

# The Land of Karn

## Fantasy Role-Playing Game

Basic Version

### Social Conflicts & Stress

Not all of gaming is about casting spells, fighting monsters, and building things with skills. A lot of time is spent talking to other characters, bartering, gaining social status, and other activities that don't fit into any of these old stand-bys of gaming. That is where Social Conflict comes in. Some of them are even usable to aid or hinder those other activities people may be trying to partake of, much like a field commander giving morale to his troops.

At the core of these conflicts is the mind's ability to handle stress, strain, and remain calm and clear in these social situations. This is the same strain they would be dealing with when under torture, but social situations are not as blatant and in your face about it. The strain is the same though, sometimes even far more cruel and painful. Social conflicts are battles of words, posturing, and often lies designed to undermined and even control your opponents in the situation. Some people spend years training just for these kinds of situations, gaining access, influence, and power without ever needing to pick up a weapon or take an overt action.

#### The Stresses of Social Interaction

Most social interactions are casual and not something that causes most people problems or much stress. They are just conversations or agreements with rather set structures, like talking about recent events or purchasing dinner. None of these kinds of actions need to have any kind of rules or structure forced upon them to play out. The players and the GM just quickly play through them to get the required information or items passed on, or even just to enjoy the conversation.

There are times, however, when the social interactions go beyond the casual chitchat and the friendly banter. Where the conversations are more about plays

for control, power, influence, or some other want or gain. Each side is trying to gain dominance (even if they don't want it look like they are) over the situation to make the outcome what they want to happen. This is when there needs to be something more than just the players and the GM acting through the scene to determine the outcome. This is where Stress Points (SP) come into play and skills are used to affect the situation.

Many of the social skills (and even some other skills in combat or other areas) will have an affect on the SP of a character, which is a measure of how calm and controlled they are. Through the use of these social methods (skills) characters can attempt to manipulate the way things play out. Many of these actions will also have a cumulative affect on the eventual outcome of the conflict, although pushing forward to get the best possible outcome can be risky, as it might lead to your tipping your hand and losing it all.

#### Stress Points

Just as Hit Points (HP) are a measure of how many physical "hits" something can take before they break down or die, Stress Points (SP) are a measure of how much "stress" somebody can take before their mind starts to break down and suffer. This is based mostly off the Resistance attribute, which is a general measure of how well your mind reacts to stress, attacks, and other mental things. Not all stress is obvious or clear, but all of it can affect a person in the same ways. Some stress is cause externally, some is completely internal, and some just seems to happen without a real known source. In the game it works the same way.

Any time a character is under stress of any kind either they will take SP damage according to the rules or the GM may make them make a RES Check or something to see if they suffer some for other reasons. Certain

skills (even in physical combat) can cause this kind of stress damage. The lower this number gets (even into the negative numbers) the more they will suffer the effects of stress. Luckily, SP are regained faster and easier than physical HP, although the lasting effects that one might suffer (mental damage) are usually harder to get rid of.

## Effects of Stress

As the SP are lowered the character will start to suffer from the effects of the stress. They should be played as if they are more flustered and easily rattled or angered the lower it gets, but since every character is different there is no exact listing of how they should be played or how they should react. No matter what way it is, every character will start to act differently the worse it gets.

For example: Zachariah Whetherbane has a natural maximum of 25 SP and is down to 8 SP. He is starting to have trouble concentrating on his work and snapping at people who ask small things of him as if they were major requests. At the same time you have his twin sister Jenna, who is in the same situation with her SP. She just becomes quieter and seems kind of scared and on the edge of crying. Both of these are completely fair and realistic reactions to stress.

As long as a character is still above 0 SP they will be able to act relatively normal, although perhaps with a little agitation or difficulty concentrating. Once they are below this (especially into the larger negative numbers) they will really have to start reacting to and dealing with the stress, which really changes the way they will act. It can make even the normal and mundane things become great troubles and tasks to overcome. Again, it depends on how the character was created but all of them will have troubles and act oddly the worse it gets.

For example: Zach is now down to -12 SP and it is greatly affecting him. He can't concentrate on work at all, having no ability to focus on anything for too long, and is angry and yelling at everyone around him for no good reason. Jen is also in the same boat again (at -12 SP), but she is acting completely differently. She is closed down, not speaking to anyone without serious prodding, and has outbursts of crying for no obvious reason.

There are also a number of actual game mechanic effects when a character has low SP. Most of them can easily be attributed to any of the actions or attitudes the players choose for their character's reactions to high stress effects. At any negative number they will suffer a negative modifier for all RES Checks equal to their current SP. The following are the other negative modifiers caused by different SP levels (all with examples of a character with a RES of 40 and a natural SP maximum of 20).

Max to Half SP (20-10): No effect.

Less than Half SP to 1 SP (9-1): -1 on all combat skills, -10 on all percentage skills (Meditation is -25), -20 on Social Conflict Resolutions.

0 SP (0): -2 on all combat skills, -20 on all percentage skills (Meditation is -35), -30 on Social Conflict Resolutions.

Negative 1 SP to Negative Half RES SP (-1 to -20): -3 on all combat skills, -30 on all percentage skills (Meditation is -50), -50 on Social Conflict Resolutions.

Less than Negative Half RES SP to Negative RES SP (-21 to -40): -5 on all combat skills, -40 on all percentage skills (Meditation is -75), -80 on Social Conflict Resolutions.

Less than Negative RES SP (-41 and lower): Mental break of some kind, possible permanent effect, pass out.

When they suffer a mental break (by having a SP lower than a negative number equal to their RES) the character will first pass out from the stress. This will last for at least 2D10 minutes, at which time they will become able to be awoken but not just come to naturally for hours later. When they wake they will have calmed down some (gaining back 2D6 SP), but be suffering from the effects of a mental break. What this means depends on the character, the GM, and the situation. Often it involves giving into some demand, mental illness, or insanity. Perhaps even a combination of them all.

## Recovering SP

There are times throughout the game where characters will lose SP (perhaps even into the negative numbers). This is usually due to normal stresses and rarely causes much of a problem because it comes back naturally rather quickly. The problems are in high stress situations, because it not only causes more problems but they come back slower. The rate at which they come back depends on a lot of different variables. The following are the basics, but some skills may alter them.

Under normal casual circumstances SP are regained at a rate of 1 every ten minutes while active and 1 every five minutes while resting or asleep. Meditation can be used to get them to come back at a rate of 1 per minute.

For example: This would count even when doing simple tasks that aren't causing much in the way of stress, like washing dishes or riding casually through town.

Under mild stress or high levels of activity they come

back at a reduced rate. In these cases SP are regained at a rate of 1 every thirty minutes while active and 1 every fifteen minutes while resting or asleep. If Meditation can be successfully done they still come back at the increased rate of 1 per minute.

For example: This could be when a character is working hard at his blacksmith job, even just making some common items, or when they are trying to rest, but have to deal with some possible trouble looming over their head (figuratively).

If the character is under constant active stress (where they don't have time to calm down or take a break from it, even in social situations) or actively trying to maintain some social skill (which should be causing active stress too), they do not regain any SP back. If they are able to take a break from it all, the normal rates for their situation will return.

For example: This could be things as calm appearing as being in a social situation where they have to keep up airs or deal with many others on a regular basis (who are possibly even working against them in secret). It can also mean situations where the stress is more overt, like being held captive and tortured on a regular basis.

If the character's SP are in the negatives at all they come back much slower, even if they are able to find a calm or casual place. In these cases SP are regained at a rate of 1 every hour while active and 1 every thirty minutes while resting or asleep. If Meditation can be successfully done they come back at a rate of 1 every ten minutes.

For example: If the character was greatly stressed from an angry encounter with a former lover, having their SP knocked down to -8, they will use these rates when not actively under stress any more.

If the character's SP are in the negatives and they are under any kind of constant stress (even if it is mild stress) they can not gain any back at all naturally. The only exception is if they are able to successfully Meditate (in which case they come back at a rate of 1 every hour).

For example: After than encounter with the ex, the character is then thrust into a situation where they have to make an impression on a new guild member, so they are able gain back none of them and will be in a foul mood.

## Social Conflicts

Sometimes socializing can lead to conflicts that don't end in physical threats. Sometimes they end in contests of status, debates, tests of will, or attempts to control the situation through lies and trickery. The use of special social skills against one another to gain what you want at the moment, sway the crowd your

way, or even just give you the time you need to get away cleanly. These situations are social conflicts.

Normally social conflicts are initiated when two or more people are opposed to each other in some kind of social goal. This can be as simple as them trying to agree on what to do next or as complex as trying to gain the favor of a crowd when trying to gain the one available prize or post. Debates, arguments, contests, and even underhanded dealings can all be played out as social conflicts.

As with most anything in the game, the GM will have the final say on what qualifies as the start of a social conflict (since it can depend on so many factors it would be impossible to make rules for them all). Some situations will have major negatives to one side because of where it is located or how it started. This is most common with criminal cases, where one person is trying to prove their innocence in a "Guilty until proven innocent" world.

## Social Conflict Rules

Social Conflicts are handled by using a series of abilities or skills (that have a social conflict aspect to them) and gaining modifiers that sway things to your side. Most of these skills have two uses, to make them also work for certain things outside of social conflicts (which are explained in their skill descriptions). In a social conflict the other uses are ignored and only the effects they have on Social Conflicts are used. In addition to these skills there are a few natural actions that all people can use to gain favor in these conflicts, even if they don't have any of the social skills.

Social Conflicts are actually organized and have a structure to them, as going outside these lines would normally make you lose favor and look to be uncivilized. Each participant is allowed to have their piece said or done in turn and all participants get at least one chance to speak before a conflict can end. Not all are structured as strictly as debates, but all conflicts do need to have this form or it becomes nothing but showboating. This does not mean each participant has to actually take an action each time it comes to them (as they can pass), but they do have to be given the option to.

The main structure of a Social Conflict is handled as a series of single action turns by each participant, usually done in the round to give them all equal chances to get a point in. Each of these actions has the opportunity to affect the Conflict Modifiers for the final resolution that happens at the end of a social conflict.

Most of them have both positive and negative effects for both success and failure of the skills. When a specific social conflict ends all Conflict Modifiers are removed and the next one will start from scratch (or with starting modifiers if the GM says so).

Ending a Social Conflict depends on the type of Social Conflict it is. In many of them, after the first full round any participant can attempt to call an end to the conflict instead of taking another action, or they end according to the structure of the conflict. Others can contest this call and possibly force it to continue around some more, but eventually it will end. Depending on the situation, one last quick round maybe allowed before the final conflict resolution is made.

When playing out a Social Conflict it can be handled however the gaming group feels most comfortable with. I suggest they at least attempt to play out the actions, speaking the basics of what their character might be saying for each attempt, but it is understood that not all players are going to be able to be as eloquent or gruff as their characters would be. These factors are accepted and the rolls for the skills are what actually matter to the outcome, but playing out the actions gives some everyone an idea of what the player is thinking their character might be trying to say or do.

Heavy role-playing groups may actually seriously play out the actions, making the rolls first and then acting out the result the way they think it would have gone. Groups not comfortable with any aspect of acting in-character may just make clear what skill they are going to use and make the roll to see what the outcome is. Some groups may even use a mix of different levels between these extremes, depending on the comfort level of each player. There is no correct way to handle this, just as long as the group enjoys the game.

## Types of Social Conflicts

Although there is no absolute list of all types of social conflicts (since they can be extremely varied), but there are some common types that have a certain style and format to them. These can be used as examples when figuring out what works for the current situation the characters may find themselves in.

### Organized Debate

This is one of the most structured forms of Social Conflict, where each side is given a specific amount of time to make their case and reply to their oppo-

nents. This can be done on a specific topic, usually trying to sway the audience one way or another on it, but can be more general and used as a very formal form of popularity contest. This is often moderated by a third party, whom controls when each participant is allowed to speak (making the use of interruptions almost always fail, being -40 to the one attempting them).

This will almost always be in a clear round the group turn based debate format, with each participant getting to use one skill per turn. The participants can not call for an end to the proceedings, as that is left to either the moderator or a preset number of rounds. The winner of the debate gains whatever the goal of the proceedings was, but often this is just part of a larger series of events.

### Court Procedures

This is absolutely the most strict of all forms of Social Conflict and can often just be completely controlled by the judge or magistrate if they choose to do so (no matter what the others want to try). Only those allowed to speak will be allowed to try to attempt any social skill once and some skills could cause much worse problems if they fail. Interruptions are flat out impossible to use successfully and even attempting them could land someone in trouble.

The proceedings end when the court says they end and not before or after. The possible outcomes of the proceedings are usually determined before it even starts and nothing short of a critical success and massive win would allow anything outside of that realm to happen. What the participants are trying to do is force the outcome one direction or the other on this preset scale. It is possible that all outcomes are bad, but just different levels of bad.

### Social Argument

In polite society arguments are not just two people yelling at each other. There is actually an accepted structure to them, even when the participants have no actual respect for each other. When being observed by others the failure to follow this structure will often work against them because of losing face, and most of these arguments are all about saving face and social status. Most of these are not actually about swaying the opponent's opinion, but making them lose face in the eyes of the onlookers. This can also be used when people can't agree on what actions they (as a group) should take next.

Normally this is handled in a turn based roundtable

format, allowing each person make their points (and use a skill), but interrupting can be used if there is more than two people involved (if used by a person not just speaking). Social arguments need to go at least two full rounds (allowing each person to speak at least twice) before an ending is called for by one of them. If they are ended early, any person shorted can call the others on it get one last use of a skill with a possible doubling of the benefits if it is successful.

## **Battle of Wills**

This is the kind of conflict where multiple people are trying to sway each other into some way of thinking or belief. It is very rare that this will actually case one side to convert or change, but it is entirely possible that they will be worn down and concede the win even though they don't agree with it. These conflicts are usually very drawn out and have special requirements for a resolution to be called for.

Unlike most Social Conflicts, these tend to involve the reduction of SP being an important factor. As such, at least one participant must have certain skills that can reduce the SP of others (or else this just becomes an argument). This means that one side (at least) has to be driven to the point of frustration before a resolution can be called for. Nobody can call for a full resolution unless there is a member with SP reduced to at least half their normal maximum. Other endings can happen (like through Controlled Compromise), but these will not end with a full resolution or a clear winner.

## **Popularity Contest**

This is any kind of situation where at least two people are trying to position themselves above each other in the eyes of a group or their peers. This can be done to gain a position, win something, or just place themselves higher than their opponents in the eyes of their peers. Most of the time this is informal, but still mostly civil (although it doesn't have to be).

The resolution can be called for at any time by not only the participants, but by some observer in a position of authority. Interrupting and using underhanded actions can all be used successfully without any extra negatives if they fail. Observers can also join the "fray" at any time by choosing a side and aiding them (see Multiple Participants below). Winning a resolution simply means the majority of the audience is currently on their side and has no real effect on their opponents in the conflict.

## **Roundtable**

Most of the time this is used for a more peaceful and calm debate, or to discuss a topic at hand. When it comes to being a social conflict it usually turns into a discussion over what choice to make in some situation set before them. Quite often the sides are not firmly held to beliefs (usually just ideas they may have had on the subject) and the roundtable discussion is used to decide which idea is the one they are going to go with. This is not the only way things can work, but rarely do roundtable discussions that become heated remain in this format (instead becoming free for all or arguments).

The first round is usually made of each participant stating their position and making their first skill check in turn (without interruption). After that, the become more free form and open (allowing the order to change and interruptions to happen). Individuals involved are even allowed to switch sides and join others at the table in their stands (see Multiple Participants below). When this happens they abandon their position completely and must start building their bonuses from scratch again.

## **Free For All**

This is a situation where there is no structure and no rules for the social conflict. These are also the ones that often end abruptly and become physical combat when they get heated. They can be over anything and for any reason, with nothing being out of bounds for use in them. Even the resolution of them may just lead to more problems if they are done under too much duress. These kind need to be carefully watched over by GMs.

## **Special Social Conflict Actions**

Although there are lot of skills that can be used in Social Conflicts, not everyone has access to them or has trained in them (although they are free to try any of them at the most basic levels allowed through Fair Game Skill use). There are some basic conversation abilities that all people have access to and can use in Social Conflicts. They are the four following actions.

Unlike most Social Conflict Skills, these Actions can be performed over and over again without negatives.

### **Basic Statement**

This is the most common of all statements that one can make. It is just a clear statement of your position, opinion, or concept. This does not have any other special effect. It requires a CHR Check to use (without any social conflict modifiers). On a success they gain

a +5 Social Conflict Modifier. On a failure they suffer a loss of all Conflict Modifier bonuses (it remains the same if already negative).

## **Charming Pass**

This is not saying much of anything, passing on their chance to make a point, but doing it in a way that saves face and doesn't lose the audience or momentum. This does not have any other special effect. It requires a CHR Check at +10 to use (without any social conflict modifiers). On a success they gain nothing, but also lose nothing. On a failure they suffer a loss of all Conflict Modifier bonuses (it remains the same if already negative).

## **Factual Statement**

This is a simple statement of knowledge about the subject at hand. Although called a Factual Statement, it may not actually be factual if the character's information is not based in fact (they just think it is). This does not have any other special effect. It requires an INT Check to use (without any social conflict modifiers). On a success they gain a +5 Social Conflict Modifier. On a failure they suffer a loss of all Conflict Modifier bonuses (it remains the same if already negative).

## **Interruption**

In many kinds of Social Conflicts that include more than two participants it is possible to try and interrupt when someone else starts to or is about to speak. This can only be done by someone who has not just taken their turn and is not the new speaker. They attempt to interrupt them and have to make an Opposing CHR Check against the new speaker.

If they win (the new speaker loses) they get to immediately take an action and neither of them suffer a change to their Conflict Modifiers from the interruption itself. If they lose (the new speaker wins) they suffer a -5 to their Conflict Modifier and the new speaker gets to continue their turn as they planned.

## **Social Conflict Skills**

The majority of Social Conflicts will be filled with the use of special skills designed for them. Most of these skills have some casual social uses as well as the social conflict use, but those uses are mostly ignored while a conflict is happening. The following is a list of the common skills and what their Social Conflict uses are. This does not include descriptions of their standard skill uses (see their descriptions in the skills

section for that).

I have included a basic example of each of these, but understand that these examples are not perfect examples of the most skilled or subtle uses of these skills. These examples are mostly exaggerated and obvious to make them simple to understand. The most skilled users will actually be hard to truly see which method they are using most of the time.

## **Backhanded Compliment**

This is a special skill that can be used directly before going into your normal skill use for the turn (it does not count as a skill use for previously used skill restrictions). It allows the speaker to give a small dig at the previous speaker, undermining their confidence while sounding like they are trying to be complimentary. When skillfully done it will cause confidence to drop, feelings of unexplained anxiety, and a general wave of questioning about the target from observers. When done poorly it becomes obvious and reflects poorly on the person attempting it.

For example: "You speak very well about that kind of theory."

When attempted the new speaker makes a skill roll. If successful, the previous speaker has to make a RES check (minus what the skill succeeded by) or suffer a -2 SP and a -5 Conflict Modifier. If the skill fails the new speaker suffers a -5 Conflict Modifier for seeming petty and insulting.

## **Controlled Compromise**

This is an attempt to end an open social conflict early by coming to a compromise, rather than having an obvious winner, undermining confidence, or obviously discounting any ideas. This can not be used in controlled or overseen conflicts (like court cases, organized debates, and any others the GM say it doesn't fit into), or in cases where there is a split that can not be compromised (like choosing between two things with nothing between).

For example: They propose that instead of continuing the argument about who caused the leak, they agree that each member will pay for part of cleaning cost.

When attempted the speaker makes a skill roll. If successful, any other participants can contest the attempt by making a CHR check (minus what the skill succeeded by) and stopping the attempt if successful. If these objections fail (or there were none), the Social Conflict ends immediately (without a resolution roll) and has a compromised outcome. This outcome will be leaning slightly towards the side of the speaker if

there is no absolute middle ground.

## **Convincing Lie**

This is a risky maneuver that involves stating something that is completely untrue in a very convincing way. When skillful, this can greatly sway things in a conflict, but will really work against the speaker if they are caught in it. This can not be used by the same speaker in two consecutive turns.

For example: "You don't want to go through the Butch Desert, it's common knowledge that the Butchwings are vicious killers who prey on caravans through their land."

When attempted the speaker makes a skill roll. If successful, they gain a +20 Conflict Modifier OR they can give a -10 Conflict modifier to any other participant. If unsuccessful, they suffer a complete loss of all Conflict Modifiers (reduced to 0) or a -20 Conflict Modifier, whichever is lower.

## **Counter Interruption**

This is a special kind of action in a Social Conflict that allows a person to interrupt a statement made by another and immediately counter some point they just made. This generally puts down or detracts from the point just made, canceling any possible gain they may have received from it. This is most affective against lies. This does not count as a turn and once finished the next person in line (even if the same person who just made the interruption) gets to take their turn.

For example: "I'm sorry to interrupt, but I have to correct you on your point there. The Butchwing are a generally peaceful nomadic tribe that would give us no such issues."

When attempted the new speaker makes a skill roll, directly after the skill roll was made by the previous speaker. If successful, the previous speaker has to make a RES check (minus what the skill succeeded by) or it counters all positive Conflict Modifiers they may have just received (and gives a -10 Conflict Modifier if used against a lie). If the skill fails the new speaker suffers a -10 Conflict Modifier for seeming petty and insulting and the previous speaker gains an extra +5 Conflict Modifier.

This can be over-used in a conflict and becomes more difficult to pull off each time it's used. If the same person uses it more than one in the same Conflict they suffer a -10 to the skill attempt for each previous attempt they have done.

## **Fast Talk**

This form of conversation style speaking is use to

convincingly speak for a fair amount of time without actually saying very much that is solid on any particular topic. If done well, those listening won't realize how little was actually said and possibly even nod in agreement. This can not be used by the same speaker in two consecutive turns.

For example: "As you can see from all the evidence you can find out there and the kinds of experiences several of us have even had in our lives there is little chance of knowing what outcome is likely to happen, at least as long as we continue to handle things as well as we have in the past."

When attempted the speaker makes a skill roll. If successful, they gain a +10 Conflict Modifier. If unsuccessful, they suffer a complete loss of all Conflict Modifiers (reduced to 0) or it remains the same if already negative.

## **Impressive Posture**

This is a special action that can be added to any other standard action during a turn within a Conflict. This does not count as an action itself, but must be done connected to a standard action (not an interruption or other action). While making a statement this is used to maintain good presence, use of hands and expressions, and posture to make what is being said seem more important or prominent.

For example: With careful hand gestures, showing the strengths and emphasis of what is being said, this makes their points even more impressive.

When attempted the speaker makes a skill roll. If successful, they gain a +5 Conflict Modifier. If unsuccessful, they suffer a -5 Conflict Modifier.

## **Incite Anger**

This is a method of speaking and describing a position specifically aimed at causing an opponent to become angry and stress over what is being said. This is dangerous and has no direct positive affect for the speaker, but can cause serious problems for the target of their speech. This can also be used against multiple participants with added difficulty. This can not be used by the same speaker in two consecutive turns.

For example: "As clearly stated by these points, any opposition would have to be blind or stupid to not understand the necessity of this route. Perhaps my opponent would like to explain which one they are."

When attempted the speaker makes a skill roll (-10 for each additional target after the first). If successful, the target participants have to make RES checks (minus what the skill succeeded by) or suffer a -2D4 SP and a -5 Conflict Modifier. If the RES check was

successful they still suffer -1 SP. If the skill fails the speaker suffers a -10 Conflict Modifier for seeming petty and insulting and the target will have a +5 bonus to their next social skill attempt.

## **Intimidation**

This is a direct, targeted response to another participant designed to intimidate them using several different methods, from powerful presence to open threats. This can have a very powerful affect on a target, but can also work against the speaker if they don't do it right, making them seem overly aggressive and/or shifty. In some of the more organized or controlled conflicts (like debates and court proceedings) this will also cause problems for the speaker. This can not be used by the same speaker in two consecutive turns.

For example: "You don't want to go there sir, you step one foot in the direction of compromising with the Butchwing again and I will see that you and your followers here are demoted back to footman. You know I have the power to make it happen."

When attempted the speaker makes a skill roll. If successful, the target participant has to make RES checks (minus what the skill succeeded by) or suffer a -2D6 SP. If the RES check was successful they still suffer -2 SP. If the skill fails the speaker suffers a complete loss of all Conflict Modifiers (reduced to 0) or a -20 Conflict Modifier, whichever is lower.

## **Leading Questions**

This type of action is used to allow another participant to speak in response to the questions set up by the active speaker, but they are attempting to lead the conversation in a direction that will help themselves while making the opposition feel more in control. When done right everyone comes out feeling like they were successful, but when messed up it can cause some problems for the active speaker. This can not be used by the same speaker in two consecutive turns.

For example: "So which one is it? Are they too dangerous to deal with because of their culture or the climate?"

When attempted the speaker chooses a target participant (to answer the questions) and makes a skill roll. If successful, they gain a +10 Conflict Modifier. If unsuccessful, the target gains a +5 Conflict Modifier and the active speaker suffers a -5 Conflict Modifier.

## **Misdirection**

This is a standards speaking technique that uses their time to steer the discussion away from one subject that they don't want to discuss and onto another subject of their choosing. When done well this goes by

unnoticed and avoids possible topics of trouble for the speaker. When done poorly this tends to bring problem areas to light. This can not be used by the same speaker in two consecutive turns.

For example: "Travel route aside I think what we really need to focus on is what kind of supplies we will need for a caravan through the desert. Will we be able to bring enough water?"

When attempted the speaker makes a skill roll. If successful, they gain a +10 Conflict Modifier. If unsuccessful, they suffer a complete loss of all Conflict Modifiers (reduced to 0) or it remains the same if already negative.

## **Persuasive Argument**

This is a powerful debate technique that is used to sway opinions of something without using lies or truly underhanded means. Powerful arguments, logic (sometimes skewed), and carefully selected facts and information are all tools to create this kind of argument. When successful this can often help sway entire groups to one side or another, but when unsuccessful it can cause the speaker to look stupid. This can not be used by the same speaker in two consecutive turns.

For example: "As these points clearly show, I have a well established record of being hard on crime and keeping our streets safe. Since I was put in charge there have been nearly fifty fewer murders within our walls."

When attempted the speaker makes a skill roll. If successful, they gain a +10 Conflict Modifier. If unsuccessful, they suffer a complete loss of all Conflict Modifiers (reduced to 0) or a -10 Conflict Modifier, whichever is higher.

## **Subtle Interruption**

This is a special action used to interrupt a speaker as they just start speaking, using their statements to flow into your own smoothly. This can make it all seem clean and smooth, as if it was not an interruption at all (at least in the view of the audience). If done poorly it can come off as a clumsy attempt at interrupt that failed. This can only be done by someone who is not the new speaker or the previous speaker.

For example: "There is nothing left to plan for, as..." They say and then are immediately cut off by "as long we ignore the possibility of a water shortage."

When attempted the interrupter makes a skill roll. If successful, the speaker has to make a RES check (minus what the skill succeeded by) or it counters their skill attempt before it even starts and the interrupter becomes the new speaker (staring their turn). If the

skill fails the interrupter suffers a -5 Conflict Modifier for seeming rude and clumsy and the speaker gets to continue.

## Social Conflict Resolutions

When a resolution is called for (either by one of the participants or the one ruling over it, depending on the type it is) all the participants have to figure out their current Conflict Modifiers and prepare for the final check. The actual in world actions this forms depends on the type of conflict it is. In some it could be a call for silence as the final ruling is made, while in others it's a matter of everyone talking over each other as they try for one last edge. No matter what the way it is handled in game is the same.

If it is an open conflict any participants can contest the call for a resolution, and others can throw their support behind either side in calling for it. Everyone involved (on either side), but not those abstaining from the call, has to make an opposing CHR Check. Whatever the winner of the check stands for is what happens. If it continues at least one more round must happen (where everyone gets one more turn) before anyone else can call for a resolution.

For example: Four people are competing for the approval of the party on the next target they are going to hit. They have been at it for three rounds and player one calls for a resolution. Player three contests the resolution and player four gets behind them. Player two stays out of it. The three of them make CHR Checks and player four wins by the most, so the conflict continues for at least one more round.

A conflict resolution requires everyone participating to make a CHR check and factoring in any conflict modifiers they currently have (and don't forget possible modifiers because of lower SP). This is handled just like a normal Opposing Attribute Check, with the highest success being the winner out of the group. What comes of a win depends on what the conflict was going for and how much they beat their opponents by (as determined by the GM).

For example: Three players are in a conflict and a resolution has been called for. There was not a successful contention so it is going through.

Player One has built up a +40 modifier and has a CHR of 48. They roll a 69 for a success of 19.

Player Two has built up a -15 modifier and has a CHR of 42. They roll a 6 for a success of 21.

Player Three has built up a +20 modifier, has a CHR of 56, and is suffering with an SP of -6 (for another -50 modifier). They roll a 12 for a success of 14.

In the end the one with the lowest natural CHR and worst Conflict Modifier still manages to win the conflict with just dumb luck.

Winning doesn't have to mean it will change the mind of anyone involved or even the audience, just that they won the argument for the moment. In social situations it could sway the audience against the losers, but in personal situations it could just further anger the loser for being made the fool (unless the right skills were used). As with most anything of this nature, the final outcome will be in the favor of the winner, but the GM has to determine what that means based on the situation.

## Multiple Participants Per Side

It is pretty obvious that a social conflict can have more than two sides, which means it can have more than two direct opposed participants. These are handled as normal and as explained in all the above rules. It's when one side of a conflict starts to have more than one participant that things can get more complicated, but not all conflicts can have more than one person per side (such as a social contest to hold a single position in a royal court). As people team up they can aid each other in the conflict or suffer from problems together.

Any skill that targets an opponent directly (like Incite Anger or Leading Questions) will lead to all participants that are on their side to also be effected by any modifiers it leads to (positive or negative). In the same boat, any skill any of them uses that gives blanket statements about the position (like Convincing Lie or Persuasive Argument) will also lead to all participants that are on their side to be effected by any modifiers it leads to. Personal skills that are only about the person themselves and not the argument (like Backhanded Compliment or Impressive Posture) will not have this group affect.

At the conflict resolution section of a social conflict all participants on all sides make separate rolls for their CHR Checks. Those who are on a side together then have to add their success and failure amounts together to get their final result. The side that has the highest success is the winning side of the argument. The rest of the resolution process is handled exactly the same as usual.

## Critical Success and Failure

Just as with any skill, where there is a chance to really mess up or succeed spectacularly, the same can happen at any point during a social conflict. On the basic level any critical will double the effects of what the skill would normally cause for that outcome (good or bad), but it will also have some extra affects on the

psyche of the person performing the skill.

Critical success will boost their ego slightly, giving them a +2 SP and making them feel a little more calm and confident for a short period. This is in addition to the normal doubling of the outcome of the skill.

For example: A character is using the Fast Talk skill and gets a Critical Success. They gain +2 SP and a +20 (doubled from +10) Conflict Modifier.

Critical failure will cause them to have a moment of stressful insecurity, giving them a -1D6 SP and making them stumble and feel less confident for a short period. This is in addition to the normal doubling of the outcome of the skill.

For example: A character is using the Leading Questions skill on his opponent and gets a Critical Failure. They lose 1D6 SP, give their opponent a +10 (doubled from +5) Conflict Modifier, and suffer a -10 (doubled from -5) Conflict Modifier