

Shattered Spirits

Johan has a tough decision ahead of him. No solution sounds like a good idea, but he has to pick one. So, he lets it simmer in his subconscious for a while. He'll make his decision when the time comes. Little does Johan know, he has just set himself up for quite an interesting few days. Johan is a *Shattered Spirit*. Deep inside him, the many fragments of his soul are holding a Council. A vote is to be held about the dilemma facing Johan in two days. The choice will, no doubt, affect each fragment differently. In The Council, not every vote counts equal. One's vote is weighted by its own power over the rest of The Council. It's time to go out into the outside world, and work for that power. It looks like Johan is about to have a few more problems.

In *Shattered Spirits*, you play the role of The Council. You are the ones summoned to solve the dilemma the main character faces. But, a simple vote would be just too simple. First, you must use your extensive powers to get few brownie points with The Council.

Characters

- Main Character -

The main character is run by the GM (game master), and is the central focus of the story. The GM is the referee. It is his job to keep the game flowing, and has final say on rulings. He also takes the role of any part of the world that the players do not.

- Supporting Cast -

Every other character that isn't the main character is supporting cast. Control of these characters will shift as play goes on.

- Spirit Fragment -

The players play the role of Spirit Fragments, individual shards of the main character's soul. Each is a conscious being, but still a piece to the bigger puzzle. Together, the fragments form The Council. Each has a say in the small 'community.' Alliances are etched, and enemies are forged. Within the main character, the fragments may not directly oppose each other. However, the real world is an open and free arena to strive for one's own goal.

The Characters

The first element to be written is the main character. Since the players are to ultimately make up the main character, they should be a part of the creation process.

Setting

The first part of the main character is the world he or she will exist in. The setting may not seem like part of the character, but it is in this game. This is because the GM runs the world much like he would the main character, because to the fragments, the real world is nothing more than an extension of their own world. This game does not cater to a specific setting, so it can be anything you would like it to be. Go ahead and choose something from a favorite book, show, or movie. Or, you could just make one up.

Background

Write a short biography on the main character. It doesn't have to be anything long, just something that gives a good idea of the character concept. Give a little history. Tell about some likes and dislikes. What is the character doing with its life. Has being a host to a congress of power-hungry spirits had any affect on day to day life?

Motives

Every character has something that motivates them to do what they do. The main character is no exception. In game, a motive is an attribute. If a fragment attempts a power that would generally fall under a motive, it gets an extra number of dice equal to the motives rating. However, no more than one motive can be used at a time. For example, if the main character had a “Really, Really Hates Broccoli (3)” motive, then a power to turn a plate of broccoli into chocolate cake would have three extra dice. However, any power that works against a motive loses that many dice. For example, an attempt to summon a broccoli monster might lose three dice. Also, the motives help the GM decide how the character should act. There is no limit to the amount of motives a character can have, or how high they can be, though generally, they ranger from one to five, one being a minor interest, five being an obsessive passion. It may be a good idea to start the main character out with four, or so motives, then add more as play goes on. Always keep the players aware of the main characters motives, and any changes in them. They should never be a surprise.

Dilemma

The dilemma is the focus of the story. It is the reason for holding The Council, and it is what the vote is to be held about. Put a bit of thought into it. Make sure that it is a difficult problem, that would require the main character to have to think about it. Maybe he has to choose between two lovers. Maybe he's a judge or king with a difficult case to rule on. Make it worth the trouble the character is about to go through. This area may be interesting to twist. Perhaps the problem is on going, not something solved by a single decision. Maybe the main character is tragically flawed, and there is no solution. Make it interesting.

Supporting Cast

The supporting cast, simply put, are any other character that are not the main character. Supporting cast generally aren't as well developed as the main character (at least not initially). They don't need dilemmas, or biographies. However, they do have motives. Unlike the main character, the players will not know the supporting cast members' motives, unless they either possess them, or successfully put them there with the suggestion power. It is important to note that the main character need not be a loner. Close friends, traveling companions, and even pets can make for good co-stars.

The Spirit Fragments

Creating a Spirit Fragment

Fragments are rather simple beings, at least on paper.

First, choose your fragment's aspect. This can be an emotion, a vice, a feeling, etc. Essentially,

this is what part of the main character's soul you exist as. This doesn't have a big mechanical influence on the game, but it has a huge influence on how you play the fragment, and how you vote. Also, you may be rewarded for played well to your aspect.

For the fragment's powers, you start with eight points. Using those points, you divide them between the eight powers listed in the section on powers below. Before adding points, all powers start at level zero, except for possession and weight, which start at level one. No single power may begin the first game higher than level four. A power with a level of zero can't be used at all. It's a good idea to pick a few powers, and put points into them, instead of spreading yourself too thin.

Each player may also choose a specialty for his fragment. A specialty is single descriptor that the fragment has extra control over. See the section on powers for more details.

The powers of a Spirit Fragment

Each fragment has a set of powers. While all powers are available to all fragments, most will pick a select few to expand. One important note about powers is that they are limited by the main character's range of influence. The range of influence is any place that the main character can interact with. For example, the main character walks onto a construction site. One of the crew yells down to him to get off the property. A fragment could possess that member of the crew, so long as they were within range to communicate with each other. Also, a fragment could possess someone the main character was having a telephone conversation with. However, he would lose the possession the moment he hung up the phone. As long as two-way interaction is available, a fragment can perform a power. It could not, for example, possess someone it saw on television, as only one-way communication is available.

- Possession: The primary power of all fragments, possession allows the fragment to control a member of the supporting cast. See the section on possession, below, for more information.
- Creation: With creation, a fragment can create an inanimate object, or prop, within the main character's range of influence.
- Summon: Using summon, a fragment can add to the members of the supporting cast. The fragment does not automatically have control over the cast member, it is simply inserted into the scene.
- Alteration: Similar to creation, alteration physically changes an inanimate object or supporting cast member that already exists.
- Illusion: Illusion is a power of fragments that allow them to trick mortals into believing something is real, when it is not. It need not be a visual illusion. In fact, it can even be used against a cast member possessed by another fragment. If the player does not react appropriately to a successful illusion, he may be subject to a possession roll (see Possession below).
- Suggestion: Similar to possession, in that you influence a member of the supporting cast. The


difference is that you don't actually take control of the character. Instead, you place or alter a motive of a single supporting cast member. Unlike possession, this is permanent, and lasts even after the character leaves the main character's range of influence. Newly created motives have a level equal to the number of successes rolled. Existing motives can be shifted up or down equal to the number of successes, or the description of the motive can be changed, but not both.

Geomancy: Geomancy is the control of the elements. With it, a fragment can start a fire, change the direction of the wind, start a small rock slide, and make it rain, among other things. Geomancy is extremely powerful.

Weight: Not an active power, weight decides how much power a fragment carries in The Council vote. Each fragment gets a number of votes equal to its weight power. As a fragment advances, the weight attribute will rise. It may then spend points from weight to increase its other powers.

Using Powers

Since fragments can't interact directly with the outside world, they will be using their powers. All powers work pretty much the same. The only exceptions are Possession and Weight.

To use a power, first you decide what power you want to use. If what you have in mind involves a motive, claim it now. Don't tell anyone what effect you have in mind, someone is going to have to guess. Throw a number of six-sided dice equal to your level in that power, plus or minus any adjustments for motive. Every number that comes up a five or six is considered a success. If you would like, you may also use *FUDGE* dice. In that case, any die that comes up with a  is a success.

For each success, you get one descriptor of your desired effect. A descriptor is a single word that relates to your desired outcome. The exception is targeting where, or what you want to be effected. If you wish to use a success to specify the location of the effect, you get a number of words equal to your skill level in the chosen power. A descriptor may not say the effect specifically, only hint at it. Descriptors, essentially, exist as restrictions for the narrator to follow when producing the actual effect.

Narration

Once the power has been described, another player is chosen to describe the effect. Generally, the GM chooses the narrator randomly (though he may choose a player that hasn't had much of a chance, to keep them in the game). The player chosen cannot be the person(s) manifesting the power, or be Charged (see The Balance of Power, below). If no players fill the requirements, then the GM narrates. If the GM is forced to narrate, all participants get their power level back (again, see The Balance of Power, below). If a player so chooses, she may use one of her successes to choose the person she wants to narrate her power (for example, if she doesn't want someone else, who's got it out for her, to narrate). Also, a player may spend one point of weight to become the narrator. This over-rules any other previous choices, and cannot be countered.

The narrator simply describes what happens as a result of the powers manifestation. The narration need not be long, but must include all descriptors and motives (whether for or against).

It's important to note, for the GM, that there isn't much of a restriction on the kind of over-the-top devastation and madness the narrator can put out. While the GM always has the right to step in and disallow a certain narration, it is in the better interest to avoid it when ever possible. Instead, keep in mind that every power has an effect on the world. A geomancy power that brings down an entire building with one big column of fire, isn't going to go unnoticed. Creating an alien doomsday device could very well end up being a major plot element. Players and GM's alike, remember that wanton zaniness should be part of the fun, not part of the problem.

Example Power:

Brant, the main character, is in a tight spot, backed into corner by a gang of thugs. One of the fragments decides to do something about it. It decides to use creation, in which it has a level of 4. The player also claims to be using Brant's motive 'Collects Medieval Weaponry (2).' That's a total of six dice. She rolls them, and gets 2, 5, 3, 4, 6, 3. That's two successes. As her descriptors, she chooses 'In Brant's Right Hand,' and 'Pointy.' The GM then has to *create* something *in Brant's right hand*, using the descriptor *Pointy*, and relate it to his love of *Medieval Weaponry*. Kim, the player chosen to narrate, declares that while Brant is pressed against the wall in fear, a long spear, none to subtly, appears in his right hand.

Keep in mind, the players **do not** have control of the main character's actions. Just because Brant has a big, pointy spear in his hand, doesn't mean he'll use it. This is entirely up to the GM. The GM should never allow players to dictate the main character's actions, when narrating a power.

Failures

A manifested power rarely fails to produce a result. However, it can produce an unplanned result. In the event that the roll does not produce any successes, instead count any die that comes up as a one or two (— on *FUDGE* dice). These are called failures. The GM then gets as many descriptors as you had failures, to use in your place. If it comes up with zero failures, then you are lucky. The power fails to manifest, and you get your power level back (see The Balance of Power, below).

The Balance of Power

As nice as it would be, fragments can't just shoot out powers at rapid fire. The give and take relationship between them just won't allow for it. Each fragment has three levels of power: Charged, Ready, and Passive. At the beginning, all of them start at Ready. Ready is the ideal neutral power level. When ever a fragment uses a power, with the exception of possession, it shifts it's power down one level, from Charged to Ready, or Ready to Passive. If the fragment is already Passive, it may not manifest any powers until it's power rises. In order to gain power levels, the player must narrate a power. Each time the player narrates a power, her fragment shifts up one level of power, from Passive to Ready, or Ready to Charged. If it is already Charged, the player may not narrate until her fragment manifests a power, and lowers the fragment's power. There may be some situations when a character does go beyond Charged (see Merging Powers, below). In this case, the player can not narrate until enough powers have been manifested that the fragment returns to Ready.

Specialty

A specialty is a single descriptor in which the fragment excels. A player may add a single

specialty to a list of descriptors, at anytime, without the expense of a success, so long as the fragment has at least a level of one in the chosen power, and rolls at least on success. A specialty must be a descriptive adjective. Like any other descriptors, it cannot directly refer to the chosen effect.

Merging Powers

Being of one body, all of the fragment's powers are very much compatible with each other. If a fragment uses a power, another fragment may chose to expand on it. After a player declares their descriptors, but before the GM narrates the effect, another player may declare they will add to the effect. To do this, they roll a number of dice equal to their own level of the same power used. If a motive was involved, the player must take any penalties or bonuses the previous player did. For each success, it gets one extra descriptor to add to the current list. However, only one targeting descriptor may exist, so if the last player already described the target, the new descriptors may not.

When narrating a merged power, the narrating player gains a number of levels in power equal to the number of people who rolled for the power. In many cases, this will push the fragment beyond the Charged level. It is now considered Super Charged, and can only manifest (not narrate) until it is returned to the Ready state.

Possession

Possession is a fragment's most versatile and dependable ability. It is also the easiest way to effect the outside world. If a supporting cast member is within the main character's range of influence, a fragment may possess it. So long as it doesn't do anything that would go against the character, and isn't opposed by another fragment for control, the player does not need to roll anything to possess the character. While possessing, the fragment is still free to use it's other powers, even against the character it is possessing. It may also use the new host's motives, as well as the main character's (though it is still limited to one motive per power).

While possessed, the character must believe that its actions are its own choice. This means that while controlling it, the player must stay "in character." If he acts in a way that seems wrong for that character, the GM may call for a possession roll. Roll a number of dice equal to your possession power level. The first time, only one success is needed. If the requirement is not met, the fragment is returned to the host, and may not possess that character again this session. A second offense requires two successes, a third requires three, and so on. Game Masters are encouraged to be a little lenient in this respect. Only if it's generally agreed that the character would not do something like that, should a roll be warranted. Much of the time, supporting cast won't be thoroughly defined. It's safe to assume that what the player is doing is in character, when no other precedent has been set. However, going against a character's motives always warrants a possession roll, with a penalty equal to the motive's level.

Example:

The main character, Agrem, is pinned against the ground, with an orc ready to thrust something rusted and pointy through him. Jerry claims this one. He says he's going to possess the orc, thinking he can make it not kill Agrem. No roll is needed for the actual possession. Upon arrival, the GM gives Jerry the orc's motives. Top on the list is 'Kill Squishies (3).' Being the stubborn type, Jerry goes through with plan A, and states the orc backs off, and considers Agrem as a good candidate for a prisoner. The GM declares that this is in blatant disregard for the orc's motives, and requires a possession roll. Jerry has a 'Possession (4).' After the penalty for the orc's motive, Jerry has one die to try and maintain his possession.

If two or more fragments want possession of the same character, or wants to steal possession from another fragment, then each makes a possession roll. The one with the most successes wins, and the others may not contest it again for the same character this session. In case of a tie, the first to claim/attempt possession wins.

Weight

Weight could be considered a fragment's most valuable power. Yet, it has absolutely no direct affect on the outside world. The first use of weight is at voting time. When the votes are cast, each fragments' vote counts a number of times equal to his weight power level. Second, at anytime, a point may be taken from weight, and added to one of the other powers, so long as weight is at least one point higher than the power being raised. This transfer is permanent, and cannot be taken back.

Weight as Currency

A fragment is worth its weight in gold, figuratively, of course. Since weight represents a fragments power over The Council, it only stands to reason that it is a precious commodity. As such, it would make the perfect payment, bribe, or holiday gift. A fragment may make a contractual agreement with another fragment, using weight as a form of payment. For example, one fragment offers to pay another one point of weight to vote a certain way on the next issue. A contractual agreement is made. After the vote is passed, if it did indeed vote the way it was contracted to, it would automatically give it one point of weight, as promised. There would be no way out of the contract, if all agreements are met. This is politics, not organized crime. The GM has final say on all contractual agreements.

Acquiring Weight

A fragment acquires weight by using its powers. As the weight attribute rises, it becomes more difficult to push it further. Anytime it successfully manifests a power through a roll, write a small hash mark next to the weight level. This means it cannot get a mark simply by possession something, but can through successful maintaining a possession. If the number of hashes ever becomes equal to or greater than the weight level (either by adding marks, or spending weight), erase the hashes and add one to the weight's level. All surplus hashes are always lost. Maintaining a high weight level can be very difficult, but will be necessary to acquire high level powers. You can't raise the level of a power, unless your weight is higher than it.

Also, at the end of the session, but before the final vote, everyone picks another player they felt played their aspect the best. The winner gets one extra point of weight.

The Council

A single fragment holds more power than a whole spirit. Yet, this power is drawn from the influence it has over the other fragments. “Drawing strength from being whole, and yet from being apart.” It is this paradox that makes The Council what it is.

The Vote

A vote held by The Council is the only way to influence the main character. Often, a vote is passed to The Council subconsciously by the main character, when it needs to make a hard decision. Other times, a fragment of The Council may submit an issue to be voted on.

If the GM feels that the main character faces an especially difficult decision, he may choose to pass it down to The Council to be voted on. How the votes are cast is up to the GM. However, once a precedent has been set, that same method should be used for all votes. For example, you could use a secret ballot (well not entirely secret, you may need to prove you voted a certain way to cash in on a bribe), in which each player submits a piece of paper with their own vote, and how much it counted for. Another method could be to go around the table, casting votes in order of the fragments' weight levels. If you are playing over a slower medium, such as email, you could set a specific time that all votes need to be posted by. When tallying the votes, each fragment's vote counts a number of times equal to its weight level.

Should a player wish to initiate a vote, the method is very much the same. However, the player must first spend one point of weight to get it started. Then, he declares the issue in question, and the players vote. Of course, the main character might have something to say about all this, as well. If the GM feels that one of the results is favored by one of the main character's motives, then that result gets an additional number of votes equal to the motive's level. As with power usage, only one motive may apply per vote.

Don't let the game get too bogged down with votes. They are a handy tool, that can be used to a potent effect, but they also slow down game play. Try to keep votes sparse and significant.

End Notes

This is still the beta version, and as such, there is always things to be added, or changed. I'd like to add more examples and clarifications, as well.

It has been pointed out that the concept here is similar to that of “Insects of God” by Jason Blair. I'll take that as a compliment, as it's a rather enjoyable game. If you are interested, it can be found at: <http://www.key20.com/insectsofgod/>
I highly recommend it.

Thank you for your patience, and I hope you enjoy *Shattered Spirits*.