

# Amaranthine RPG – The Chess Resolution Hack

Throughout a game of Amaranthine, your characters will do many amazing things over many lifetimes. Your characters will engage in violent conflict and passionate intercourse, with the force of their relationships holding true over eternity. In order to portray these important struggles, this variant uses the game of Chess instead of dice.

## The Structure of Eternity

This is an alternate resolution system and it replaces the one present in Chapter 3- Basic Resolution from the Amaranthine core book. Toss out the dice, and put down a chess board in the middle of the table where you are playing. At the start of the session, be certain to set up the board normally.

Whenever there is a conflict between characters and/or the Director, the participants play a handful of chess moves. Each side wants to capture their opponent's pieces while protecting their own. Each time you capture a piece, you get a certain number of Successes. If you get as many Success as the Goal, you get what you want.

## Who is on the right Side?

The group collectively plays a game of chess in a series of **Clashes**. Each Clash normally represents 6 moves for each side of the chess board. After each Clash is resolved, you leave the board set up for the next one. Normally the character with the highest amount of Phlegmatic Humor goes first, though you may spend a point of Sanguine Humor to get your first pick.

If there are multiple participants in a Clash, they can collude and work together to plan out their moves. The winning side shares the benefits of victory and the losing members all suffer the penalties for their failure.

## Before the Play: Competencies

Before you play the game, all participants in the Clash have the option of increasing their odds of success.

Any character that has a relevant Competency for the Clash begins with 1 automatic Success per level. What is a "relevant Competency?" It's a Competency that could fit within the scope of the challenge. Players might argue for inclusion of certain Competencies, and that's fine. You should err on the side of allowing use. This means that at the start of the Clash, the character already has 1-3 Successes.

## Before the Play: Privilege

Each player may also spend Humors to gain a situational advantage which unfairly favours their character; their Privilege. Each point of Humor spent gives that character another success at the start of the Clash.

- A feature declared from Phlegmatic Humor must be a mental, psychological or otherwise creative aspect of the scene. Clever positioning, advantageous planning, and intimidating factors are common examples of Phlegmatic features.
- A feature declared from Choleric Humor must be physical in nature. Appearances, tools, traps, and blockades are common Choleric features.
- A feature declared from Sanguine Humor must be circumstantial and coincidental in nature. A freak thunderstorm, a car crash nearby, and a stock market crash are examples of Sanguine features.
- A feature can never contradict a piece of the setting that's already been determined. Use reason and logic. If a race is set in the Sahara, an unexpected rain storm is unlikely to affect the results. That level of oddity is reserved for immortal magic.
- For a feature to give a bonus, you must explain why the feature gives your character Privilege, but does not give an opponent Privilege as well. If you declare that a hatch falls out from under you, and both characters are falling, you must explain that since your character has experience in freefall, she gets a benefit but her opponent does not.

## Who has the Moves?

Each side of the Clash gets to play 6 moves normally. Those moves may either be minor (Pawn, King) or major (Bishop, Knight, Rook, Queen, King). You may have to keep track of this with some tokens, since you may be restricted in the number of moves of each type you are permitted depending on your Relationship shifts.

If two characters are in a clash and they have a significant relationship with each other, they may be limited in what kinds of moves they are permitted. If you have a positive relationship with your opponent, your opponent must play at least as many major moves as you have positive Shifts. If you have a negative relationship with your opponent, your opponent must play at least as many minor moves as you have negative Shifts. If their Heart is on Fire, they have no restriction.

**Example:** *Megan and Mustafa have a nuanced relationship which affects them once they enter into a Clash. Mustafa thinks of Megan as a boon companion (+4), one who makes him feel complete and invigorated. Megan is far less enthused about Mustafa however, thinking of him as more of an annoying associate than anything else (-2).*

*When they Clash, Megan must play a minimum of 4 Major moves representing the amount of extrasocial power she has over the man. Mustafa must play a minimum of 2 Minor moves, as the woman's irritability makes it hard for him to get close. Megan is far more likely to win the conflict, since the more potent pieces must be brought to bear during the clash.*

## Escalation

In a clash, the participants may choose to Escalate the conflict for greater potential results for each side. If you choose to Escalate, each side gets another 3 moves. In such a case, each side also needs to declare the Stakes; something you could lose or something your failure would cost you. For the Stakes, choose something your direct failure could cause to happen. For example, if you're doing first aid, your subject might die instead of not getting better. If a conflict sees escalation, a greater failure is on the line. The Director is allowed veto power if she thinks the Stakes are too low or inconsequential. If the Stakes truly matter to the character, it doesn't matter if they seem negligible. Ultimately, conflicts about whether Stakes are high enough should come down to a quick discussion of relevance and importance around the table.

As well as adding Stakes that affect the story in an abstract sense, any escalation adds one point of Condition to the Goal for the particular challenge. This means that the character might lose the Stakes, while still achieving the basic, desired result.

***Example:** Kitty is using a rousing speech to move labor protestors to violence. Since they're relatively nonviolent people, the Director says the Goal is 7. Her player decides she also wants the head of the local grocer's union to toss a book at the CEO's head as he walks by. The Director says that's a Condition, so the Goal will be 8 for that Condition. If she scores 7, the riot still happens but the book isn't thrown unless she gets an 8.*

## Earning Successes

In order to determine who gets what they want, you need to tally up the number of pieces captured by each side. The White side participant counts a number of points based on what Black pieces were captured, and vice versa. Compare the two point totals, and the side with the most points wins the Clash. The winner gets a number of points equal to the difference.

- A **pawn** capture gives the player 1 point.
- A **knight** or a **bishop** capture gives the player 3 points.
- A **rook** capture gives the player 5 points.
- A **queen** capture gives the player 9 points.

***Example:** Megan is playing White and she captures 2 black pawns, a bishop and a rook, giving her side  $1+1+3+5=10$  points. Mustafa manages to capture a knight and a queen, giving his side  $3 + 9 = 12$  points. Mustafa wins and gets a total of 2 Successes (12 White – 10 Black)*

## Checkmate

If or when you get the opponent in Checkmate, you get full narrative authority of what occurs next. There are no limits, beyond the fact that you should not do anything that the other people around the gaming table are uncomfortable with. You can declare exactly what happens in the course of the story and you can impose any reasonable mechanical effect which does not contradict past events. This is a mighty power, so use it wisely. Wheaton's Law applies for Checkmate situations.

## Terms, Conditions, and Goals

How many successes are required for the action to go as planned? That depends on the plan. The intended results are called the Terms. If you're trying to hack into a mainframe and pull out all of a major video game company's user account information, that's your Terms. The complexity of the Terms, and the things that might get in the way, those determine the Goal, the required number of successes. Ultimately, the Director determines the initial Goal.

Most actions are quite simple, and have a Goal between one and three. Something with a Goal in that range should be relatively easy for someone capable and trained. Three is a bit challenging, but with an investment in Privilege, and possibly a couple of tries, the character should have little trouble. Most people will be all but incapable of completing an action with a Goal of five or higher in a single Clash. They can with repeat attempts, and a significant investment to Privilege. Goals have no upward limit, but goals of twelve are considered epic, nigh-impossible actions for humans. Clearly, these tasks are the types of things that only happen once in a generation of normal people, or somewhat regularly in the lives of Amaranthine.

Instead of listing sample actions with arbitrary difficulties, instead we provide a few rules of thumb, as above. Most actions worth Clashing should be rated between four and eight. Twelves should almost never be used. If you really want the characters to invest everything, we recommend a Goal of eight or higher. Pay attention to the players' reactions. If they get discouraged by repeated use of Goals eight or higher, try a seven. Really, the Goal is used to guarantee players are putting things at risk, and that they feel the right amount of tension in the scene. It's not an exact science.

**Example:** *A famous stunt man and martial artist puts everything on the line regularly. He's known for doing his own stunt work, and breaking bones during filming. When he does big-budget films, his production staff only lets him commit to safer stunts, citing insurance risks.*

*So when he performs a leap from four stories, he does it with a harness. Even if he completely slips up, he won't hurt himself beyond a superficial bump. That doesn't make it easy. This task might have a Goal of 4.*

*When he's in his home country, making smaller budget films, the expectation is that if he's not risking life and limb, the movie isn't worth watching. In this case, he choreographs a complex scene, where he must leap from atop one moving bus to another. If he falls, he might not die. The two vehicles are only moving fast enough to make the scene tense, and they're not that tall. He has an ambulance on-site, just for the occasion. This particular scene is difficult and risky; the task might have a Goal of 8.*

*Our hero got in over his head with some particularly cruel Amaranthine. They fancied themselves guerilla filmmakers. They roped him into a monstrous contract, and stroked his pride about the script. He was leaping lava streams along the mouth of a volcano. If he slowed his pace for a second, or as much as tripped, he would be dead. Sometimes, Amaranthine forget about the fragile natures of mortals. This task might have a Goal of 12.*

## Conditions

As well, if a player declares further rewards, the Director may assign Conditions, or modifiers to the Goal. For example, if the Goal of our hacking example is five, but the player also wants her character to leave a dummy account in the mainframe to mislead pursuers, it might have an additional Condition of 2. This means that if she gets five successes, she's able to hack the mainframe. But if she gets seven, she hacks the mainframe and provides the administrators with a harder trail to follow.

If multiple Conditions exist, and the Goal is not exceeded by the full amount, the player can choose which Conditions are met.

## Amaranthine Need Clashes

Often, Amaranthine characters find themselves with immense capabilities. Even Goals of 12-20 can sometimes be easy for them, if they're willing to put a lot at stake. This is a recognized part of the game's mechanics. Amaranthine really shouldn't have much chance of failure when presented with the world's standard challenges. Amaranthine are really only stressed when up against one another. So as Director, if there's an Amaranthine involved in anything a player's character is doing, try to pit them against the other Amaranthine as a Clash. The unreliable results of the game add tension and conflict to events when multiple immortals are involved.

However, this guideline doesn't mean much for Amaranthine faced with humans alone. In those cases, err on the side of using Goals whenever possible. Humans can't compare to Amaranthine in raw capability. However, a group of humans can help to expend Amaranthine resources, which can lead to greater tension in later struggles.

## A Cost

By investing a point of Choleric or Phlegmatic Humor from the outset of the Clash, a character can potentially cause their opponent to lose that Humor. If this choice is made, in addition to standard victory conditions, the difference in successes determines the loss of Humor. This loss is doubled if an escalation occurs. Note that the opponent may also spend a point of Humor to cause loss as well.

In these cases, the Clash's terms must pertain to that type of Humor. A Phlegmatic Clash would be social or mental in nature, causing emotional or mental stress. A Choleric Clash should cause harm, fatigue, or other physical stress.

*Uninvested Clashes do not exist in this Hack. Enter into a Clash with the Director instead.*