



Here is a quick presentation which provides you with an outline of the different aspects of the game (universe, rules, type of stories played, etc.).

It's also useful to say that the game is mostly intended for a mature audience. Despite a good deal of action, it's not hack & slash. Plots are usually more sophisticated than chasing a treasure in a forgotten place guarded by monsters. They embrace and address many themes, including but not limited to politics, economy, philosophy or sexuality.

It's up to you to assess your own maturity or that of your players, since it's not strictly related to a given age.

The world

The setting

Kerminwoks is an animistic world where Spirits are everywhere and govern the laws of nature. This animism is not anthropomorphic however, and trees don't speak, even though they're very much alive. A tree or a forest does have a personality though, as well as moods, and it can express those to its environment or to Mortals in varying ways. Same goes for rocks and mountains, rivers and oceans or for the sky. There's not just one sky by the way, but a different sky atop each part of the world, and they each have their personal climates and seasons, in line with their own personality.

Mortals are Elemental Spirits too. They are what are called *Somatils*, i.e. body Elementals, since bodies and their components (flesh, bones, keratin, etc.) are one of the ten Elements of nature in this universe.

Nothing is called *animal* since all Elements have a Spirit and are as animate as Somatils. The word 'animal' therefore poorly qualifies.

There are no humans either in this game. Many humanoids are close to them physically, mentally or socially, but since they all differ in at least some respect from us, none of them is referred to as "human".

Still on a lexical note, the word "race" is not used, since Somatils are classified according to their physical and

Spiritual (magical) nature at the same time. Two Somatils of the same category thus don't necessarily have an ancestor in common.

The world of Kerminwoks is huge and vast, and not everything is yet known of it, either geographically or cosmologically. As in our world, scholars from different places nonetheless study this world to fathom it out and the knowledge Mortals have of their environment is not fixed, but develops over time.

What is known of reality also varies with the different cultural systems in existence among humanoids. Each nation has its own perception of the universe, its own philosophy. Sometimes these visions conflict, sometimes they echo each other. This cultural aspect combined with material needs shapes the diplomatic relations between the different groups of people across the world, and cultural aspects are given a particular importance in the game.

Technology is hardly comparable to ours since the laws of physics don't apply in this world. It's consequently neither more advanced or more rudimentary than ours, it's simply different.

Bows and spears are the regular missile weapons while vehicles are nothing else than a wagon drafted by some Somatils. However, some of them can fly (like Griffins) and flying transportation is thus available. Similarly, alchemy creates objects of diverse properties, like sticks which can ignite fire or cast lightning, or specialized tools for professionals, like scissors which cut metal like butter for blacksmithing purposes.

As you can see, no equivalence of technology can really be made with what we know. As in our world though, what's technical and efficient is usually costly and is not therefore available for everyone. Economical differences are technological differences as well, either on an individual or national scale.

Characters and stories

The players role play humanoids called *Nérédar*. This is the meaning of the game's title: "Kerminwoks (the world) experienced as a Nérédar".

The Nérédar are hybrids of other humanoids, more or less human in look, called *Amayir*. It takes a blending of several types of Amayir over several generations to give birth to a Nérédar. Since the Nérédar are sterile, it results that there are very few of them in the world at any given time or place.

Physically and magically, the Nérédar are usually above the standard Amayir, and all player-characters are therefore skilled in magic to some degree, since it comes naturally to them. Their lifespan is also longer than for most humanoids (from 200 to 300 years). Socially however, they remain a small minority that's differently appreciated depending on the culture, and they're usually subject to some legends.

Part of the stories the characters will play address this social issue of blending in. This is particularly salient in regard to the importance that is given to cultural and social aspects within the game. This is however not the core of most plotlines, as the typical ingredients of a story in *Kerminwoks Délos Nérédar* are action and investigation.

Action mostly revolves around combats and journeying, as traveling in the wild is addressed as a real action scene by the mechanic, and it's commonplace for most storylines to involve a long distance travel.

The investigation involves some aspect of the world itself, how it works, how Spirits interact with each other. It can also be about a given place or the agenda of some people. The plotlines always require to figure out several elements of the world in the manner of a rational investigation. They also involve the discovery of the Somatils and peoples of this world, of their cultures and ways of life, and progressively, the different adventures unveil and foreshadow the whole world of Kerminwoks itself.

Saving the world will never be at stake, as the world doesn't need saving. There's not conflict between good and evil, since nature is neither good nor bad, it just *is*. That's the case of every Spirit or entity in this world. There are no demonic creatures or foul beasts only existing to be slain. There are many predators on the other hand, very powerful sometimes, and thus constituting a threat for many, possibly for you. From a global standpoint however, they belong in this world as much as the next Somatil.

Stories will consequently revolve around your concerns and worries, or those of your community. You can be part of a greater cause too, either intellectual (knowledge) or political. That depends on the exact stories you play, but all plots deal with your ability to exist in the natural chaos of the world (conflicts with nature, between political entities, nations, struggles for material resources, etc.).

The Chronicle format

The stories to play with this game can either be a loose plot the Narrators have to flesh out as they like or intricate storylines. This is where the investigation aspect of the game really shows up.

These complex stories are shaped into what's called a Chronicle.

A Chronicle divides into Chapters. It's different from the classical scenario or campaign format in which scenarios are individual units which can possibly be rearranged or skipped in the overall frame of the campaign. Besides, each scenario is a full narrative unit with its own motivations, characters and final resolution.

By contrast, a Chronicle is a single story, like a very long scenario, and Chapters are just a way to divide this long segments into shorter units, just as in a book. Each Chapter is necessarily the continuation of the last, and sometimes, a Chapter can even break off in the middle of the action, which resumes when the next Chapter starts. What makes the unity of a Chapter is more a vibe, a theme or a situation.

The mechanic

The mechanic is extensive and rich. Rules taken in their entirety are heavy. However, they remain customizable, since they come in different "versions". The first chapter of the rulebook lays down basic principles to test probabilities. These basic rules can always double for a more sophisticated rule dedicated to a given stat. Keeping things simple is thus always an option. Besides, the starter book offers a lighter version of some specific rules, and the more complex of them break down into basic, optional and advanced.

Basically, tests are made against percentages. The d100 is therefore the chief die in this mechanic. However, all dice are used (you can even use d16s, although it's not indispensable, don't worry!). You also need a good number of dice in combat and travel. In combat for instance, the type and number of dice you roll determine your amount of damage. (the weapon defines the type of die, your strength and proficiency establish how many you roll). In the rest of the mechanic, throwing several dice at a time is less common.

Game Modes

The key notion of the game mechanic is that the rules articulate in Game Modes. In other words, the rules don't apply unilaterally throughout the different scenes. What rule applies and to what extent is defined by the Game Mode that is on during the scene.

The function of Game Modes is to set the difficulty of a scene played, since all the scenes of a story don't have the same importance. In some of them, you want the story to be fast because what's played doesn't matter much or because it's not meant to challenge the players. In other scenes, you want the players to make it through, but they nonetheless have to struggle a little to get what they want. Other parts of the story are meant to be more heroic and uncertain. What's gonna happen when they come face to face with their nemesis for instance?

Modes partly regulate the level of uncertainty of scenes, and they do that by the rules they activate or abridge.

For instance, in the easiest Game Mode (the *No Sweat* Mode), no count is kept of Hit Points. Even though the heroes can be hurt, this is only a narrative element in this case. They're never wounded to the point it could challenge the continuation of the story in No Sweat Mode. You therefore don't even bother to take down damage, and when the Mode shifts up, they're consequently full. By the same token, important characters (you, but also your antagonists among others) can only die in the two highest Modes (there are five Modes overall).

The difficulty to pass tests is also related to Game Modes, as well as the number of tests you've got to pass to achieve what you want. In the Survival Mode (the highest), the number of rules which apply to a given action is increased, reflecting the difficulty of even mundane things. Luckily, this Mode is quite unusual and never stays on for long. How hard things are in the game is consequently largely depending on the Mode.

Plot points only occur in the highest Modes, otherwise, there would be no real achievement, would they? As a result, low Modes are the comfort zone for the players, but they can only take down important enemies, triumph over obstacles or reach their goal when the Game Mode is high, i.e. by taking risks. Where would be the fun otherwise? No guts, no glory like they say!

Game Modes move according to the storyline. There's no exact rule to decide which Mode is necessary for which scene and there's no limit to how long a given scene can take. Sometimes, it's even the decisions of the players which changes the Mode. If they for instance decide to leave the road to enter the forest, the Narrator can tell them the Game Mode shifts one level up. The players can thus revise their judgment and get back on the road now that they know which Mode is on. The Game Mode is always clearly mentioned to the players by the way. It's not a secret thing kept behind the screen, but a clear information that also contributes a psychological aspect ("oh no! Not Survival Mode!").

Most of the time, it's the Chronicle which sets the different Modes in line with the scenes. The Initiation Chronicle is by the way a good tutorial to understand how this Mode thing works in practice and to see what Mode suits what kind of scenes.

Stats

Each character is defined by a wide array of stats. They fall into the following categories: Primary Traits, Sub-Traits, Secondary Traits, Hit Points and Skills.

Primary Traits are simply the standard characteristics characters have in many games. There are 9 of them here: Strength, Dexterity, Agility, Constitution, Reaction, Mind, Willpower, Perception, Aura.

Sub-Traits are additional information regarding the Primary Traits in the form of adjustments. They usually depend on the type of humanoid the character is. They only address 3 Traits: Constitution, Perception and Aura. Each Perception Sub-Trait defines one specific sense for instance.

Secondary Traits are values that the character doesn't really control, like *Needs* (Hunger, Sleep, Thirst), as well as a barometer for exhaustion and another for the morale.

Hit Points are not surprisingly the life barometer of the Somatil. They decrease under damage. 0 doesn't mean death but is the threshold for serious injuries.

Skills are like Traits quite a classical type of stat in RPGs. They split into Universal Skills (shared by all characters and with a minimum value) and Specific Skills (personal to each character).

Confidence

The game mechanic takes into account the morale of the characters thanks to a pool of points called *Confidence*. Points are added to the pool each time there's a good news or when the heart of the character is lifted. On the opposite, bad turns of event drain the pool.

The goal of these points is to be spent on dice rolls to increase your chances of success. So, the more confident a character, the more they can succeed at what they do.

The huge advantage of Confidence is to allow you to prioritize the tests you don't want to fail. Spending Confidence doesn't necessarily ensure the success of a die roll (it depends on the value), but the more you invest Confidence, the more the odds turn in your favor.

This system of morale really highlights the role of several artistic Skills like music, poetry or dancing. Having people skilled in these fields in a group is always a very valuable asset.

In lack of such Skills, food and sex also contribute greatly to Confidence. This is also works as a valuable incentive to role play a character.

Combat and travel

Combat and travel rules somewhat behave like sub-systems in this mechanic. They both split in different Styles and Ranks. The Style defines the strengths and shortcomings of a character while the Rank rates their proficiency in the field.

Combat and travel Ranks and Styles are obviously unrelated. The Style or Rank you have in one is completely independent of the other.

In combat, you have Styles like *Barbarian* (best damage, weak defense), *Feline* (good defense, uses short weapons only), *Blades Dancer* (fights with two blades), *Wrestler* (bare-hand fighting style), etc.

In travel you have Styles like *Turtle* (slow but best carrying capacity), *Antelope* (very fast in flat terrains but weakened when the terrain is irregular), *Snowling* (the best in snow and quite effective in harsh terrains), etc.

Combat and travel both proceeds from a *Struggle* mechanic. You have a value to which you add a d100 each turn. The opposition does the same, the higher score takes the Struggle.

In combat, Struggles are individual (each fighter makes their own roll) but can be opposed to many adversaries. Who beats who indicates who is in opposition to attack

who. From there, you move on to defense rolls and damage.

In travel, the Struggle roll is collective for the whole group of travelers. The terrain is considered as an enemy and has its own Struggle value. Contrary to combat, what matters most here is the margin by which you beat the terrain or lose against it. The difference between the two Struggle scores (terrain vs. travelers) indicates how many days this roll covers and whether there will be one obstacle on the way, among other things.

It's possible to use Confidence points in both combat and travel to enhance your Struggle scores. So, here again, being full of hope contributes to victory.

The Combat and travel systems both have their own Modes which add to Game Modes. As said before, the likeliness to die is controlled by Game Modes. This remains true in combat and travel. What their specific Modes regulate is the difficulty of the action. Do you take stamina into account or not? Do you have a bonus to location rolls in combat? How severe can be an obstacle? These parameters are controlled by Combat and Travel Modes respectively, so as to make sure that a recreational fight doesn't turn into a nightmare for the story just because of a few bad rolls...

Magic

Magic splits into 4 states (like the 3 states of matter). One of these states is alchemy. It consists in the making of objects in alchemic materials with special properties akin to the effects of spells. They can be of very diverse function and many are for everyday life, as suggested earlier regarding the technological level in this world.

Another state of magic consists in classical spells, called *Charms*. They are innate abilities of some Somatils and you can't consequently decide to learn those spells. You can train to cast them only when you're born with their corresponding ability. The Nérédar have usually between one to three of these Charms.

The two other states of magic are open. You've got no pre-existing spells here, only magic scales with which you compose your own spells. You can improvise a spell on the fly with these scales, but it's safer to prepare them in advance.

Since you make your own spells, the possibilities are limitless in theory. The real limit is however the difficulty to successfully cast them! Magic has many possibilities in this world, but it comes at a price. When you fail a magic composition (by contrast with a Charm) it's not like you did nothing: something does happen! It's simply not what was expected. And when the failure is particularly severe (Special Failure), the effect of the spell becomes totally unpredictable.

These two states are the chief use of "real magic" (when it becomes a professional's job). Since these states allow creativity, different nations and peoples have developed their own spells, in line with their needs and cultural inclinations.

Regarding the mechanic, tests to pass a spell are made under the same Magic Skill, regardless of what you attempt. The rest depends on what you can do. Charms are innate abilities defined at character generation, while magic scales are learned. You can start the game with a few or even all of them, or learn them as you play. The extent of your possibilities in magic will result from the number of scales you know and the level of your Magic Skill (this is under Magic that you'll see the probability rolls with the highest difficulty ratings of the game).

Elemental Connections

Aside magic, there is a similar form of Spiritual potential with are Elemental Connections. They consist in a special link nurtured to other Elementals to gain their assistance.

It's very different from magic in the sense that you don't cast spells and that "failure" is somewhat impossible, because you don't do anything. It's the Elementals who are in charge in this case, and their intervention is subject to their good will. The higher the Connection, the more they will assist you.

A Connection to Sylphs for instance (air Elementals) can deviate the wind from your face or even some missiles thrown at you. Sylphs can also help you jump a little higher or give you a perception of the weather to come. How far they assist you or provide information to you depends on how high is your Connection to them. This is true of all Elementals.

A Connection is not developed through work and practice like magic, but with intimacy. As says the name, it's a connection to other Spirits, not a personal power. Most Somatils living in the wild have several Elemental Connections.

Progression

The system rewards actions and initiatives. The more you use something, the better you get at it.

You tend to improve more when you pass your tests, but the issue of success/failure is pretty secondary compared to how often you do something.

This is true of all stats. The more a Trait or Skill is solicited, the higher it gets, the more you fight, the better you get, regardless of whether you win or lose an opposition. Similarly, your Hit Points increase as you take damage.

Note that Game Modes influence considerably the gain of experience points. You gain nothing in No Sweat Mode (too easy) while you improve rapidly in Survival Mode (everything is hard in this Mode and it doesn't stay on for long anyway).

This individual stat progression is backed by a global progression rating based on how the character is played. It's not based on acting skills and such, but rather on how faithful the character is to their cultural background and what this character brings to the game. This progression is called the Dramatic Rating.