INFINITE GALAXIES

Rules Update – Milestones

This document updates the Infinite Galaxies rules in development. This introduces Milestones found in the new version of the rules set.

WHAT'S CHANGED

Milestones replace the Plots and Sub-Plots system in prior versions of the rules set. In the prior version, the GM would create Plots as frameworks to better structure the game. Sub-Plots were related to Plots and provided additional support to structure the game experience. While Plots and Sub-Plots worked well to structure the game, it was perhaps *too* structured for a "story"game. In addition, Interests, a character-side game element, have been removed from the current rules set and were directly related to Sub-Plots. Thus, Sub-Plots are no longer needed, from a rules mechanics sense, and thus, Plots have also been rendered unneeded.

Thus, Milestones are being introduced to the Infinite Galaxies game. Milestones represent something similar to Plots and Sub-Plots, in that the GM uses Milestones to help structure the game experience. The GM creates Milestones based on the story that is taking place and represent something specific that must be accomplished (or prevented) in order to further the story. Once the players pass a Milestone, there are game effects – such as earning xp or refreshing resources.

NEW TERMS

Below are several new terms introduced in this rules set.

- Milestone: The GM creates a Milestone to represent a specific action that affects the ongoing story. The Milestone is created as an action and the terms of this Milestone, whether the PCs succeed or fail, will have a direct impact on the fiction. The GM introduces a Milestone once the story concepts inherent in the terms have been brought into the fiction.
- Milestone Terms: When the GM creates the Milestone, he or she writes a specific action that must be undertaken or otherwise dealt with before the story moves forward. The terms must be worded in *active* terms, meaning that this is something that the PC must do or prevent before the story moves on.
- Passing a Milestone: At some point, the story will dictate when the terms of the Milestone are relevant. It is at this point that the PCs will either succeed in dealing with the terms set in the Milestone or they will fail to do so. Once this has been determined, the Milestone has *passed* and the action moves onto the next phase of the story. The PCs no longer have the opportunity to deal with the terms of the Milestone. At this point, the GM should introduce a new Milestone.
- Complete Success / Partial Success: Once the PCs have dealt with the terms of the Milestone, the GM will determine whether the result was a success or failure. If it was a success, it can be a complete success or a partial success. The GM should treat a complete success like a 10+ result on a normal move, whereas the partial success should

be treated as a 7-9 result; the GM will treat the result as if it were a custom move (for example, on a partial success, the GM may use a soft move to put someone in danger, affect resources, and so forth).

- Failure: If the PCs failed against the terms of the Milestone, the GM will treat it as if the players failed on a normal move. This means that the GM can use a hard move – whatever makes sense given the circumstances.
- Consequence: When the PCs fail at the terms of a Milestone, there is a consequence within the story. When creating a Milestone, the GM should consider what the implications of failure are.

CREATING A MILESTONE

A Milestone represents a specific action that the players must complete before the story can continue. Think of a Milestone as a plot point in a story. If you consider your story in the context of a three-act framework, your game may have three Milestones. The first may appear in the "first act", when the story and its rules are being established. Once the action proceeds, the story's "second act" is in play, and your second Milestone may appear. The story's "third act" is when the plot comes to its conclusion; your Milestone here is likely the resolution of the story.

The creation of a Milestone requires that the GM has a handle on the game's story and where it is likely headed. If you are running a one-shot or convention game, Milestones can be created ahead of time; you will want to do this because it will save you time during the session. Otherwise, in an ongoing game, Milestones should be created organically, based on the needs of your story. Once created, the Milestone will be known to the players; the GM should not present the Milestone until the story elements inherent in the Milestone have been established in the story.

When the GM creates a Milestone, it is worded as an action: the players must do something, prevent something, find something, rescue someone, destroy something, get to a certain place, discover the truth behind some mystery, and so forth. This wording is known as the terms of the Milestone. The GM will get a sense of what a Milestone should be based on how the story is unfolding.

The terms stated in your Milestone should be worded in such a way that it is easily determined whether or not the action has been completed. It is a binary proposal; the characters either achieved the thing stated in the Milestone or they didn't.

> Ask yourself: "Will I know that the PCs successfully completed the action?"
> *If you can't answer "yes" to this question, your Milestone needs to be re-worded.*

The story should have an inherent pressure to successfully complete the Milestone; this could be a time-based pressure or an event-based pressure. The pressure is necessary because the GM will need to consider how to react if the PCs fail against the terms in the Milestone. If there isn't a pressure to succeed in the action stated in the Milestone, consider re-wording it.

Here are some examples of Milestones:
- (Act One) Discover the truth behind Princess Moonbeam's strange disappearance.
    - Pressure: The King and Queen have threatened to expel all foreigners from the planet unless Princess Moonbeam is returned by dawn.
- (Act Two) Find the secret base of the Blackstar Pirates.
    - Pressure: The Blackstar Pirates are known to sell their captives into slavery (there characters must find Princess Moonbeam before this happens, obviously).
- (Act Three) Rescue Princess Moonbeam from the clutches of the Blackstar Pirates.
    - Pressure: The Blackstar Pirates realize that their base has been infiltrated and are trying to get away with their captive.

- (Act One) Prevent the space cruiser, Lorelei, from crashing into the planet.
    - Pressure: This one is pretty easy; the ship is going to crash.
- (Act Two) Follow the saboteurs to their secret base.
    - Pressure: The characters must chase the escaping saboteurs and find out where they are hiding. There is no time to waste!
- (Act Three) Escape the asteroid mine before it explodes.
    - Pressure: Again, this one is pretty easy; get out before the big explosion.

When creating the terms of a Milestone, the GM should consider what effects passing the Milestone will have on the fiction. This is especially important because the GM will need to judge whether passing the Milestone was a complete success, a partial success, or a failure. The consequences of each of these outcomes is discussed below.

Finally, once the GM has created the Milestone, it should be presented to the players. Use an index card or a whiteboard to present this. Once the Milestone has been completed, create a new Milestone and present it in the same manner.

USING MILESTONES IN THE GAME
In the Infinite Galaxies game, Milestones serve two purposes. The first purpose is to provide story structure, not in a controlling way, to move the game in a certain direction. The second purpose is that it provides mechanical effects within the game. The Milestone tells the players what their characters are trying to do. It is a way to point the players towards a common goal. The wording of the Milestone is critical because passing the Milestone has effects within the game. Ultimately, the GM will determine whether the terms of a Milestone has been successfully completed, although this should be obvious with a well-written Milestone.

Introducing a Milestone tells the players that there is something that needs to be done and that accomplishing this will move the story forward in a positive manner (and failing to do so will have negative consequences). In a long-form game, the Milestone should come organically from action and story that has already taken place; the players have contributed to this, so the introduction of the Milestone should not be a surprise and should not feel like the GM is "railroading" the story in a certain direction. In a short game, a one-shot or a convention game, the Milestones are there to keep the action going and create impetus needed to finish the game within the given time frame.

A Milestone is a turning point in the plot. Passing the Milestone means that the story has moved into a new phase. In addition to the story-based reasons why passing a Milestone is important, we also want to provide a mechanical reward for successfully completing a Milestone. Within the context of the game, successfully completing a Milestone gives each character 1 xp. Some characters may have additional benefits; see the individual playbooks for more information.

PASSING MILESTONES AND CONSEQUENCES

Inherently important within the context of this discussion is determining whether a Milestone has been successfully completed. In addition, while it is assumed that the PCs successfully complete these Milestones, it is worth discussing what happens when they fail to do so.

The GM will determine when the Milestone has been "passed"; at this point, there is no going back and the story moves on to the next phase, whatever that may be. Milestones may pass because the PCs were successful in the action stated in the Milestone, but this may not always be the case; PCs can also fail to achieve whatever was stated in the Milestone and this also has consequences within the fiction. In any event, when a Milestone has passed, it means that the opportunity to achieve the action inherent in the Milestone is gone (for good or ill).

Passing a Milestone creates consequences; something happens as a result of passing the Milestone. Based on how the PCs dealt with the terms of the Milestone, the GM must determine whether it was a complete success, a partial success, or a failure. The GM should view this through the lens of a move and assign a consequence based on how it all played out.

When there is a complete success, this means that the PCs have absolutely achieved everything inherent within the terms of the Milestone, left no loose ends, found every clue, stopped every enemy, and so forth. Measure the success against all possible conflicts or complications you could derive from the fiction. If the PCs have obviated all of those options, consider it a complete success. Treat this like a 10+ result on a normal move. You can offer additional options or resources, or anything else that makes sense. Also, each PC earns 1 xp.

When there is a partial success, this means that the PCs have achieved the basic things inherent within the terms of the Milestone, but left some outstanding story elements they will have to face or deal with later. This could mean that enemies escaped (to alert others), the PCs lost resources that they will need to recover (serious resources, like their starship, weapons, allies, etc), or otherwise barely achieved the terms of the Milestone. Treat this like a 7-9 result on a normal move. Because this is a partial success, the GM uses a soft move; it will cost the PCs something: a resource, time, access to something, the enemies gain ground on them, the task gets more difficult, and so forth. Also, each PC earns 1 xp.

When the PCs fail to achieve the terms of the Milestone, it means that the opportunity to deal with it, within the fiction, has passed and that the PCs did not achieve whatever was inherent within those terms. While the GM should give the PCs every opportunity to succeed on a Milestone, there are times when this just doesn't happen. It could be that a critical enemy escaped, an essential resource was permanently lost, too much time passed, or something else within the fiction prevented the PCs from doing it. Treat this like a 6 or less result on a move.

This means that the GM will use a hard move; the consequence will be something difficult and will cause the PCs to spend extra resources to recover from it.

The good news is that the GM does not have to pre-determine what the exact consequences will be. Instead, as the game continues, the GM should have a good idea of what the consequences *could* be and then work within the established fiction to tailor the result to the ongoing game.

There are too many possibilities to go into a lot of examples here. The GM must use his or her best judgment to determine what consequences there should be for passing a given Milestone in the game.

Note that certain playbooks offer additional outcomes when a Milestone passes. See the individual playbooks for more information on this.

DRIVES AND MILESTONES
In this version of the rules set, it is suggested that players do not mark Drives for their characters until a Milestone is introduced. The reason for this is that the Drives will push the story in a certain direction, as does the Milestone, so it makes some sense to have the decisions on Drives coincide with the introduction of the Milestone.

When a new Milestone is introduced, players have the option to change their characters' Drives. Since PCs can only have a certain number of Drives marked, and that pursuing these Drives will point the action in a certain direction, it makes sense to allow the PCs' Drives to change when the next Milestone is introduced; the new Milestone may suggest a change in strategy that may necessitate a change in what the PCs are trying to do.

MILESTONES AND THE END OF SESSION MOVE
In this new version of the rules set, the introduction of Milestones changes how the "End of Session" move works. In the new version, the GM will grant 1 xp for every Milestone that was passed, for good or ill. This xp is in addition to any earned directly from passing the Milestone during the course of the session; thus, in a sense, PCs may earn 2 xp for successfully completing a Milestone.