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Introduction

Overview

In a weird, whimsical, endless sky, villages cling to small rocky spheres lit by sentient suns, brave souls sail far beyond the reach of gravity toward far-flung delves and enchanted clouds, and strange skybeasts swim wild through vast and distant twilights.

Welcome to the **Azure Etern.**

This book will help you run open-ended and unpredictable adventures in an infinite volume of floating Lands filled with fantastical Folk. Here are some of its qualities:

1. The Azure is vast.

It is three-dimensional, it is unmapable, it is practically infinite. The Azure stretches beyond the limits of knowledge in all directions, an endless sky interrupted only rarely by settled Lands. Each moves to the rhythms of some incomprehensible celestial mechanics, so navigation is hard, even between familiar waypoints. Rather than a fixed set of races and enemies, there are a boundless number of cultures, powers, and threats out there: many beginning but few endings.

2. The Azure is wild.

Few dare venture far from the weight of their home-Land to float out into the endless sky. Pirates are the least of the dangers out there: mile-wide clouds with evil appetites, immense floating forests of strangling vines and poisonous moss, forgotten dungeons burrowed into mountains tumbling through eccentric orbits, places that have drifted so far from light they don't have a word for it any more. Food, water, even air may be rarities.

Deep in wild skies, you may find far more than you're looking for.

3. The Azure is whimsical.

Think *The Little Prince* told by Miyazaki. Think *Flash Gordon* by way of Guillermo del Toro. Picture tiny planets ruled by backyard despots, intelligent stars burning like capricious gods, ships made from leather gasbags or metal rockets or wooden hulls or dragonfly wings, all sailing the skies together. Think begoggled freedom fighters, bumbling alchemists, winged clerics; think spherical lakes filled with copper fish. Think lost kingdoms and zero-g castles and trash gyres swirling with the wreckage of a thousand cities, a million forgotten empires.

4. The Azure is fun.

This is a stage for a campaign centered on exploration, wondrous adventures, and seat-of-the-pants escapes from gargantuan foes. There are real dangers to overcome here, but also an open sky that rewards engagement and observation. Never get bogged down in rules so much you lose the joy of the wind on your face.

The rules of *Skycrawl* help gamemasters generate new adventures in the skies and give players tools to explore them. Here's a quick look at some of the system and setting details the book will cover:

The Sky Folk. One could perhaps list all the races of intelligent creatures found on a single world, but in the endless skies

there are more peoples and cultures than can be counted. Explorers will frequently meet new kinds of people, called Folk: especially at crossroads or watering holes. Much like a certain galaxy far, far away, there's always a strange new somebody ordering drinks at the bar.

Lands and the Chart. Players will track the places they've learned about and explored, called Lands, in a deck of index cards laid out on their Chart. Lands are major destinations found floating in the Azure: cities, ruins, haunted forests, enemy asteroids. Travel between these specks of civilization is dangerous and unpredictable. The more rumors gathered and maps updated before setting out on a journey, the easier it is to arrive. An abstract resource called Tack represents orientation while traveling: don't run out or risk getting lost.



Orcery (pg. 27). Travelers of the Azure Etern can collect and distill the ten Heavy Elements into coin or useful orchemical compounds. The Elements are the source of both weight and wealth, making them a precious and useful resource.

Player-Directed Stories. Your journey is led by the players, whose job is to be active explorers of these weird and wonderful skies, rather than waiting for the gamemaster to guide them through a preordained plot. The GM's job, in turn, is to fill the nearby skies with interesting details and the horizons with tantalizing suggestions, and listen for what stories the players are most excited about telling.

If you'd prefer your open-world adventures deep underground rather than high in the sky, try [Downcrawl](#), which features these same core rules in the setting of an endless underworld.

How to Use This Book

The first few pages describe the unusual setting of *Skycrawl* in general terms, explaining Lands, Elements, Sols, and Ships.

Following are the systems which both players and GMs will engage with: travel, rumors, chart-keeping, ship combat, and orcery.

The remainder of the book shows the GM how to generate and run the world, with instructions for generating Lands, Folk, Ships, and random encounters.

Skycrawl is designed to work alongside your favorite fantasy roleplaying system, rather than being a standalone game itself. Some good free systems are *The Black Hack* from Gold Piece Publications, for an old-school feel, or *FATE Accelerated*, for a lightweight, story-first framework. But any system will do.

The text will frequently give numbers tuned for either **d20** or **2d6** based systems, as a basic calibration point. Note that the random tables make use of the full traditional set of dice: **d4**, **d6**, **d8**, **d10**, **d12**, and **d20**.

Moves and Rolls

Recurring situations in your exploration of the skies are resolved using moves (a concept borrowed from *Powered by the Apocalypse* by Meguey and Vincent Baker). Each move describes the situation in which it applies, and offers possible outcomes based on either the roll of the dice, player decisions, or both. See pg. 14 for an example.

Moves with dice rolls generally have five possible outcomes:

- A **Critical Success** or **Crit** is the best possible roll in your system (ignoring modifiers), and means an extraordinary result.
- A **Strong Success** means exceeding success by a significant amount, something that should happen for maybe a third to a half of successes.
- A **Success** is the regular successful result in your system.
- A **Complication** means something interesting or alarming happens that wasn't what you expected.
- A **Critical Failure** or **Crit Fail** is the worst possible roll in your system (ignoring any modifiers), and means disaster.

Complications, not Failures. Rolling the dice always makes something happen. Success means it happened in the way you expected; complication means it happened in a way you didn't. A complication might mean a hard choice instead of an easy win, an unexpected side effect, or a chance for the GM to introduce something new and unexpected. Each move explains the results of rolling a Complication.

Bonuses and Penalties. If a situation grants you a Bonus or Penalty, take a modifier to your roll that increases or decreases the odds of success by a noticeable amount. For a **d20** system, a **+2** or **-2** is about right. Multiple Bonuses and Penalties can stack.

Exhaustion. If your system doesn't simulate tiered exhaustion, simply track how many points of it each character has, and take a Penalty to all rolls if you have any. At five Exhaustion, you're on the verge of death. A full and uninterrupted night's sleep in a safe Land removes one point of Exhaustion.

Damage. A rule or move may tell you to take Damage. The GM will tell you an appropriate amount given your system and character level, but something on the smaller side is generally appropriate (i.e. **1d6** for low-level characters in a **d20** system).

In some systems (like those based on percentile rolls) you may want to customize the range for criticals so they'll appear more often. **d20's** math, where each crit appears 5% of the time, is a nice range to shoot for.

Table of Dice Ranges

» Some suggested ranges for dice results in various kinds of systems.

	d20	2d6	Percentile	FATE
Crit	Nat 20	Nat 12	Doubles under target	Succeed with style
Strong Success	DC+5	10+	Under target by 20% +	Succeed
Success	DC	7-9	Roll under target	Tie
Complication	Miss	6-	Over target	Fail
Crit Fail	Nat 1	Nat 2	Doubles over target	3 or 4 minuses
Bonus/Penalty	+/-2	+/-1	-/+10%	+/-1

The Azure Etern

On Gravity, Skies, and Ships

The Azure is an infinite, weightless, air-filled volume. In the vast realms of sky between Lands, everything floats, drifting on gentle currents or zooming by with slow-to-shed momentum. If you step off the deck of a skyship, you don't fall but simply drift away, just another piece of jetsam in a sea of clouds.

Within this immense space can be found skybeasts of all sizes swimming hither and yon, gyres of trash from a thousand peoples and eras, sandstorms, clouds, Lands, and Sols (see next page). Rain can "fall" from any angle if a strong enough wind disturbs a heavy cloud. Water accumulates in quivering spheres of any size, from pea to sea. Plants thrive in many forms, from titanic mazes of vines and moss to trees that grow branches and leaves at both ends, sucking in light and moisture from the air. Rock in all forms also tumbles through the skies, from grit to pebbles to boulders to mountains, each on their own incalculable trajectory. Some say in distant corners of the sky hang truly tremendous rocks called *Plannets*, so large their inhabitants believe them to encompass all creation. Your heroes may even claim to have come from such a place!

The ships that travel the Azure come in all sizes, shapes, and styles (pg. 56): from great wooden schooners with bilateral or trilateral sails, to metal tubes pushed forward by steam-powered propellers, to balloons that float wherever the wind takes

them, to immense skybeasts like mantas or moths that someone's learned the knack of training. Winged Folk even fly between Lands under their own power.

Though weightlessness is the Azure's natural state, most Folk find it difficult to live without gravity, hearts and muscles growing weak without its pull. Fortunately, the Heavy Elements exude a strong gravitational attraction, and many inhabited Lands are laced with elemental veins that provide a standard gravitational force. Some Folk sculpt their Land's elements in unusual ways, creating Escher-worlds where any wall might become another floor, or double-sided streets with one set of people and shops on top and another on bottom. Most skyships have decks infused with elemental powders (making up a good portion of their cost) to provide gravity during journeys. Other ships or Lands might spin to produce centrifugal weight on an interior surface, or even use magic to separate up from down. In the endless space of the Azure there are few bounds to clever Folk's ingenuity.

To communicate at distance, skyships across the Azure use a standard language of colored smoke streamers, which can get quite complex: but the basics are that white smoke means a friendly hello, yellow means help is needed, orange means proceed with caution, and red means to flee for your lives, it is coming, it is coming, it is coming.

On the Nature of the Sols

It is no exaggeration to say that without them, there would be no life in the Azure. The brilliance of the Sols provides heat and light, and most scholars agree their exhalations are the source of breathable air. They seem to have an affinity for the Heavy Elements, and are most often found swimming slow, lazy circles around a particular Land they've taken a long-term fancy to. Some Folk worship them, bestowing on their patron Sols names, genders and personalities; others think them no more interesting than any other natural phenomena like wind or fire. The Sols themselves don't seem to care either way.

They are undoubtedly alive, and many believe them to be wiser (and far older) than the most ancient sages, though it is rare indeed for them to interfere in everyday matters. Legends speak of heroes sailing close enough to the Sols to commune with them. Some legends even speak of the heroes coming back alive and unburnt.

Perched on a typical Land with its own Sol, one might well believe oneself standing on the surface of a Plannet, with the Sol's lazy orbit providing regular cycles of night and day. But not all arrangements are so regular. Some Sols hang motionless in the sky, bringing endless day. Some Lands attract many Sols who swim round it in complex geometric patterns. Rarely, and for reasons obscure, a Sol will abandon a Land to drift off into the Azure, leaving its residents in darkness and cold, desperate

to attract another. Some Sols burn with a strong and steady light; others cycle through all the colors of the rainbow, or pulse with their own inscrutable rhythms. Some, on rare occasions, can become pregnant.

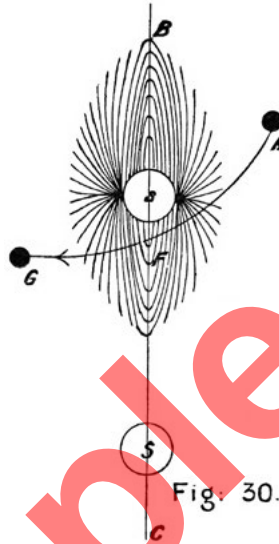


Fig. 30.

Far from a Sol in the immense spaces between Lands, the rich blue of the sky fades to a deep navy twilight, and the air grows cold and thin. From any given point, half a hundred distant Sols might be seen twinkling in the darkened sky, although within dense banks of clouds it might become black as midnight. Travelers generally don't need specialized equipment to survive except on the most extreme voyages, but the thin air saps strength and prevents uninterrupted sleep, meaning recovering one's full strength on a

voyage between Lands can be impossible (see pg. 16).

On Elemental Economics

While much of the rock floating through the Azure is simply mineral, the ten Heavy Elements (pg. 27) also make up a key part of its nature. The Elements are not just a source of gravity, but also of wealth. Starting with sylve, the most common, each is roughly half as common, twice as heavy, and twice as valuable as the previous.

Three of the Elements are often minted into coins of standard size and weight accepted in most Lands. Sylve coins are the most common; ten of these make one lode, and ten lode coins equal one lazul.