



GEMINI

GENRE-AGNOSTIC

PHILIP J. GUINCHARD

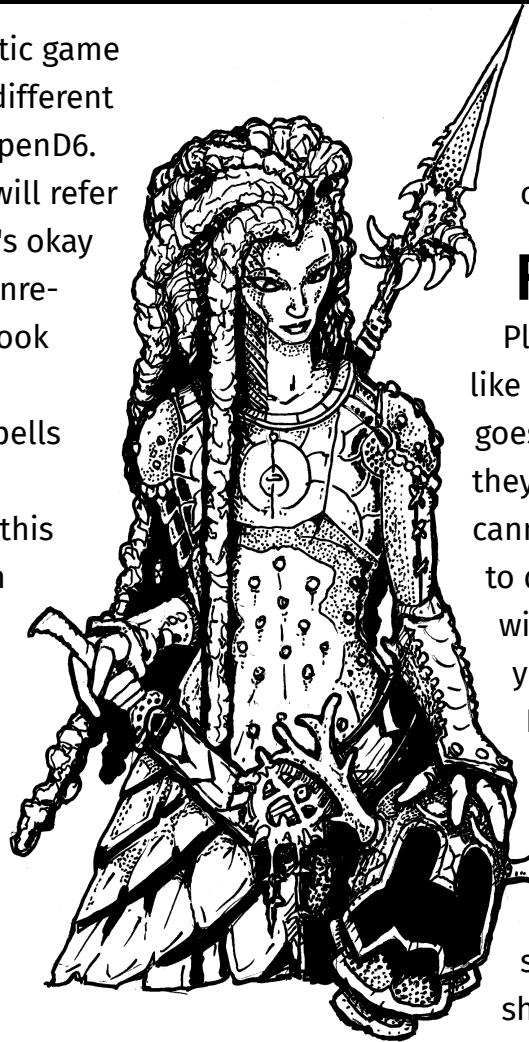
INTRODUCTION



Gemini is a genre-agnostic game heavily influenced by two different games: Hero System and OpenD6. Throughout this section, I will refer to the parent games, but it's okay if you don't know them. Genre-agnostic means that this book has no assumption about whether you are slinging spells or hand grenades at your enemies. The main goal of this book is to provide you with the ability to use the rules herein to play in the genre (or genres) you choose. People familiar with Hero will hopefully be at home with some of the concepts inherited from Hero, such as paying for powers and abilities with points, having a pool of points to build with, and the idea of applying a Special Effect (SFX, more on this term later) to a base power to give it form.

Gemini is not Hero; it has been heavily inspired by and borrowed from Hero, but it is not Hero. The math is fundamentally different between Hero and Gemini, for one. Beyond the mathematical differences, we are also an OpenD6 game. Being an OpenD6-based game means that if you understand OpenD6, you should feel at home with how this game plays. There are dice pools and numbers to beat, just as you would expect from any OpenD6 game.

Much of what Gemini is trying to do is splice the DNA of two games to form something unique. Of course, being unique is



one of many design goals I have for Gemini. I'll discuss a few of the more top-of-mind ones next.

FUN

Playing any game should feel like fun. What makes a game 'fun' goes far beyond mechanics, but they are related. A game that cannot support what players want to do mechanically can interfere with player enjoyment. Whether you are getting a critical 'Wild Die' success at the right moment or just snatched the Jewel of Tez'techa from the slumbering priestess with the slimmest of margins, you should feel like Gemini is fun.

Players and GMs can get quite frustrated when attempting to do 'something cool' but find themselves unable to simulate it in the system, especially if that 'something cool' is a well-established trope for the genre. Situations like this are where having a solid foundation of rules comes into play, and drawing on the rules of both systems has allowed Gemini to become what it is. The main goal of the rules is to support players and GMs in their games so they can have fun, whatever fun means to them.

FAST

My experience is that the bigger the rulebook, the more you will look at it. There are always questions about this modifier applying to that situation or other such



INTRODUCTION

questions in-game. The issue with complex game systems is game speed. There's no easy way of saying this, but complexity can often get in the way of fast gameplay. Spending time with my nose in a book means I have less time to hang out with friends and play.

Action resolution needs to be simple; this is where OpenD6 steps in. It uses a roll-high, meet-or-beat-a-number rolling system, meaning players will have dice pools of six-sided dice they roll and total. The action attempt succeeds if it meets or exceeds the Target Number (TN).

For example, if a player wanted to pick a lock, they would roll their lockpicking skill, represented as a die code like 4D+1. The character will roll four six-sided dice, count the face value, and add +1 point to it to generate a total. Several factors, such as the quality and complexity of the lock, determine the difficulty they have to beat. The Gamemaster (GM, a special kind of narrator) will set this appropriately for the lock; let's say, in this case, the GM sets the TN to 16. To open the lock, the player must roll 4D6+1 and meet or beat a 16.

Most of the rolls you make will resemble the lockpicking roll described above. The good news is you have absorbed the core mechanics of the system if you have understood the previous example. Want to lift a fighter jet over your head? That's a 48 TN. It will probably only happen if you are superhuman, but you can always try. Action resolution is easy to understand; higher TNs mean the task is more challenging, and larger dice pools mean a given task is more straightforward.

I made other changes to help facilitate this

goal of having a fast-playing game. Most choices revolve around keeping bookkeeping to a minimum, and some rules have changed here and there.

FLEXIBLE

Gemini has to be flexible enough that it can handle different genres. This means the game has to handle some outlandish ideas, everything from cloning to time travel and everything in between. How do we do this? By leaning heavily on Hero and learning as much as possible from it. Hero has an excellent track record of making some fantastic character concepts come to life that would be hard, if not impossible, to do in other systems.

Hero has two fundamental and interconnected ideas that enable some of its flexibility;

- Points define your character by using them to purchase in-game abilities;
- Powers (a catch-all category for building unusual abilities) are generic; an SFX is used to define a Power.

These two concepts are essential to understand in Gemini, as we have borrowed these concepts from Hero. With these ideas in tow, particularly the concept of an SFX, you can have a lot of flexibility with your character builds.

POWER BUILDING

As mentioned previously, powers in Gemini are generic building blocks. In this book, you will not find Powers called 'Fireball' or 'Arc Lightning'; instead, you will find a power called 'Ranged Attack.' The 'Ranged Attack' power is a generic power that allows you to

INTRODUCTION



deal damage at range, so this is the same power I would use to make both abilities. You may ask yourself if it's the same power; what is the difference between the two abilities? Let's assume that the 'Fireball' spell is meant to damage an area while the 'Arc Lightning' spell hurts single targets.

In Gemini, you would purchase each Power with points; the more points you invest in it, the stronger it is. Powers in Gemini are also further customizable with Enhancements and Limitations. Enhancements make a Power more potent in some way and add to the cost of the Power. Limitations complicate the power's activation or operation and make the power cheaper.

The 'Arc Lightning' ability is a straightforward application of the 'Ranged Attack' Power. It damages a single target at range, so all we need to do is decide how many points we spend on the power. Each point we invest in the 'Ranged Attack' Power makes it more potent. There is no hard cap regarding points you can spend on the 'Ranged Attack' Power; you can simply keep spending points on it.

Returning to our 'Fireball,' we can apply the Enhancement 'Area of Effect: Radius' to the power and make it more expensive but able to blanket an area. Now we have two Powers, both built from the same base Power ('Ranged Attack'), but one damages an area, and the other damages a single target. Mechanically, the powers are now defined, but we need to discuss Special Effects briefly.

SPECIAL EFFECT (SFX)

You should always give your Powers a Special Effect when building them. Not only

does it give your power definition and help define your character, but there can also be in-game effects. For example, the 'Fireball' spell will inflict fire-based damage, and 'Arc Lightning' will inflict electric-based damage; these damage types could come into play in-game as Vulnerabilities (a special type of trait your character may possess called a Disadvantage that makes them take more damage from a SFX). You can easily see the 'Fireball' spell used to set ablaze combustibles, perhaps causing secondary damage and destruction. The 'Arc Lightning' spell could also set ablaze combustibles, but a GM may also rule that it damages a small area if the target is in water.



The SFX of powers will also dictate its look and feel in-game and can impact gameplay. Consider two characters with similar abilities, a sorcerous mage and a powerful cyborg, who have the 'Fireball' and 'Arc Lightning' abilities



INTRODUCTION

we built. The source of their powers is quite different in-game and can dramatically impact the game. For starters, our cyborg would probably have all sorts of built-in gadgets and gizmos that would be their power source. The Mage could easily be required to speak loudly and gesture arcaneously to tap into the ley-lines (or what have you) to channel their magic. The Mage concept could further customize their 'Fireball' and 'Arc Lightning' spells with the Limitations Incantations and Gestures, making their powers cheaper to buy but introducing activation requirements on their spells.

There's more information about building powers in the Powers chapter.

POINT-BUY SYSTEMS

If you are brand new to a point-buy system, you need to know this: there will be math. Fortunately, Gemini's math is limited to the addition/subtraction of small numbers. Everything in Gemini costs you points called Creation Points when you build your character. These points you invest in your character's attributes, skills, powers, and so on are all tracked on your character sheet. You can spend these points where you want, so you have much more control over what your character can do in the game.

FAIR

What is fair? The answer is connected to genre, but the short answer is anything you and the GM agree on during the game.

Fairness usually revolves around who can do what with skills, powers, and abilities and when – the roots of what is fair to do in a GM's campaign stretch back to character

creation. The GM is the one who will ultimately approve what's appropriate for their campaign, which is why they need to give the thumbs-up to characters brought to their game.

Even though Gemini supports mind reading, time travel, and other wild stuff, the GM may want to avoid having your time-traveling bounty hunter in their campaign. A GM may ask for a character modification despite liking the actual concept of the character! The reasons a GM may want something other than this character in their game could be centered around the character's abilities. Time travel is classically a very confusing and potent ability to allow into a game. Player-based time travel is typically very disruptive to games and is hard to manage from the GM side of the screen. Understandably, allowing time travel in a game would be a significant accommodation and impact every scenario.

The question of what an ability costs and why one is worth more points than another matters. Simply put, what something costs is directly related to how useful it is in combat. Immortality is 1 point, but Intangibility is 8 points. Immortality in Gemini means you won't die from aging; it won't stop you from being stabbed. Intangibility will stop you from being stabbed, so it's worth many points compared to Immortality. Attaining immortality has been the focus of entire stories and characters, so it can seem strange sometimes that it is so affordable. Still, this makes more sense now that we are framing it in the context of combat. In that context, it makes much more sense that Intangibility is worth more points than Immortality.

INTRODUCTION



WHAT THIS Is

Gemini is an experiment to see if the best traits of OpenD6 and Hero System can be combined. Some rules have been tweaked based on what I have found to work best for my games, but the OpenD6 system remains largely intact. Much of the rules I transplanted originated in the Space, Adventure, and Fantasy OpenD6 books. I used Hero System 5th and 6th editions as my reference points for those systems.

WHAT THIS Is NOT

Gemini is not a genre or setting book. No assumptions about how the rules are written have been made about the genre. Gemini assumes the setting will be provided by the Gamemaster separately.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

From a logistical perspective, you need some things to play the game.

- Dice – about 12 six-sided dice per person should do;
- A pencil and paper;
- A group of friends to play the game with;
- And a character concept that fits into your GM's world.

The last point is critical if you are a player. Understanding what will work for what your GM is trying to do is essential. If your GM is doing a by-the-numbers high fantasy campaign, there is probably no room for your cybernetic assassin concept. Work with your GM to create a character that fits the genre, and the setting is the bottom line.

As a GM, you will need inspiration from your favorite movies, television shows, books,

and comics and the desire to bring them to life. Being a GM can be challenging, but the rewards are immense. I have always seen my role as a GM as the enabler. I prefer to say something other than 'no' to my players; I would much rather work with them so they can achieve their goals.

THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE

Have fun. Every game will say it in one variation or another, but if it's not fun, it's wrong. The players may not be into the genre the GM has picked or don't like their character. Work together as a group of friends to fix it.

THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT RULE

Rules are made to be broken. Avoid getting hung up on the rules too much, and be bold in changing or putting a new rule into play if you feel it works better for the game. One of the biggest strengths of Gemini is its flexibility and ability to adapt, so leverage that in your games. Games are different; what works in one may not work in another, so stay flexible and open to new ideas.

WHY A CHIMERA LOGO?

I chose the Chimera logo not because of its mythological significance but for its scientific meaning. A Chimera is a single entity composed of more than one distinct genotype. It was a fitting emblem, given the nature of Gemini.