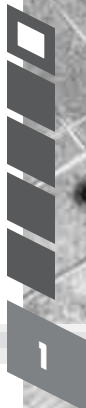# INTRODUCTION

N.O.W. IS:

Intense battles against overwhelming odds!

High tech gadgets and one-of-a-kind vehicles!

Leaping across rooftops while evading and fighting off ninjas!

Private eyes who take on any job, big or small, so long as it pays!

Secret organizations moving to control the world through business and politics!

Technology-laden thieves who steal from wealthy society to give to the poor!

Roaming mercenaries seeking fortune, for themselves or for the downtrodden!

Investigators who root out corruption in their own cities, but find much more!

Battlefields rippling with explosions and filled with dynamic combatants!

Teams of crime fighters facing off against criminal syndicates and shadow cartels!

Spies clashing on rooftops, at ostentatious events, and in the shadows of society!

Artificially enhanced government operatives working deep behind enemy lines!

Explorers uncovering ancient ruins in search of forgotten lore and treasure galore!

Precisely executed covert operations in war-torn lands!

Martial artists performing incredible feats and fighting with deadly efficiency!

Mavericks chasing down those who flee the law, going places G-men can't!

Vigilantes who stalk city streets in the long hours of the night!

The vestiges of the O.L.D. and the beginnings of the N.E.W.!

FOREWORD:

I first met Morrus at the 2013 ENnies. I was a young spitfire game designer with a penchant for weird things and a work ethic that can't be beat (yay hard labor), and looking back, I can honestly tell you that I did not anticipate writing an entire game system for EN World at the time—I was mostly preoccupied with being there and starting to be somebody.

In a lot of ways, I was like a first level character. I like to think I'm level two at this point.

N.O.W. started developing half a year ago (as of this Foreword being penned, anyway) while the breakaway *What's O.L.D. Is N.E.W.* Kickstarter blew through stretch goals and funding ramped up to places Morrus didn't know what to do with—as soon as he solicited ideas I put together a robust outline prepared with different ideas. What stuck was one for a game about action movies, a topic very close to my heart. I'm such a fan that I went to school for Film Studies, and if we aren't talking Gilliam, chances are good my favorite films fall into the shoot-em-up and exploding things genre. I've written academic papers about *Last Action Hero*, collected and watched every Jackie Chan film (even *The Spy Next Door*), and generally made it my thing to cheese out with action flicks.

I cannot explain how wildly excited I was when Morrus put me on as a stretch goal, or how crazy amazing it felt when we broke that level of funding. This is by far my biggest foray into game design thus far (am I allowed to plug *Veranthea Codex* here?) and I literally feel like bouncing off the walls (and did at first) whenever I think about N.O.W.—I reckon that after playing it, you will as well.

Taking this bound was not a simple thing, however, and several people need to be thanked directly for their contributions. Jonathan G. Nelson, owner of AdventureAWeek.com, is chief amongst them, alongside Owen K. C. Stephens and L. J. Stephens of Rogue Genius Games. The former saw a diamond in the rough and has been polishing it ever since, and the latter pair have been providing all the mentoring Jonathan skips over. Russell Morrissey, master of EN World and EN Publishing, also deserves a shout-out alongside all of the membership of EN World and everyone who backed the *What's O.L.D. is N.E.W.* Kickstarter!

And milady of course, Stephanie, for convincing me to make that first pitch. You are amazing, female.

Anyway, forget all of that! Shoot things, punch through walls, and start piling up dead bad guys N.O.W.!

WHAT'S O.L.D. IS N.E.W.

—*Mike Myler*

P.S.: Thanks again to Morrus for giving me a title I can be punny with N.O.W. and then.

P.P.S.: Right N.O.W. I'm in the rough draft of revisions and wanted to let yins know that I'm still not tired of that pun.

"**NOT ONE OF YOU RESPECTS THE** armory, and I'm going to shove a golf club up the backside of the next person who sweats all over a bench and doesn't clean it up. You are not children—clean up after yourselves." Lady Anarchy hefts her bag of bloodied sports equipment up onto a work table, inspecting a gouge in her tungsten carbide hockey blade. "Oh and Senny, what the hell was that?"

Eternal Senpai, the youngest among them, a teenage girl not yet four feet tall but with the demeanor of an old man, shrugs. "They should not have done what they did. It is a simple thing."

Lady Anarchy's expression under her hockey mask can't be seen, but it can certainly be heard. "For *littering*? You endanger an operation that took months of planning because some idiot tossed a balled-up burger wrapper out their car window? It was *absolutely necessary* to sprint after their car?"

Once more the diminutive and ever calm young woman merely nods as if it were the most normal thing in the world. "I believe that they learned a most important lesson."

Seeing the rage building up in his street-bred ally, a slender gentleman in a slightly rumpled tuxedo holds up both hands, gesturing to each of his quarrelling compatriots. "Ladies, please! The engagement proceeded, we succeeded, and all is well. There's positively no reason for this argument to continue."

"As usual, Ben's right." Alejandra says, appearing from around the corner with a bottle of champagne in one hand. Her other hand—the cybernetic one—is reconfigured into a bottle opener and she laughs as it winches the thing open. "Nobody's dead, the getaway vehicle can be salvaged, and we're in a good place to make our next move. Let little Senpai have her little *trastada*."

The young girl is not amused. "It was not mischief."

Just as Lady Anarchy hefts back a lead-core hockey puck, the door to the armory slams open with a kick. A bandaged Mack Marlowe, his trenchcoat rife with bullet holes, stands supported on the shoulder of the team's leader, Duke Roosevelt. Both look at the hockey-masked vigilante and say in unison, "don't."

The old soldier walks Mack over to the ex-private eye's locker, pulling out a carafe of aged whiskey and pouring two tumblers full of it before addressing the team. "You all did good today. Though she's right, Senpai—pull a stunt like that again and we'll find a new ninja. How did we do on intel, Alejandra?"

As she gulps down the last of her first glass of champagne the hacker waves her hand in the air, the metal of her fingers forming into playful streamers. "All good, boss! We've got warehouse schedules, some behind-the-scenes payroll, and maybe a few contacts I can dig out of their net activity. Should be able to hit them again before the week is out."

Duke nods, his stark white hair like snow against the blood—not his own—spilled during the hectic highway car chase just thirty minutes ago. "After you're done with that bottle, get on it. Everybody get some rest, check your gear, and be ready to head out again before dawn tomorrow."

Welcome to N.O.W.

N.O.W. is a modern-day roleplaying game, set in a very exciting version of the present or near-present. Players take on the roles of action heroes and play through scenarios presented to them by a Game Master (GM). The GM creates the universe, the places, the allies and enemies who populate the world, and the adventures that the player characters (PCs) will encounter.

N.O.W. is set in the modern era, at some indeterminate time in the late 20th or early 21st century. Whether there are cell phones or car phones, laptops or DOS, smart links or phone jacks, wireless Internet or broadcast television is ultimately up to you, though the rules for using near-future and near-past technology are all included here.

In N.O.W. you'll create a character and adventure across the globe with characters created by other players. Your characters might be private eyes, mercenaries, covert ops specialists, spies, loner badasses, masters of martial arts, or vigilantes. You could be Human, Augmented in some way, a Mutant, or a Designed experiment. Each player creates his or her own player character, decides on a personality, abilities, and attributes, and plays that character through numerous adventures.

N.O.W. allows you to blow up your enemies in style, perform fantastic feats of martial prowess, root out corruption in the dark streets of the city, uncover duplicitous organizations bent on world domination, or make your way across the world as a soldier for hire.

What You Need

To play N.O.W. each player will need the following:

- A selection of six-sided dice (referred to as "d6s").
- A character sheet (you can photocopy the one in this book or download one from the internet; at worst, a sheet of scrap paper will do).
- If the GM is using battlemaps to display combat positioning, a small miniature, token, or figurine to represent your character. You can find these in most game stores, but pennies or chess pieces will do in an emergency.
- If you are the GM, you will need a copy of this book and some kind of scenario or adventure.

HOW TO PLAY

This book provides you with the core rules of play. It tells you how to create characters, adjudicate challenges and combat, and more.

During a game of N.O.W. the GM will describe the environment and events of the game world, and the players will describe what their characters do within that scenario in a collaborative story-telling manner. Often the success of an action is not guaranteed, at which point you will use your dice to determine the outcome. Some tasks will be more difficult than others, and some characters will be better at certain types of activity than others.

As your character makes his or her way through adventures across the globe, there will be money and equipment to find or earn and Experience Points (XP) to be gained. These XP can be spent to improve your character's capabilities by purchasing new careers, and they are awarded to characters by the GM when the characters complete storylines or defeat challenges and enemies.

Example of Play

David, Linda, Lucy, and Dirk are playing Duke Roosevelt, Eternal Senpai, Alejandra Vanistos, and Ben Madjos, respectively, in an adventure being run by Sigourney, the GM. The group is preparing for an attack by the Crimson Sparrows, a sinister and villainous organization. They've selected an abandoned warehouse where they plan to ambush their foes, and Ben Madjos, international superspy, has used his contacts to ensure the Sparrows know exactly where to find them.

Sigourney (the GM): It's evening now. You're in the warehouse you selected at the end of Goldacre Street. According to Ben's sources, the Sparrows plan their attack any minute now. How are you readying yourselves?

David (playing Duke): We need to set up an ambush. Is there an upper level to this building?

Sigourney (the GM): Yes. There's a balcony running round the inside, high up, about 30 feet above you. It's about 15 feet wide, and has various crates and boxes cluttering it up.

Linda (playing Eternal Senpai): Good. Plenty of cover for you gunslingers. I'll be right in the middle of the action, of course! Does the balcony extend above the entranceway? I'd like to be able to jump down into the bad guys from above.

Sigourney (the GM): It does indeed. The jump would be about 30 feet though.

Linda (playing Eternal Senpai): No problem for me. Using my Death from Above exploit and some of my Chi power, I won't be hurt by the drop. The bad guys will be, though!

Sigourney (the GM): Right. So Senpai is positioned on the balcony above the entrance. Where are the rest of you?

Dirk (playing Ben): I will be in my car, outside.

David (playing Duke): Wait, what? Outside? Planning on going somewhere?

Dirk (playing Ben): You wait and see! It's from my days at MI-6. It has a few tricks.

Lucy (playing Alejandra): By "trick" do you mean "machine guns"?

Dirk (playing Ben): *(grins)* And other things. I'll be ready to gun the engine and charge in from behind.

Sigourney (the GM): OK. So Senpai is above the entrance, and Ben is in the old Aston Martin parked outside. That leaves Alejamdra and Duke. Where are you guys?

Lucy (playing Alejandra): I'll be ready with my pistol behind some crates on the balcony, off to the left as they come in.

David (playing Duke): And I'll be directly opposite the entrance. I want them to be able to see me so that I can draw them in.

Sigourney (the GM): You're all set! Just in time, too. Ben, outside you hear the sound of engines—the Crimson Sparrows are approaching! Round the corner, a small truck drives into view. On the back you can see six ninjas clad in black, with the signature red headband of the Sparrows. They armed with swords and sub-machine guns.

Dirk (playing Ben): Grrr. I'm fairly sure ninjas don't traditionally use Uzis … ah well. I raise one eyebrow ironically, and then alert the others using my radio.

David (playing Duke): Everyone who needs to be, get into cover!

Sigourney (the GM): I believe Eternal Senpai and Alejandra are hiding. Duke is remaining clearly visible as bait. Ben, are you trying to remain hidden in your car?

Dirk (playing Ben): You betcha. I won't be much of a surprise if they see me!

Sigourney (the GM): Great. Then I need AGILITY checks from Senpai, Alejandra, and Ben. Ben, add your *stealth* skill to your dice pool. You too, Alejandra.

(All: Various rolls are made, and the results are reported; Lucy makes an unlucky low roll for Alejandra.)

Sigourney (the GM): The truck rolls to a stop outside the warehouse, and the Crimson Sparrows disembark. They clearly haven't seen Ben. Fanning out, three enter the building. They spot Duke immediately, and one of them points up at Alejandra behind the crates.

David (playing Duke): What is it they say? No plan survives contact with the enemy? Anyway, I grin, take a puff of my cigar, and wave cheerfully at them. Let's spring the ambush!

Sigourney (the GM): Only Ben and Senpai get to act in the Ambush Turn. The rest of you don't, unfortunately, because you've been spotted!

Dirk (playing Ben): Let's see what this puppy can do! I open fire with the Aston Martin's machine guns at the the three ninjas still outside! Here we go … AGILITY 3d6 … I need a bit of luck, though, so I'll use up 2d6 out of my LUCK pool to make sure this one counts. I roll 19.

Linda (playing Eternal Senpai): And I leap down on the three inside the entranceway, summoning up my Chi for a devastating attack! It's AGILITY for me, too, plus my martial arts skill. This is what I'm really good at! I roll 21! It's a shame Lady Anarchy isn't here … she'd make mincemeat of these guys with her golf clubs and stuff!

Sigourney (the GM): They're both excellent rolls, and both of your attacks succeed. Ben, your car's machine guns tear into the ninjas in front of you; Senpai, you land among the ones in the warehouse and lash out with fist and foot! Roll some damage and let me know about any other effects from your attacks!

David (playing Duke): I *do* love it when a plan comes together …

About this Book

This book is the main rulebook for N.O.W.: The Roleplaying Game. Using this book, you can run a campaign focused on settings and challenges that reflect the action movie genre. It describes how to create characters, adjudicate the game, run combat, and design settings and adventures, among other things. The book is divided into four main sections.

- **I: Character Creation.** The first section of the book deals with character creation. It takes you through the process of generating new player characters from start to finish, including attributes, heritage, careers, and more, as well as detailing equipment, armor, and weapons that player characters can purchase.

- **II: Running the Game.** This section describes how to run a game of N.O.W. It covers the core game mechanics, including attribute checks and countdown pools, and the combat rules, along with details on the environment, objects, and movement. It also includes information on Chi and a selection of mooks and minions for use in the game.

- **III: Vehicles.** In this section, you'll find rules for buying, customizing, building, and ultimately using vehicles of all kinds—from talking supercars to tricked out 18-wheelers. You will find rules on how to pit vehicles against each other in combat, and even a bonus vehicle skirmish mini-game.

- **IV: Building a World.** The final section of the book contains guidelines for using N.O.W. in conjunction with O.L.D. and N.E.W., as well as rules for designing your own setting, heritages, careers, combat locales, and enemies. It also contains rules for creating, joining, and running organizations. It is a GM's toolkit for campaign and adventure design.

"Rule Zero"

The GM is the final arbiter of what happens in the game. If a rule needs to be interpreted, it is the GM who decides how to resolve it. At times, the GM may need to create new rules, or alter existing rules. In other words, the rules in this book should be viewed as guidelines, and should not interfere with or be a hindrance to your game-playing.

The ultimate goal of this game—like that of any game—is to enjoy it and have fun. There is no right or wrong way to play N.O.W. If you're all enjoying yourselves, you're playing it correctly.

THE SETTING

N.O.W. is set in a recent time period, the present, or the very near future. That world might be our own world, or it might be a fictional one of your own devising. It might be small in scale, encompassing only a small town in Colorado as Communist forces make landfall, it might encompass an entire seaboard with a cast of villains, or be a globe-trotting thrill ride that takes the characters across the entire world. Here are some examples of settings:

- ◆ **The world has been wracked by war, and civilization has fallen.** Even the forces of battling warlords are unlikely to sleep with a belly full of food rather than lead. Experts and mercenaries are the most valuable resources in toppling these tyrants, and the only real hope of the downtrodden citizens of Earth.

- ◆ **In the digital age, information is absolute power.** Corporations have risen to the fore of global politics, overshadowing or entirely replacing governments across the world. Those with enough gumption to get off the streets are the pawns of society's elite, working with blackhats and expatriated soldiers in unending (and bloody) corporate warfare.

- ◆ **The world of espionage is a deadly, secretive one.** Superspies operate alone or in small, elite teams, thwarting the devious plans of their foes with wits, ingenuity, and an arsenal of hi-tech gadgets.

- ◆ **Lone survivors, thought dead by their retreating allies, are deep in enemy territory** with no chance of backup or rescue. Left without recourse, fighting for their freedom is all they can do; or will a small force of determined warriors be enough to turn the tide of the greater conflict?

N.O.W. WHAT'S O.L.D. IS N.E.W.

O.L.D. is a companion roleplaying game of medieval fantasy, and N.E.W. is a companion roleplaying game of science fiction. These two games are 100% compatible both with each other and with N.O.W.; if you want a wizard to appear in the jungles of the Congo before aliens descend onto the White House, you'll find that these three games work together perfectly.

Look for the O.L.D. and N.E.W. roleplaying games from EN Publishing.

A BRIEF GLOSSARY

This is a short introduction to some of the terms you'll encounter throughout this book. These elements are building blocks for a character—some bigger, some smaller—that when put together create an overall picture.

Attributes. Attributes represent a range of core measurable facets of your character in numerical form. These attributes are STRENGTH, AGILITY, ENDURANCE, INTUITION, LOGIC, WILLPOWER, CHARISMA, LUCK, and CHI, plus a couple of optional attributes which depend on the campaign model. The higher an attribute, the more your character exemplifies that attribute.

Attribute Check. Most activities in the game are based around an attribute check. This is a test whereby one of your attributes helps determine how many dice you get to roll to accomplish a task such as shooting at an enemy soldier or lifting a heavy object.

Benchmark. The difficulty of an in-game task is described by its benchmark. This is a descriptive word and numerical value (such as *Challenging [13]*) which is the target value for an attribute check. Any attribute check result that matches or exceeds the benchmark numerical value is a success.

Career. A career is a temporary building block which helps form your character's development. Characters take careers for periods of time during character generation as the process works its way through his life. Each career affects his attributes and skills. For example, a few years spent training in a dojo in downtown Brooklyn might enhance a character's martial skills. At any given time, a character will have a current career.

Chi. Chi is an attribute which represents a character's mastery of an inner, supernatural power. Chi can represent ki, the eye of the tiger, cool, or similar power sources.

d6. A "d6" is a regular six-sided dice. N.O.W. is based around pools of dice in which you roll a number of dice, add up the total, and compare it to a target number known as a difficulty benchmark. If you need to roll x dice and add them together, this is expressed as xd6—for example, 3d6 means "roll three dice and add them together", while "5d6" means "roll five dice and add them together."

d66. When the rules ask you to roll a d66, you should roll 2d6 but read them a little differently. Instead of adding them together, you read the first as "tens" and the second

as "ones"—for example, if you roll a 3 and a 2, you read that as 32. Similarly, rolling a 1 and a 6 yields a result of 16. This way of rolling dice is mainly used by the GM when rolling on random tables.

Descriptor. At the top of the character sheet you will see an area known as the "descriptor". The descriptor presents a number of fundamental things about your character in the form of a single summarizing sentence.

Dice Pool. A dice pool is the handful of dice you roll when making an attribute check. It can be formed in various ways (for example, you might add dice because of your character's attributes, skills, or equipment) and is limited in size by your character's grade.

Die Bonus/Penalty. If something grants a die bonus or inflicts a die penalty (usually in the format "a +2d6 bonus" or "a −1d6 penalty"), this refers to additional dice which can be added to (or which must be removed from) your dice pool when you make an attribute check.

Experience Points (XP). Characters earn Experience Points by accomplishing tasks, defeating enemies, and completing adventures. These Experience Points can be spent on a range of abilities and character improvements.

Exploits. Exploits are individual abilities or benefits. There are different types of exploits—heritage exploits, career exploits, attribute exploits, and universal exploits. Exploits include things like a rebel's talents for acquiring illicit goods, a mutant's unlikely ability to modify the odds of unlikely events, or the ability to make multiple flowing attacks in a deadly flurry.

Game Master (GM). The GM is the referee of the game. The GM describes the universe to the players and controls the actions of NPCs and monsters.

Grade. Your character's grade is simply the total number of career grades he or she has taken. A starting character is Grade 5. Your character's grade is important because it determines the maximum size of the dice pool you can form when your make attribute checks.

Heritage. Your character is one of a number of available heritages (predominantly human). Your character might be a Human, a Mutant of some kind, a genetically customized Designed, or a technologically enhanced Augmented.

Non Player Character (NPC). An NPC is a character which is not played by one of the players. Instead, all NPCs are played by the GM.

Skills. Skills are smaller, concentrated packets of interest, expertise, or training. They include things like *cooking, pistols, unarmed combat, poetry, cracking, piloting, engineering,* and more. Your character will pick up new skills throughout his career. The skill list is open-ended and unlimited; a skill kicks in at any time your character performs an activity related to it.

Setting the Tone

Advancement Level is a tool a GM can use to peg the tone of his campaign or setting; it's a broad technological scale designed to roughly describe the level of available technology in a given setting.

N.O.W. is set in the Modern Era, which encompasses AL 4–6. Its companion games O.L.D. and N.E.W. cover the Archaic (AL 0–3) and Future (AL 6+) Eras, respectively.

The majority of N.O.W. games will select a setting-wide AL between 4 and 5.5. AL 4 offers radio and telephones, AL 4.5 contains everything readily accessible before the spread of mobile digital devices, AL 5 is roughly equivalent to the modern world of 2015, and AL 5.5 contains technologies that might be accessible in the near future (holograms, quantum computers, and cold fusion).

Modern Era

Age	AL	Earth Example
Industrial Age: early automobiles, radio, phone lines	4	1900s–1960s
Information Age: early computers, car phones, jets	4.5	1970s–2000s
Digital Age: modern computers, cell phones, electric cars	5	2000s–2010s
Quantum Age: flying cars, internal electronics, super computers	5.5	2020s–2100s

In some settings, a group, organization, or region might have access to technology typical of an AL above the setting's AL. Other settings may feature widespread higher-AL technology, lack specific technologies typical of the setting's AL, or both. In particular, higher sciences and quantum devices are AL 5.5 technologies which might appear at lower ALs… again, depending on the setting.

Some examples of popular action franchises and their associated ALs include the *Knight Rider* TV series (AL 4.5), the X-Men franchise (AL 5.5), the James Bond franchise (AL 4–5), the *Lethal Weapon* movies (AL 4.5), and the Jason Bourne franchise (AL 5).

The "default" setting of this book is between 4.5 and 5.

DEFAULT ASSUMPTIONS

The primary default assumption in this book is that your setting is whatever you want it to be. It can be as low- or high-action and as technologically advanced as you like. However, this book does have a sort of "baseline" of its own. The assumptions that make up this baseline can be stated generally as follows:

- Traveling across the globe in 24 hours is possible with enough money and time spent in airports.
- Time travel is extremely rare; if it occurs at all, it is central to important plots.
- Martial artists and other seasoned combatants can perform inhuman feats of physical prowess or mental ability.
- Robots are extremely simple and rarely, if ever, attain sentience; if they do, it is central to an important plot.
- Conflict is never very far away, be it with an unruly gang or opposing military force.

N.O.W. encompasses international superspy movies from the 1960s to the present time, cop shows from the 1970s, the various super-vehicle series of the 1980s, the action muscle movies of Schwarzenegger, Stallone, and Willis, the young adult action comedy/horror of Joss Whedon, the slick action of the *Fast & Furious* franchise, and more.

THAT SEEMS FAMILIAR!

You may see ideas presented in this rulebook that are familiar to you. This is deliberate. N.O.W.'s goal isn't to create a new fiction (although it does play with the edges of that) but to capture existing paradigms and put them into mechanical form. This is for those who watch an amazing action film and feel they want to role-play in that setting, or, if not in the setting itself, in a setting with a similar feel and some of the same assumptions. The rules are here to help you run a game inspired by your favorite adrenaline junkie flicks and TV shows.