refine the magical energy as they hold it, and any removal of penalties between the casting and utilization of a spell reduces the penalty to utilize the spell. The Complexity of a spellcasting attempt is equal to the number of Stages in the spell.

Although Invocations are “cast” ahead of time, they still require time to utilize; once the spell is cast, however, an Invoker can take other actions while waiting for the spell to take effect. A failed Invocation attempt does not expend the energy of the spell, and the spell remains even though it is unused.

Spells

Spells are the primary means of magic in Vellatha, and the only form that will be covered in the *Unending Skies* core rulebook.

Spells are divided into Invocations; functionally identical the difference between the two comes down to the means of learning and executing magic. Spells are further subdivided into a number of schools based on the general use of their effects; spells with multiple effects that are not in the same school are cross-school spells and are not considered to have any school for the purposes of being cast.

Spells leave behind a magical trace that is observable using a Manascape test (see the Manascape section for more detail).

Effects

Effects are the core element of any spell; they are the key factor in determining what the spell will do. Each effect has a cost, and many effects have a further Special ability that may be activated to alter the functionality of the spell. While many effects do damage, spells do not cause Wounds unless the effect explicitly says that it would. A spell does not have to include any levels of an effect in order to be cast.

Blur (Deception)

Blur increases the Complexity required to interact with an object by causing nervous system feedback associated with sensing the object. This makes the item appear fuzzy, have an odd sensation associated with coming near it, and distorts any sound it makes. The Blur effect does not have any impact on inanimate objects (or, interestingly, Wraithlike), so it cannot cause machinery to malfunction. The Complexity increase applies to all skill rolls not governed by the Invoker or Sorcerer careers, including combat.

Cost: The spell's Rank is increased by 2 for each Rating of Blur.

Special: The Illusion effect limits the effect of Blur to a single sense, but decreases the price of the final spell by 1 Rank.

Darkness (Deception)

Darkness as an effect focuses on cloaking and concealing objects. Anything within the locus of a Darkness effect has both muted sound and a decreased visibility due to the effects of entropic magic. All attempts to perceive the presence or form of something with a Darkness effect applied, whether by sight, hearing, or even touch face an increased Difficulty equal to the rank of Darkness affecting the object. This is limited to the object and its immediate products, applying to something like a gunshot or hidden blade, but not a powder burn or injury that is derived from an object but not necessarily part of it or its normal use. Darkness does not have an impact in combat situations.

Cost: The spell costs 1 Rank and 1 Action more to cast per Rating.

Special: A Dread effect can be added to the Darkness effect; this begins at a Rating of 2 and is increased by 1 for each Rating of the Darkness effect. The Darkness effect is nullified once the Dread Rating is calculated. This effect is applied whenever someone perceives the object and is meaningfully close; this is up to the GM's discretion, since an artillery shell with a Dread effect may be frightening for miles in any direction, but someone may ignore a Dread effect on someone they pass without noticing on the street. Upon taking effect, the viewer is forced to make a Fear Test with a Difficulty equal to the Dread rating and a Complexity equal to 1. Adding Dread to a Darkness effect does not increase a spell's cost, as it replaces the original Darkness effect.

Special: Greater Dread can be applied to any Darkness that has a Dread effect; at the price of 1 Rank and 1 Round of casting time, the Complexity of the Fear Test for someone who falls victim to the Dread Effect may be increased to 2. This may be repeated one more time for a maximum Complexity of 3.

Fire (Elementalism)

The Fire effect does six points of damage to a target per Rating of the effect. This can cause an Ignition check, but otherwise disappears after doing damage.

Cost: Spell increases 1 Rank per Fire Rating

Special: Increase the spell's Rank by 2 and Time by one round to have a Lingered Fire effect; on each subsequent combat round or turn, the effective Rating of the Fire effect decreases by 1, and any other effects on the spell disappear unless they would otherwise be sustained. When the Fire rating equals zero, the spell ends unless it has another effect still ongoing.

Healing (Restoration)

The Healing effect restores five points of health to a target per Rating of the effect. This cannot restore wounds.

Cost: Spell increases 1 Rank per Healing Rating, and takes 1 Action more to cast.

Special: Increase the spell's Rank by 2 and Time by two rounds to add a Cure effect that removes a Shock as well as diseases or sickness, and allows the target of the spell to make an immediate recovery check against poison.

Harm (Death)

The Harm effect removes seven points of health (or durability) from a target per Rating of the effect. This can cause wounds.

Cost: Spell increases 1 Rank per Harm Rating.

Special: Add the Bury effect to the spell by increasing its Rank by 2. If a target is incapacitated or dead when the Bury effect comes into action, their body is disintegrated, making it impossible to resurrect them from body parts.

Special: Add the Wound effect to the spell by increasing its Time by 1. If the spell takes effect on a living target, it is treated as having done two more points of damage than it did for the purposes of causing a wound.

Loci

Loci determine the sphere of influence of a spell; each locus is affiliated with a specific effect or group of effects.

Loci may also be stacked onto each other through a process known as staging. Stages are linked by either being “given” or “extended”. A given spell is treated as having been cast by the target upon which the spell is cast at that particular stage of a spell, allowing them to target the effects of the next stage of the spell. A person to whom a spell has been given becomes aware of the effects of the spell. An extended spell is still in control of the mage; it simply takes effect immediately. Note that both given and extended spells advance to the next stage immediately upon reaching their target.

As a general rule, only sapient lifeforms can utilize a given spell; some animals may be capable of doing so with training, but this is often risky as animals do not always realize what effects the spell will have. Attempting give a spell to an inanimate object or construct will cause it to return to the caster without taking effect. People given an Occulted spell are only aware of the stage that they are handling.

For instance, let's consider the following Rank 3 spell:

Stage 1: Bolt, Ricochet 1

Stage 2: Bolt, Fire 1, Ricochet 1

An extended spell will take effect as usual; the first stage bolts hit any target within the caster's line of view, then hit a second target. The caster will then allocate two bolts that must be within line of sight of the caster for each of the original bolts, doing the effects of Fire 1 on each target. The limitations of this are that the spell still belongs to the caster, meaning that bolts cannot attack people outside of line of sight. Of course, since the bolts do not have homing, they are also limited to not passing through anything that would obstruct fire (any solid object) from the perspective of the targets of the original bolts.

The above spell as a given spell, however, would allow the caster to give the bolts to either allies or himself (assuming, of course, that he is within his own line of sight, something as simple as extending a hand or glancing down at himself could do this), then decide the targets for those bolts; this could allow him to stay safely behind cover and still provide his allies with fire support.

Unless otherwise noted, the effects of a spell take effect immediately. Spells that effect health have permanent effects (such as Harm, Healing, or Fire), but other effects last only for the amount of time specified in the effect itself or in the Locus used in casting the spell.

Bestow

The Bestow locus causes the caster (or person to whom the effect is extended or given) to gain the effects of a spell over time. The effects of a spell cast with Bestow last for a minute (ten combat rounds) unless the Bestow effect has the Extension ability applied. During this time, the effects cannot be removed through any mundane or magical means other than counterspelling. Health gained or lost in this way should be tracked separately; it is treated as damage or healing applied at the end of any turn before a wound or death check would come into effect.

Cost: The Bestow locus requires five combat rounds or a half-minute casting time in addition to the usual casting time for the spell.

Special: Extension allows the duration of a Bestow spell to extend to an hour, a day, a week, or a month by increasing the Rank of a spell by 1, 2, 3, or 4 respectively.

Bolt

The Bolt locus is one of the more common and simple methods of casting magic. It simply delivers the desired effect of the spell to a distant target. This can be anywhere within line of sight of the caster, and will travel through anything the spell's effects could travel through (lightning can go through conductive materials, healing and harm can go through anything).

Cost: 1 Action

Special: Ricochet allows the caster of a spell with the Bolt locus to include an additional target for the price of 1 Rank per desired target after the first.

Special: Homing allows the caster of a spell with the Bolt locus to send a bolt flying at a target who is not directly visible at the cost of an additional 1 Rank. This allows the caster to bypass any immediate obstacles.

Touch

Touch spells are favored by those who need to use magic in a hurry; witchhunters and spellblades have favored the Touch locus for as long as it has been around for its simplicity and speed. The only special requirement of the Touch locus is that users must connect either with a part of their body or with a

casting implement (typically a rod or wand, but training allows other objects to be used).

Cost: None

Special: Homing Touch spells use an extra Rank, but are considered to always hit without having to make an attack roll. The magical effect will cause the wielder to contact the target, but if the spell is combined with an attack it does not deal damage unless it would hit normally.

Refinements

Last Resort

Rather than immediately taking effect, the effects of this spell linger for a number of hours equal to the final Rank price of the spell but do not take effect immediately. When any character affected by the stage's locus is knocked unconscious or killed (caster's choice) the spell takes immediate effect. Invocations with the Last Resort effect wear off if their caster regains spells.

Cost: Increase Time by 2 rounds. Not compatible with targeted Loci.

Smart

A spell modified with this refinement will not trigger its effects when the caster would not want it to; it will not harm allies or benefit enemies, regardless of what its effect locus says.

Cost: Increase Rank by 1 *or* increase Time by 1 round.