

To Serve the Earth

By Chris Andrews, Copyright 2009

-=Prologue=-

In each of us, there are dreams and desires. We are creatures of our passions, driven to accomplish great things and sweep our changes across the face of tomorrow. At the root of all desire, is the Purpose: To serve the Earth. I once asked my Oracle, what does it mean?

She said to me, "We stand along the edge of great spiral, a spring bounding and rebounding. Once, this world was a lush paradise ruled by the now sleeping gods. In their pride, the gods faltered and the world fell to ruin. So the gods created us and left the world to our caretaking while they entered the great sleep. It was the hope of the gods that one day, the world would be a paradise again, and they could return. That is our purpose, 'to serve the Earth,' that it may one day be green again."

-=Introduction=-

"To Serve the Earth" is a roleplaying game, written for the third "TRO Challenge" on RPGnet. In this game, players will guide a robotic society in their struggle to transform the earth from a polluted wasteland into a green world, or a battle-scarred ruin. Players will also take the role of individuals within the robot society, guiding figures who will hopefully make big changes on the world.

To play, you and your friends will need:

*A stack of index cards, for characters and other things. Get plenty.

*Some hexagonal graph paper, maybe a few sheets. You can print out your own for free at <http://incompetech.com/graphpaper/>

*Many d6 for each player, in two colors. I'd suggest about 10 of each. I'll use white and black dice in examples and rules, to represent Action Dice and Trouble Dice, respectively. You can share dice, if you like, and reroll dice if you only have one set.

*Counters, to track Story Points. I recommend coins, poker chips, or glass beads. These should also be in two colors, or somehow distinguishable between Karma and Darma points.

I'm not going to waste a lot of time and space telling you what a roleplaying game is or defining dice terms. Maybe I'll throw that in the non-contest version. Let's do this thing.

-=Inspirations=-

To Serve the Earth is drawing on a few sources, some RPGs and a some stories.

Games:

Fallout, S.T.A.L.K.E.R. - the look of the world, the nature of mutants and such.

In a Wicked Age - the idea of player different characters each session and Oracles.

REIGN - some ideas of large-scale action mechanics and other little things

Settlers of Catan - hex-grids and resources and the kingdom game in general

Movies:

Wall-E - the biggest inspiration, from the wasted planet to the quirky robots

-=The World, in Brief=-

Before play, it would help all players to understand more about the setting and what the tone is.

Some very long time in the past, humans built up the earth to soaring technological heights. At the same time, war and pollution came to overpower the safeties put into place. Eventually, the Earth was left so environmentally devastated that human life became impossible. Humans left the world to live in hibernation ships that would either colonize new worlds (if they could be found) or at least let the remaining humans wait the long years until Earth could be rehabilitated. These became the sleeping gods of legend.

Humans left behind powerful Artificial Intelligence overseers and automated facilities to commence the reconstruction. Waste-handler bots cleaned up landfills and toxic waste zones. Massive automatic plants filter the air and water. Power comes from solar, wind, and nuclear fusion.

The robots were given strong orders, but emergent behaviors and the long years of cleanup eventually had an "awakening" effect. First, the AI controls moved to centralize authority and operations. The city of Zero Prime was erected as a hub for all activity. Smaller nodes would be spread out from there.

The AI moved their cores to Zero Prime, and established the Council of Oracles to best manage their efforts. There were several AI control programs, each at one time handling a different region. Now that they were assembled together, they saw that each had slightly differed in its program. At the core of all robot programming are a few prime directives, and above all else, the Great Purpose: to serve the Earth.

Each AI differed in what it believed the best way to handle the Earth, each had a unique interpretation of the Purpose. This problem spread to all robots, factionalizing them and dividing them. All agree that the Earth is their stewardship, but none know exactly what is to be done. Some feel that clean-up is most important, and a return to the world's original state. Others feel that the planet must evolve and change, and new life forms must be engineered for it. There are even factions who feel that humanity is a scourge that caused the problems in the first place, and thus the best way to serve the planet is to turn it into a war machine so that all humans may be wiped from the universe.

That is where things stand. New factions arise all the time, some independant and some branches of larger groups. Perhaps one of them will be able to unite the Oracles towards a common cause, or at least make a large stride in securing their beliefs into the society as a whole. Even barring that conflict, the world is a dangerous and hostile place. Mutants, rogue robots, and hostile environments all provide challenges that an adaptable and brave citizen could rise to prove themselves against.

-=The System=-

Before getting into character creation and the flow of the game, let's go over the basic system and the general idea of play with "To Server the Earth." All players (that's everyone at the table) will control a Faction within robot society. Each session, the players will take actions with their Faction to take territory, build up structures, and do work to improve the planet.

Also during a session, players will make characters and play out the conflicts from a personal scale, taking the role of a robot within their faction. Through these interactions of overview- and personal-level play, a portrait of the ruined world will emerge, filled with conflicts and stories that your group crafts.

During the course of these stories, conflicts will arise between players, and between players and the challenges of the world. To resolve this, the players roll dice. Players will get a certain number of Action Dice based on the abilities on their character sheets, and can gain more by taking on risk or through positive circumstances. Any die that comes up a 5 or a 6 is a victory. If you have any victories, then the action succeeds. If you have 5 victories, then the action is a stunning success. Every 5 victories above that makes it Stunning + X, where x is how many times up you go. So if you got 10 victories, then that's a Stunning+1 result, or perhaps Double Stunning! Whatever terminology you like.

In addition to those good dice, players also must roll a certain amount of Trouble Dice. These dice come from negative circumstances, penalties accumulated, and also through risk taking. I recommend rolling these at the same time as the Action Dice, but using a different color. Perhaps white d6 for Action, and black d6 for Trouble. Any die that comes up a 5 or 6 here is a Problem. If your roll has any problems, then the success level is dropped by one. Stunning successes become normal successes, and regular successes become failures. Worst of all, if you failed to roll any victories and got problems, then the action is a catastrophic failure. Also, the rule of 5 applies here too. Every 5 Problems shaves off another layer of success from your results. So before taking on a bunch of risk, think about how much you'd like to have a Doubly Catastrophic failure.

What's to be done about those Problems? Well, there is a way to deal with them, two of them. One, every player has a certain number of Karma Points that they can use for the sole purpose of buying off someone else's problems. One Karma buys off one Problem, and multiple players can contribute to buy off all of it. Players get more Karma for following their beliefs and roleplaying to their best.

Why would you want to buy off someone's problems? Maybe to just to be nice and help out, or maybe to extract a favor from the person. Problems are a bargaining chip for sure to whoever has the points to buy it up. There is another incentive as well. Every two points of Problems you get turns into one point

of Darma. It doesn't matter if you bought the problems, or suffered from them because no one else would. Every second Problem that comes your way gives you a Darma point. These are the other way to buy off problems: one Darma destroys one Problem, but that means nobody gets it. There are a few other uses for Darma: you can buy an extra Action Die with them (before or after the roll), and you can spend them to make a true statement about the world.

What if two (or more) players all throw down Karma at the same time to buy off some problems, who gets it? In such a situation, the person with the problems decides who he is willing to "sell" to. Darma spending also follows Karma, so it's possible for one player to buy a problem and another to throw down a Darma to destroy it "in transit." It's a mean thing to do, and somewhat pointless, but it's a cruel world out there.

On any roll, a player is free to take risk. They add one to three Action Dice to their roll, and add the same number of Problem Dice. Here's an optional rule that's related. If the group is ok with it, you can also take a Reckless Chance. In that case, just add one to three victories to your total, but add twice that many problems! Do you have enough Darma and friends to pay it all off?

Aside from those basics, there are some further complexities that may come into the game. First, certain situations and items can add more dice to either Action or Trouble, and some potent effects can add straight victories and problems to a roll's outcome. There are also two kinds of special roll. The first is a "No Fail Roll." In this roll, players can't lose (they can succeed even with zero victories) but can still take on Problems. In these circumstances, Problems becomes negative details about the world, as per the nature of the roll being made. The second special roll is the Pure Risk Roll. If a situation is purely luck based, then it all comes down to how many Action and Trouble dice a player is willing to gamble on. For a Pure Risk Roll, the maximum risk is 6 dice (of each type). Also Reckless Chance may be used here as well.

-=Getting Started=-

So everyone is gathered round the table, index cards and writing utensils ready, dice hands twitching. How do you start?

The game occurs in phases. First everyone makes a Faction, then you do some mapping, then you make characters, and then you play. That's the first session. On subsequent sessions, you do a mapping phase, a character creation, and play. Faction creation is usually only for new players or people who want to try something different.

To start out, everyone has six points of Karma. Karma and Darma belong to the player, dice scores belong to the characters and factions. Keep that in mind as the game begins.

-Making a Faction-

Start with the hex grid in the middle of the table, and everyone with an index card. This is your Faction card. Pick a hex as near the center as possible, and label it as a city. This is Zero Prime, the capital of the

robot empire and home base for everyone. Every Faction starts out as a loose organization of robots, and has a base in Zero Prime.

Your faction is your "real" character. It will persist from session to session, and let you change the world as you want. You can use the character sheets in this document to write up your company, or just use an index card to freeform it. Just so long as the information is there.

First, your faction needs a name and a dream. The dream is a purpose, an overarching methodology for the group. All factions share the same purpose, "To serve the Earth." The dream is how your faction interprets it. This is also a time to consider what sort of organization you will control. A military faction might have the dream, "Cleanse the world of all hostile elements." While an environmental faction might follow, "Restore the planet to a green state." Once you have a dream, a good name should follow. Maybe "Spartan Initiative" or "Green Root Process." Whatever name works for you and your group.

Once you have those, it's time to determine the stats for your faction. Factions have three stats: Membership, Power, and Adaptability. Membership determines how many working robot citizens are in your faction. Power is how much influence you can direct over the world at a time. And Adaptability rates how flexible your faction is in dealing with the unexpected.

Aside from what they represent, each stat always has an in-game effect that may change how you value each. Membership determines how many actions your faction can attempt during each segment of game time. Power determines what sort of tasks you can attempt; it is how big of a change you can attempt at one time. Adaptability acts as a defensive attribute, and also acts as a limit on Power during extreme circumstances.

The number of points available will vary depending on the group's preferences. The more points, the bigger the factions. I recommend everyone use the same point total, but even that rule can be broken if everyone is good with it. Attributes usually range from 1 to 5. They can go higher, but the game might get unwieldy. If Membership is actions, do you really want everyone taking 12 actions per turn?

For a few small factions, I recommend 5 points per person to divide up as they like.

-Mapping the World-

Once you all have a faction to play as, it is time to map out the world. Give each player a token. Then, everyone places a token on the map. That's your first Outpost. You also control all 6 hexes next to your Outpost. Each hex is a territory. If any hexes overlap with another person's area, then those territories are contested.

To resolve contested territory, both players (or more, if such be the case) roll their faction's Power. Most successes takes the territory, and highest single die takes it if no one gets any victories. Remember, you can add risk to this roll. If anyone ties for first, then the territory remains contested. All the "owners" must agree on any decisions for that land, or be ready to enforce their claims. The only territory that cannot be contested is the faction outpost. It belongs to whoever placed it.

Now, all players should make a No-Fail Adaptability roll. Again, risk taking is encouraged. Every success lets them add a detail about that territory, and everyone gets a free extra detail. Details should be short phrases, but provocative. Things like "Here be mutant dragons" or "abandoned uranium mine" or "home of the broken-down blacksmith." Write these phrase on the Territories sheet, and mark them on the map in your territories somewhere. If you rolled a Stunning success, you get a free extra detail as well: Facility. You can define what it is, but you have an extra asset in your territory.

Since this is a No-Fail roll, you also get to deal with Problems separately. Problems also become details about your territory, but bad ones. Everyone has to approve a bad detail, so no being too soft on yourself. The nastier it is, the better the story will be later. Some examples might be, "rogue army in mountains" or "pestilent swamp lands" or the ever popular "unexplored wilds." If victory details added the helpers and plothooks and NPCs, then problem details add the dungeons and the monsters.

As a final bit of detailing, each player can define the terrain and some general features of their territories. Maybe one player wants to live in the mountains, and another wants a swampy retreat. Everything from plains to oceans and whatever else the players want.

-Determine the Game Master-

A unique feature of this game is that the duty of Game Master is meant to rotate around between the players. After the mapping, but before the game: any volunteers? If one person wants to GM and no one objects, that person takes up two each of Darma and Karma (for the next session). If more than one person wants it, try negotiating. If that doesn't go through, then it's roll off time.

This will be a Pure Risk Roll. The most victories gets to be GM. Whoever that is, take up all the other players' problems, minus their victories. Those problems are spent by the GM immediately to add more details to the world, problematic or benign. These can be placed on any hex, owned or not, except for each players' outpost. If the GM was a volunteer, or everyone rolled a lot of victories so that problems are scarce, the GM still gets a minimum equal to the number of players (including the GM). There's always trouble somewhere.

In this game, the role of GM is more akin to that of a director and narrator. I know those are common ways to describe the role, but I mean it. Like a narrator, the GM will establish scenes and add the details of the environment. Like a director, the GM will choose scenes and assign roles to the players, who are the actors in this case. Yes that's right, assign roles. The GM is free to make NPCs and even run them as needed, but the GM should feel free to pass NPCs to other players and let them run them. Ideally, the GM should never roll dice in this game. Leave that to players, so they can abuse and enjoy the Karma/Darma system.

Once the GM is established and more problem details are added, it's time for the players to take Faction actions.

-Mapping Continued: Faction Actions-

For every point of Membership a player has, they have one work unit. A work unit is a group of robots, geared to a certain purpose. That purpose is called a Directive. Common directives would be to create

Army units, Diplomat units, or other task forces geared to a certain job like building or clean-up. Creating a work group usually takes an action, but all players start with a free one already assembled.

All players can take actions now (see the chapter on Factions for details). Once this first faction phase is resolved, the players will make characters and play.

Hopefully, you've got a world that's in motion now. It has some details, and some problems. There are armies and task forces working in various territories, maybe dealing with problems. The stage is set for the stories you will tell.

-Making Characters-

In the city of Zero Prime, the Oracles have gathered to judge the progress of the reconstruction. The GM will lead the council as they look at the state of the world, and determine where there is trouble to be resolved. Think about the problem details, spread around the map. Pick a territory close to some problems, 2 to 5. The players should all vote on which set to go with, but ultimately the GM will decide. Just one thing: the GM can't pick a territory he controls or that affects her directly. NPCs from the GMs faction can show up, but they shouldn't be a focus.

The GM should work out a story involving those problems, and how they might interrelate. Meanwhile, the players will make characters who will have a stake in resolving that problem. There are a few good reasons to be involved: 1) The Oracle assigned a troubleshooting specialist to the problem, 2) your faction is trying to solve the problem because it effects you or an ally, or 3) the problem is caused or inflamed by your faction. There could also be other reasons, pick something that makes good story for you.

Let me walk you through a character sheet while you fill it out. First up, Designation and Controller. That's the robot's name, and the player's name. Then, your motivations. Directive is like with work units: it's your job. Model is related, they should work together to describe your robot type and work goals. Maybe you're a Soldier bot whose directive is "Kill all mutants." Or perhaps a Utility bot assigned to "Reconnect power to distant facilities." Most especially, consider the Problems being looked at, and what sort of bot might have been sent to resolve or inflame those problems. If your faction has a work unit in the area, consider if your robot is a member of it.

Next, determine a Desire. This is what your robot, as an individual, wants. Make it good and conflictive. Your Desire should oppose another player's Desire or Directive. It can even conflict with your own Directive. Dream is the same as your Faction, since your robot belongs to it. It too can conflict with your Desire or your Directive, and it can especially conflict with other player's motivations. Finally, Purpose, which is the same for all robots: "To Serve the Earth." If you aren't following your purpose, you're a renegade and an enemy to all robots.

After motivations, you define the basic attributes of your robot. These are Adapt, Force, and Will. Adapt is how fast your robot can respond to changing circumstances, Force is how potent the robot can be, and Will is how determined it is. You have 5 points to split amongst them, minimum is 0 and max is 3.

Next, every robot has one Special Part and one Quirk. A Part is something that gives your robot an edge, a special power of some sort. Having thick Armor Plating is a good Special Part. Having a laser cutter, or a plasma bolt gun, or superior machine empathy are all good Parts. It should be fairly narrow, and analogous to a piece of specialized equipment. When your part is useful in an action, you get an extra Action die for free on that roll.

Your Quirk is a glitch in your robot's programming or construction that no one can seem to get out. It's a unique little action that your robot can't help but do. "Shoots when startled" or "Squeaky treads" or "whistles old country songs when nervous" are all examples of Quirks. They needn't exactly be disadvantages, but they aren't universally helpful. When your Quirk gets you in trouble, it allows you to take a greater risk on a single roll that scene, up to 6 dice (or 9 dice in a Pure Risk Roll). If you play it well, the GM might give other bonuses as well.

That's all there is to it. Characters are pretty simple in this game, but I hope that encourages you to focus on their personalities and how they grow as part of the world, not as numbers on a sheet.

-=The Next Session=-

So the session is over, I hope you had a good time. Before you pack up for the night, pull out a Story Card and make note of who GMed this game, and who had some trouble resolved. Make sure to also note how much Darma and Karma you left off with. These will come in handy for the next session.

When you gather again to play, first thing is first: figure out this game's GM. It can't be the same as last time's, that person doesn't even get to compete for it. Indeed, no one can GM twice until everyone has had a shot at it. If a person wants to pass, they can, but they also pass on resolving any trouble in their territories that session. No free rides.

Once a GM is figured out, take a look at the map. Did the GM add any more trouble this time? Maybe so, remember that the GM always gets at least the number of players in points of trouble to spread around. Decide right now, as the Council of Oracles, if it is time to take another Faction turn, or if there is still enough trouble to tell more stories as is. It might also be time for another map if this one is getting crowded after a few games. Just attach a second sheet of hex paper onto one side of this one, and expand the world. Or draw a new map with the old page as just one cell of the larger "world map."

If you want more Faction work, go ahead with that. If not, then the Oracles should decide a new conflict for this game, and they should avoid doing conflicts in the territories of players who already had problems resolved. The players can bring back an old character from before, or make a brand new one. If you make a new one, total up your Faction's stats, that's how many points you get to spend on the new character's stats and the max can go above 3 now. Note that old characters don't get bumped up, just new ones. As your Faction gains members, grows in power, and learns to adapt, the followers of that faction grow stronger as well.

-=Advanced Rules=-

Once you've gotten a game or two down, it might season the game a bit to add some more advanced concepts in. Also, giving the GM more tools to work with can help play along. In this section, I'll cover some advanced bits to enhance the game.

-GM Advice: Running Conflict-

A lot has been written and said about conflicts in RPGs. Right now, I won't go into a lot of theory and advice on how to build conflict and set-up great clashes in your games. Instead, I offer some simple mechanical advice on how to run conflicts.

First off: don't oppose, obstruct. Why waste your time on a lot of dice rolling, especially for NPCs? Who cares if they get 4 victories on a roll? Use your judgment, and NPCs either do or don't as the story demands. For players though, they're going to want to get into some trouble. Use those Trouble Dice to handle it. If they're rolling at all, players should always be rolling at least one trouble die. Add more for risky actions that are dangerous. If something is really tough, throw in some Problems as well. Now the action requires teamwork or spending down a few Darma points. You should always be testing how much players are willing to pay for something.

That said, don't punish players either. If they roleplay well or set-up a good plan, give bonus dice, or perhaps free victories. If a plan sounds really insane, force some Risk on them. One of each die plus one assured victory is a good payout for a risky plan. If they get any Problems, the action will likely fail (without a teamwork bailout, which you want) and if it does succeed, the player gets one more victory to reward him for the planning.

Also, the most basic thing in the game. You can set the difficulty of a challenge by requiring more than one victory to overcome it. Definitely toss in a few "tough challenges" now and then to encourage risk taking and point spending.

-Consequences-

So besides causing big failures and successes on the magic 5s, what good are extra victories and problems? Extra victories should always be a reward for players. Let them add details to the scene, one for each victory. Let them get bonus dice on their next roll, one die for each victory on the set-up roll. Also, reward stunning successes with some free Darma, or a big story bonus, or something equivalently grand.

With problems, be ruthless. Spend problems as negative details, really hammer on the characters. Crush them when catastrophes occur, and don't feel too bad, because they just got at least 2 points of Darma for taking all that pain.

You can also introduce the Consequences system. After a roll which the GM dubs Consequential, the character accumulates any problems as Consequence dice. At the end of the action, the player rolls those dice alone and any successes become Bad Consequences. BCs are spent by the player on general badness, including: one for one spending to remove value from Special Parts (a part at zero value is destroyed), three for one to lower an attribute, three for one to buy permanent Trouble dice on an

attribute, five for one to gain a new Quirk (limit of 3, please), and the GM can offer special deals on Consequences like utterly failing a mission, losing Karma or Darma, losing your place in society, or other bad things. Note that lowering Attributes doesn't change their "real" value. You aren't really less willful for losing points in that stat. It just means you are damaged.

If all three of your stats hit zero, by the way, your robot is totaled. The same if you have more Trouble Dice than "real points" in all three stats. You can force your way on, you can will yourself to victory, and you can even adapt to the worst of it, but you have to have something to go on with, or else you're dead.

The GM can also feel free to add Good Consequence dice to the character, which are rolled at the end of a session. GCs should come from: great roleplaying, playing to motivations and quirks, and successfully completing missions.

-Opposed Conflict-

Probably sooner than later, two robots are going to decide that they stand against each other and only one can be right. In such a case, instead of rolling to see who has the most victories flat out, try this advanced conflict system. Both players start by picking the stat they're using: Will, Adapt, or Force. That gives them their Action dice. Now they look at their opponent's stat which opposes the one they chose, and that gives them Trouble dice. The oppositions are like this: Adapt opposes Force, Force opposes Will, and Will opposes Adapt. Add any extra dice for Parts and circumstances, and make a Consequential No-Fail Roll. Any problems accumulate on you as Consequence. Any victories go to your opponent as Trouble dice for the next roll.

Now evaluate your position. You might have some Consequence on you, and you probably have a good bit more coming. Are you ready to go on? Sure you don't want to negotiate an outcome first? If not, roll on. Keep accumulating until one of you hits twice their highest stat in Consequence. Whoever hit, loses the conflict. If you both pass the mark on the same round, make one more roll, of Consequential Pure Risk. Winner takes all, both sides take massive Consequences.

Now wasn't that exhilarating?

-GM Advice: Motivating-

Every character has at least 5 different ways to motivate and guide roleplaying. Support the faction through Dream. Support yourself through Directive and Desire. Mess around with Quirks. And if nothing else, everyone must Serve the Earth in their own way. The GM should be looking for players to work on their motivations and reward them for doing so. Whenever a player makes a tough decision in favor of their motivations, give them Karma. When the group overcomes a challenge, give them Karma. When a player makes a big risk on a quirked action, give them Karma regardless of the outcome. Players must spend Karma on each other or else it lingers and does nothing. Encourage teamwork and spending to overcome obstacles. If that doesn't work, give them challenges so dreadful they have to take big risks on them to overcome. If players have no Karma, encourage playing to their motivations and then give them more.

Fair challenges are the road, characters and their rolls are the vehicles. Karma is the fuel that makes the car go. Everything else is just scenery, but never neglect how powerful the scenery can be when you are on a journey.

-Advancement-

I'll tell you straight up: character don't get better. The stats don't go up, and more dice should be hard to come by. Sure, you can make a new character with higher base stats, but he's got no Consequences on him and no fond player memories either. Consequences, the good kind, are like advancement.

At the end of a session, players should all roll the dice they've accumulated as Good Consequences. The GM was handing them out right? For good roleplaying, finishing missions, and all that jazz? Most players should get 1 to 3 dice, just for finishing the session. 1 if they did badly, 2 if they played ok or if they played good but lost, and 3 if they played good and won. On top of that, most players should get 1 or 2 for good roleplay per session, and 1 or 2 more for taking a risky roll or succeeding against rough odds. All told, the players should get between 3 and 7 dice of Good Consequences, every session. No more than 10 though, and at least give them 1 for showing up.

So you roll those, and any victories become... what? Well, you can get a new Special Part with them, or add one to the Value of an existing Part. See the next segment for details on that. You can also buy off the results of any bad consequences, repairing damage or removing quirks. You can also spend them on game details, that become semi-permanent fixtures of the setting. This is the really good stuff. How about buying some NPCs into existence to act as allies for you? Or buy a plot hook into the next story, assuring a certain problem of showing up. Talk with the GM and work out a deal. Whatever you want, the GM surely has a price for it. The one thing you can't do is make your guy smarter, or tougher, or more willful, or whatever. You are who you are, and that doesn't change.

-Better Special Parts-

That Special Part is pretty nice, getting a free die on relevant rolls. Wouldn't it be nice to have more of them, or even better ones? Well, you can! Good Consequences can be spent to buy up more Special Parts. These aren't permanent, you could lose them to Bad Consequences or even just carelessness in a story, but this extra equipment will help out while you have it. Each point of Good Consequences lets you buy a new Special Part, or upgrade an old one. Each new SP has a value of 1, and each upgrade makes the value a point higher. No part can be more valuable than 5. Also, new parts you buy can start with any upgrade, instead of just Enhances like your first did.

Here are the upgrades:

Enhances - Gives an extra die to relevant actions

Powerful - Gives two dice instead of one (requires Enhances)

Extreme - Gives three dice instead of two (requires Powerful)

Never Fails - Your device gives 1 victory when it applies instead of 2 die (requires Powerful)

One-time - Makes the item a one shot use (then it's gone) but in addition to its regular benefits, it makes the target number on Action Dice a 2 instead of a 4. Prepare for a shot of mega-victory!

Useful - Your device is useful in a second circumstance. Like, your laser is both a cutting tool AND a weapon.

Reliable - Your device is so sturdy it reduces Trouble dice by 1

Sturdy - Your device is super reliable and reduces Trouble dice by 2 (requires Reliable)

Hardened - Your device is rock-solid and reduces Trouble dice by 3 (requires Hardened)

Other - if you can think of another good power, talk it over with the GM and work it in. If the effect is very powerful, it may require a negative (like One-shot) or a prerequisite (like Never Fails).

-GM Advice: Threat and Danger-

During the Consequences phase of the Faction Turn, some problems might get their threat elevated. What does that mean? It means that a simple problem becomes a Problem: Threat 2. It means that when you do a mission involving it, it's worse than normal. When the player goes to roll Consequences for the faction next time around, the extra Threat doesn't add anything. But when the characters go in to investigate, they find a worse situation for each level of Threat.

You know how I said players should always be rolling one die of Trouble anytime they roll? In a Threat 2 mission, it should always be 2 Trouble. Challenges should be a little harder, risks a little deadlier. Mostly, though, situations should be more dire. Put more at stake. Layer the trouble. If the problem was "renegades have a base here" then the Threat 2 problem is "renegades are massing for an attack after an Enforcer patrol was lost in the area."

Just don't surprise the players. They should know they're going into a Threat 2 (or 3 or more) zone, let them prepare and build up for it.

-=Faction Rules=-

Building up your faction is how you change the world, big time. It's also the key to fielding stronger robots. So how do you grow the faction, how do you build it all up? You do that with Faction Actions, taken during the Faction phase of the game.

Each Faction gets actions equal to its Membership score. You also need an actor to take those actions with. Actions are sometimes automatic, and sometimes resolved with a roll of dice. Your faction grows by winning certain conflicts, taking certain actions, and acquiring more territory. One Faction Turn occurs roughly every session, but that's only if all players agree that it's time for one. Otherwise, don't! Remember, each faction turn changes the layout of the world.

-Faction Territory-

What good is territory? Aside from letting the player define a chunk of the world and causing trouble, what good are those hexes? It depends on what you do with them. At the start of the game, all your territory is Raw. Through actions, you can cultivate raw land into useful land. You can then build on that land and use the facilities to aid you.

Let me go back for a moment though. I threw away "define a chunk of the world" and "cause trouble" like those were worthless. Those are not worthless benefits, not at all. Each session, the story is defined by the problems and the setting is made by the terrain. If you define a problem as "rampaging rhinobots" and terrain as "smokey jungle" then guess what? At some point, you might very well have a session featuring the hunting of cyborg rhinos in a smoke-filled jungle close to home. That's power, power to define the stories and the way the game goes. Don't look at that lightly.

All territory goes through a few basic phases. It starts out as Unknown, that's the blank hexes on the map. Once you send a work unit there, it becomes Explored, and you can define the terrain there. You can call it Claimed as well, but without something to enforce that claim, any player could swoop in and take it. Once Explored and Raw, you can Cultivate the land. Then you can Build on it, making it Civilized.

So that's: Unexplored -> Explored -> Cultivated -> Civilized

-Faction Facilities-

What sort of things can you build on Cultivated land to make it Civilized? There are a few Facilities available that you can build. Each takes one action to build. You can also add more facilities to an already Civilized territory, but it will take two actions. Then it will take 3 to add a third facility, and so on. Here's the list:

Outposts - Outposts are great, because they can do it all! They can manufacture any type of work unit, like a super factory. They also can defend themselves and provide growth benefits. But the catch is limits. You can only have one Outpost per map page, roughly speaking. They're meant to be regional HQs.

Factory Facility - "Factories" make work units. I use scare quotes because it need not be true that they build the robots. Sure, some bots are built fresh still, but there are quite a few experienced bots around too. A "factory" might be more like a recruitment center, to attract already built bots to work. Regardless of the specifics, each factory can only build one type of robot, decided on when you build it. You can change the directives of the work units created, but they must all be of a type, like Soldiers, Utility bots, or Diplomats.

Growth Facility - Again, "Growth" is a generic term for a specific facility. Each Growth facility can encourage the raising of one of your Faction stats. You have to pick which stat is supported when you build it: Membership, Adaptability, or Force. You might define these as labs researching new technologies, training grounds to hone technique, or mines and excavations to support new building. They could even be propaganda centers and radio towers that attract other bots to your faction.

Operations Facility - These are like non-mobile work units. They can do actions, but only on adjacent hexes. You must define the type when you build it, but as a concession to their immobility, you can define a second type as well. Typically, you would do something like Soldier and something else. The soldiers (perhaps in a "Bunker" facility) defend the territory while the other group does some kind of useful work.

Special Facility - It's possible you will want a building to do some special task. If that task is ok with the GM, then build it. Maybe you want something like a signal jammer that makes work harder for other players in the area. Or you just want a cool setting for a story to take place in. Just define your requirements for it, and the GM will approve or deny the request.

-**Faction Work Units-**

Works units come in many robot types, as do the individual robots you play as. I'm not very rigid on types. If I said there were only X types, some player would want a specialized ninja bot or something I hadn't thought of. That said, I tend to think of a few different types of bots. These would be your typical work units, and the work they do.

Soldiers - Directives like "Defend the faction", "Kill mutants", and "Hunt down renegades." Soldiers do combat work, and will almost always need a Power roll to do their thing. High on Force, low on Adapt, usually.

Utility - Directives like "Repair broken facility", "Clean-up toxic waste", and "Build new roads." Utility bots do the kind of construction and clean-up work that makes life possible, or at least may make life possible again, someday. Usually merits an Adaptability roll, and tend to be high on the Adapt stat as individuals. Usually low on Will, the whiny rust buckets.

Diplomats - Directives like "Keep peace with other factions", "Set up trade routes", and "Spread the Oracles' words." Diplomats are social bots, spreading news and working to keep their factions well regarded in the greater society. They can use any Faction roll, but sometimes make good use of Membership as a rolled stat, to show off how popular their faction is. Tend to be high on Will, but not very forceful.

Advanced - The advanced versions of the above three might be Specialists (like ninja bots, enforcers, and siege bots), Constructors (like nanite-hive builders and hazardous environment workers), and Priests (who speak directly with the Oracles) or Leaders (who guide society). Advanced bots would have to wait until your faction grows and can support bots with higher base stats.

-**Faction Actions-**

Actions fall into several categories, based on who the actor is.

Factory Actions:

Construct Work Unit - Creates a new Work Unit of a given type.

Upgrade Work Unit - WUs can have special parts, just like a character. To get them, though, requires an Upgrade.

Work Unit Actions:

Move* - Move is a special action. All Work Units can move 1 hex for free, each Faction Turn. To move additional hexes requires a special roll. You must take one Risk per additional hex moved, and you can add your Adaptability into the roll. Each problem cancels one victory. If any victories remain, then the full move is successful.

Do Work - Each WU type does a different sort of work, but they all operate the same in game mechanics. You define the outcome of the work, and make a roll. If the type of work is something the WU can do well (it's of their type) then you get to make a regular roll with the GM determining how much trouble is involved. If you are rolling out of type (trying to make Diplomats attack for example) then you have to roll the appropriate stat with an extra three trouble on top.

Attack - Attacking is just Doing Work for soldiers, but it typically goes as an Opposed Roll, per the advanced rules. Attacker and Defender roll Force, with their enemy's Adaptability as trouble dice. Accumulating more Consequences than Membership means defeat for the work unit. Bad Consequences don't hurt the Faction's stats, but do cause problems in the surrounding hexes.

Build/Cultivate - Again, just Doing Work, but this time for Utility bots. Allows the cultivating of raw land and the building of new facilities.

Free Action:

Grow - Each turn, you get one Growth roll. This occurs at the end of the turn. Pick the stat you want to grow. For each growth facility of the right type and outpost you own, roll one Action Die. If you get more victories than your current stat, you raise it by one. Otherwise, no change. You can get bonuses to this roll during a session if the GM feels your character represented the Faction's stat well (Working or fighting hard for Force, overcoming big danger for Adaptability, and putting on a good public face for Membership).

Consequences - Each turn, you also get one Consequences roll. Roll all your stats together as Action dice against all Problems in your territory as Trouble dice. Problems cancel out Victories. If you have a net victory, then you suffer no bad consequences and in fact, get a free end-of-turn action to celebrate. If you have net problems, then your lands are troubled. If you lost any facilities or territory this round, you can spend 3 to 1 on Consequences to lower a faction stat. Otherwise, negotiate with the GM to increase the threat of some existing problems.

-Advanced Faction Options-

You may find the Faction game to be too slow, not dangerous enough, or too dangerous. If it's going too slow, double the available actions for each player. Or the GM can provide more bonus actions for various things. Too dangerous? Forget the Consequences roll: factions just never get worse, only better. The GM should get to place extra problems at the start of each session, just to keep up the right amount of

trouble in the world. Game too easy, not enough danger? Work in more direct consequences and let each action carry the fate of the whole Faction.

Mostly, just work with the GM and the system to come up with what sounds fun and fair within the framework. Also, try using Settlers of Catan with some extra rules as the Faction game instead of these Faction rules. You might like the difference.

-=Sheets and Records=-

These quick sheets are stand-ins for the real ones I'd do if I had more time and may do if I keep working on this game after the contest. As I intend it, everything goes on its own index card. As you play, you build up a library of locations, characters, parts, and ideas that will get used throughout the game. One session you play as a character, the next that same robot might show up as an NPC when you GM.

-Character Card-

Designation:	Purpose: TO SERVE THE EARTH
Controller:	Model:
Force:	Dream:
Will:	Directive:
Adapt:	Desire:
Special Parts:	Quirks:

-Faction Card-

Designation:	Purpose: TO SERVE THE EARTH
Leader:	
Dream:	
Power:	
Adaptability:	
Membership:	
Notes	

-Player Card-

Player: Purpose: TO SERVE THE EARTH

Faction:

Karma: Darma: Times GM:

Characters:

-Story Card-

Episode: Purpose: TO SERVE THE EARTH

Director:

Cast:

Plot Synopsis:

-Special Part Card-

Designation: Purpose: TO SERVE THE EARTH

Value:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enhances | <input type="checkbox"/> Useful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Powerful | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme | <input type="checkbox"/> Sturdy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never Fails | <input type="checkbox"/> Hardened |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One-Time | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Description:

-Territory-

Designation:

Purpose: TO SERVE THE EARTH

Terrain:

Details/Facilities:

Problems:

-END-