

Games of the Gods

1. Introduction

The gods are long lived and always need new entertainments to while the innumerable hours of their existences. Thus, the gods took an interest in man. In this game you will control a deity who is playing a game against the other gods (players) with humans as the pieces. You will direct humans to act in ways that serve your interests, but the continued meddling of the gods will cause reality begin breaking down. The god who has best directed their human pawns will reshape the remains of the old human world into one more fitting their divine will.

2. Required Materials

Here's what you need to play GotG:

- Lots of 6 sided dice (at least 5 per player is best)
- Paper to keep track of what the world and human characters are currently like
- Index cards
- Tokens of some sort to keep track points of a few types

3. Terminology

Here are some terms that will come up later. If you aren't sure what weird word means, just look here.

- **God** - a divine being who directs humans to act, one of the players
- **Motif** - a recurring image associate with a God, gives bonuses when incorporated into narration
- **Character** - one of the humans
- **Feature** - something important about a character
- **Relationship** - a connection between two characters
- **World** - all the *Characters* and *Relationships*, basically the relationship map for game
- **Goal** - something a *God* gets divinity for making a character do
- **Divinity** - a resource a *God* can spend to get a bonus die on a roll
- **Glory** - esteem from the fellow *Gods*, collecting these is how you "win" the game
- **Autarch** - the *God* currently in charge

4. What is the World?

The first thing you'll do when you start playing is creating the *World*. In GotG the World is defined pretty rigorously. The World is made up two kinds of things: *Characters and Relationships*. As mentioned just above in the terminology section, a character is any human taking part in the story while a relationship is a connection between two characters.

Characters

What makes up a character? First, every character has vitals. Vitals are things like name, age, sex, and other superficial physical stuff. Next, every character has 3 features. A feature is a characteristic of the character. They are things like, "Pushy", "Smart", "Ace Pilot", "Savior to All Mankind", and so forth. Features are explicitly not things like, "Son of ..." or "Love of ...", they should be things about the character rather than their relationship to other characters. Features will grant bonuses or penalties to things that character does in play. Last, a character is active or not. If a character is active he or she can begin conflicts. Inactive characters **can** be the target of conflicts.

Relationship

Relationships are connections between two characters. A relationship is made up of three parts: a description, a source, and a target. The description of the relationship says what the nature of the relationship is. Example descriptions are, "parent of", "hates", "loves", "works for", and so on. The source of a relationship is the active party in the relationship and the target is the person who the description of the relationship is about.

NOTE: Relationships are not reciprocal. Just because character A has a relationship that means they love character B doesn't mean that Character B feels the same way!

Example Characters

Vitals: Elric, 25 years old, male

Features: Albino, Sorcerer, Melibonian

Vitals: Servarian, 24 years old, male

Features: Torturer, Eidetic Memory, Has a Limp

Vitals: Spike Spiegel, 30 years old, male

Features: Jeet Kun Do, Laid Back, Ace Pilot

Example Relationships

This relationship means: "Romeo Loves Juliet". To make them love each other Juliet would need the symmetric relationship.

Description: "loves"

Target: Juliet

Source: Romeo

Here's the relationship I have with my boss at work.

Description: "works for"

Target: "Ayman"

Source: "Eric"

5. World Creation

Before you can play, the players all need to agree what humans the game is going to be about. So, the very first thing to do when playing GotG is to get all the players together and start discussing the who, where, and when of the characters. Though each player plays a god, the gods themselves never act personally in human affairs they simply direct humans to act. This makes creating characters and a situation that the players are interested in especially important.

In terms of rules, have everyone talk about what *characters* and *relationships* they want to have in the *World*. Make sure that the characters and relationships are in an interesting situation. So, make sure that there is plenty of revenge, hate, unrequited love, forbidden

love, coup attempts, power struggles, or whatever else is in a story that you want to sit through for the duration of play. However, be careful not to give every character a relationship with every other character, save relationships for important connections. Lastly, every character starts active unless you have a REALLY good reason for them not to.

I think that about 1.5-2 characters per player and 1-1.5 relationships per players should be about right.

Once you have reached a consensus, simply create the characters and relationships that you discusses. Make sure that every player has at least one character and relationship that they wanted. If you have created the World and someone's input wasn't included, go back and add something of theirs.

6. Parts of a God

Each player is a god. Gods have a few important parts. First, every God has 2 *motifs*. A motif is some trademark of the god that will give the god bonus dice when incorporated into narration. Example motifs are: "Odor of Death", "Harp Music", "Sand", "One Eyed Men", and so on. Players can set what 0, 1, or 2 of their motifs are before play begins. Unset motifs can be set during play, but if you know you really want to incorporate something into the game you might as well set it now. Once set, a *motif* cannot be changed.

Each god also has a *Divinity* score and a *Glory* score. Divinity is spent to help your chances of success on die rolls and is gained by fulfilling *Goals*. *Glory* is gained during play, and whichever player has the most at the end of the game "wins" the game at the end.

6. Playing

Once the world is completely defined, it's time to start playing! The players will play a number of *Acts* each made up of several *Conflicts*. Pick one god to be *Autarch* first. The Autarch is first to act in most situations, but it will change after every Act, so don't worry too much about who it is to start.

Once you have picked an Autarch, it is time to start the first act. At the beginning of every Act each player is given 5 conflict dice. These dice represent the God's ability to influence events in the human world and will be spent to have Characters engage in conflicts.

Now that everyone has dice to get in conflicts with, it's time to use them. The players will take turns instigating conflicts, starting with the Autarch and proceeding to the left. See the **Conflicts and Divinity** heading for how to instigate conflicts and what kinds of conflicts are allowed. After a conflict is resolved the player to the left now gets a chance to instigate a conflict the same process. Go around the circle three times (give everyone a chance to instigate a conflict 3 times) or until everyone has used their 5 dice, whichever comes first.

Any conflict dice not used in a conflict are **lost**. The players cannot keep dice from act to act.

After conflicts are done, roll to see who gets *Glory* for this act. See the **Glory** heading for the specifics. After distributing *Glory*, players claim *Goals* to gain *Divinity*. See the **Goals** heading for the details.

Now, check to see if the game ends. See the **End Game** heading for the appropriate rules. If the game hasn't ended, then the World will be changed due to instabilities introduced by the intervention of the gods. See the **Reality Is Melting!** heading for the mechanics.

The changes to the world are the end of this Act. The office of the Autarch passes to the left and more acts are played until the conditions for the game ending are met.

7. Conflicts, Goals, and Divinity

Gods will instigate conflicts to fulfill Goals to gain Divinity.

To instigate a conflict, a god picks a character who will be starting the conflict, and which character the conflict will be with. A character can be in conflict with itself. Characters can only be used to instigate a conflict if they are *Active*. Upon instigating the conflict the player chooses which type of conflict it is (see **Conflict Types**) and role plays the conflict. This method will work best if the instigating player play the character they used to instigate the conflict with other players playing other characters as needed. When instigating a conflict a god spends conflict dice. For each die spent to instigate the conflict the God rolls a die when resolving the conflict. A god must spend at least one die to instigate a conflict.

After a god has instigated a conflict, the other gods have a chance to respond. Starting with the god to the left of the instigating god each god can spend dice to help the other side in the conflict. After every other god has had a chance to spend dice, resolve the conflict.

Features in Conflicts

Here's where the features we set for characters come into play. If a character is involved in a conflict and one or more of their features is helpful to the character being used to instigate the conflict then the instigating god gets one free conflict die added to their side of the conflict. Only one die can be added this way, no matter how many relevant features the characters have. The bonus die can be added if feature is on the instigating character, or the character the conflict is with.

For example, if the conflict was started to have Alfred try to kill Bill the bonus die would be added if Alfred has a feature like "Kung Fu Master" or Bill has a feature like "Worst Fighter Ever". But even if both those features were present, the instigating god would still only get one bonus die.

Motifs in Conflicts

If the instigating player incorporates one of their motifs into the narration of the conflict then they gain a bonus conflict die. If the god has unset motifs during a conflict the god may set them and immediately gain the bonus die. Remember, once set, a motif can't be changed. Like features, only one die by motifs can be added per conflict

Divinity

Though how to get divinity hasn't been covered yet it can also get you bonus conflict dice. For each point of divinity spent before rolling the god adds one conflict die to their side of the conflict. Gods who spend dice to help the other side of the conflict **may** spend divinity before they roll to add dice to their roll. Gods can spend as much divinity as they want on a single roll. Gods may spend more divinity in response to other gods spending divinity. Don't roll the dice until everyone is done spending divinity. More divinity cannot be spent once any dice are rolled. Gods may only spend divinity on their own rolls.

Motifs + Features, Spending Dice

A god may gain one die from features **and** one die from motifs, for a total of two bonus dice. Even if the god gets bonus dice from features, motifs, or divinity they still must pay one of their 5 conflict dice they got when the act started to initiate a conflict.

Who Wins Conflicts?

To win a conflict a god needs more successes on its conflict dice than the difficulty of the conflict. To calculate successes have the instigating god roll all of its conflict dice.

This will be <dice spent to start the conflict> + <motif bonus dice> + <features bonus dice> + <divinity spent>

Any die that shows a 4,5,or 6 is a success. Sixes "explode" so for each six showing roll another die and add any successes gained. Dice gained from exploding dice also explode on a 6.

All conflicts have a base difficulty. The base difficulty of each conflict type is in the table in the Conflict Types section that follows. Each god who is helping the other side of the conflict rolls their dice.

This will be <dice spent to help the other side> + <divinity spent>.

The number of successes gained by the opposing gods is added to the base difficulty. For example, if a conflict's base difficulty was 1 and an opposing god rolled 2 successes then the new difficulty would be 3.

If the success are less than the difficulty the conflict is lost. Any opposing gods **have not** won a conflict for the purposes of claiming goals.

Conflict Types

There are five basic conflict types in GotG. They are: conflicts about changing features of

a Character, conflicts about adding Relationship, conflicts about removing a Relationship, conflicts about Deactivating a Character, and conflicts about changing the description of a Relationship.

Within each of these types there are 3 levels of conflict. With level one being least extreme and the easiest, and level three being the most extreme and most difficult. Level 1 conflicts are difficulty 1, level 2 conflicts are difficulty 2, and level 3 conflicts are difficulty 6. Succeeding at a level 1 conflict decreases the difficulty of level 2 and 3 conflicts by 1. Succeeding at a level 2 conflict decreases the difficulty of level 3 conflicts by 2. Succeeding at a level 3 conflict causes the World to change. The effects of level 1 and level 2 conflicts are complementary, so succeeding at a level 1 and level 2 conflict decreases the difficulty of a level 3 conflict by 3.

Winning a level 1 or level 2 conflict against a character means that whenever the player who instigated the conflict gets in future conflicts of the same type against that character the difficulty is decreased as described above. This bonus is gained even a different character is used to instigate the conflict. Other players don't gain this bonus, only the god who instigated the conflict. Multiple gods can instigate the same type of conflict against the same character.

Changing Features = If a level 3 conflict of this type is successful against a character then any number of its features may be changed to whatever the winning player wishes

Adding A Relationship = If a level 3 conflict of this type is successful against a character then a relationship between the character activated by the instigating player and the character the conflict was against is added to the world. Either character may be the target or the source. This cannot be used to cause a character to have a relationship with themselves. The description is set by the instigating player

Removing a relationship = If a level 3 conflict of this type is successful against a character then a relationship with the target character as either the source or target is removed from the world.

Deactivating a character = If a level 3 conflict of this type is successful against a character then that character is now not Active and cannot be activated by a player to start conflicts.

Changing Description = If a level 3 conflict of this type is successful against a character

then the description on any relationship with that character as the source or target is changed to whatever the instigating player wishes.

That was a lot of numbers!

Yes, it was. Now, what do conflicts actually mean in play on the story level? Level 3 conflicts are big news. They involve the inner nature of a character changing, a powerful bond forming between them, a powerful bond being dissolved, the character dying or withdrawing from the world, or the nature of a bond between two people changing.

Example conflicts by Type

Changing Features: what's happening is that something essential to that character's inner self, or personality, or skills is changing. Maybe the character is overcoming their shyness, or learning a martial art, etc. Lower level conflicts are things like self reflection, other characters confronting them about their weaknesses, other characters breaking them down physically or emotionally, etc.

Adding A Relationship: These are about growing to hate someone, growing to love someone, getting hired in an important (story-wise) position, adopting someone. Lower level conflicts are things like flirting, doing something to incite hatred, going down a spiral of vengeful acts that lead to hatred consuming you, going to a lot of job interviews, digging up dirt on your future employer to blackmail a job out of them.

Removing a relationship: These are about a bond disappearing between two characters. Releasing hatred, disavowing vengeance, getting a divorce, getting fired, losing an election, removing your parent from your life. Lower level conflicts are a lot like the ones for adding a relationship, but with different intent.

Deactivating a character: Deactivation is not death, it just means that character won't be starting more conflicts. Deactivated characters could be dead, but they could have moved away, be removed from political power, join a nunnery, or anything else that leads to not being an active agent any more. Lower level conflicts are things like planning a murder, digging up dirt to expose to the media, driving someone to depression.

Changing description: Is for when the bond between characters changes fundamentally. So, getting promoted above your boss, going from "just friends" to something else, love

becoming hate, hate becoming love. Lower level conflicts will look a lot like conflicts for adding a relationship, but will focus on how the old description is going to become the new description.

8. Goals

Goals are how the gods get divinity. A goal is *open* if a god can claim it, it is *closed* if it is not.

Each goal is "Win a <level> <type> conflict". For example, "Win a level 1 conflict about removing a relationship" or "Win a level 3 conflict about changing a feature". There are 15 kinds of goal in all, one for each type and level combination of conflict. For ease of handling, it is best to write each goal on its own index card.

Setting Up Goals

At the start of the game only the goals about level 1 conflicts are open. All other conflicts are closed.

Claiming a Goal

At the appropriate time during an act gods are allowed to claim goals. The order gods claim goals in is the same order they initiate conflicts in. Starting with the Autarch and proceeding to the left each god can claim a single goal. Once all the players have had a chance to claim a goal all the players have a chance to claim another goal again starting with the Autarch and proceeding to the left. Continue this process until no player wishes to claim more goals. To claim a goal a god must have won a conflict of the correct type during the act. Upon claiming a goal the god gains 1 divinity plus any bonus divinity on the goal. Only the first player to claim a goal with bonus divinity on it gains the bonus divinity, future claimants get 1 divinity.

For example, if A, B, and C are playing and A is Autarch then A would claim one goal, then B, then C, then A again, then B, etc.

Bonus Divinity

If after all the players have claimed all of the goals they wish then all the open goals that were not claimed this act get one bonus divinity added to them. There may be more than 1 bonus divinity on a goal. Put a token on the goal's index card, if you have cards and

tokens.

Opening and Closing Goals

All the level 1 goals start open and all others start closed. After a goal has been claimed a certain number of times it is closed and the next highest goal of the same type is opened. When a level 3 goal is closed no new goal opens. Goals that are being closed or opened do so after all of the players are done claiming goals. Claiming a goal never stops someone else from doing so later in the same act, opening a goal never allows someone to claim it in the same act.

When a Level 1 goal has been claimed a numbers of times equal to the number of players ($\#players$) the Level 2 goal is opened and the level 1 goal is closed. When the Level 2 goal is claimed half as many times as the number of players ($\#players/2$) the Level 3 goal is opened and the level 2 goal is closed. If the level 3 goal is ever claimed it is closed and no new goal is opened.

Each type of conflict's goals open and close independently. It is perfectly legal to have level 3 goals for some conflicts and level 1 goals for others.

9. Glory

Glory determines who "wins" the game. Exactly what the highest glory score does is described in the **Endgame** section.

Getting Glory

To get glory the gods get in a multiway conflict against each other. Each god has rolls five dice plus one die for every point of divinity they spend before rolling. Gods may spend any amount of divinity they wish on this roll. The successes are counted using the same method as conflicts (4,5,6 - 6's explode).

If more than one god is tied for most successes they all get 1 glory. If there is a single god with the highest number of successes determine how many successes they beat the god with the second most by and award additional glory using the method below.

1 or 2 more -> 1 additional glory

3 through 5 more -> 2 additional glory

6- 11 more -> 3 additional glory

12 or more -> 4 additional glory

10. Reality Is Melting!

Madness is loosed upon the world

When the gods intervene in the world of men, it rarely ends well for men. Direct contact between the divine is causing the less robust reality the characters are in to break apart. As the goals get higher and higher numbered make each god's motifs more and more explicit. Write problems of the characters large with them. Have completely unreasonable weather events, plagues of animals from the sky, choral music from nowhere, walls oozing blood in the shapes of the secret desires of the characters.

Exactly how much of this is visible to the characters should be decided by the players. Same with how much it bothers the characters.

Mechanics of the Breakdown

At the end of the act the world is changed. Roll twice dice and take the sum and select the result on the following table once for each level of the highest open goal. The Autarch makes the first change, then the changes proceed to the left (like conflicts or claiming goals).

2 = make one random character Inactive if Active or Active if Inactive

3 = Remove one random relationship from the world

4 or 5 = change the description on one random relationship

6 or 7 = change a feature on one random character

8 = change the target on one random relationship

9 or 10 = change the source on one random relationship

11 or 12 = add one relationship

When these changes are made the character or relationship being modified is selected randomly, but what it is changed to is chosen by the player making the change. So, if a 8 is rolled the relationship is chosen randomly, but the character which will be the new target is chosen by the player making the roll. In the case of adding a relationship the description, target, and source are chosen by the player.

Hold on? What happened to my setting?

The world was changed. Hard. The characters' memories are bound to be confused, but the reality reflected in the World is the way things are now. Play up any contradictions that occur. If you don't like it, wait.

11. Endgame

When two level 3 goals have been claimed the game ends. The player with the highest divinity chooses 3 results from the table in the **Reality is Melting!** section only instead of the character or relationship being randomly selected, the player chooses. The winning player then narrates an epilogue based on the new world.

12. End Notes

This game is in many ways inspired by the books of Phillip K. Dick, the Cornelius books by Michael Moorcock, [Days Between Stations](#) by Steve Erickson, the anime of Satoshi Kon, and all the other works of fiction in which the environment reflects the psychosis of the characters. The stuff about reality falling apart is meant mainly to enhance rather than dominate play.