GUMSHOE SRD CREATIVE COMMONS VERSION

Copyright Notice

Version History

Version 2

Updated to include TimeWatch RPG content.

Version 3

Updated to include The Yellow King Roleplaying Game, QuickShock, and GUMSHOE One-2-One content.

Introduction

This standard reference document provides the GUMSHOE rules made available via the terms of the Open Gaming and Creative Commons-By Attribution licenses. It is a reference for game designers, and is not tuned to teach the game, or provide a playable game experience. If you're looking for a playable game, seek out such Pelgrane Press titles as *TimeWatch*, *The Esoterrorists*, *Trail of Cthulhu*, *Ashen Stars*, *Night's Black Agents*, *Mutant City Blues*, or *Fear Itself*. Or watch for games the users of this license will build with it.

Notes appearing in italics within square brackets provide guidance for designers basing their own games on these rules. Avoid unsought hilarity (and violation of the OGL) by remembering to cut them from your finished manuscript.

This document provides text you can cut and paste into your games. It naturally assumes that you have acquired a fundamental understanding of GUMSHOE by reading and extensively playing at least one GUMSHOE game. When creating core rule books, you will want to interleave this text with examples of your own devising, which show new readers how the rules work, and, at the same time, convey the tone, spirit and entertainment value of your setting.

This open license document does not grant rights to use the settings of Pelgrane's GUMSHOE games. You might however use it as the basis for generic scenarios GMs can adapt to their horror, space opera, time travel, or spy thriller GUMSHOE worlds of choice.

Your Character

Create player characters by choosing your **character concept, investigative abilities,** and **general abilities.**

Investigative abilities allow you to find the information your character needs to move forward in a mystery-solving narrative, plus occasional additional benefits.

General abilities help you survive while you're gathering information and solving problems. You create characters by spending build points on your character's abilities. Each ability has a numerical rating. Every rating point costs 1 build point to purchase.

The GUMSHOE rules define your character by what he or she can accomplish in an investigative scenario. The component elements of each ability don't matter in rules terms. The rules don't care if your Forensic Accounting ability is one part native mental acuity to two parts training or vice versa, although you can mention them when describing your character to others. All that matters is how you solve cases, and overcome other obstacles arising from them.

Ratings and Pools

The number you assign to each ability is called a **rating**. Although you may improve them gradually over time, ratings remain static over the course of the typical game session.

For each ability your character has a **pool** of points, which fluctuates over the course of each session. You begin each case, or scenario, with pool points equal to your rating. You might then immediately spend some of them during a prelude phase to the investigation itself. You will definitely spend points as you conduct the investigation. At times your pool may increase,

sometimes **refreshing** to equal its rating again.

The distinction between ratings and pools is a crucial one; keep it in mind as you read and interpret the GUMSHOE rules.

Step One: Concept

[Describe the sorts of mystery-solving characters the players will play in your setting, and any preliminary creative decisions each player will make about her character.]

Stereotypes

[In some games you may wish to guide players to choose genre-appropriate concepts by supplying a list of stereotypes as a starting point in character creation.]

Sample Stereotype: Good Girl

The good girl is an ordinary young woman. If not chaste, she's more modest and circumspect about her sexuality than the other young women in the cast of characters. Smart and cautious, she becomes the ultimate prize of the shadowy forces stalking the group—often proving herself more determined to survive than those around her.

[From Fear Itself]

Packages

[In some games you may choose to give additional mechanical heft to the stereotypes by turning them into Packages.]

Each package sets out minimum requirements in both Investigative and General abilities. Before spending any points elsewhere, make sure you have those covered.

Sample Package: Communications Officer (Hailer)

You establish, receive and route communications with other ships, planetary installations, and space stations. More than a glorified space receptionist, you serve as a combination of public relations frontperson and psychological warrior. You facilitate the decision-making process of the crew and convey its intentions to the outside world. In crisis situations, you keep vital information flowing to the stratco, so that the right decisions get made at lightning speed. During space combat, you launch hack attacks on the enemy's computer system, while defending your own from penetration.

Investigative: Linguistics 1, Flattery 1, Reassurance 1, Decryption 1, Data Retrieval 1

General: Communications Intercept 6, Sense Trouble 4

[From Ashen Stars]

Occupations

[A variant of the Package sub-system, the Occupation, appears in Trail of Cthulhu. Rather than

providing minimums to qualify for a package, an Occupation provides key abilities at half-price, and often a Special mechanical benefit as well. Future Pelgrane GUMSHOE designs will likely stick to the faster, simpler ability minimum approach found in Packages.]

You get two rating points in **Occupational abilities** for every one build point you spend. For example, 12 rating points of Occupational abilities cost you 6 build points. Left over half-points are lost, so assign an even number points to Occupational abilities.

Sample Occupation: Private Investigator

There are things that cops can't do, and things that cops won't do, and you'll take money to do either. Sometimes you get dragged into something the cops want you out of, but you gotta stay in it to keep the cops honest. What keeps you honest? Now, that's the real mystery, ain't it?

Occupational Abilities: Accounting, Disguise, Driving, Law, Locksmith, Photography, Assess Honesty, Reassurance, Scuffling, Shadowing.

Special: Private eyes with point pools in Disguise or Shadowing may spend points *after* rolling the die for a test. For every 2 points you spend *after* rolling the die, you increase the die result by 1. This *only* applies if you are undistracted and not directly observed. It never applies during a contest. You must describe the thing that almost went wrong, and how you caught it barely in time or succeeded through sheer luck.

[From Trail of Cthulhu]

Alternate Species

[Most unusual characters in TimeWatch don't require customized rules; a psychic uplifted dog, for instance, probably has paws instead of hands but the player can describe using their psychic powers to accomplish anything a human character could do. Some species, however, may benefit from customized rules. As you add benefit, include limiting factors to ensure the new species is ono par with a human character.]

Sample Alternate Species: Disembodied Brain

When you care more about style than appearance, it's hard to go wrong with playing a psychic or mechanically encased disembodied brain. Brains unencumbered by bodies are a classic way to showcase how far humankind may evolve in the far future.

- Psychic disembodied brains can telekinetically manipulate anything they'd normally use their hands for. This only works at Point-Blank range (i.e., within normal arm's reach). Similarly, brains in their own armored braincase have mechanical tentacles or arms to manipulate items near them.
- Since they don't have legs, psychic disembodied brains hover about 2 meters off the ground and can maneuver at the pace of a fast walk. The Athletics General ability works normally, representing the brain's ability for finely controlled movement and faster-than-normal hovering speed. Mechanically encased brains either hover or have spider legs attached to their braincase.

- Disguise — an important ability for a brain! — is typically achieved by projecting a hologram or mental construct. The Unobtrusiveness ability works similarly, with the brain clouding minds so that it cannot be seen.
- Agents who are actually disembodied brains should expect sudden horror and extremely negative reactions when they fail their Unobtrusiveness or Disguise rolls.
- Want unique psychic or mind control effects? You can fake it with an Investigative spend. For example, spending a point of Intimidation allows you to describe how you're using your psychic powers to mentally cow and break down your target; spending a Science! point allows you to imitate a super-science device for a scene.
- Similarly, Preparedness tests create effects directly instead of just producing objects that provide effects. For example, any player character could normally use Preparedness to acquire a jetpack that lets them fly for a scene. A psychic disembodied brain could use Preparedness to temporarily gain the ability to fully fly with no physical jetpack required. Same roll, same effect, slightly different description. A brain within its mechanical armored fishbowl could use Preparedness or Tinkering to temporarily create such a device from its own mechanical attachments.
- Normal Scuffling or Shooting attacks for a psychic brain are described as purely mental psychic attacks; armor protects against them as per normal. A Preparedness or Tinkering test can supply different weapon effects for a scene, just as Preparedness or Tinkering would be used by a more traditional character to acquire or build a unique weapon.
- Most standard issue TimeWatch gear is assumed to be incorporated into the psychic brain's normal abilities; for instance, language translation for a disembodied brain doesn't need a device to function. The Armor 1 gained from TimeWatch armor can either be described as a hovering, physical damage-resistant braincase or as an invisible psychic shield, at the player's preference. For mechanically encased brains, the crystalline fishbowl around the brain protects it like normal armor.

- Disembodied brains are considerably more vulnerable to Stun effects than most creatures. All Stun tests made by the brain have their Difficulty increased by 1; for example, shooting a brain with a PaciFist instigates a Stun 6 test instead of the normal Stun 5 test to remain conscious.

[From TimeWatch]

Step Two: Assign Investigative Abilities

Investigative abilities are central to any GUMSHOE character; they enable you to gather information and drive the plot forward. The number of points each player spends on

investigative abilities varies according to the number of regularly attending players, according to the following table. The GM leads the group through the list of investigative build points, ensuring that each one of them is covered by at least one member of the group.

[Complete this chart with values based on the total number of investigative abilities you include in your game. That number is x. The final numbers don't have to be dead on, so fudge them upwards if desired for a prettier-looking numerical progression.]

# of players	Investigative Build Points
2	*80% of x*
3	*60% of x*
4	*55% of x*
5+	*50% of x*

Players who can only attend every now and then get the same number of investigative build points as everyone else, but are not counted toward the total when deciding how many points to allocate.

Free Rating

[If your setting concept assumes all characters will have a particular ability (like Cop Talk if everyone is a police officer), indicate what it is, and that everyone gets 1 rating point in it for free.]

What Good Are Investigative Ratings?

Players used to the bumbling half-competence of their characters in other investigative game systems may be surprised to learn how effective even a single rating point is.

Any rating in an investigative ability indicates a high degree of professional accomplishment or impressive natural talent. If you have an ability relevant to the task at hand, you automatically succeed in discovering any information or overcoming any obstacles necessary to propel you from the current scene further into the story.

You may ask to spend points to gain **special benefits**. Sometimes the GM will offer you the chance to spend points. In other circumstances she may accept your suggestions of ways to gain special benefits. Use them wisely; spent points do not return until the next investigation begins.

[The power and versatility of special benefits may vary by game; for instance, special benefits in TimeWatch are generally more powerful than special benefits in Trail of Cthulhu.]

Once all of the abilities are covered, you are permitted, if you desire, to reserve any remaining build points to spend as situations arise during play. You may assign yourself additional abilities, or increase your ratings in the ones you've chosen, as seems appropriate to your character and the situations she finds herself in. When you choose to do this, you are not suddenly acquiring abilities on the spot, but simply revealing for the first time what the character has been able to do all along.

If you want, you can save build points from character creation to spend later. If your GM is running an ongoing series, you will accumulate additional build points during play.

Investigative Benchmarks

When choosing investigative abilities it is better to get a large number of abilities with fairly low ratings. Even a 1-point rating is worth having. You'll rarely want to spend more than 3 or 4 points on any one investigative ability.

You must have an investigative ability at a rating of at least 1 to get useful information from it.

Step 3: Assign General Abilities

Each player gets 60 points to spend on general abilities, regardless of group size. TimeWatch players instead get 50 points.

General abilities use different rules than investigative ones, which allow for possible failure. They help you survive while you investigating. When choosing general abilities, you'll want to concentrate your points among a few abilities, giving your comparatively higher ratings than you want in the investigative category.

 [To support 60 as the value for general build points, include approximately 12 broadly useful general abilities. Some games may also support specialized general abilities on top of the 12. You may wish to assign an additional build pool to another class of general abilities unique to your setting.]

You start the game with 1 point *[each]* in Health and *[any other similar ablative ability required for the setting's genre emulation, like Stability in most GUMSHOE horror games.]*

Although there is no set cap on abilities, the second highest rating must be at least half that of the highest rating.

What Good are General Ratings?

General abilities use a different set of rules and are measured on a different scale than investigative abilities. The two ability sets are handled in different way because they fulfill distinct narrative functions. The rules governing general abilities introduce the possibility of failure into the game, creating suspense and uncertainty. Uncertain outcomes make scenes of physical action more exciting, but can stop a mystery story dead if applied to the collection of information. This division may seem aesthetically weird when you first encounter it, but as you grow used to the GUMSHOE system you'll see that it works.

GUMSHOE focuses not on your character's innate traits, but on what they can actually do in the course of a storyline. Why they can do it is up to each player. Your characters are as strong, fast, and good-looking as you want them to be.

General Ability Benchmarks

A rating of 1-3 indicates that the ability is a sideline. 4-7 is solid but not off the charts. 8 or more suggests a dedicated bad-assery that will be immediately apparent to observers when they see you in action.

0-Rated General Abilities

If you have a rating of 0 in a general ability, that is you have put no build points into it, you cannot make a test on that ability. That is not to say you can't do the thing at all; it's only if you want to attempt something requiring a roll that you will not succeed. You character might be able to drive, but with a Drive rating of 0 you will not be able to deal with a car chase or potential crash.

Investigative Abilities

The following abilities are the bread and butter of GUMSHOE characters.

Ability descriptions consist of a brief general description, followed by examples of their use in an investigation. Creative players should be able to propose additional uses for their abilities as unexpected situations confront their characters.

Certain specific actions may overlap between a couple of abilities. For example, you can enhance image resolution with either Data Retrieval or Photography.

Some abilities, like Research, are broadly useful, and will crop up constantly. Others may be called for many times in the course of one scenario, and not at all in others. When building your character, strike a balance between the reliable workhouse abilities and their exotic, specialized counterparts.

Investigative abilities are divided into the following sub-groups: Academic, Interpersonal, and Technical. The purpose of the sub-groups is to allow you to quickly find the best ability for the task during play, by scanning the most likely portion of the overall list.

[Rewrite investigative ability descriptions and example bullet points as needed for your setting. Rename abilities for desired flavor. Create new abilities keyed to your setting. Include only abilities relevant to your setting in your game. Some investigative abilities tie into specific general abilities and vice versa; make sure you either include both relevant abilities, or drop the cross-references between them. Some abilities may subsume more specific abilities from other games; for instance, TimeWatch's Science! includes under its aegis the abilities Astronomy, Botany, Chemistry, Natural History, and more. Where appropriate, include Sample Spends to show players what they might accomplish by spending one or more Investigative points

Where you see the term spend/Push, use only the one fitting your chosen version of the rules, eliminating the other from your text. Pushes began with QuickShock, and are found on p. 103. They work as a standalone rules element and can be imported into standard GUMSHOE if desired.]

Anthropology (Academic)

You are an expert in the study of human cultures, from the stone age to the Internet age.

You can:

- identify artifacts and rituals of living cultures
- describe the customs of a foreign group or local subculture
- extrapolate the practices of an unknown culture from similar examples

Archaeology (Academic)

You excavate and study the structures and artifacts of historical cultures and civilizations. You can:

- tell how long something has been buried
- identify artifacts by culture and usage
- distinguish real artifacts from fakes
- navigate inside ruins and catacombs
- describe the customs of ancient or historical cultures
- spot well-disguised graves and underground hiding places

Architecture (Academic)

You know how buildings are planned and constructed. You can:

- guess what lies around the corner while exploring an unknown structure
- judge the relative strength of building materials
- identify a building's age, architectural style, original use, and history of modifications
- construct stable makeshift structures
- identify elements vital to a building's structural integrity

Art History (Academic)

You're an expert on works of art from an aesthetic and technical point of view. You can:

- distinguish real works from fakes
- tell when something has been retouched or altered
- identify the age of an object by style and materials
- call to mind historical details on artists and those around them

Astronomy (Technical)

You study celestial objects, including the stars, planets. You can:

- decipher astrological texts
- plot the movement of constellations
- study and debunk UFO reports

Authority (Interpersonal)

You know how to present yourself as the person in charge, whether that's a CEO, a government official, a military commander, or a police officer. You speak the lingo of soldiers and law enforcement authorities, and you know how to make people feel confident and relaxed in your presence. You can:

- command the attention of people who need problems solved
- impersonate a law enforcement officer
- coolly ply cops and soldiers for confidential information
- fit in smoothly in any sort of military organization, with people assuming you're a soldier or an officer
- get excused for minor infractions

Ballistics (Technical)

You process evidence relating to the use of firearms. You can:
- identify the caliber and type of a bullet or casing found at a crime scene
- determine if a particular gun fired a given bullet

Botany (Academic)

You study plants and fungi and can:
- identify the likely environment in which a plant sample grew
- identify plants which might be toxic, carnivorous, or otherwise dangerous
- spot the symptoms of plant-derived poisonings

Belle-Lettres (Academic)

As an essayist and journalist, you know how to:
- identify rich, powerful, and influential persons in your city
- recall their past exploits and associations, including those too scandalous to print
- name their allies and enemies
- understand their political and philosophical leanings
- argue in a witty and tendentious style, in person or on the page
- navigate the city's profusion of newspapers and journals, from the size of their readership to the quirks of their editors
- recall the gist of articles from local publications, no matter how obscure

You can also treat this as an Interpersonal ability, prying information from otherwise reluctant witnesses by either promising them favorable coverage, or agreeing not to print what you know about them.

Bonhomie (Interpersonal)

Your sparkling personality delights people, making them want to please and impress you. Their desire to take you into their confidence may lead to indiscretions. Even if they later come to regret sharing secrets with you, they can't help feeling that it was worth it. You were just too witty, beautiful, and magnetic to resist.

People both aware of, and hostile to, your aims, can disregard your charm enough to withhold the information you seek. Even they won't be able to stop themselves from liking you, which may soften their behavior toward you—especially if you make a Push.

Bullshit Detector (Interpersonal)

You can tell when some people are lying. You must usually be interacting with them or observing them from a close distance, but sometimes you can spot liars on television, too. Unfortunately, nearly everyone lies, especially when facing possible trouble from the authorities. Sometimes you can infer why they're lying, but it's hard to reliably discern motive or get at the facts they're working to obscure. This sense doesn't tell you what they're lying about, specifically, or see through their lies to the truth.

Not all lies are verbal. You can tell when a person is attempting to project a false impression through body language.

Certain individuals may be so adept at lying that they never set off your bullshit detector. Some people believe their own falsehoods. Psychopathic personality types lie reflexively and without shame, depriving you of the telltale tics and gestures you use to sense when a person is deceiving you. Sometimes you need leverage to get information out of people who you know are lying – re-interviewing suspects in the light of additional facts is a genre staple.

Bureaucracy (Interpersonal)

You know how to navigate a bureaucratic organization, whether it's a governmental office or a large business concern. You know how to get what you want from it in an expeditious manner, and with a minimum of ruffled feathers. You can:

- convince officials to provide sensitive information
- gain credentials on false pretences
- find the person who really knows what's going on
- locate offices and files
- borrow equipment or supplies

Bureaucracy is not a catch-all information gathering ability. Bureaucrats wish to convey the impression that they are busy and harried, whether or not they actually are. Most take a profound, secret joy in directing inquiries elsewhere. When players attempt to use Bureaucracy to gain information more easily accessible via other abilities (such as Research), their contacts snidely advise them to do their own damn legwork.

Camping (Technical)

You are familiar with working and living outdoors and in the wild. You might be a farmer, cowboy, or logger, or an amateur (or professional) fisher or hunter, or work for the Park Service. Perhaps you were merely an Eagle Scout, grew up in the back of nowhere, or served in a military unit with sufficient patrol experience "in country." You can:

- ⚲ tell when an animal is behaving strangely

- ⚔ tell whether an animal or plant is natural to a given area
- ⚔ find edible plants, hunt, and fish
- ⚔ make fire and survive outdoors at night or in bad weather
- ⚔ navigate overland, albeit more easily with a compass and a map
- ⚔ track people, animals, or vehicles across grass or through forests
- ⚔ hunt with dogs, including tracking with bloodhounds, assuming you have friendly dogs available

Charm (Interpersonal)

You're good at making people *want* to help you, whether you utilize compliments, flattery, or flirting. You can get them to:

- reveal information
- perform minor favors
- regard you as trustworthy
- become enamored with you

[Charm combines Flattery and Flirting into one Ability, and shouldn't be used in conjunction with them.]

Chemistry (Technical)

You're trained in the analysis of chemical substances. You can:

- among a wide variety of other materials, identify drugs, pharmaceuticals, toxins, and viruses
- match samples of dirt or vegetation from a piece of evidence to a scene

Craft (Technical)

You can create useful physical objects, working with materials like wood, metal, jewelry, and so forth. Although the resulting cabinets, kettles, or rings may be beautiful, your focus is utility, not art. Like the Art ability, you may focus on one craft (blacksmithing, cabinetry, coopering, etc) or diversify into many; the same rules apply.

You may be able to use your Craft ability to specific investigative ends: discover a secret drawer in a desk if you are a cabinet-maker, and so forth.

Comparative Religion (Academic)

You study religions in their various forms, both ancient and modern. You can:

- ⚔ supply information about religious practices and beliefs
- ⚔ quote relevant tags from the major scriptures
- ⚔ recognize the names and attributes of various saints, gods, and other figures of religious worship and veneration

- ⚔ identify whether a given religious practice or ritual is orthodox or heretical
- ⚔ fake (or in some traditions, officiate at) a religious ceremony

Cop Talk (Interpersonal)

You know how to speak the lingo of police officers, and to make them feel confident and relaxed in your presence. You may be a current or former cop, or simply the kind of person they immediately identify as a solid, trustworthy citizen. You can:

- coolly ply cops for confidential information
- get excused for minor infractions
- imply that you are a colleague, authorized to participate in their cases

Counterinsurgency (Technical)

As a former insurgent yourself, you can now turn the tables and read scenes of sabotage and terrorism for clues leading to the perpetrators. That's helpful, because these days the rebels are Castaignite dead-enders who want to bring back the old dictatorship.

You can:

- identify the munitions or weaponry used to stage an attack
- tell whether a gun has been recently fired
- find hidden weapons and bombs
- spot the best places to lie in wait, with or without a sniper rifle
- look at a location, see how you would attack it, and describe both how the assault would go down and what you'd do to stop it
- spot supposedly casual onlookers who are in fact sizing up the area, just like you are

On a spend/Push, gain a favor from a fellow member of the movement.

Cryptography (Technical)

You're an expert in the making and breaking of codes, from the simple ciphers of old-school espionage tradecraft to the supercomputer algorithms of the present day.

Culture (Academic)

As a general follower of the arts, your knowledge fills in the gaps between other characters' more form-specific awareness of the city's cultural scene. You know the people, trends, and venues of such art forms as:

- dance
- music
- drama
- opera

- music hall
- ceramics
- calligraphy
- stage magic
- clowning, mime, and circus performance
- (if applicable to your period) cinema

Data Retrieval (Technical)

You use computer and electronic technology to retrieve and enhance information on hard drives and other media. You can:

- recover hidden, erased or corrupted computer files
- increase the clarity of audio recordings, zeroing in on desired elements
- miraculously find detailed, high-resolution images within a blurry video image or blurry JPEG

Document Analysis (Technical)

You're an expert in the study of physical documents. You can:

- determine a document's approximate age
- identify the manufacturer of paper used in a document
- tell forged documents from the real thing
- identify distinctive handwriting
- match typed documents to the typewriters that produced them
- find fingerprints on paper

Electronic Surveillance (Technical)

You're adept at the use of sound recording equipment to gather evidence. You can:

- trace phone calls
- plant secret listening devices
- locate secret listening devices planted by others
- make high-quality audio recordings
- enhance the quality of audio recordings, isolating chosen sounds

Evidence Collection (Technical)

You're adept at finding, bagging and tagging important clues. You can:

- spot objects of interest at a crime scene or other investigation site
- note relationships between objects at a crime scene, reconstructing sequences of

events

- store objects for forensic analysis without contaminating your samples

Explosive Devices (Technical)

You're an expert in bombs and booby-traps. You can:

- defuse bombs and traps
- reconstruct exploded bombs, determining their materials, manufacture, and the sophistication of the bomb-maker
- safely construct and detonate explosive devices of your own

Fashion (Academic)

Being conversant with all aspects of the garment trade, from high to low, you can:

- evaluate a garment's workmanship
- use technical terms of the clothing trade
- identify the designer of a particular high-end garment
- read clothing labels, no matter how obscure, tracing items to their makers
- tell from its style how old a garment is
- spot the differences between an authentic piece from a noted couturier and an imitation
- identify the source and type of toiletry items
- combine clothing items for maximum effect
- apply makeup and style hair
- elicit information from workers in the fashion industry, from top designers to harried seamstresses

Farming (Technical)

Your knowledge of agriculture starts with the practical and may extend to the theoretical. Possible uses while investigating mysteries include:

- distinguishing between normal and abnormal domestic animal behavior
- telling which dangerous farm implement caused those wounds
- identifying the source of crop damage, if natural, or aver that crops have been damaged by no ordinary cause
- predicting upcoming weather
- recounting the superstitions, wives' tales, and folkways of a rural community

Make a spend/Push to find a hidden food cache, refreshing your Scrounging pool.

Fingerprinting (Technical)

You're an expert in finding, transferring and matching fingerprints. This includes expertise in

the computer software used to compare sample fingerprints against large databases of criminal defendants and government personnel.

Flattery (Interpersonal)

You're good at getting people to help you by complimenting them, as subtly or blatantly as they prefer. You can get them to:

- reveal information
- perform minor favors
- regard you as trustworthy.

Flirting (Interpersonal)

You're adept at winning cooperation from people who find you sexually attractive. You can get them to:

- reveal information
- help you in small ways
- date you

It's up to you whether a high rating in Flirting means that you are physically alluring, or simply exude a sexual magnetism unrelated to your looks.

Forensic Accounting (Academic)

You comb through financial data looking for irregularities. In the words made famous during Woodward and Bernstein's investigation of the Watergate scandal, you know how to "follow the money." You can:

- tell legitimate businesses from criminal enterprises
- spot the telltale signs of embezzlement
- track payments to their source

Forensic Anthropology (Technical)

You perform autopsies on deceased subjects to determine their cause of death. In the case of death by foul play, your examination can identify:

- the nature of the weapon or weapons used
- the presence of intoxicants or other foreign substances in the bloodstream
- the contents of the victim's last meal

In many cases, you can reconstruct the sequence of events leading to the victim's death from the arrangement of wounds on the body.

You also perform DNA analysis on samples found at crime scenes, matching them to samples provided by suspects.

Forensic Entomology (Technical)

You specialize in the relationship between corpses and the legions of insects who dine on them. By studying eggs and larvae in a decomposing corpse you can:

- determine approximate time of death
- identify a crime scene, in the case of a dumped body

Forensic Psychology (Academic)

You apply psychological insight to the solving of criminal cases. From the details of a crime scene, you can, based on past case studies of similar offenses, assemble a profile detailing the perpetrator's likely personal history, age, habits and attitudes.

You can also glean useful information from simple observation of certain individual, especially as they react to pressure.

Forgery (Technical)

You fake documents, art, and identification. Given time, originals (or good copies), suitable materials, and work space, you can:

- create a false identification, license, traveling paper, or other government credential
- quickly create digital records and a false Internet history
- forge handwriting with a sample to work from
- fake a book, pamphlet, newspaper, or other published work
- forge a sculpture, painting, or other objet d'art
- artificially age paper and ink
- spot forgeries, and make intelligent deductions about the forger
- undetectably open and reseal a sealed envelope, document, pouch, or other "soft" container
- create an attractive, if somewhat uninspired, work of art on a subject of your choosing

Forgery is also useful for larger, detail-oriented investigative work. You can also use Forgery to construct a fake crime scene, or to clean up an actual crime scene so as to make it look as if no crime occurred. After secretly searching a room, the visual memory you gain from Forgery will tell you if you've accidentally left any item out of place.

Geology (Academic)

You are an expert on rocks, soils, minerals, and the primordial history of the Earth. You can:

- analyze soil samples, crystals, minerals, and so forth
- determine the age of a rock stratum
- date and identify fossils
- evaluate soil for agriculture or industry

- identify promising sites for oil or water wells, mines, etc
- anticipate volcanism, seismic events, avalanches, and other earth phenomena

Hacking (Technical)

You use computer and electronic technology to retrieve and enhance information on computers and other information devices, from punch cards to future-tech.

You're also an expert in math, logic, and the making and breaking of codes. Given time and computing power, you can unravel everything from simple ciphers to the supercomputer algorithms of the future. You can:

- hack into secure computer systems to gather clues
- recover hidden, erased, or corrupted computer files
- increase the clarity of audio or video recordings, zeroing in on desired elements
- break codes in any language you can read
- deduce logic puzzles and calculate complex mathematical formulas
- use Burglary to break into particularly high-tech security systems
- use Tinkering as a computer skill, should a Hacking-related General ability test be needed for any reason (such as active opposition by an opposed hacker)

High Society (Interpersonal)

You know how to hang with the rich and famous, and how to chat them up without getting security called. You are comfortable with "old money" aristocracy, with the Davos elite, with the televised chattering classes, and with the crassest of nouveau riche vulgarians and celebutantes. Yachts, Gulfstreams, and three-star restaurants are your seeming natural habitat. You can:

- dress fashionably for any occasion
- get past the velvet rope at exclusive clubs and parties, or past the concierge at a four-star hotel
- drop brand names, allude to current trends, and generally blend in culturally with rich scenesters of all types
- identify the best wine, liquor, food, jewelry, and other luxury goods
- successfully schmooze for an introduction to, e.g., a celebrity, elected official, or financier
- recall specific or relevant gossip or news about the tastes, lifestyles, or sordid behavior of a rich or famous person
- know where and when the best parties, most culturally important openings, or other gala events in any city are due to happen
- score drugs or otherwise find the seamy side (if any) of high-society functions, happening nightclubs, etc.
- interact with the rich and famous as an accepted equal

Note that this ability does not necessarily convey any actual wealth or fame. The Director can,

if she wishes, allow an agent to use family connections or a liberated Company slush fund to explain it.

History (Academic)

You're an expert in recorded human history, with an emphasis on its political, military, and economic and technological developments. You can:

- recognize obscure historical allusions
- recall capsule biographies of famous historical figures
- tell where and when an object made during historical times was fashioned
- identify the period of an article of dress or costume

[For TimeWatch, History may be split into Ancient, Contemporary and Future abilities.]

Hunting (Technical)

As an experienced hunter, you know not only how to find, kill, and prepare edible game, but also how to:

- follow a track in the wilderness
- find your way out of the woods when lost
- understand the behavior of wild animals
- tell which creature a bone, hank of fur, or feather came from
- tell whether other people have been in a wild area, and how long ago they passed by

On a spend/Push you can:

- put hunters at ease or gain assistance from them
- bag a game animal of your choice (must be native to the area), refreshing your Scrounging pool.

Impersonate (Interpersonal)

You're good at posing as another person, whether briefly misrepresenting yourself during a phone call or spending long periods undercover in a fictional identity.

Successfully disguising yourself as an actual person known to those you're interacting with is extraordinarily difficult. Brief voice-only mimicry requires a spend of at least 1.

Face-to-face impersonation requires a spend of at least 2 to 3 points for every five minutes of sustained contact between you and the object of your impersonation. Especially wary or intelligent subjects cost more to hoodwink than dull-witted walk-on characters.

Inspiration (Interpersonal)

You convince reluctant witnesses to supply information by appealing to their better selves. After a few moments of interaction you intuitively sense the positive values they hold dearest, then invoke them in a brief but stirring speech.

Interrogation (Interpersonal)

You're trained in extracting information from suspects and witnesses in the context of a formal police-style interview. This must take place in an official setting, where the subject is confined or feels under threat of confinement, and recognizes your authority (whether real or feigned.)

Intimidation (Interpersonal)

You elicit cooperation from suspects by seeming physically imposing, invading their personal space, and adopting a psychologically commanding manner. Intimidation may involve implied or direct threats of physical violence but is just as often an act of mental dominance. You can:

- gain information
- inspire the subject to leave the area
- quell a subject's desire to attempt violence against you or others

Intuition (Technical)

Your acute attention to inexpressible details in your environment allows you to make instinctive leaps of logic you can't entirely explain. You can sense when a person or place has been touched by eerie influence.

On first meeting, you can sense strangers' motivations and guess at the dramatic events that drive them. This happens only when you know nothing about them beforehand.

Occasionally you spot, unbidden, a surprising and enlightening connection between two apparently disconnected elements of a place you're seeing for the first time. For example:

- when entering a château, you might suddenly and correctly guess that an item is hidden amid the ashes of its fireplace
- in an asylum, you might realize that a withdrawn patient is having an affair with the chief administrator
- in a roadside tavern, you might intuit that the smell of meat simmering from the kitchen comes from human flesh

When you first read this description, you may worry that it's too powerful. There's a catch, though! Intuition is a most capricious quality: it works only when it suits the GM's purposes in moving the story forward. Otherwise, you and the rest of the group have to rely on practical abilities, not hunches.

Languages (Academic)

For each rating point in Languages, you are verbally fluent and literate in one language other than your native tongue. You may specify these when you create your character, or choose opportunistically in the course of play, revealing that you just happen to speak Javanese when circumstances require it. You are not learning the language spontaneously but revealing a hitherto unmentioned fact about your character. You may elect to be literate in an ancient language which is no longer spoken.

Leadership (Interpersonal)

Gain information from others who are your inferiors in the military hierarchy, and from others, civilians included, who crave or respect formal assertions of authority.

Make a spend/Push to impel soldiers lower than you, in your chain of command, to execute an order not only diligently but to the absolute tiptop of their ability.

Make a spend/Push to gain calm and cooperation from civilians who desire order or clear direction.

Make a spend/Push to impress a superior with your ability to command your inferiors, gaining recognition or assistance.

Law (Academic)

You are familiar with the criminal and civil laws of your home jurisdiction, and broadly acquainted with foreign legal systems. At a rating of 2 or more, you are a bar-certified attorney. You can:

- assess the legal risks attendant on any course of action
- understand lawyerly jargon
- argue with police and prosecutors

Linguistics (Academic)

You are an expert in the principles and structures underlying languages. You can probably speak other Languages, but that is a separate ability that must be purchased separately. You can:

- given a large enough sample of text, decipher the basic meaning of an unknown language
- identify the languages most similar to an unknown language
- identify artificial, alien and made-up languages

Locksmith (Technical)

You can open doors and locks, and disarm alarms, without benefit of the key. (You can also find convenient windows to jimmy or coal-cellar doors to force, if need be.) Many locks require specialized tools, possession of which without a locksmith's license is a criminal offense in most jurisdictions. Very complex or tricky locks may require spends to open them speedily, to avoid noise or damage, or to relock afterward.

Using Locksmith is, in other words, a way to gather clues. A lock that won't open is like a witness that won't talk or a bloodstain you can't find: antithetical to mystery-solving, investigative-adventure design. Only safes, bank vaults, and the like – locks that exist to drive drama or conflict, rather than locks which merely hold clues — require actual tests against Difficulty.

Medical Expertise (Technical)

You are trained in carrying out medical examinations of living human subjects, performing autopsies on the deceased, and forming diagnoses based on your findings. With 2 or more points of Medical Expertise you are likely a trained and certified doctor. You can:

- establish a person's general level of health
- prescribe treatment for a treatable condition
- perform autopsies
- diagnose probable causes of addiction, disease, sickness, injury, poisoning, or death
- tell if a subject is a shape-shifted nonhuman
- perform DNA analysis on subjects, identifying their likely relatives
- interact with medical professionals as a peer, understanding medical jargon and practices from throughout history

Military History (Academic)

Having studied wars and warfare, you can:

- inspect weapons, identifying their approximate age, condition, country of origin, and manufacturer, specifying whether they were made for civilian or military use
- identify battlefields, reconstructing the engagements fought there
- recall famous battles and the tactics that determined their victors
- tell the rank and specialty of a soldier, past or present, from their uniform

Military Tactics (Academic)

You are a student of warfare, probably trained as such in a military academy or through hard experience on a battlefield. This expertise includes a knowledge of military history, strategy, and tactics, and the weapons, technologies, and engineering techniques of the battlefield. You can:

- identify an unknown military or paramilitary force by examining the weapons, uniforms, or insignia they use
- deduce a soldier's training and assignment history from his demeanor and use of slang and jargon
- spot weaknesses in an enemy's fortifications or tactics
- know the key turning point of a historical battle
- deduce whether a battle is being won through the use of anachronistic technology or tactics
- analyze the effectiveness of an enemy's battle tactics
- examine traces of a hand-to-hand skirmish and recreate the fight

Natural History (Academic)

You study the evolution, behavior, and biology of plants and animals. You can:

- tell when an animal is behaving strangely
- tell whether an animal or plant is natural to a given area
- identify an animal from samples of its hair, blood, bones or other tissue
- identify a plant from a small sample

Negotiation (Interpersonal)

You are an expert in making deals with others, convincing them that the best arrangement for you is also the best for them. You can:

- haggle for goods and services
- mediate hostage situations
- swap favors or information with others

Notice (Technical)

You are adept at noticing subtle details and finding important clues. This is the generic ability for spotting a hidden clue or a disguised imposter, maintaining general situational awareness, or noticing a nonthreatening visual anomaly. You can:

- spot hidden objects and objects of interest at an investigation site
- notice subtle errors in a disguise
- case a location to spot guards, cameras, multiple entrances, potential security response, and the like
- notice signs of a previous search of the location
- find anachronistic technology that is currently in use, or signs of future tech that has recently been used in a location
- note relationships between objects at a crime scene, reconstructing sequences of events
- cold read someone, analyzing their body language and behavior to draw conclusions about them

Occult Studies (Academic)

You're an expert in the historical study of magic, superstition, and hermetic practice from the stone age to the present. From Satanists to the Golden Dawn, you know the dates, the places, the controversies, and the telling anecdotes. You can:

- identify the cultural traditions informing a ritual from examining its physical aftermath
- supply historical facts concerning various occult traditions

- guess the intended effect of a ritual from its physical aftermath
- identify occult activities as the work of informed practitioners, teenage posers, or *bona fide* Esoterrorists

Your knowledge of the occult is that of a detached, even disapproving, outsider. This ability does not allow you to work magic or summon supernatural entities. Doing either of these things is bad, the work of Esoterrorists. It weakens the fabric of reality and warps the practitioner's psyche. You can, at best, fake your way through a ritual while attempting to pass yourself off as a believer. Even in this situation, your actions do not evoke supernatural effects. Your covertly hostile presence may, in fact, be enough to prevent an Esoterror ritual from achieving efficacy.

As mentioned earlier, all characters built for the Esoterrorist setting get Occult Studies 1 for free.

Oral History (Interpersonal)

You can find sources willing to talk, win their confidence, and gather (usually lengthy) oral testimony about historical events, local traditions, folklore, family legend, or gossip. This is an excellent way to do research in illiterate or semi-literate societies, and in rural or small-town communities in general. This ability also covers taking shorthand notes or making recordings without spooking your sources.

Against an armored enemy during a fight, spending 1 or more points of Notice might allow you to target unarmored portions of their body for several rounds, ignoring part or all of their armor when calculating damage.

Outdoor Survival (Technical)

You have lived and worked outdoors and in the wild, possibly during a rural upbringing or isolated military service. You can:

- accurately determine the weather for the next day
- tell when an animal is acting strangely
- tell whether an animal or plant is natural to a given area and time
- hunt, fish, and find edible plants
- ride a horse (using Athletics to determine how well)
- make fire and survive outdoors at night or in bad weather
- navigate overland
- track people, animals, or vehicles across grass or through forests

Painting (Technical)

As a fine art painter of some promise, you can:
- make quick sketches to retain the key details of a scene
- remember and distinguish faces and postures of individuals you see in person, no matter

how briefly

- detect unnatural elements in a landscape, for example, a real-life error of perspective suggesting its corruption by alien physics
- tell forgeries from genuine works
- determine whether two pictures were produced by the same hand

Making a noteworthy painting requires a spend/Push.

Pathology (Academic)

You are trained in carrying out medical examinations of living human subjects and forming diagnoses based on your findings. You can

- diagnose probable causes of sickness or injury
- identify the extent and cause of an unconscious person's trauma
- detect when a person is suffering from a physically debilitating condition such as drug addiction, pregnancy or malnutrition
- establish a person's general level of health
- identify medical abnormalities

If you have 8 or more points in **Medic** you get **Pathology** 1 for free.

People Person (Interpersonal)

"Hey, I think my sister works with your aunt!"

You can make a new acquaintance from any walk of life feel like your new best friend. You chat with folks, learn their stories, and file them in your ever-expanding memory vault. You foster a comfort level that leads them to talk without even realizing that they've let their guard down. You can:

- recall gossip and details about prominent but non-famous people, including details of their careers, romantic lives, and connections to the old regime or People's Congress
- deduce details of a person's biography from the way they speak, dress, and hold themselves
- reliably intuit whether an otherwise unknown individual you're meeting in person for the first time fought for or against the Castaignes, or sat the revolution out
- observe a group of people and see who hates who, who's sleeping with who, and who wishes they were sleeping with who
- divine the nature of a person's ambitions from innocuous small talk

On a spend/Push, get practical assistance, rather than information, from someone you just met.

Photography (Technical)

You're proficient in the use of cameras, including still and video photography. You can:

- take useful visual records of crime scenes
- spot manual retouching or digital manipulation in a photographic or video image
- realistically retouch and manipulate images

Poetry (Academic)

You study poetry, and write your own. You can recall a variety of historical facts about any culture or era that gave birth to poetry of any kind, from the Sumerians to today. You know Paris' poets, understanding their rivalries and alliances, and can successfully pass yourself off as an aficionado of any school. You can rattle off the requirements of any form, from the quatrain to the sonnet.

An improvised poem may induce cooperation from anyone who appreciates the form. This costs you nothing when you seek information. Other favors require a spend/Push.

To write a memorable poem, make a spend/Push.

Political Science (Academic)

You study the relationships between nations, and between competing branches and factions of government. You can:

- impress visiting civilian dignitaries, gaining their trust and the disclosures that come with it
- tell whether a civilian leader is honest or dishonest, competent or incompetent
- ease disputes between your forces and their allies, or between contending groups from two different allied forces
- gauge the mood of civilians toward the military
- enter a village and tell who's really in charge (which may or may not be the mayor or other official who is supposed to be running things)
- predict the reactions of a village, town, or city to a proposed action
- tell when a population's behavior has gone somehow awry

Reassurance (Interpersonal)

You get people to do what you want by putting them at ease. You can:

- elicit information and minor favors
- allay fear or panic in others
- instill a sense of calm during a crisis

Research (Academic)

You know how to find factual information from books, records, and official sources. You're as

comfortable with a card catalog and fiche reader as with an Internet search engine. The contacts file on your personal digital assistant brims with phone numbers of exotic and useful contacts.

Respect (Interpersonal)

Your knowledge of social rituals allows you to gain information and favors with a culturally appropriate show of respect for a subject. This ability applies to subjects who consider themselves figures of authority, or who hold real or imagined power over you. By showing respect, you preserve your status as well as the subject's.

Salt of the Earth (Interpersonal)

As a farmer or other humble laborer, you get along well with peasants and other ordinary folk. You can:

- gain their trust, getting them to reveal information they wouldn't share with a bourgeois or high-hat
- tell whether a manual task has been done well or poorly
- at a glance, tell whether a peasant is hardworking or lazy, clever or dimwitted, guileless or treacherous
- understand the limits of rural civilian cooperation

Science! (Technical)

You're a scientific and engineering expert, knowledgeable about astronomy, biology, chemistry, physics, and other forms of science. If you have 1 or more points in this ability you may use the General ability Tinkering to fix advanced, high-tech machinery that the GM might otherwise not let you repair.

This ability does not cover chronal mechanics, which fall under the ability Timecraft. Computer-related knowledge falls under the ability Hacking.

You can:

- quickly develop theories and conclusions about scientific phenomena
- make rapid mathematical calculations and determine orbital mechanics
- identify drugs and synthesize most chemical compounds if given an adequate laboratory
- determine the usage of mysterious scientific equipment or control panels in an unfamiliar ship or laboratory

Sculpture (Technical)

As a sculptor of some promise, you know the history and practice of the form. You can:
- identify the era and culture of archaeological sculptures and objects
- look at a work and name its maker, if he is a known figure, no matter how obscure

- tell a fake from the genuine item
- discourse on metallurgy
- distinguish various sorts of clay from one another
- calculate how much weight a floor can support

To create a memorable work, make a spend/Push.

Society (Interpersonal)

Accustomed to traveling in polite society, you understand the etiquette and mores of the ruling class and *haute bourgeoisie*. You gain cooperation and information from persons of good standing by winning their trust, as one who knows how to behave and exercise discretion. You know where these people live and how to gain entrance to their parlors to talk to them without arousing suspicion. Regular study of the society pages keeps you up to date on all of the latest betrothals, marriages, births, and business arrangements. On a spend/Push, you can gain non-informational favors from society types.

Spying (Technical)

You're adept with the art of spying, including spycraft, countersigns, safe houses, electronic surveillance, and the use of surreptitious photographic and sound-recording equipment. Using either your tether or contemporary technology, you can:

- trace phone calls
- hijack security cameras
- plant secret listening devices, and locate devices planted by others
- make and enhance high-quality visual records and audio recordings
- realistically manipulate audio, photographs, or video images
- ensure with some certainty that you are not being spied upon
- pass as a spy, whether to someone looking to hire a spy or to an actual agent in the intelligence community

Streetwise (Interpersonal)

You know how to behave among crooks, gang-bangers, druggies, hookers and other habitués of the criminal underworld. You can:

- deploy criminal etiquette to avoid fights and conflicts
- identify unsafe locations and dangerous people
- gather underworld rumors

Taunt (Interpersonal)

You are an expert at infuriating others, driving them to such fury that they let their secrets slip. This may be accomplished through sarcasm, disdain, mocking, insults, or public humiliation.

However you manage it, you know how to make people angry enough to talk before thinking, and you know how to steer the conversation once you do. You can:

- gain clues by making a subject too angry to think straight
- drive an antagonist into a furious monologue
- know when a threat is sincere, and when it's just posturing
- cause a supporting character to boast about her plans while insulting or threatening you in return
- make a subject desire to attempt violence against you or others

Terrain (Technical)

You understand geography from a warrior's point of view. You can:

- read maps
- point out anomalies and mistakes on maps
- spot the best available sniper position
- distinguish readily defensible positions from those the enemy will easily overrun
- find good places to hide—which are also likely spots to be ambushed from
- tell when something bizarre has affected the landscape
- predict lighting conditions in a given location at various times of day under various degrees of cloud cover
- rattle off the current lunar phase without resorting to an almanac
- orient yourself without a compass

Textual Analysis (Academic)

By studying the content of texts (as opposed to their physical characteristics of documents) you can draw reliable inferences about their authorship. You can:

- determine if an anonymous text is the work of a known author, based on samples of his work
- determine the era in which a text was written
- identify the writer's region, and level of education
- tell a real work by an author from a false one

Tradecraft (Interpersonal)

You know how to utilize the techniques of conventional espionage agents, and how to talk to them if you must hold a meet. You can:

- set up and check a dead drop
- spot or conduct a brush pass or car toss
- determine which agency trained a covert operative by examining his tradecraft,

surveillance methods, etc.

- ⚔ identify good places for recognition signs, cleaning passes, etc.
- ⚔ recall notorious or relevant episodes of spying, covert ops, etc.
- ⚔ gather rumors in the covert ops world
- ⚔ make contact with operatives without scaring them off
- ⚔ convey information or threats elliptically without tipping off eavesdroppers

Traffic Analysis (Technical)

You know how to boil down a mass of data — probably raw signals intel, a tranche of phone records, or possibly a whole lot of surveillance tapes — and extract its meaning and patterns. Given the data, you can:

- determine which numbers in a set of phone records are calling who, when, about what
- determine which cars in a city's traffic pattern are driving where, when, and how long they're staying there
- find patterns in the data flow, e.g., more murders in August, or the same museum guard on duty during all the incidents
- work out the daily (and weekly, monthly, etc.) routine of an office, military base, museum, etc. and answer questions like: When is payroll made? Who takes delivery of parcels? When does the cleaning staff arrive?
- find anomalies in the data flow, e.g., missing records or "dogs that didn't bark"
- find weak spots in security that follows a regular pattern
- identify the source of information (or disinformation) by tracking its route through the system
- assemble a communications or organizational picture of a social network such as a criminal conspiracy, academic email list, or division of border guards

Trivia (Academic)

You're a font of apparently useless information that would stand you in good stead as a contestant on a quiz show. You're especially good in the following spheres of interest:

- celebrities and entertainment
- sports records and statistics
- geography
- arts and letters
- names in the news

This catch-all ability also allows you to know any obscure fact not covered by another GUMSHOE ability. (In moments of improvisatory desperation, your GM may allow you to overlap with abilities which none of the players at the current session possess, or which no one is thinking to use.)

Exotic Investigative Abilities

[Evocation of your setting and genre may prompt you to introduce general abilities allowing characters to glean information via means, inherent or technological, unavailable to nonfictional characters. Here are two examples.]

Analytic Taste

Your sense of taste is superhuman, and you have, by trial and error, trained yourself to use it as a precision instrument. You function as a walking, talking chemical analysis lab, able to instantly detect the composition of nearly any object you can touch your tongue to. By distinguishing fine gradations of taste, you can, for example, match a sample of heroin to the precise batch it came from, or conduct a comparative analysis of soil samples. Although you may for good reason be reluctant to do so, you can even identify blood types from small samples, or derive similar identifying or typing information from other bodily fluids.

Some individuals with analytic taste suffer from high revulsion thresholds and can only enjoy the purest, most perfect foods. Others become inured to traditional pleasures associated with the sense of taste, or become passionate connoisseurs of substances ordinary people consider inedible.

When using this sense, you consume, at most, only trace quantities of the substances you test. Analytic taste grants no ability to digest inedible matter.

Although this power grants no poison immunity, only the most toxic of substances will harm you in the tiny trace quantities required for analysis.

{From Mutant City Blues]

Aura Reading

To those with the sight to see, every living organism is surrounded by a nimbus of energy. By studying the color and movement of this energy, you gain insight into people and animals.

When you read a person's aura, you can:

- examine the subject's general emotional state, determining which of the following adjectives best fits his current condition:
- joyful, depressed, angry, amused, confused, frightened, or relaxed. (Costs 2 points per
- attempt.)
- tell whether the subject is healthy or determine if the subject is under the influence of a spirit or other supernatural being. (Costs 4 points per attempt.)

[From Fear Itself]

Paradox Prevention (Technical)

If you're a time traveler, you're bound to run into paradoxes. This ability allows you to recognize them, predict them, solve them, and even use them to your advantage. When a historical change ripples through everyone around you, you'll notice and remember true history.

You can:

- know what sort of actions might cause paradoxes and chronal instability
- notice when time has changed around you, and retain a memory of previous timelines (although that memory may be fuzzy or incomplete)
- sense when you interact with a change in the correct timeline
- determine methods for fixing disrupted timelines
- recognize anachronisms by touch (such as neural disruptor rifles disguised as blunderbusses)
- recognize an anachronistic individual by touch (and occasionally sight), regardless of their disguise
- by touch (and occasionally sight), recognize an individual who has been absorbed by the timeline due to chronal instability or paradox

[From TimeWatch]

Timecraft (Academic)

You know the official rules and procedures of TimeWatch, including techniques for cleanly re-establishing a diverted timeline and how to operate all official TimeWatch technology. If you have two or more points of Timecraft, you are an expert on chronal theory, including the knowledge of other nonhuman species and organizations that are opposed or allied with TimeWatch.

You can:

- operate a time machine
- operate chronomorphic technology to disguise futuristic devices
- identify timeline changes that create parallel timelines or paradoxical time loops
- predict how timeline changes ripple outwards, and predict the scope and strength of those timeline changes
- identify signs of alien influence and mind control in others
- use a time machine to reach the Citadel, TimeWatch's secret headquarters that resides outside of the normal flow of history
- use a time machine to track a quarry through time by following their time vortices
- if your GM and campaign frame allow it, identify the location and existence of parallel dimensions and time streams
- use the MEM-tagging process to remove anachronistic knowledge from unconscious witnesses
- remove traces of your true identity and origin before departing a timeline
- with 2 points of Timecraft and the Tinkering ability, repair a time machine or install chronomorphic technology

[From TimeWatch]

General Abilities

[Rewrite general ability descriptions as needed for your setting. Rename abilities for desired flavor. Create new abilities keyed to your setting. Include only abilities relevant to your setting in your game. Some investigative abilities tie into specific general abilities and vice versa; make sure you either include both relevant abilities, or drop the cross-references between them.]

Almost every General ability has a **cherry,** a feature that kicks in when the character has 8 rating points or more in it. Agents can always use that special benefit, even if their pool in that ability has dropped to 0.

Some GUMSHOE iterations, including Night's Black Agents, permit the following:]

Many General abilities also function as **Investigative** abilities, either when used to gather a clue (rather than to overcome opposition) or to interact with people devoted to those abilities' use: Hand-to-Hand, for example, can be used investigatively to infiltrate a dojo or gymnasium, and to gather information or gossip from the clientele or managers.

[Some GUMSHOE games, like Ashen Stars, maintain a tighter separation between investigative and general abilities, so that the general Business Affairs ability, used to keep a crew's finances humming, doesn't garner you the clues you get from the investigative Forensic Accounting ability. To use this more restrictive approach, omit the above paragraph.]

Artillery (Physical)

Allows you to operate weaponry systems too large to be carried by a person, including mortars and high-caliber mounted guns.

Athletics (Physical)

Athletics allows you to perform general acts of physical derring-do, from running to jumping to dodging falling or oncoming objects. Any physical action not covered by another ability, probably falls under the rubric of Athletics.

If your Athletics rating is 8 or more, your Hit Threshold, the Target Number your opponents use when attempting to hit you in combat, is 4. Otherwise, your Hit Threshold is 3.

Battlefield (Focus)

Since Agincourt the main way not to be killed in battle is to remain outside the kill zone created by incoming fire. Use this ability to remain alive in the midst of a mass combat or while under bombardment. In *Paris* you mostly used Athletics to avoid injury hazards; here you rely chiefly on Battlefield.

Burglary (Focus)

You're good at placing yourself inside places you have no right to be, and you're good at taking things once you're there. With a successful Burglary test, you can:

- pick pockets
- unobtrusively search a target's pockets

- plant objects on unsuspecting subjects
- pick locks
- deactivate or evade security systems (although particularly high-tech security systems might require you to have a point in the Investigative ability Hacking)
- find suitable places for forced entry, and use them

Many locks require specialized tools that can be produced with a Preparedness test; such tools range from simple lock picks to sonic high-tech multi-tools. Complex or tricky locks may have a higher than usual Difficulty to open them speedily, to avoid noise or damage, or to relock afterward.

Business Affairs (Presence)

You know how to run a profitable business.

Composure / Stability (Presence)

Jarring or stressful events can exert a damaging long- psychological toll. Your Stability rating indicates your resistance to mental trauma.

[Standard GUMSHOE] You get 1 point for free.

Conceal (Focus)

You can hide things from view and conceal them from search. Your methods might include camouflage, holding items out on your person, snaking things into drawers unobserved, building secret compartments, or even altering a thing's visual signature with paint or plaster.

This ability also allows you to discover things intentionally concealed.

Disguise (Presence)

This is the skill of altering your own appearance, posture, and voice to be unrecognizable. Disguising others in anything more complex than a baseball cap or false mustache is good only for brief periods, as posture and body language are vital components in any successful disguise.

This ability also covers selling yourself as a different person: vocal mannerisms, altered body language, dress and motion sense, and realistic-seeming reactions.

Successfully disguising yourself as an actual person already known to those you're interacting with is extraordinarily difficult. Brief voice-only mimicry pits you against a Difficulty of 4. Face-to-face impersonation requires a successful roll against a Difficulty of 7 for every five minutes of sustained contact between you and the object of your impersonation.

Driving (Physical)

You're a skilled defensive driver, capable of wringing high performance from even the most recalcitrant automobile, pick-up truck, or van. You can:

- evade or conduct pursuit

- avoid collisions, or minimize damage from collisions
- spot tampering with a vehicle
- conduct emergency repairs

For every additional rating point in Driving, you may add an additional vehicle type to your repertoire. These include: motorcycle, transport truck, helicopter, or airplane. You may choose exotic types, like hovercrafts and tanks, although these are unlikely to see regular use in an investigation-based game.

Explosives (Focus)

You're an expert in bombs and booby-traps. You can:
- defuse bombs and traps
- handle nitroglycerine or other dangerously unstable materials with relative safety
- given time, blow open safes or vaults without damaging the contents
- mix explosive compounds from common chemicals
- safely construct and detonate explosive devices or booby-traps of your own

Explosives doubles as an investigative ability when used to:
- reconstruct exploded bombs
- for any bomb (exploded or unexploded), determine the method and materials of the bomb-maker, and deduce his sophistication, background, and skill

Fighting (Physical)

Used when you enter into physical struggle with adversaries, including not only combat but also fleeing and pursuit.

You will have to pay a Toll, even when otherwise victorious, to avoid taking a Minor Injury. You can use Fighting points (along with Health and Athletics) to pay Tolls.

[This catch-all combat ability encompasses Fleeing, Shooting, and Scuffling.]

Filch (Focus)

Your nimble fingers allow you to unobtrusively manipulate small objects. You can:
- pilfer clues from a crime scene under the very noses of unsuspecting authorities
- pick pockets
- plant objects on unsuspecting subjects

Fleeing (Physical)

Although you are not a strong overall athlete, you can boot it like a bat out of hell when chased by dangerous people, beings, or moving objects.

If your Fleeing rating is more than twice your final Athletics rating, you can buy rating points in Fleeing above the value at a reduced rate, getting 2 rating points for each build point spent.

Hence, if your Athletics rating is 0, all your Fleeing is half-price.

Gambling (Presence)

You are conversant with the rules and etiquette of all forms of gambling, from Texas hold 'em and roulette to horse racing and numbers rackets. To win (or strategically lose) at a game of chance or sporting flutter requires a Gambling test, or a contest if played against an NPC with the Gambling ability. In addition to playing by the rules and winning, you can:

- ⚔ spot cheating, either by the house or by another player
- ⚔ stack a deck, rig a horse race, load dice, or otherwise cheat

Palming cards, tiles, or dice is allowed as a Gambling test; anything else requires Conceal or Filch.

Gambling doubles as an **Investigative** ability when used to:

- ⚔ calculate the odds of events ruled by probabilities
- ⚔ use Bullshit Detector on professional gamblers despite their poker faces
- ⚔ interact with gamblers and blend in at casinos

Health (Physical)

Health measures your ability to sustain injuries, resist infection, and survive the effects of toxins[1]. When you get hit in the course of a fight, your Health pool is diminished. A higher Health pool allows you to stay in a fight longer before succumbing to your injuries.

[Standard GUMSHOE] When your Health pool is depleted, you may be dazed, wounded, or pushing up the daisies. For more on this, see "Exhaustion, Injury and Gruesome Death."

Hypnosis (Presence)

This ability represents medical hypnosis as depicted in pulpy genre sources; it is not psychic mesmerism or Dr Caligari-style mind control. You can only hypnotize a *willing* subject, and only one subject at a time. Using Hypnosis requires a Test against a Difficulty Number that varies depending on what you are using it for.

• *Simple hypnotic state:* To place a patient in a hypnotic trance, you must succeed against Difficulty 3. During this trance, she is calm and placid.

• *Establish analytic rapport:* Once you have successfully hypnotized a patient, your Psychoanalysis pool increases by 3 during any future use of Psychoanalysis on them. Your Psychoanalysis rating must be at least 3 to gain this benefit, and the 3 points must be spent on the patient.

• *Recover memories:* The patient's fragmented or buried memories, as of dreams, traumas, or murky monster attacks, can be called to the surface and "relived." This is a Difficulty 4 test. Reliving an experience that cost Stability will cost the patient the same amount again, although you may practice immediate Psychological Triage to minimize the patient's shock. The GM is free

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[1]

to provide false memories if she feels you are "leading the witness."

• *Post-hypnotic suggestion:* Upon lifting the trance, you may cause your patient to perform a single action without apparent thought. You may require a "trigger phrase" or simply specify a time: ("When you get home, you'll leave the book on the desk.") Spells and other complex activities cannot be post-hypnotically induced. The patient will not accept a suggestion contrary to her normal behavior. This is a Difficulty 4 or higher test; the GM may increase the Difficulty based on the suggestion.

• *Ease pain:* You can relieve symptomatic pain in a patient. This removes the mechanical penalties for being hurt and lasts until the patient is wounded again. This is a Difficulty 4 or higher test; the GM may increase the Difficulty depending on the pain's severity. *This does not work under battlefield conditions.*

• *False memories:* You can purposely implant false memories in the patient or bury real ones. This is extremely unethical without a direct therapeutic benefit (such as easing a remembered trauma). This is a Contest between your Hypnosis and the patient's Stability. Your Difficulty Number is 5; the patient resists with Difficulty 4. Again, the GM may increase your Difficulty based on the severity of the memory change. At the GM's discretion, if the patient suffers a further trauma (such as her Stability dropping below -5 again), she may suddenly recall the truth.

Infiltration (Physical)

You're good at placing yourself inside places you have no right to be. You can:

- pick locks
- deactivate or evade security systems
- move silently
- find suitable places for forced entry, and use them

Despite its name, Infiltration is as useful for getting out of places undetected as if its for getting into them.

Insurgency (Focus)

This ability incorporates Traps and Bombs, plus the following:

Before attacking human (or strongly human-like) targets in a location you have the opportunity to case in advance, you can devise the most efficient plan of attack, dealing maximum harm at minimum risk.

Make an Insurgency test with a Difficulty keyed to the location: 4 for most civilian targets, 5 for a secure military target, 6 for an ultra-secure installation.

On success with a margin of 2 or less, all combatants on your side get a +1 Fighting bonus. A higher margin nets a +2 bonus for all.

This also allows you to defend against attackers using guerrilla tactics against a position you have had time to hunker down in. Here the Difficulties flip: 6 for a civilian location, 5 for military, 4 for ultra-secure. When defending you can make a Counterinsurgency Push for a +4

bonus on your roll.

Insurgency tests take the place of extended planning sessions in which players manage the tactical details of an assault, just as Preparedness skips the part in a classic RPG experience where you dutifully note in advance every item you're carrying around with you.

After a successful Insurgency test, ask the player, abetted by anyone else in the group who likes to describe skirmishes in loving Tom Clancy-esque detail, to describe the clever plans they've laid for their soon-to-be-attacked targets. In the ensuing Fighting test, they can describe them working to superb effect (if the group wins), or the GM can describe them being countered by a victorious foe.

Mechanics (Focus)

You're good at building, repairing, and disabling devices, from classic pit-and-pendulum traps to DVD players. Given the right components, you can create jury-rigged devices from odd bits of scrap. Mechanics doubles as an investigative ability when used to:

- evaluate the quality of workmanship used to create an item
- determine the identity of a handmade item's maker by comparing to known work by that individual

[You may wish to maintain the flavor of certain settings by splitting this into multiple disciplines, each specializing in its own particular subset of technology. In TimeWatch, this ability is named Tinkering.]

Medic / First Aid (Focus)

You can perform first aid on sick or injured individuals.

Morale (Presence)

Think of Morale as the outward-going counterpart to Composure. When the terrors of war impel other soldiers to flee or curl up into a ball, a Morale success returns them to their senses and keeps them fighting.

As long as your character can be heard by another PC, you can spend any number of points from your Morale pool to refresh that PC's Composure pool by the same number of points. The GM may ask you to describe or act out the inspiring speech or exclamation that fills the recipient with renewed resolve.

You can't use Morale to refill your own Composure pool.

In addition, you can make Morale tests to:

- allow other PCs to discard certain Shock cards (when the text of the card says this is possible)
- motivate GMC soldiers to risk their lives, as they were trained to do

Network (Focus)

You know somebody, probably but not necessarily from your days in the resistance, who can

help you with a tricky, but no more than moderately dangerous, logistical problem. Test this ability not to solve the main problem you currently face, but a secondary dilemma that would otherwise distract you from the main problem. They don't do things for you; they make it easier for you to do things.

With Network you might:

- tap a couple of experienced operators to protect a witness while you continue your investigation
- find a sniper to fire a well-timed round that will drive opponents into your ambush, (and then slip away, leaving you to risk your skin in the actual fight)
- know an absolutely discreet chop shop where you can get the vehicle you used in an operation quickly disassembled, no questions asked
- borrow restricted weapons
- gain access to a vault where you can stash the evidence you've collected
- get that priest who used to shelter dissidents to make his cathedral available as neutral ground for a secret meeting

Politics (Presence)

Politics tests allow you to win over allies and fend off rivals as you pursue the group Goal that runs as a subplot in parallel with your investigation into a scenario's central mystery.

Piloting (Physical)

You can fly one or more airborne vehicles. You can:

- ⚊ evade or conduct pursuit
- ⚊ anticipate bad weather
- ⚊ avoid collisions, or minimize damage from collisions
- ⚊ spot tampering with a vehicle
- ⚊ navigate by compass or the stars, read maps, and maintain a sense of direction
- ⚊ conduct emergency repairs

[You may require the player to specify a particular type of craft, gaining 1 vehicle per 2 rating points. Rewrite to reflect the air vehicles prevalent in your setting. In some settings you might include water craft in this ability.]

Preparedness (Presence)

You expertly anticipate the needs of any mission by packing a kit efficiently arranged with necessary gear. Assuming you have immediate access to your kit, you can produce whatever object the team needs to overcome an obstacle. You make a simple test; if you succeed, you have the item you want. You needn't do this in advance of the adventure, but can dig into your kit bag (provided you're able to get to it) as the need arises.

Items of obvious utility to a paranormal investigation do not require a test. These include but

are not limited to: note paper, writing implements, laptop computer, a PDA with wireless Internet access, mini USB drive, cell phone, various types of tape, common tools and hardware, light weapons, flashlights of various sizes, chem lights, batteries, magnifying glasses, thermometer, and a no-frills audio recording device.

The utility of traditional anti-supernatural accoutrements such as crucifixes, holy water, and silver bullets is a matter of great debate within the Ordo Veritatis. Whether you choose to include them in your basic kit reveals your attitude toward the supernatural. Is it purely the work of the Esoterrorists, or are there other unnatural forces out there? Decide for yourself, and pack wisely.

Other abilities imply the possession of basic gear suitable to their core tasks. Characters with Medic have their own first aid kits; Photographers come with cameras and accessories. If you have Shooting, you have a gun, and so on. Preparedness does not intrude into their territory. It covers general-purpose investigative equipment, plus oddball items that suddenly come in handy in the course of the story.

The sorts of items you can produce at a moment's notice depend not on your rating or pool, but on narrative credibility. If the GM determines that your possession of an item would seem ludicrous or and/or out of genre, you don't get to roll for it. You simply don't have it. Any item which elicits a laugh from the group when suggested is probably out of bounds.

Inappropriate use of the Preparedness ability is like pornography. Your GM will know it when she sees it.

Public Relations (Presence)

You manage the public image of your team or others. You unruffle feathers, burnish reputations, downplay failures, and trumpet successes.

When keeping the locals onside during a case, the GM may allow you to spend Reassurance or Respect points on Public Relations tests.

Riding (Physical)

Although staying on a tame, untroubled walking horse (on flattish terrain, anyway) is relatively easy once one gets the hang of it, and staying on a mule or burro even easier, you are a gifted equestrian. You can gallop even recalcitrant or spirited horses, donkeys, and mules past distractions and across the countryside. You can:

- ⚔ evade or conduct mounted pursuit
- ⚔ care for, groom, shoe, and stable mounts
- ⚔ take care of, prepare, and use riding gear such as saddles and bridles
- ⚔ calm a nervous mount
- ⚔ drive a horse-drawn wagon or cart
- ⚔ wield a weapon while riding

For every additional 2 rating points in Riding, you may add an additional riding animal: camel, water buffalo, or elephant.

Scrounging (Presence)

Allows you to find needed items in or around a war zone, through a mixture of ingratiation, horse-trading, and perhaps the odd moment of outright stealing.

Think of it as Preparedness for needs you had no way of preparing for.

In a restful moment or pause in the action, you can refresh a single other PC's Battlefield pool by producing a scrounged item that brings cheer or solace. You must describe it and can't describe the same item more than once in a single scenario. Items might include: baguettes, sausages, champagne bottles, books, cigars, shaving cream, or shampoo. Choose a number of Scrounging points to spend: the recipient refreshes Battlefield by the same amount. You can't transfer points from Scrounging to your own Battlefield pool.

Use Scrounging to refresh the entire squad's Battlefield and Athletics pools by Hunkering Down;

Scuffling (Physical)

You can hold your own in a hand-to-hand fight, whether you wish to kill, knock out, restrain, or evade your opponent.

[To preserve the flavor of certain settings you may wish to break this out into two abilities, for armed and unarmed close combat.]

Sense Trouble (Presence)

Keen perceptions allow you to spot signs of potential danger to yourself and others. Information gained from this ability might save your skins but doesn't directly advance the central mystery. You might use it to:

- ⚔ hear someone sneak up on you
- ⚔ see an obscured or hidden figure
- ⚔ smell a gas leak
- ⚔ have a bad feeling about this

Players never know the Difficulty Numbers for Sense Trouble before deciding how many points to spend, even in games where GMs generously inform the players of other Difficulty Numbers. Players must blindly choose how much to spend.

When more than one player is able to make a Sense Trouble test, the group decides which of them makes the attempt. Only one attempt per source of trouble occurs, conducted by the chosen PC.

Shrink (Presence)

You can provide comfort, perspective and solace to the mentally troubled. You may be a therapist or counselor, a priest or pastor, or just a empathetic and intuitive individual. You can restore panicked characters to a state of calm, and treat any long-term mental illnesses they accrue in the course of their investigations.

Shooting (Physical)

You are adept with firearms.

Composure / Stability (Presence)

Jarring or stressful events can exert a damaging long- psychological toll. Your Stability rating indicates your resistance to mental trauma.

[Standard GUMSHOE] You get Stability 1 for free.

Surveillance (Focus)

You're good at following suspects without revealing your presence. You can:

- guide a team to follow a suspect for short periods, handing off to the next in sequence, so the subject doesn't realize he's being trailed
- use telescopic viewing equipment to keep watch on a target from a distance
- find undetectable vantage points
- hide in plain sight
- perceive (either with sight or other senses) potential hazards to yourself or others.

8 or more points in Surveillance grants you 1 free point of the investigative ability Electronic Surveillance.

Traps and Bombs (Focus)

Use this ability to set or disarm mines, explosive charges, and booby traps. The latter may be explosive or purely mechanical.

Unobtrusiveness (Focus)

You're good at noticing other people trying to be unobtrusive, just as you're skilled at hiding and avoiding notice. It's up to you whether you use skill, technology, minor psychic prowess, or a combination of those to blend into the background. With a successful Unobtrusiveness test, you can:

- spot someone trying to hide or be sneaky
- avoid being surprised in combat
- surprise others in combat
- follow someone without being noticed
- hide in plain sight within a crowd
- blend into the shadows to hide
- escape from someone following you
- pass unnoticed despite being the sort of person who would normally attract attention

Exotic General Abilities

[Fidelity to your setting and genre may prompt you to introduce general abilities allowing characters to perform fantastical actions impossible in our world, or to interact with imaginary technologies. Here are some samples.]

It costs 5 build points to gain a rating of 1 in any [*exotic general ability*] and 1 build point for each additional build point after 1.

Chronal Stability

Chronal Stability is a measurement of your ability to stay anchored in time, even when paradox and chronal forces try to jar you loose and erase you from reality. A combination of personal resolve and inherent attachment to the fabric of reality, it's as important an ability as Health; dropping far below 0 Chronal Stability can literally turn you into a different person or erase you from existence. The higher your Chronal Stability, the better your ability to adapt to new time eras without accidentally becoming trapped in time or removed from history.

Lost Chronal Stability does not come back with rest and cannot be restored with standard pool refreshes. It must be restored with the General ability Reality Anchor, and is otherwise restored at the end of a mission.

[From TimeWatch]

Mutant Power: Blood Spray

You can perform a ranged attack in which you send a high-pressure spray of your own blood gushing from your mouth. You hit your target on a successful Blood Spray test. If you hit, the opponent must make an Athletics test, the Difficulty of which equals 4 plus any Blood Spray points you spent on the attack. If he fails the test, he is knocked over and must, in lieu of his next attack, make an Athletics test (against the same Difficulty) in order to regain his footing. If he fails, he continues to slip on the blood, losing further attacks until he finally succeeds.

A blood spray attack inspires instinctive revulsion. Anyone within direct visual range must make a Stability test or suffer the urge to flee. Victims with the Olfactory Center power add your Blood Spray pool to the Difficulty of this test.

Characters who do not flee suffer ill effects while they remain able to see and smell your blood: their Hit Thresholds decrease by 1, and the Hit Thresholds of anyone they're attempting to attack effectively increases by 1.

In addition to any Blood Spray points you spend, each use of this power costs you 3 Health points. Health points lost to Blood Spray use can be refreshed with a large meal of red meat, washed down with large quantities of orange juice or a similarly sugary drink, followed by an hour's nap.

[From Mutant City Blues]

Pathway Amplification

You can heighten another mind's ability to recall, process and interpret information. Once per episode, you may designate a PC recipient and an investigative ability that character possesses.

The PC adds your Pathway Amplification rating to his pool in that ability. The pool refreshes to normal at the case's conclusion.

[From Ashen Stars]

Reality Anchor

In the same way that the Medic ability restores Health, the Reality Anchor ability restores lost Chronal Stability to yourself and other Agents. This can save an Agent from literally disappearing out of existence when the universe decides he no longer belongs in it. Since Chronal Stability represents an Agent's determination to fight back against an uncaring time stream that seeks to erase him, Reality Anchor helps reinforce and bolster that willpower, literally talking a fellow Agent (or yourself) back from the edge of extinction. Whether in person or on a communicator, you must be in verbal contact with the person you're using Reality Anchor on. You remind them who they are, why they're there, and of your shared past. Doing so helps re-anchor them in reality by restoring lost Chronal Stability.

Unlike most other General abilities, you do not roll a d6 when spending Reality Anchor points to help someone. Every point you spend from your Reality Anchor pool restores 2 Chronal Stability points to someone else or 1 Chronal Stability point to you. Chronal Stability cannot be refreshed in any other way during a mission, but Reality Anchor pools can be refreshed by Stitches as per normal.

Viroware Enhancement: Dominator

You emit pheromones provoking the instinct of intelligent beings to obey high-status individuals in a social hierarchy. When an interaction with a supporting character has turned against you, spend 4 points from your Bureaucracy, Cop Talk, Downside, Interrogation, and/or Intimidation pools. The GM then plays the character, subtly or overtly, as if you have gained the upper hand. The subject must be within 4m of you when you first initiate the effect.

[From Ashen Stars]

Cherries

[TimeWatch refers to these as Boosters. In some games, you may wish to trick out general abilities with the following fillip:]

Almost every General ability has a cherry, a feature that kicks in when the character has 8 rating points or more in it. Agents can always use that special benefit, even if their pool in that ability has dropped to 0.

Example Cherry: Crackers' Crypto

If your Digital Intrusion rating is 8 or more, you get 1 free rating point in the Investigative ability Cryptography. You can also encrypt your team's electronic communications against all but government-level (NSA, GCHQ, MID, DGSE, GRU, Unit 8200, etc.) cracking.

[From *Night's Black Agents*]

Potential Points

[Useful in some settings; best when restricted to one, or a few, abilities you wish to highlight.]

Some abilities are more abstruse, difficult, or complex than others, enough so that they can't simply be bought "from scratch" during character improvement. They require a prerequisite: teaching by a master, learning from an ancient text, or some other specific in-game experience. That prerequisite experience conveys "potential points" in the ability; when the character spends build points from experience on that ability, she can only do so up to her "potential."

Drives

[In some games you may wish to require players to select drives for their characters, ensuring that their characters are well motivated to get into the kinds of investigative trouble the genre demands.]

Each PC follows a **drive**, a personal motivation giving him, her or it good reason to act heroically and curiously. By following your drive, you keep the story moving and ensure that your behavior is in keeping with the [*insert name of genre*] genre.

Sample Drive: Altruism

You instinctively act for the benefit of others, especially when they're unable to help themselves. As far as you're concerned, the fees the crew earns for its cases are just a means to an end. They keep the ship operational and the group sufficiently equipped to go out and do good in the world. If the Combine were still active, you might well have signed on with them as a patrol officer. Without them, the need for strong men and women to act selflessly is greater than ever. This sector of space has taken some hard knocks, and people are scared and discouraged. But if enough folks put the common good over their own petty interests, someday—maybe someday soon—the Bleed will go back to what it was before the war.

[From Ashen Stars]

The GUMSHOE Rules System

This section describes the basic GUMSHOE rules system and is addressed to players and GM alike. But first bear with us for a little explanatory theory.

Why This Game Exists

GUMSHOE speeds and streamlines the time-honored form of the investigative roleplaying game. The central question a traditional RPG asks is:

Will the heroes get the information they need?

Assuming that they look in the right place and apply appropriate abilities to the task, GUMSHOE ensures that the heroes get the basic clues they need to move through the story. The question it asks is:

What will the heroes do with the information once they've got it?

If you think about it, this is how the source materials we base our mystery scenarios on handle

clues. You don't see the forensic techies on CSI failing to successfully use their lab equipment, or Sherlock Holmes stymied and unable to move forward because he blew his Zoology roll.

You don't see this because, in a story failure to gain information is rarely more interesting than getting it. New information opens up new narrative possibilities, new choices and actions for the characters. Failure to get information is a null result that takes you nowhere.

In a fictional procedural, whether it's a mystery novel or an episode of a cop show, the emphasis isn't on finding the clues in the first place. When it really matters, you may get a paragraph telling you how difficult the search was, or a montage of a CSI team tossing an apartment. But the action really starts after the clues are gathered.

Investigative scenarios are not about finding clues, they're about interpreting the clues you do find.

GUMSHOE, therefore, makes the finding of clues all but automatic, as long as you get to the right place in the story and have the right ability. That's when the fun part begins, when the players try to put the components of the puzzle together.

That's hard enough for a group of armchair detectives, without withholding half the pieces from them. Every investigative scenario begins with a crime or conspiracy committed by a group of antagonists. The bad guys do something bad. The player characters must figure out who did it and put a stop to their activities.

When you do see information withheld from characters, it's seldom portrayed as a failure on the part of the competent, fact-gathering heroes. Instead the writers show an external force preventing them from applying their abilities. In a space opera show, you might get the proverbial ion storm that prevents the crew from scanning the planet before they go down. Information is only withheld when it makes the story more interesting—usually by placing the heroes at a handicap while they move forward in the storyline. In GUMSHOE terms, they're not trying to get an available clue and failing; they're using an ability for which no clue is available.

Historically, story-based roleplaying, of which investigative games were an early if not the earliest example, evolved from dungeon-bashing campaigns. They treat clues the same way that dungeon games treat treasure. You have to search for the clue that takes you on to the next scene. If you roll well, you get the clue. If not, you don't—and the story grinds to a halt.

However, treasure gathering isn't the main event in a dungeon game. There, the central activity is killing the monsters and enemies who live in the dungeon. The treasure-finding phase comes afterwards, as a mere reward. If you don't get all the treasure in a room, you lose out a bit, but the story keeps going, as you tromp down the hallway to the next monster-filled chamber.

Imagine a dungeon game where you always had to roll well to find another room to plunder, or sit around feeling frustrated and bored.

Many of our favorite roleplaying games use the traditional roll-to-get-a-clue model. You may have been lucky enough to play in them without ever seeing your game ground to a halt after a failed information roll. Perhaps your GM, or the scenario designer, has carefully crafted the adventure so that you never have to get any specific clue to advance the story.

More likely, your GM adjusts on the fly to your failed rolls, creating elaborate workarounds that get you the same information by different means. When you think about it, these

runarounds moments are essentially time killers. They bring about a predetermined, necessary result while giving you the illusion of randomness and chance. GUMSHOE cuts out these filler moments in favor of scenes that actually advance the story. With the time saved, you can construct more detailed, compelling mysteries for the players to sort out. That's where the streamlining comes in.

If you've never had a game stop dead on a missed clue, you may naturally figure that it never happens to anyone. Having run GMing seminars at conventions for years, I can assure you that this is not the case. People come up to me all the time to share their horror stories of games that literally go nowhere on a blown spot test. This should not be surprising. GMs are doing what the rules tell them to do, and failing to see the unwritten rule that they should then spend five to twenty minutes of game time introducing a workaround.

GUMSHOE gives you the rules you should actually use as written, and skips the workaround.

But even if you've never noticed this problem, play it because it focuses and streamlines play, eliminating the elaborate workarounds your GM has to use to make the missed information rolls invisible to you. It replaces these moments of circular plotting with more interesting scenes that move the story forward.

Mystery Structure

[Alter as needed for your genre.]

Every investigative scenario begins with a crime, conspiracy, or other act of disorder committed by a group of antagonists. The bad guys do something bad. The player characters must figure out who did it and put a stop to their activities.

Your GM designs each scenario by creating an investigation trigger, a sinister conspiracy, and a trail of clues.

The investigation trigger. This is the event, that attracts the attention of investigators.

- *The discovery of a murder victim, obviously slain during a ritualistic killing.*
- *The discovery of a corpse slain by supernatural means, perhaps by a creature.*
- *Sightings of supernatural creatures or phenomena.*

The sinister conspiracy. This sets out who the bad guys are, what they've done so far, what they're trying to do, and how the investigation trigger fits into the overall scheme. The GM also determines what has to happen to prevent the plot from going forward. This, unknown to the players, is their victory condition — what they have to do to thwart the bad guys and bring the story to a positive conclusion.

Once the GM has the logic of the story worked out from the villain's point of view, she then thinks in reverse, designing a **trail of clues** leading from the investigation trigger to an understanding of the sinister plot and its players, sufficient to get to work destroying it.

Optionally, the GM may also plan a series of **antagonist reactions**. These lay out what the bad guys do when they find out that they're being investigated. The GM determines what conditions trigger them, and what the antagonists attempt to do. These may include further crimes, giving the team more to investigate. They may try to destroy evidence, hinder the

investigation by planting false leads, or to intimidate or dispose of potential witnesses, including accomplices they no longer trust. They may attack the investigators. Foolish, overconfident or risk-taking antagonists may take them on directly. Clever antagonists will strike from a distance, taking great pains to cover their tracks.

Ordinary crime dramas may call for a simpler structure. The bad guys could still be furthering a sinister plot, or they may be doing nothing after committing the triggering crime other than hoping that the investigators don't catch up with them. In this case there is no ongoing conspiracy to disrupt. To achieve victory and bring the scenario to a successful conclusion, the investigators need merely prove their case against the criminals. The climactic scene might involve wringing a confession from the wrongdoer, or provoking him into revealing the crucial bit of evidence which will ensure his conviction.

From Structure To Story

The GM's structure notes are not a story. The story occurs as you, the team of players, brings the structure to life through the actions of your characters. The story proceeds from scene to scene, where you determine the pace, discovering clues and putting them together. Your characters interact with locations, gathering physical evidence, and supporting characters run by the GM, gathering expert and eyewitness testimony.

The first scene presents the mystery you have to solve. You then perform legwork, collecting information that tells you more about the case. Each scene contains information pointing to a new scene. Certain scenes may put a new twist on the investigation, as the initial mystery turns out to be just one aspect of a much bigger story. As clues accumulate, a picture of the case emerges, until your characters arrive at a climactic scene, where all is revealed and the bad guys confronted. A wrap-up scene accounts for loose ends and shows the consequences of your success—or, in rare instances, failure. (Why is failure possible at all? Its possibility creates urgency and suspense.)

To move from scene to scene, and to solve the overall mystery, you must gather clues. They fuel your forward momentum.

[[[BEGIN SIDEBAR]]]

Tip For Players: Containing Speculation

Investigative scenarios often bog down into speculative debate between players about what *could be* happening. Many things *can* be happening, but only one thing *is*. If more than one possible explanation ties together the clues you have so far, you need more clues.

Whenever you get stuck, **get out and gather more information**.

[[[END SIDEBAR]]]

Gathering Clues

Gathering clues is simple. All you have to do is: 1) get yourself into a scene where relevant information can be gathered and 2) have the right ability to discover the clue and 3) tell the GM that you're using it. As long as you do these three things, you will never fail to gain a piece of

necessary information. It is never dependent on a die roll. If you ask for it, you will get it.

You can specify exactly what you intend to achieve: "I use Textual Analysis to determine if the memo was really written by Danziger."

Or you can engage in a more general informational fishing expedition: "I use Evidence Collection to search the crime scene."

If your suggested action corresponds to a clue in the scenario notes, the GM provides you the information arising from the clue.

Some clues would be obvious to a trained investigator immediately upon entering a scene. These passive clues are provided by the GM without prompting. Scenarios suggest which clues are passive and which are active, but your GM will adjust these in play depending on how much guidance you seem to need. On a night when you're cooking with gas, the GM will sit back and let you prompt her for **passive clues**. When you're bogging down, she may volunteer what would normally be **active clues**.

Core Clues

For each scene, the GM designates a **core clue**. This is the clue you absolutely need to move to the next scene, and thus to complete the entire investigation. GMs will avoid making core clues available only with the use of obscure investigative abilities. (For that matter, the character creation system is set up so that the group as a whole will have access to all, or nearly all, of these abilities.) The ability the GM designates is just one possibility, not a straight jacket – if players come up with another plausible method, the GM should give out the information.

Some clues would be obvious to a trained investigator immediately upon entering a scene. These passive clues are provided by the GM without prompting. Scenarios suggest which clues are passive and which are active, but your GM will adjust these in play depending on how much guidance you seem to need. On a night when you're cooking with gas, the GM will sit back and let you prompt her for passive clues. When you're bogging down, she may volunteer what would normally be active clues.

Special Benefits

Certain clues allow you to gain **special benefits** by spending points from the relevant investigative ability pool. During your first few scenarios, your GM will offer you the opportunity to spend additional points as you uncover these clues. After that it's also up to you to ask if it there's anything to be gained by spending extra time or effort on a given clue. You can even propose specific ways to improve your already good result; if your suggestion is persuasive or entertaining, the GM may award you a special benefit not mentioned in her scenario notes.

Each benefit costs either 1 or 2 points from the relevant pool, depending on the difficulty of the additional action and the scope of the reward. When asking you if you want to purchase the benefit, the GM always tells you how much it will cost. Additional information gained provides flavor, but is never required to solve the case or move on to a new scene. Often it makes the character seem clever, powerful, or heroic. It may grant you benefits useful later in the scenario, frequently by making a favorable impression on supporting characters. It may allow you to leap forward into the story by gaining a clue that would otherwise only become apparent in a later

scene. On occasion, the additional information adds an emotional dimension to the story or ties into the character's past history or civilian life. If you think of your GUMSHOE game as a TV series, an extra benefit gives the actor playing your character a juicy spotlight scene.

The act of spending points for benefits is called a **spend**. The GM's scenario notes may specify that you get Benefit X for a 1-point spend, or Benefit Y for a 2-point spend. Sometimes minor non-core information is available at no cost.

GMs of great mental agility who feel comfortable granting their players influence over the details of the narrative may allow them to specify the details of a special benefit.

If you wish to make a spend in a situation where the GM has no special benefit to offer you, and cannot think of one that pertains at all to the investigation, you do not lose the points you wish to spend.

Inconspicuous Clues

Sometimes the characters instinctively notice something without actively looking for it. Often this situation occurs in places they're moving through casually and don't regard as scenes in need of intensive searching. The team might pass by a concealed door, spot a droplet of blood on the marble of an immaculate hotel lobby, or approach a vehicle with a bomb planted beneath it. Interpersonal abilities can also be used to find inconspicuous clues. The classic example is of a character whose demeanor or behavioral tics establish them as suspicious.

It's unreasonable to expect players to ask to use their various abilities in what appears to be an innocuous transitional scene. Otherwise they'd have to spend minutes of game time with every change of scene, running down their abilities in obsessive checklist fashion. That way madness lies.

Instead the GM asks which character has the highest current pool in the ability in question. (When in doubt for what ability to use for a basic search, the GM defaults to Evidence Collection.)

If two or more pools are equal, it goes to the one with the highest rating. If ratings are also equal, their characters find the clue at the same time.

Simple Searches

Many clues can be found without any ability whatsoever. If an ordinary person could credibly find a clue simply by looking in a specified place, the clue discovery occurs automatically. You, the reader, wouldn't need to be a trained investigator to find a bloody footprint on the carpet in your living room, or notice a manila envelope taped to the underside of a table at the local pub. By that same logic, the Investigators don't require specific abilities to find them, either. When players specify that they're searching an area for clues, they're performing what we call a simple search.

Vary the way you run simple searches according to pacing needs and the preferences of your group. Some players like to feel that their characters are interacting with the imaginary environment. To suit them, use a call-and-response format, describing the scene in a way that suggests places to look. The player prompts back by zeroing in on a detail, at which point you

reveal the clue:

> You: *Beside the window stands a roll-top desk.*
> Player: *I look inside!*
> You: *You find an album full of old photographs.*

At other times, or for players less interested in these small moments of discovery, you might cut straight to the chase:

> You: *You find an album full of old photographs in the roll-top desk.*

In the first case, the player who first voices interest in the detail finds the clue. In the second, it goes to, at your discretion:

- the character to whom the clue seems most thematically suited (for example, if you've established as a running motif that Agent Jenkins always stumbles on the disgusting clues, and this clue is disgusting, tell his player that he's once again stepped in it)
- a player who hasn't had a win or spotlight time for a while
- the character with the highest Evidence Collection rating

Die Rolls

All die rolls in GUMSHOE use a single ordinary (six-sided) die.

Tests

A test occurs when the outcome of an ability use is in doubt. Tests apply to general skills only. Unlike information gathering attempts, tests carry a fairly high chance of failure. They may portend dire consequences if you lose, provide advantages if you win, or both.

Even in the case of general skills, the GM should call for tests only at dramatically important points in the story, and for tasks of exceptional difficulty. Most general ability uses should allow automatic successes, with possible bonuses on point spends, just like investigative abilities.

There are two types of test: simple tests and contests.

Simple Tests

A simple test occurs when the character attempts an action without active resistance from another person or entity. Examples include driving a treacherous road, jumping a gorge, sneaking into an unguarded building, binding a wound, shooting a target, disconnecting a security system, or remaining sane in the face of creeping supernatural horror.

In the game world, expenditure of pool points in this way represents special effort and concentration by the character, the kind you can muster only so many times during the course of an investigation.

The GM does not reveal Difficulty Numbers beforehand. This rule is meant to force players to decide how much they want to commit to the situation, with the gnawing emotional dissonance that comes from the possibility of making the wrong move.

Difficulty Numbers and Story Pacing

Just as the GUMSHOE system keeps the story moving by making all crucial clues accessible to the characters, GMs must ensure that tests and contests essential to forward narrative momentum can be easily overcome. Assign relatively low Difficulty Numbers of 4 or less to these crucial plot points. Reserve especially hard Difficulty Numbers for obstacles which provide interesting but nonessential benefits.

For example, if the characters have to sneak into the cannibal campground in order to stage the final confrontation, assign the relatively low Difficulty Number of 4 to the task. If it seems to the characters that they ought to have a tougher time of it, insert a detail justifying their ease of success. The cannibal assigned to patrol duty might be found passed out at his post, say.

Where it is essential to overcome a General obstacle in order to reach a core scene, allow success whatever the result, but give a negative consequence other than failure for the test. For example, the PC climbs a fence, but receives an injury. This rule never protects characters from Health or Stability loss.

The test represents the character's best chance to succeed. Once you fail, you've shot your wad and cannot retry unless you take some other supporting action that would credibly increase your odds of success. If allowed to do this, you must spend more pool points than you did on the previous attempt. If you can't afford it, you can't retry.

Margins

In some special tests or contests, the difference between difficulty and result is used to determine the degree of failure or success. This number is called the **margin**.

Piggybacking

When a group of characters act in concert to perform a task together, they designate one to take the lead. That character makes a simple test, spending any number of his own pool points toward the task, as usual. All other characters pay 1 point from their relevant pools in order to gain the benefits of the leader's action. These points are not added to the leader's die result. For every character who is unable to pay this piggybacking cost, either because he lacks pool points or does not have the ability at all, the Difficulty Number of the attempt increases by 2.

In most instances a group cannot logically act in concert. Only one character can drive a car at one time. Two characters with Preparedness check their individual kits in sequence, rather than checking a single kit at the same time.

Cooperation

When two characters cooperate toward a single goal, they agree which of them is undertaking the task directly, and which is assisting. The leader may spend any number of points from her pool, adding them to the die roll. The assistant may pay any number of points from his pool. All but one of these is applied to the die roll.

Spends

Occasionally you'll want to create a task where, absent a weird and blundering choice on the part of the players, the characters certainly succeed. In this instance, you simply charge the character(s) a number of points from relevant General ability pools, called a spend. Spends can be paid by one character, or multiple players might chip in.

Competitive Tests

Very occasionally PCs compete to see who best performs a task. Each makes a test; the character with the highest result wins. If results tie, the character with the higher pool, then the higher rating, wins. If all of those factors come out even, the characters tie, no matter how odd that might be.

In a case where it is possible for everyone to fail, competitors must also beat a Difficulty set by the GM.

Continuing Challenges

For tasks where drama, verisimilitude or suspense call for a feeling of repeated effort, assign the obstacle a pool representing the base Difficulty of doing it all at once unaided: this will generally be 8 or higher, often much higher. The tests per se use the standard Difficulty of 4.

The players may take turns, cooperate on each action, or use any other means at their disposal in a series of tests: Athletics to batter down a door, or Digital Intrusion to penetrate a firewall, for example. The points they roll and spend accumulate; when they have enough points to overcome the initial Difficulty, the task is done. No points or rolls spent on a failed test add to the total.

Characters can't render an impossible task possible just by applying the continuing challenge rules.

Zero Sum Contests

A zero sum contest occurs when something bad or good is definitely going to happen to one of the PCs, and you need to find out which one takes the hit. Each player makes a test of a general ability. A zero sum contest can be positive or negative. In a positive contest, the character with the highest result gets a benefit. In a negative contest, the one with the lowest result suffers an ill consequence. When embarking on a contest with an open Difficulty, inform the players that this is an open Difficulty, and whether this is a positive or negative test. They then decide in advance how many points to spend to modify their rolls, keeping this number secret from other players by writing it down on a piece of paper. They then roll the dice, reveal their expenditures, and announce their final results. You can cap the maximum spend.

Be cautious when treating events with negative outcomes as zero sum contests. Because they guarantee that something bad will definitely happen to one of the PCs, make sure that the negative consequence is distressing but does no permanent harm to the character.

Worse results of zero sum contests are acceptable if the characters have had some other fair chance to avoid exposure to the bad situation.

If players are tied for best result (in the case of a positive test) or worst (in a negative test), the

tied players may subsequently spend any number of additional points from the pool in question, in hopes of breaking the tie in their favor. Should results remain tied after additional expenditures, the GM chooses the winner based on story considerations.

General Spends

Occasionally you'll want to create a task at which there is no reasonable chance of failure, but which should cost the characters a degree of effort. To do this, simply charge the character(s) a number of points from relevant general ability pools. Where tasks can be performed by cooperative effort, multiple characters may contribute points to them. 1 or 2 points per character is a reasonable general spend.

Making General Tests Without Abilities

[Decide whether you want your game to be unforgiving (grim settings, horror atmosphere) or heroic (upbeat settings featuring omni-competent protagonists), then choose your options from the two choices below.]

[Forgiving]:

You can always make a test of any general ability, even when you have no points in its pool, or even if you have a rating of 0.

[Unforgiving]:

You can always make a test of any general ability if your rating is 1 or more, whether or not you currently have points in its pool. You can never test a general ability when your rating is 0.

Lucky Shots

[Forgiving settings only.]

In a desperate situation, you may be called on to use an general ability you don't have. Once per episode, a character with a rating of 0 in a given ability may attempt a lucky shot. The other players must grant unanimous permission for the character to try a lucky shot. They have a vested interest because the once-per-episode rule applies to the *entire cast.* If they let you use the lucky shot, none of them will be able to try it later on.

If allowed to go forward, you spend up to 4 points from your highest current general ability pool, and add it to your roll.

Should you succeed, you get the result you wanted, but are required to describe the outcome as somehow fluky or embarrassing. Thus you preserve the sense that the players who invested real points in the ability are the real masters, and you succeeded through sheer happenstance. Alternately, you can succeed with a straight face, but then explain how the victory really belongs to the PC with the highest rating in the ability. Maybe she taught you a few tricks between episodes. Or perhaps you remember something bad-ass she did earlier, and are simply aping it now.

Toll Tests

[First seen in Ashen Stars, you might find this rule worth including in settings where the

investigators regularly build things, or encounter other situations more about cost-benefit than pass-fail.]

In a toll test, your success is assured, if you want it enough, but the cost of your effort is not. The GM informs you of the Difficulty; you roll the die without announcing an expenditure. Once you see the die result, you then decide whether to spend the points needed to bridge the gap between die roll and Difficulty, or to allow yourself to fail. The base Difficulty of a toll test is 6, which may be modified upwards as circumstances warrant.

Travel Tests

[Used in TimeWatch, travel tests are used instead of fuel to limit the frequency of time travel.]

Every instance of time travel requires a Travel test, a simple Difficulty 4 / Loss 2 Paradox test. Effectively, roll a d6; roll 1–3, and lose 2 points of Chronal Stability. Paying a Stitch per trip bypasses the need for a Travel test.

Whew

One type of partial refresh is the **whew.** It emulates the moment of relief in a narrative when the trepidation surrounding a daunting circumstance turns out to be nothing. *Whew!*

A whew provides a 2-point refresh.

The whew most often applies to Composure. Award one when players clearly dread an upcoming story turn which instead proves completely innocuous:

- A tantalizing cooking aroma wafts from the apartment where the investigators expect to find the rest of a murder victim, horribly charred. Nope—he just had a pork shoulder slow cooking in the oven. *Whew!*
- A thumping emanates from the attic above. The group steels itself to confront the scythe-wielding cannibal they've been hunting. But no, it's just the cat. *Whew!*

To maintain the emotional power of the whew, use it sparingly and only when it fits. Often the players will set up a whew for you, by showing genuine terror of an upcoming moment you never intended to play as anything other than innocuous.

Look particularly for situations where the group sends in only some of its members to confront the imagined awfulness. That way the brave get the reward and the cautious lose out.

Whews that refresh other General abilities don't come easily to mind but if one that makes sense presents itself during play, rule it in.

Contests

Contests occur when two characters, often a player character and a supporting character controlled by the GM, actively attempt to thwart one another. Although contests can resolve various physical match-ups, in a horror game the most common contest is the chase, in which the investigators run away from slavering entities intent on ripping them limb from limb.

In a contest, each character acts in turn. The first to fail a roll of the contested ability loses. The GM decides who acts first. In a chase, the character who bolts from the scene acts first.

Where the characters seem to be acting at the same time, the one with the lowest rating in the relevant ability acts first. In the event of a tie, supporting characters act before player characters. In the event of a tie between player characters, the player who arrived last for the current session goes first in the contest.

The first character to act makes a test of the ability in question. If he fails, he loses the contest. If he succeeds, the second character then makes a test. This continues until one character loses, at which point the other one wins.

Typically each character attempts to beat a Difficulty Number of 4.

Where the odds of success are skewed in favor of one contestant, the GM may assign different Difficulties to each. A character with a significant advantage gets a lower Difficulty Number. A character facing a major handicap faces a higher Difficulty Number. When in doubt, the GM assigns the lower number to the advantaged participant.

Throughout the contest, GM and players should collaborate to add flavor to each result, explaining what the characters did to remain in the contest. That way, instead of dropping out of the narration to engage in an arithmetical recitation, you keep the fictional world verbally alive .

Fighting

Fights are slightly more complicated contests involving any of the following abilities:

- Scuffling vs. Scuffling: the characters are fighting in close quarters.
- Shooting vs. Shooting: the characters are apart from one another and trying to hit each other with guns or other missile weapons

Initiative: Determine whether the character who attempts to strike the first blow seizes the initiative and therefore gets the first opportunity to strike his opponent, or if his intended target anticipates his attack and beats him to the punch—or shot, as the case may be.

As GUMSHOE is player-facing, how this works depends on whether the PC in the situation is the aggressor or the defender.

In a Scuffling contest, the PC gets to go first if his Scuffling rating equals or exceeds that of his target.

In a Shooting contest, he gets to go first if his Shooting rating exceeds that of his target.

Otherwise, the opponent goes first.

In the rare instance where two PCs fight one another (when one of them is possessed, say), the PC with the higher applicable rating (Scuffling or Shooting) goes first. If their ratings tie but their pools do not, the one with the higher pool goes first. If both are tied, roll a die, with one player going first on an odd result and the other on even.

A contest proceeds between the two abilities. When combatants using the Scuffling or Shooting abilities roll well, they get the opportunity to deal damage to their opponents.

Alternate Initiative: The time it takes to go through the ranking order once, with each character taking an action, is called a round. When one round ends, another begins. Each character and antagonist (or group of antagonists, if several bad guys act at the same time for simplicity's sake) gets to take a turn during each round.

The GM determines which character or antagonist goes first in the first round. That character announces who goes next after them, and then acts in combat. When an antagonist takes a turn, the GM announces which character goes next. The last character to act in the round decides who goes first in the following round.

[This Initiative system is used in TimeWatch.]

Hit Thresholds: Each character has a Hit Threshold of either 3 (the standard value) or 4 (if the character's Athletics rating is 8 or more.) The Hit Threshold is the Difficulty Number the character's opponent must match or beat in order to harm him. Less competent supporting characters may have lower Hit Thresholds. Creatures may have Hit Thresholds of 4 or higher, regardless of their Athletics ratings.

Dealing Damage: When you roll on or over your opponent's Hit Threshold, you may deal damage to him. To do so, you make a damage roll, rolling a die which is then modified according to the relative lethality of your weapon, as per the following table:

Weapon Type	Damage Modifier
Fist, kick	−2
Small improvised weapon, police baton, knife	−1
Machete, heavy club, light firearm	0
Sword, heavy firearm	+1

For firearms, add an additional +2 when fired at point blank range.

Supernatural creatures often exhibit alarmingly high damage modifiers.

Characters may never spend points from their combat pools to increase their damage rolls.

The final damage result is then subtracted from your opponent's Health pool. When a combatant's Health pool drops to 0 or less, that combatant begins to suffer ill effects, ranging from slight impairment to helplessness to death; see sidebar.

Unlike other contests, participants do not lose when they fail their test rolls. Instead, they're forced out of the fight when they lose consciousness or become seriously wounded.

[Some systems such as TimeWatch adjust weapon damage upwards, varying between a Damage Modifier of +0 and +2 or more. Adjust this based on your game's lethality.]

Resisting Stunning

Tasers, stun guns, tranquilizer darts, and futuristic weapons work by knocking you unconscious without causing extensive Health damage. Resisting stunning works much like resisting unconsciousness. The Difficulty Number, however, is set by the Stun value of the weapon used against you instead of by your current Health.

When hit with a stunning weapon, you must make a Stun test. Roll a die with the Stun rating of the weapon as your Difficulty. You may deliberately strain yourself to remain conscious, voluntarily reducing your Health pool by an amount of your choice. For each point you reduce it, add 1 to your die result. If you strain your Health below 0 or (if you're already below 0) below −5,

you will also have to make a Consciousness roll after the Stunning attack is resolved. If you are attacked by more than one stunning weapon in a single round, you make a separate Stun test for each attack.

If you succeed in a Stun test, you remain conscious but are briefly Impaired; you suffer a noncumulative 1-point increase to the Difficulty of any actions (including other Stun tests) you attempt until the end of your next turn. If you fail a Stun test, you are knocked unconscious for a period that varies by weapon, but which is usually 10–60 minutes or until awakened by someone successfully making a Difficulty 4 Medic test on you (which does not otherwise restore Health).

Creatures with a Health rating of 3 or less immediately fall unconscious when successfully hit by a neural disruptor, no Stun test allowed. (In other words, GMs who want an enemy to go down in one shot should give them 3 or fewer Health.)

[Stun Tests were introduced in TimeWatch.]

Exhaustion, Injury and Death

Unlike most abilities, your Health pool can drop below 0.

When it does this, you must make a Consciousness Roll. Roll a die with the absolute value[2] of your current Health pool as your Difficulty. You may deliberately strain yourself to remain conscious, voluntarily reducing your Health pool by an amount of your choice. For each point you reduce it, add 1 to your die result. The Difficulty of the Consciousness roll is based on your Health pool *before* you make this reduction.

If your pool is anywhere from 0 to –5, you are **hurt**, but have suffered no permanent injury, beyond a few superficial cuts and bruises. However the pain of your injuries makes it impossible to spend points on Investigative abilities, and increases the Difficulty Numbers of all tests and contests, including opponents' Hit Thresholds, by 1.

A character with the Medic ability can improve your condition by spending Medic points. For every Medic point spent, you regain 2 Health points—unless you are the Medic, in which case you gain only 1 Health point for every Medic point spent. The Medic can only refill your pool to where you were before the incident in which you received this latest injury. He must be in a position to devote all of his attention to directly tending to your wounds.

If your pool is between –6 and –11, you have been **seriously wounded**. You must make a Consciousness roll.

Whether or not you maintain consciousness, you are no longer able to fight. Until you receive first aid, you will lose an additional Health point every half hour. A character with the Medic ability can stabilize your condition by spending 2 Medic points. However, he can't restore your Health points.

Even after you receive first aid, you must convalesce in a hospital or similar setting for a period of days. Your period of forced inactivity is a number of days equal to the positive value of your lowest Health pool score. (So if you were reduced to –8 Health, you are hospitalized for 8 days.)

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2   In other words, treat the negative number as a positive. For example, if your Health pool is at –3, the Difficulty of the roll is 3, and so on.

On the day of your discharge, your Health pool increases to half its maximum value. On the next day, it refreshes fully.

When your pool dips to –12 or below, you are **dead**. Time to create a replacement character.

Bigger Fights

Combat becomes more chaotic when two groups of combatants fight, or a group gangs up against a single opponent.

If one group of combatants is surprised by the other (see sidebar), the surprising side goes before the surprised side.

Otherwise, determine initiative as follows.

Close-up fight: if any PC has a Scuffling rating equal to or greater than than any combatant on the other side, the PCs act first.

Shoot-out: if any PC has a Shooting rating equal to or greater than than any combatant on the other side, the PCs act first.

Shoot-outs may devolve into scuffles; this does not alter the already-established initiative order.

The time it takes to go through the ranking order once, with each character taking an action, is called a **round**. When one round ends, another begins.

In the course of each round, either the PCs or their enemies go first, as already established by the initiative order. Then the other side responds. The order in which the two sides act remains unchanged from round to round.

During the portion of the round devoted to the PCs, each participating PC makes an attack in sequence, according to the players' seating order, from left to right. Sequence becomes irrelevant, obviously, when only one PC is participating (or still standing) in the fight.

In their portion of the round, opponent(s) respond with their own wave of attack attempts, ordered by the characters they're targeting, again using a left to right player seating order. Where multiple opponents attack a single PC, the GM determines their order of action in whatever manner she finds convenient—usually the order in which she's tracking them in her rough notes.

The order of action can therefore change slightly from round to round for the PCs' opponents, but not for the PCs.

Some beings may strike more than once per round. They make each attack in succession, and may divide them up between opponents within range, or concentrate all of them on a single enemy. GMs order these attacks in whatever order they find convenient, so long as they fall within portion of the round devoted to enemy attacks. Usually it's easiest to have them act against multiple PCs at once, starting when they reach the first target in the seating order

When called upon to act, each character may strike at any opponent within range of his weapons.

Creatures may choose to use their actions to deal additional damage to downed or helpless opponents rather than engage active opponents. They automatically deal once instance of damage per action. Only the most crazed and bestial human enemies engage in this behavior.

Characters who join a combat in progress come last in order of precedence. If more than two characters join during the same round, the GM determines their relative precedence using the rules above.

The fight continues until one side capitulates or flees, or all of its members are unconscious or otherwise unable to continue.

Surprise

Player characters are surprised when they find themselves suddenly in a dangerous situation. Avoid being surprised with a successful Surveillance test. The basic Difficulty is 4, adjusted by the opponent's Stealth Modifier.

Player characters surprise supporting characters by sneaking up on them with a successful Infiltration or Surveillance test. The basic Difficulty is 4, adjusted by the opponent's Stealth modifier.

Surprised characters suffer a +2 increase to all general ability Difficulties for any immediately subsequent action. In a fight, the penalty pertains to the first round of combat.

Armor

Armor may reduce the damage from certain weapon types. If you're wearing a form of armor effective against the weapon being used against you, you subtract a number of points from each instance of damage dealt to you before applying it to your Health pool. Light body armor, as worn by police officers, reduces each instance of damage from bullets by 2 points and from cutting and stabbing weapons (knives, swords, machetes) by 1 point. Military-grade body armor reduces bullet damage by 3 points.

Light body armor is heavy, hot, and marks you out as someone looking for trouble. All of these drawbacks apply doubly to military-grade body armor. Investigators can't expect to walk around openly wearing armor without attracting the attention of the local SWAT team. Armor and heavy weapons may prove useful in discrete missions conducted away from prying eyes.

In choosing to make contemporary body armor highly effective against firearms, we're drawing on the portrayal of Kevlar vests in cop shows and movies. We make no claims for any resemblance between these rules and real life. The rules also favor close-up physical confrontations, which are more in keeping with the horror genre than firefights. GMs using the GUMSHOE rules in more realistic, horror-free investigative settings may wish to reduce the effectiveness of body armor against gunfire.

Creatures often have high armor ratings. They may possess hard, bony hides or monstrous anatomies that can take greater punishment than ordinary organisms. Most supernatural creatures are more resistant to bullets and other missile weapons than they are to blunt force trauma, slashes, and stab wounds.

[Delete or modify references to supernatural creatures as needed for your genre.]

Cover

In a typical gunfight, combatants seek cover, hiding behind walls, furniture or other barriers, exposing themselves only for the few seconds it takes them to pop up and fire a round at their

targets. The GUMSHOE rules recognize three cover conditions:

Exposed: No barrier stands between you and the combatant firing at you. Your Hit Threshold decreases by 1.

Partial Cover: About half of your body is exposed to fire. Your Hit Threshold remains unchanged.

Full Cover: Except when you pop up to fire a round, the barrier completely protects you from incoming fire. Your Hit Threshold increases by 1.

One Gun, Two Combatants

If your opponent has a gun well in hand and ready to fire, and you charge him from more than five feet away, he can empty his entire clip or chamber at you before you get to him, badly injuring you. You are automatically hit. He rolls one instance of damage, which is then tripled. Yes, we said tripled. And, yes, the tripling occurs after weapon modifiers are taken into account. This is why few people charge when their opponents have the drop on them.

If your opponent has a pistol but it is not well in hand and ready to fire, you may attempt to jump him and wrestle it from his grip. If he has a pistol well in hand but is unaware of your presence, you may also be able to jump him, at the GM's discretion. The characters engage in a Scuffling contest to see which of them gets control of the gun and fires it. The winner makes a damage roll against the loser, using the pistol's Damage Modifier, including the +2 for point blank range.

If you jump an opponent with an unready rifle, a Scuffling combat breaks out, with the opponent using the rifle as a heavy club.

Ammo Capacity

The Esoterrorists sets aside the loving attention to firearm intricacies characteristic of most contemporary-era RPG systems. For example, characters need reload only when dramatically appropriate. Otherwise, they're assumed to be able to refill the cylinders of their revolvers or jam clips into their automatic weapons between shots.

When reloading is an issue, GMs may request a Shooting test (Difficulty 3) to quickly reload. Characters who fail may not use their Shooting ability to attack during the current round.

Range

The effect of range on firearms combat is likewise simplified nearly out of existence. Handguns and shotguns can only be accurately fired at targets within fifty meters. The range limit for rifles is one hundred meters.

Non-Lethal Weapons

In GUMSHOE, non-lethal attacks never take an opponent out faster than standard combat. Otherwise players will have their characters simply knock their enemies out and kill them in cold blood, which is unsympathetic and out of genre. Thus tasers and stun guns work less effectively in the game than in real life.

Fighting Without Abilities

A character with a Shooting rating of 0 is not allergic to guns. Anyone can pick up a revolver and empty it in the general direction of the foe. Likewise, a character with no Scuffling ability is not going to just ignore the fire axe sitting on the wall when a blood bursts through a partition wall.

However, such characters will use their weapons ineffectively and hesitantly. Using a weapon (including fists or feet) without ability has the following drawbacks:

- You automatically do an additional -2 damage
- You must declare your action at the beginning of each round and cannot change it if the tactical situation alters.
- You automatically go last in each round.
- If you are using a firearm, a roll of 1 means you have accidentally shot yourself or one of your allies, as selected (or rolled randomly) by the GM. Do damage as normal (including your automatic -2 penalty).

Called Shots

[Use only for especially combat-oriented GUMSHOE games.]

In certain situations simply hitting an enemy isn't enough: you need to get him in a particular spot. When taking a called shot, specify the desired location of the strike and any additional intended effect other than injury to the opponent. The GM decides whether this is a likely outcome of such a hit. If it is clearly not a likely outcome, and your character would logically know this, she warns you in advance, so you can do something else instead.

The GM then adds 1 to 4 points to the target's Hit Threshold, depending on the additional difficulty entailed. Use the following table as a guideline. Body locations assume a human of ordinary size. Hit Threshold modifiers for ordinary body parts of extraordinary creatures are left as an exercise for the GM. *Vehicle locations are in italics.*

Desired Location	Modifier to Hit Threshold
Large carried object (rocket launcher, laptop computer, backpack)	+1
Torso, *windshield*	+1
Chest (if attacker is facing target)	+2
Gut, *specific window, tail rotor*	+2
Head or limb	+2
Hand or foot, joint, *tire*	+3

Heart, throat, mouth, or face	+3
Weapon or other hand-held object	+3
Eye, *headlight*	+4
Chest (if target faces away from attacker)	+4

With the new Hit Threshold determined, you then make a combat ability test, as per the standard rules. If you succeed, your specified effect occurs as desired.

If you struck an ordinary person in the head, throat, or chest with a weapon, add +2 to the damage; hitting the heart adds +3 to the damage. Neither can be combined with a point-blank gunshot, which is already assumed to hit a vital location.

If you struck an ordinary person in a joint (wrist, knee, etc.) or throat with an aimed hand-to-hand blow, lock, or kick, add +2 to the damage; hitting an eye adds +3 to the damage.

This assumes a trained, targeted strike intended to disable or cripple. You may narrate some other crippling strike to suit your own specific martial arts idiom, but the modifiers remain the same if you want to do the extra damage.

If, after this damage is dealt, the victim is already Hurt but not Seriously Wounded, you may then pay an additional 6 points from the fighting ability you are using to reduce the target to -6 Health. If the target is already Seriously Wounded you may then pay an additional 6 Shooting, Weapons, or Hand-to-Hand points (whichever applies) to kill the target outright.

Combat Options

[Games featuring extensive fight sequences may benefit from the addition of combat options. Examples include Night's Black Agents *and the Special Suppression Forces series frame for* The Esoterrorists.

Combat options provide extra benefits during a fight. They require:

⚔ that the character meet a prerequisite rating in one or more fighting-related General abilities

and/or

⚔ the expenditure of points from one or more fighting-related General abilities.

Example Combat Option: Mook Shield

Prereq: Hand-to-Hand 8+

If you have a Hand-to-Hand *rating* of 8 or more, you can drag a convenient mook, henchman, or minion into the path of incoming gunfire. Spend 3 Hand-to-Hand points and then make a Hand-to-Hand attack against any mook in Point-Blank range, or 3 Hand-to-Hand and 2 Athletics and then make a Hand-to-Hand attack against any mook in Close range. (Those points do not add to your attack.) If no mook is closer than Near range, you cannot use Mook Shield.

If you succeed, all ranged attacks that miss you hit the mook instead until your next turn; the

mook can do nothing. Additionally, the mook provides -4 Armor against incoming fire, losing 4 points of Health for each bullet that hits you. Holding a mook up in front of you gives you full cover, and increases your normal Hit Threshold by 1. On your next turn, you may fire a weapon, but must either drop the mook (or, more likely, his corpse) or spend 3 additional Shooting points to fire from under his arm.

[From *Night's Black Agents*]

[Many combat options and cherries allow an immediate ability pool refresh. For example:]

Example Combat Option: Martial Arts

Characters with a Scuffling rating of 8 can specify that they are trained in one or more martial arts. Once per fight, their players may gain a 4-point Scuffling refresh by uttering a brief, evocative narrative description of his or her elegantly bone-crunching moves:

- "With a flowing Kata Gurama, I try to sweep him up onto my shoulder and down to the pavement."

- "Using my krav maga training, I target the back of his knee with a pivoting, angled kick."

- "Remembering the sweat and humidity of that sweltering Bangkok gym so long ago, I summon up all my strength to tag him with a ferocious cross jab."

At the GM's discretion, especially poetic or believably obscure descriptions may fetch a 5-point refresh.

These utterances needn't be improvised; players can prepare key phrases in advance, then adapt them to the situation at hand.

[From *The Esoterror Fact Book*.]

Running Away

Fleeing from an ongoing fight requires an Athletics test. The Difficulty is 3 plus the number of foes you're fleeing from: to flee one enemy is Difficulty 4, fleeing two enemies is Difficulty 5, fleeing four enemies is Difficulty 7. On a success, melee ends and you flee; if they intend to chase you, your foes must roll first in the ensuing full contest of Athletics. If you fail, the opponent with the highest damage value automatically deals one instance of damage to you. Melee still ends, but you must roll first in the ensuing chase.

In situations where it seems appropriate to make flight more difficult, on a failure, any directly engaged opponent might spend 3 Athletics to block you from fleeing—interposing himself between you and the exit, tackling you, slamming the garage doors, or whatever the narrative description warrants. In this case, your enemies forgo the damage they would otherwise deal.

Stability Tests

[Not all genres require a system for psychological resistance. In horror games, Stability marks the downward spiral of your diminishing faculties. In Mutant City Blues, it's just a resistance to mental attacks. Ashen Stars doesn't use it at all. Adjust as needed for your setting.]

Mental stresses can take you out of commission, temporarily or permanently, as easily as physical injury.

When an incident challenges your fragile sanity, make a Stability test against a Difficulty Number of 4.

If you fail, you lose a number of Stability points. The severity of the loss depends on the situation. As with any other test of a general ability, you are always permitted to spend Stability points to provide a bonus to your roll. However, it's never a good bet to spend more points than you stand to lose if you fail.

Your Stability loss from failed tests is capped at the worst incident in that scene. Points spent on providing bonuses are still lost.

Incident	Stability Loss
A human opponent attacks you with evident intent to do serious harm	2
You are in a car or other vehicle accident serious enough to pose a risk of injury	2
A human opponent attacks you with evident intent to kill	3
You see a supernatural creature from a distance	3
You see a supernatural creature up close	4
You see a particularly grisly murder or accident scene	4
You learn that a friend or loved one has been violently killed	4
You discover the corpse of a friend or loved one	6
You are attacked by a supernatural creature	7
You see a friend or loved one killed	7
You see a friend or loved one killed in a particularly gruesome manner	8

GMs should feel free to assess Stability Losses for other incidents, using the examples provided as a benchmark. Some especially overwhelming creatures may impose higher than normal Stability losses when seen from a distance, seen up close, or ripping your lungs out.

Characters make a single roll per incident, based on its highest potential Stability loss.

Groups craving an additional point of complexity can occasionally alter Difficulty Numbers for Stability tests depending on the character's attitude toward the destabilizing event. Characters who would logically be inured to a given event face a Difficulty of 3, while those especially susceptible face a 5. A character whose daytime identity is that of a surgeon or coroner might, for example, face a lowered Difficulty when encountering gruesomely mutilated bodies. A stock car racer would get a better chance against car accidents. No character type gets a break when encountering supernatural creatures.

Losing It

Like Health, your Stability pool can drop below 0.

If your Stability ranges from 0 to –5, you are **shaken**.

Difficulty Numbers for all general abilities increase by 1, and it becomes more difficult to use investigative abilities.

If you want to make an Investigative spend, make a test with the absolute value[3] of your current Stability pool as your Difficulty. You may deliberately strain yourself, voluntarily reducing your Stability pool by an amount of your choice. For each point you reduce it, add 1 to your die result. The Difficulty of the Stability test is based on your Stability pool *before* you make this reduction. If you fail, you still make the spend, but you should roleplay this failure.

If your Stability ranges from –6 to –11, you acquire a **mental illness**.

This stays with you even after your Stability pool is restored to normal. See below for more. You also continue to suffer the ill effects of being shaken. Furthermore, you permanently lose 1 point from your Stability *rating*. The only way to get it back it to purchase it again with build points.

When your Stability reaches –12 or less, you are **incurably insane**. You may commit one last crazy act, which must either be self-destructively heroic or self-destructively destructive. Or you may choose merely to gibber and drool. Assuming you survive your permanent journey to the shores of madness, your character is quietly shipped off to a secure Ordo Veritatis psych facility, never to be seen again. Time to create a new character.

Sources of Stability/Composure

[Used in some but not all of Pelgrane's GUMSHOE horror games. Appropriate for games where the investigator's mental state has an effect on play and perhaps can remove a character from play, provided that the game's scenario structure permits scenes of the investigators' ordinary lives between missions.]

When under stress, each of us searches for reasons to keep it together and persevere. In [this game], you quantify your character's Stability by specifying its sources. For every 3 points you invest in Stability, you must name one thing that restores your mental well-being when the terrors of the world threaten to shred your psyche. (In a one-shot game, you only need to pick one source at the start; you'll discover the others in play.)

These Sources of Stability fall into three categories: personality traits, activities, and people.

 – Innate sanity-preserving **personality traits** might include stoic, Zen-like, or emotionally resilient. Define these as you please, subject to GM approval. GMs are encouraged to allow broad latitude, only ruling out obviously nonsensical traits. If you pick more than one personality trait, see to it that they don't contradict one another. For example, don't pair "sense of humor" with

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[3]   In other words, treat the negative number as a positive. For example, if your Stabilty pool is at –3, the Difficulty of the roll is 3, and so on.

"grim implacability."

– **Activities** are pursuits or hobbies that calm you, allowing you to regain your sense of perspective after a stressful incident. Again, let creativity be your guide. The GM will disallow blatantly ridiculous choices. Efforts to use these pursuits to overcome plot obstacles within the game must be backed up with relevant skills. Even if you pick hang gliding as a stability-granting hobby, you won't be able to hang glide your way into the enemy compound unless you've also bought the Athletics ability.

– By far your richest Source of Stability is a support network of **friends and family** whose strength you draw on in times of quiet. A name and identifying phrase are sufficient for each. You may not use other player characters; they go through the same stresses you do and remind you of the horrors you confront. It's permissible, but risky, for multiple characters to lean on the same folks as members of their support network.

Relying on others is a source of strength, but also of danger. Once you come to the attention of [proactive enemies], such as [specific proactive enemy] they may use your loved ones against you. They may turn them to evil, possess them, take them captive, or otherwise harm them. If anything bad happens to them, you not only face immediate, difficult Stability tests, but may permanently lose the rating points they're linked to. Your spouse, parent, or child can no longer soothe your spirit if you can only visit their scarred and broken bodies in a secluded mental hospital.

You may not select more personality traits than you do people, or more activities than you do people.

Paradox and Chronal Stability

[These rules are used in TimeWatch.]

Being a time traveler feels like standing in an ocean's shallows, fighting a riptide that tries to carry you out to sea. As a time traveler you need to make a conscious effort of will to resist the universe's attempt to eradicate you from time periods where you don't belong. In *TimeWatch*, the degree to which you're anchored to reality is represented by your **Chronal Stability**. Think of it like your Health points, but instead of measuring how far you are from dying, it measures how far you are from the universe unraveling your existence.

The threat of chronal instability is one of the major challenges facing a TimeWatch agent. You can potentially lose Chronal Stability when time traveling (which requires you to make a simple Travel test), when encountering or causing paradox, and from rare aliens or technological devices. When this is a risk, the GM will ask you to make a Paradox test. In some campaign frames where mental stability is tied to Chronal Stability, severe emotional and mental shocks from horrific occurrences can also degrade your Chronal Stability.

Lost Chronal Stability points can only be restored with the Reality Anchor ability, as your allies keep you centered and remind you who you truly are. Lost Chronal Stability cannot be restored directly by cashing in Stitches. If your Chronal Stability drops to 0 or below, you are at risk of fading away, being erased from the universe, or suffering from lingering insanity after accidentally being subsumed by someone else's life.

Any time you first experience a paradox, you make a Paradox test. A paradox occurs when an already established event is contradicted.

How Paradox Tests Work

Paradox tests work like a Stun test, but with Chronal Stability instead of Health: choose whether or not to spend any Chronal Stability points, roll a d6, and hope to hit a target Difficulty Number (usually 4). For each point you spend, add 1 to your die result. If you meet or exceed the Difficulty, you lose no additional Chronal Stability other than the points you spent to add to your die roll. If you fail, you either suffer some negative result (if a weapon or attack is being used against you) or lose a number of points from your Chronal Stability pool, in addition to any points spent on the test itself. A test with a **Difficulty** of 4 and a potential **Loss** of 4 points is called **a D4/L4** test.

You're always permitted to spend Chronal Stability points to provide a bonus to your roll. You cannot voluntarily reduce your Chronal Stability pool below –11. If you strain your Chronal Stability below 0 or below –5, you will also suffer consequences for having become **Fading** or **Subsumed**. Unless the GM says otherwise, if you suffer more than one threat to Chronal Stability in a single round, you make a separate Paradox test for each threat.

The severity of a failure depends on the situation; see below. Paradox tests are usually made at a Difficulty of 4, but the Difficulty of such tests varies widely.

Paradox tests are one of the few instances in *TimeWatch* when the GM will usually tell you the exact Difficulty Number you need, although she may not tell you the exact chronal Loss you would suffer on a failure.

When Do You Risk Losing Chronal Stability?

A little Chronal Stability is usually lost through the normal act of time traveling. Experiencing any paradoxes, whether large or small, also triggers Paradox tests. You may make a Paradox test when something you learn or experience contradicts a known fact, when you change something consequential to history, when you time travel into a scene where you already exist, when you experience something horrific (only in certain campaign frames where emotional stability is tied to Chronal Stability), or when you're struck with a chronal destabilizer weapon during combat.

Characters have slightly more trouble maintaining Chronal Stability on timelines that are not originally their own. If you're in a parallel timeline from the one you were born in, any Paradox test other than Travel tests usually has both the Difficulty and Loss raised by 1 point.

Creatures that spend a great deal of time in a parallel universe eventually acclimate to it, losing this penalty. Conveniently enough, in *TimeWatch* the acclimatization happens at just about the point when both GM and player keep forgetting that the character is originally from an alternate universe, so they seldom remember to apply the penalty. In other words, if the penalty becomes too finicky to easily remember, the character has acclimated and the penalty can be legitimately discarded.

Scenes

We measure the risk of time travel within **scenes**, where a scene is considered a single

encounter. Different incarnations of you can exist dozens or more times in a given time period with no chronal distress at all, as you're not entangling yourself with the same events, but when you appear more than once within a single scene you risk churning up the temporal waters.

What's a scene? An evening-long masquerade ball in Marie Antoinette's court would be considered a scene, as would a 30-second-long quick and vicious fight in a back alley of ancient Athens. A quickly summarized but months-long trek across the Alps might be a scene, as might a 10-minute-long infiltration into an enemy's stronghold. If your game was a movie and the director would say "end scene," that's probably where a scene ends, but the GM always has final say.

Regaining Chronal Stability

Other than finishing a mission, the only way to restore Chronal Stability points is with the Reality Anchor General ability. Reality Anchor restores your stability and stops time from sweeping you away. You can use Reality Anchor on yourself, but it's not as efficient, only restoring one Chronal Stability point for every Reality Anchor point you spend. If a friend and fellow Agent uses Reality Anchor on you, you regain 2 points of lost Chronal Stability for every point of Reality Anchor they spend. Like any other ability, you can never increase your Chronal Stability pool higher than your rating in the ability.

Triggers for Paradox Tests

A number of things can trigger Paradox tests. Here are some common examples, along with their Difficulty, their Loss, and whether the action needs the expenditure of a Paradox Prevention point to even occur.

Paradox tests can be abbreviated for clarity and brevity. A Travel test would be abbreviated D4/L2, denoting Difficulty 4, Loss 2. If spending a Paradox Prevention point is required to succeed at the test, that's also noted, such as D4/L4 – P when your future self wants to leave you a note.

TRIGGER	DIFFICULTY/LOSS	PARADOX PREVENTION SPEND REQUIRED?
No Paradox: • You successfully restore history back to its true path, ending the mission	None (no test required)	No
• Any time travel ("the Travel test")	D4/L2	No
Lesser Paradox: • You learn, experience, or cause something that violates a known fact • You significantly change the future, perhaps by revealing future history to	D4/L4	No

someone or by leaving a futuristic device behind in time • You kill someone consequential, but not essential, to history • You are hit by a chronal destabilizer (whether weapon or effect) • Your future self leaves you a vague or mostly useless clue about a future event		

Paradox:
• Your future self leaves you a specific message or important clue about a future event
• You overlap yourself in a scene and aid yourself, changing history, although your past self never becomes aware of the fact (such as secretly sniping a foe from a nearby rooftop or unlocking your own prison door)
   o Every additional overlap adds +2 to the Difficulty and +2 to the Loss
	D4/L4 – P	Yes
		  (if you choose not to spend a Paradox Prevention point, you can't aid yourself in this way)

Greater Paradox:
• You overlap yourself in a scene and directly offer yourself aid (such as arriving to heal your own unconscious body, or your future self joining in an ongoing fight to double your firepower)
   o Every additional overlap adds +2 to the Difficulty and +2 to the Loss)
	D4/L6 – P	Yes
		  (if you choose not to spend a Paradox Prevention point, you can't aid yourself in this way)

Severe Paradox: • You close off a time loop and remove the reason you time traveled in the first place, with the unfortunate result	D6/L6 or higher	No

that two paradoxical versions of you exist simultaneously • You kill someone essential to history • You change events in a way that fundamentally changes a future you know to have occurred, perhaps branching correct history onto an alternate history timeline • You are caught in the chronal field of a broken autochron • Your direct ancestors within the past 3 generations are killed in a way that ensures you will never be born (Loss decreases by 1 for every generation prior to that; a change more than 250 years before your birth does not trigger a test)		

Excessive Paradox

The GM may decide that some time tricks are impossible even when the player wants to make a Paradox test and/or spend a Paradox Prevention point, usually because the time trick doesn't make sense or because it makes the game less fun for everyone. She'll generally be consistent about this, and it shouldn't happen often. When this happens, she'll say "no" and possibly say why, and you'll need to find another solution. Excessive paradox generally applies to both player characters and adversaries.

Examples of excessive paradox include:

- trying to use Preparedness to leave yourself an item in a location where you already know no item exists, when there's no logical way to have the item just appear
- trying to make an Investigative spend to create an effect when you already know that effect is impossible, such as trying to spend Architecture to create a window in a room you already know has none
- trying to add or subtract combatants from past rounds of a combat, or change what occurred earlier in the fight, in a way that would make everyone need to replay all or part of that fight
- losing a battle and going back in time to replay the exact same fight, this time with the odds tipped in your favor so that the end result is different

The Effects of Instability

Like your Health, your Chronal Stability pool can drop below 0.

If your Chronal Stability ranges from 0 to –5, you are **Fading**, clinging onto reality through pure force of will. Difficulty target numbers for all General abilities increase by 1, and it becomes more difficult to use Investigative abilities.

If you want to make an Investigative spend, make a roll with the absolute value[4] of your current Chronal Stability pool as your Difficulty. You may deliberately strain yourself, voluntarily reducing your Chronal Stability pool by an amount of your choice. For each point you reduce it, add 1 to your die result. The Difficulty of the roll is based on your Chronal Stability pool *before* you make this reduction. If you succeed, you can make the Investigative spend.

If your Chronal Stability ranges from –6 to –11, you are **Subsumed**. The universe tries to rid itself of an unnatural irritant by turning you into a local citizen from the current timeline, including a full history and memories that you receive when the universe rewrites itself to include you. Your appearance, personality, and memories change to those decided upon by the GM, or perhaps by both the GM and the player. This new individual has no knowledge of TimeWatch, and any objects on the Agent's body vanish when Subsumed.

Once your allies locate you (which may range from an easy task to an adventure in itself, as decided by your GM), they will have to spend Reality Anchor to restore you. Upon restoration you permanently lose 1 point from your Chronal Stability *rating*. The only way to get it back is to purchase it again with build points. The memories of being Subsumed stay with you, as explained below.

When your Chronal Stability reaches –12 or less, you are **erased** from the universe. We're not kidding, here; not only don't you exist, you *never* existed, and even your closest friends in TimeWatch have faint, fuzzy, and fading memories of you. TimeWatch agents hate it when your Agent is erased, because every mission you accomplished will have to be redone by other TimeWatch agents. Time to create a new character.

Coming Back From the Edge

As long as you're in audio contact with the recipient, you can spend points from the Reality Anchor ability to help another character regain lost Chronal Stability points. For every Reality Anchor point you spend, the recipient gains 2 Stability points. Reality Anchor points can also be spent to re-anchor yourself to the timeline; for every Reality Anchor point you spend on yourself, you regain 1 Chronal Stability point.

If a character is Subsumed due to chronal instability, you can make a Difficulty 4 Reality Anchor test to snap him into a state of temporary self-awareness. Any points spent on this test do not otherwise restore Chronal Stability. The false reality will reluctantly relinquish its grasp on the character once his Chronal Stability is restored above 0, at which point he will revert to his true appearance and memories. Any held items that vanished when the character was Subsumed will return. Additional Reality Anchor points will restore lost Chronal Stability, but not the point

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[4]   In other words, treat the negative number as a positive. For example, if your Chronal Stability pool is at –3, the Difficulty of the roll is 3, and so on.

permanently lost when Subsumed.

Characters who have lost a Chronal Stability point due to being Subsumed, even briefly, usually gain new memories and personality traits from the temporary persona. This is a suggested roleplaying quirk that allows players, if they so desire, to model the new memories by rearranging up to 5 points of their character's Investigative abilities.

These phantom personalities and memories typically disappear if the lost Chronal Stability point is repurchased with build points.

Chimeras

TimeWatch agents who have been subsumed multiple times are referred to in TimeWatch as **chimeras**, and may become an insane, erratic conglomeration of competing personalities and unique chronal powers. It's not uncommon for such agents to be retired from active service before they steal an autochron and rebel against TimeWatch. As chimeras tend to be both paranoid and sly, however, they may successfully escape and turn into Adversaries more often than TimeWatch would like to admit.

Mental Illness

[Alter as needed for the flavor of your setting.]

If the incident that drove you to mental illness was mundane in nature, you suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD.) You are haunted by dreams of the incident, and spend your days in a constant state of anxiety and alert, as if prepared for it to repeat itself at any moment. Whenever your senses register any input reminding you of the incident, you must make a Stability test (Difficulty 4) or freeze up. If you freeze up, you are unable to take any action for fifteen minutes and remain **shaken** (see above) for twenty-four hours after that. Tests to see if you show symptoms of PTSD do not in and of themselves lower your Stability pool.

If driven to mental illness by a supernatural occurrence, you face a range of possible mental disorders. The GM rolls on the following chart or chooses a disorder based on the triggering circumstance. The player is then sent out of the room, while the GM and other players collaborate on a way to heighten his sense of dislocation and disorientation.

1. **Delusion.** The other players and GM decide on a mundane detail of the world which is no longer true and has never been true. For example, there might be no such thing as a squirrel, a Volkswagen, or orange juice. Maybe John Lennon was never assassinated, or never existed in the first place. PCs and supporting characters deny knowledge of the chosen item, person, or event.

2. **Homicidal Mania.** The GM takes the player aside, tells him that he knows one of the other players is a supernatural creature, and tells him just how to kill the monster.

3. **Megalomania.** When the character fails at a dramatic moment, the GM describes the outcome of his ability attempt as successful, then asks the player to leave the room. Then the GM describes the real results to the other players, and invites the megalomaniac player back into the room.

4. **Multiple Personality Disorder.** At moments of stress, another player is assigned control

of the character, speaking and acting as if he's an entirely different person.

5. **Paranoia.** The other players are instructed to act as if they're trying to keep straight faces when the affected player returns. Occasionally they exchange notes, make hand signals to the GM, or use meaningless code words, as if communicating something important the player is unaware of.

6. **Selective Amnesia.** The group decides on an event that did happen in the world that the player has now forgotten all about. He's married, or killed someone, or pseudonymously written a best-selling book. Everyone he meets refers to this new, verifiable fact that he has no knowledge of.

Psychological Triage

A character with the Shrink ability can spend points from that pool to help another character regain spent Stability points. For every Shrink point spent, the recipient gains 2 Stability points.

If a character is acting in an erratic manner due to mental illness, a another character can spend 2 points of Shrink to snap him into a state of temporary lucidity. He will then act rationally for the remainder of the current scene.

Head Games

Mental illness can be cured through prolonged treatment using the Shrink ability. At the beginning of each scenario, in a prologue scene preceding the main action, the character administering the treatment makes a Shrink test (Difficulty 4.) After three consecutive successful tests, and three consecutive scenarios in which the patient remains above 0 Stability at all times, the mental illness goes away.

However, if the character ever again acquires a mental illness, he regains the condition he was previously cured of. Permanent cure then becomes impossible.

A successful Shrink test undertaken during the course of a scenario suppresses its symptoms until the patient next suffers a Stability loss.

Regaining Pool Points

Spent points from various pools are restored at different rates, depending on their narrative purpose.

Investigative ability pools are restored only at the end of each case, without regard to the amount of time that passes in the game world. Players seeking to marshal their resources may ask you how long cases typically run, in real time. Most groups finish scenarios over 2-3 sessions. Players may revise their sense of how carefully to manage point spending as they see how quickly their group typically disposes of its cases.

(GMs running extremely long, multi-part investigations may designate certain story events as breakpoints where all investigative pools are refreshed. For example, a globe-hopping investigation where the team meets a separate team of Esoterrorists enemies in five different locales might allow refreshment of investigative pools after each group of enemies is neutralized.)

Use of the Shrink ability permits limited recovery of Stability points in the course of an episode. Full refreshment occurs between cases. It is possible only when the character is able to spend calm, undisturbed quality time with friends and loved ones uninvolved in the shadowy world of the Ordo Veritatis. In campaigns where the teammates' personal lives are a matter of background detail only, refreshment automatically occurs between episodes.

GMs who wish to add a soap opera element to their campaigns, in which the characters must balance the everyday pressures of ordinary life against their activities as covert battlers of the supernatural, can complicate this process. In this campaign type, the characters must work to keep their support networks intact. If they fail, they regain no Stability between episodes. As part of the character creation process, players must detail their network of friends and loved ones in a paragraph or two of background text, which is then submitted to the GM for approval.

The Health pool refreshes over time, at a rate of 2 points per day of restful activity. (Wounded characters heal at a different rate, over a period of hospitalization.) Use of the Medic ability can restore a limited number of Health points in the course of a session.

Pools for the physical abilities of Athletics, Driving, Scuffling, and Shooting are fully restored whenever twenty-four hours of game-world time elapses since the last expenditure. The remaining general abilities refresh at the end of each case, like investigative abilities.

[[[BEGIN SIDEBAR]]]

What Do Pool Points Represent?

Pool points are a literary abstraction, representing the way that each character gets his or her own time in the spotlight in the course of an ensemble drama. When you do something remarkable, you expend a little bit of your spotlight time. More active players will spend their points sooner than less demonstrative ones, unless they carefully pick and choose their moments to shine.

Remember, all characters are remarkably competent. Pool points measure your opportunities to exercise this ultra-competence during any given scenario. Even when pools are empty, you still have a reasonable chance to succeed at a test, and you'll always get the information you need to move forward in the case.

Pool points do not represent a resource, tangible or otherwise, in the game world. Players are aware of them, but characters are not. The team members' ignorance of them is analogous to TV characters' obliviousness to commercial breaks, the unwritten rules of scene construction, and the tendency of events to heat up during sweeps.

We represent this most purely in the case of investigative skills, which are the core of the game. Their refreshment is tied to a purely fictional construct, the length of the episode.

However, where a pool could be seen to correspond to a resource perceptible to the characters, we handle refreshment in a somewhat more realistic, if also abstract, manner. Characters' ebbing Health scores are perceptible to the characters in the form of welts, cuts, pain, and general fatigue[5]. Stability is less tangible but can be subjectively measured in the characters' moods and

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[5]   The publisher uses Health to represent the narrative plausibility of a character subject to peril not dying. A GMC with 1 Health might be bad-ass, but drop the first time he's hit because

reactions. Physical abilities, also tied to fatigue and sharpness of reflexes, are also handled with a nod to the demands of realism.

[[[END SIDEBAR]]]

Hunkering Down

[[Use in warlike settings, with the general abilities Battlefield and Scrounging]]

Once per scenario, the group can stop to temporarily Hunker Down, partially or fully refreshing their Battlefield and/or Athletics pools.

When the players ask for an opportunity to Hunker Down, allow it if the interlude fits the pacing and situation. As guidelines, you might require that the squad be:

- traveling on foot
- through dangerous territory
- at least three hours of world time away from your point of departure
- one hour of world time away from your destination

As GM, you can offer an opportunity to Hunker Down whenever the group needs it and it feels right given the current situation. When you offer, remind the players that they get to Hunker Down once per scenario.

Designate one character to make a Difficulty 3 Scrounging test. The character must have a rating of 1 or greater in Scrounging.

Difficulties increase in especially inhospitable, bombed-out, or alien territory: +1 for a denuded no man's land, +2 for a twisted briar in an alternate realm.

On a success, the scrounger finds a spot of relative safety where the squad can rest and regroup, momentarily relaxing their constant vigilance. This might be:

- an abandoned farmhouse
- a cave
- a gully
- a burbling creek bed at the bottom of a secluded ravine

The GM invites the player to describe the spot, suggesting adjustments should the narration contradict details essential to the current mystery.

Each player, including the scrounger's, refreshes a number of points equal to the margin on the test. A margin of 0 is upgraded to a 1, so everyone gets at least one point. Points can be used to refresh Battlefield or Athletics.

The GM then invites a player who could use, and would like, some spotlight time, to

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his not important to the narrative.

commence a quick session of classic wartime dialogue between the squad members. The group might:

- try to make sense of this blasted war
- reminisce about the sunlit days before the first guns rumbled
- guess what their loved ones are doing on the home front
- imagine what they'll do next time they get leave
- make plans for their civilian futures after the war

When this interlude loses momentum, the GM calls for a player who could use the spotlight time to explain why the group has to get a move on and leave this safe location. "We have a mission to accomplish/mystery to solve" is a perfectly solid reason. When the narrated explanation suggests danger, describe the group getting away from it. Giving the group a chance to refresh points and then putting them in a situation that immediately yanks them back will strike your players as an unfair waste of time.

Stitches: TimeWatch's Action Points

It's been said that in GUMSHOE games your entire character sheet is made out of action points: spend your pools, get better results on your dice. *TimeWatch* is no exception, so *TimeWatch*'s actual action points (called Stitches, as in "a stitch in time saves nine") are a little different. They allow you to hang on longer in an action scene, or to raise or lower combat damage.

Distribution

The GM puts a bowl out on the table with 3 markers in it (such as poker chips or glass beads) for every player at the table, excluding the GM. (For instance, 5 players = 15 chips.) The GM doesn't refill this when it empties out, but spent Stitches are returned to the center bowl. In a virtual game held online, the GM simply puts the markers next to her computer and removes them from or puts them back into the pile when they're handed out or used.

Players automatically start the game with 1 Stitch each.

When someone makes the table laugh, follows their Drive, roleplays superbly, solves a clever clue, keeps a team moving through an investigation, or makes the game better for other players, they should get a Stitch from the bowl in the middle of the table. As a player you can't give one to yourself, but you're encouraged (and pretty much required) to hand out Stitches from the central bowl to other players, thus ensuring that a distracted GM isn't the only person granting them. Giving another player a Stitch is a way of saying "that was cool!" or "you were awesome." Pay attention to the other players at the table; you'll always have one player who is quieter than the rest, and make sure they're rewarded for interacting as well.

Your GM may also hand out Stitches if she makes a narrative decision that disadvantages a PC for the good of the plot. If she decides that an explosion knocks the group out and that you wake up captured, because the game is more fun to start a scene that way, she'll hand out one or more Stitches to anyone affected. This should be used sparingly by GMs, but is a good balance for rewarding players if their characters are disadvantaged for the good of the game.

It's up to the GM how many Stitches a player can have at one time; this is called the **hoarding limit**. In most games, the hoarding limit is usually 3 at once. If you're at your hoarding limit, you must spend one or more Stitches before you can earn any more. If someone tries to hand you a Stitch when you're already at the hoarding limit, you can immediately spend one or more of your existing Stitches to refresh pool points, and then accept the newly proffered one.

What Stitches Do

Stitches can be used for five things: slightly refreshing a pool, aiding another character through teamwork, simplifying time travel, boosting your weapon damage, or reducing weapon damage inflicted on you. The Teamwork benefit aside, you can never normally spend Stitches on behalf of someone else.

Pool Refreshes: At any time, spend one or more Stitches to refresh one or more General ability pools by 2 points per Stitch.

This is the primary way that you refresh your General pools. You can never exceed your ability's rating; for instance, if your Scuffling rating is 5 and you're down to 0, spending 3 Stitches on refreshes will bring it back up to 5 and no higher. This is specifically a refresh, not a bonus to a roll.

Stitches can never restore points to any Investigative pool, to Health (which is restored with the Medic ability), or to Chronal Stability (which is restored with the Reality Anchor ability).

Teamwork: Teamwork is a fast, easy way to give an ally +1 on a roll. As long as you can explain to the GM how you're helping, you can spend 2 Stitches to slightly aid another player in a General ability test. Spend 2 Stitches before or after the other player rolls his die, and you give him a +1 bonus on the die roll. This is the only method in the game for giving a bonus after the die is already rolled, and the bonus cannot be greater than +1. The GM can disallow this if she feels your description of how you're helping wouldn't work.

At the GM's discretion, and if it makes sense, multiple players can use teamwork to help the same character before they roll their die. This is different from the Cooperation rules in that it doesn't require an action, can be done on someone else's turn, and provides a maximum bonus of +1 per assisting character.

Simplify Time Travel: Normally, every instance of time travel requires characters to make a Travel test to avoid losing 2 points of Chronal Stability. Spending a Stitch when time traveling negates the need to make a Travel test. You can't spend a Stitch to negate other Paradox tests, though.

Boost Combat Damage: You can spend Stitches after rolling the damage die to increase damage inflicted on a 1-for-1 basis. Successfully punch someone for 1d6 − 1, spend 3 Stitches, and your damage is instead 1d6 + 2. This has no effect on PaciFist Stun tests or other non-damage effects.

Reduce Combat Damage: After you've been told how much Health damage your character has just taken, you can spend Stitches on a 1-for-1 basis to reduce damage that's inflicted on you. Spend 3 Stitches, for instance, and take 3 points less damage. This has no effect on Stun tests or other non-damage effects.

Improving Your Character

At the end of each investigation, each player gets 2 build points for each session they participated in. (This assumes a small number of 3-4 hour sessions; if you play in shorter bursts, modify accordingly.) Players who had characters die in the course of the investigation only get points for each session involving their current character.

These build points can be spent to increase either investigative or general abilities. You may acquire new abilities or bolster existing ones. If necessary to preserve credibility, rationalize new abilities as areas of expertise you've had all along, but are only revealing later in the series.

Opponent Statistics

You usually only need game statistics for characters, including ODEs, that the investigators in some way have to overcome through general abilities. Most witnesses, suspects and non-combatants require only a text description, indicating for example which interpersonal abilities they're most likely to respond to.

Opponents use the same Hit Threshold and Weapon Damage rules as player characters.

When choosing Health ratings for dramatically unimportant foes, don't worry about simulating their relative robustness in comparison to the general population. Focus on how many hits they ought to be able to take before dropping, according to dramatic logic. If you want a thug who falls to a single burst of automatic fire, give him a Health of 1 or 2.

An **Attack Pattern** is an optional game statistic suggesting how the opponent might spend its Scuffling and/or Shooting points from round to round of a fight. GMs should always consult story logic and dramatic needs first and resort to the attack pattern second. You might want a vast lumbering creature to smash doors and walls around the PCs, and a small vicious ODE to attack with unerring precision. These numbers are a fallback if you can't decide how the opponent would spend, or are uncomfortable choosing to spend enough to guarantee a hit each time. Don't use them just because they're there, even if you find the pull of numbers—oh, sweet, beautiful numbers—generally irresistible.

When you do use the Attack Pattern, increase the spends after each miss until the opponent either starts to hit, or runs out of points. Once engaged, opponents figure out how hard the PCs are to hit, and adjust their efforts accordingly.

Instead of a combat pool, some opponents may have a static value to attack. If so, apply this modifier to each attack.

Armor is subtracted from each instance of damage the opponent takes. Where a weapon or weapons is listed in brackets after the number, the Armor reduces damage only from those weapons. Some Armor may protect against all Scuffling attacks but not Shooting attacks, or vice versa.

An opponent's **Alertness Modifier** represents its ability to sense your activities, whether through standard senses like sight and hearing, or exotic ones like echolocation, pheromone recognition, or energy signature reading. When you try to sneak past it, the Alertness Modifier is applied to your base Infiltration Difficulty, which is usually 4. It also applies to Surveillance tests when you're trying to observe the opponent without being observed in turn. The Alertness

Modifier reflects all of the individual's sensing capabilities, both natural and technological. A second number appearing after a slash represents the opponent's Alertness if its gear is somehow neutralized or taken away.

An opponent with a **Stealth Modifier** is either significantly harder or easier to spot with Surveillance. It alters the difficulty number for that or similar tests.

Monster Special Abilities

[*Opponents in some games, such as TimeWatch, have a range of special abilities that have a cost in ability points, usually from a catch-all General ability such as Tempus. Customize opponents by selecting special abilities from this list.*]

Tempus

Tempus (as in *tempus fugit*) is the ability behind unique antagonist powers. Tempus is a catchall category that represents the antagonist's mastery over time and space. This ability rating determines the base Hit Threshold of the antagonist, just like Athletics for a TimeWatch Agent; a Tempus rating of 8+ means a Hit Threshold of 4, unless the antagonist is particularly easy to hit (as a few antagonists are). It functions as Preparedness when acquiring objects, as Chronal Stability, including when making Paradox tests, and as Medic when trying to heal oneself, and antagonists draw on it to power their time machines, alien powers, and temporal attacks. Antagonists who are not time travelers or aliens may not have Tempus and use the traditional abilities instead.

Antagonists with strong willpower and a strong sense of self may have more Tempus than is listed here. Weak-willed antagonists may have less.

An antagonist makes Paradox tests using their Tempus points. They do not, however, typically have access to the Reality Anchor ability to restore these points once spent. This means that failed Paradox tests reduce an antagonist's ability to activate their special powers.

Mooks and Opponents run out of Tempus at 0, just like Health; this may make them fade out of existence if they're time travelers. Adversaries run out of Tempus at –12, just like Chronal Stability for player characters. An Adversary who runs out of Tempus is erased from the universe, or disembodied and flung to another time. The Adversary can spend herself into a hole if she wants to, but suffers the normal risks of chronal instability for doing so.

Antagonists refresh their Tempus pools fully after an 8-hour rest, so chasing down a fleeing enemy through time can be essential if you don't want her to clock back in fully rested 15 seconds after she departed. At the GM's discretion, several hours of downtime will restore half an antagonist's depleted Tempus.

List of Special Abilities

This list is far from comprehensive. If you think of a new, balanced, fun ability while designing an antagonist, just assign a Tempus cost and scribble it down, and you're ready to go. Several abilities (such as Cybernetics, Mutation, and Technology) are a catchall for any number of other effects.

Ability	Cost	Effect
Armor	0 or 3	Reduces damage
Awareness	0	Raises the Difficulty of player character Unobtrusiveness tests to hide
Blink	2 + 1/round	Flash in and out of combat
Branching Point	4	Pick one of two possible paths for yourself or another
Chronal Drain	2	Drain Reality Anchor points on a hit
Clock Out	2	Time travel
Cybernetics	2	Trigger a robotic effect
Destabilize	2 or 4	Trigger D4/L4 Paradox test
Disguise	1	Look like a different person
Distortion	2 or 3	Increase Hit Threshold
Electronic Interference	2	Render electronics useless
Embrace Instability	0	Gain Tempus every time Agents make Paradox tests
Exile	2	Fling target through time
Extra Action	2	Gain a 2nd action in a combat round
Flashback	5	Have a preprepared plan, as per the Preparedness Booster
Flight	0 or 2	Levitate or fly
Fluid	0 or 3	Effectively immune to most physical attacks
Help Yourself	5	An older, healthy version arrives to help in combat
Hivemind	0 or 2	Link brains to share information and lower a foe's Hit Threshold
Immaterial	0 or 2	Out of phase with reality
Impersonation	2	Perfectly impersonate another creature
Infection	0	Spread disease
Interdiction	0 or 2	Briefly restrict time travel
Invisibility	3	Increases Hit Threshold and Stealth Modifier
Lightning Speed	2	Move quickly
Mastermind	0	Genius planner and tactician
Mental Attack	Variable	Chronal Stability test to avoid mind control or

		possession
Mutation	2	Trigger a mutation-related effect
Oracle	1	Predict upcoming future events
Psychic	2	Trigger a psychic effect
Regenerate	0 or 2	Regenerate Health damage
Resist Stun	0	Stun test Difficulties are lowered by 2
Restabilize	Variable	Refreshes another creature's Tempus
Seize Initiative	2	Jump into combat initiative at any point
Shape-Shift	2	Reshape body into a nonhumanoid form
Spider Climb	0 or 1	Walk on walls and ceilings
Stealth	0	Raises the Difficulty of player character Unobtrusiveness tests to notice you hiding
Stony	0	Made of stone and resistant to many attacks
Strength	0 or more	Incredibly strong
Stun	0	Attacks can stun, usually at Stun 5
Summoning	3	Summon Mooks as backup
Technology	2	Use super-science to produce technology
Teleport	2	Move instantly from one location to another
Unfeeling	0	Never become Hurt, and make all Consciousness rolls and Stun tests
Universal Attack	1 or 2 per target	Instantly attack everyone you wish to within range
Venom	2	Attack also delivers poison

Sample Creature Stat Block: Lipovore

Abilities: Athletics 6, Health 18, Scuffling 12, Shooting 8, plus one shipboard ability at 8 and another at 4.

Scuffling Weapons/Damage: punch +2

Shooting Weapons/Damage: disruption pistol +1

Hit Threshold: 3

Typical Tech: Disguiser, Personal Bluffer, Tether

Alertness Modifier: +2

Stealth Modifier: +2

Savvy Modifier: +2

Special: At -12 hit points a lipovore falls into a deep coma that may be mistaken for death.

[From Ashen Stars]

Sample Creature Stat Blocks: Various Animals

Aggressive Herbivore, Cattle-Sized

Abilities: Athletics 8, Health 8, Scuffling 8

Scuffling Weapons/Damage: gore/trample +2

Hit Threshold: 2

Armor: 0

Alertness Modifier: -2

Stealth Modifier: -2

Aggressive Herbivore, Rhino-Sized

Abilities: Athletics 12, Health 12, Scuffling 12

Scuffling Weapons/Damage: gore/trample +4

Hit Threshold: 2

Armor: 2

Alertness Modifier: -3

Stealth Modifier: -3

Aggressive Herbivore, Triceratops-Sized

Abilities: Athletics 12, Health 24, Scuffling 16

Scuffling Weapons/Damage: gore/trample +6

Hit Threshold: 2

Armor: 3

Alertness Modifier: -3

Stealth Modifier: -3

Aggressive Herbivore, Sauropod-Sized

Abilities: Athletics 24, Health 36, Scuffling 24

Scuffling Weapons/Damage: trample +8

Hit Threshold: 1

Armor: 1

Alertness Modifier: -4

Stealth Modifier: -4

Apex Predator, Lion-Sized

Abilities: Athletics 12, Health 8, Scuffling 8
Scuffling Weapons/Damage: bite +1
Hit Threshold: 4
Armor: 0
Alertness Modifier: +1
Stealth Modifier: +1

Apex Predator, Megafauna-Sized

Abilities: Athletics 16, Health 8, Scuffling 8
Scuffling Weapons/Damage: bite, swipe or claw +4
Hit Threshold: 3
Armor: 1
Alertness Modifier: +1
Stealth Modifier: -3

Apex Predator, Monster-Sized

Abilities: Athletics 16, Health 18, Scuffling 18
Scuffling Weapons/Damage: bite, swipe or claw +6
Hit Threshold: 2
Armor: 2
Alertness Modifier: +1
Stealth Modifier: -3

Pack Predator, Dog-Sized

Abilities: Athletics 8, Health 3, Scuffling 4
Scuffling Weapons/Damage: bite -1
Hit Threshold: 4
Armor: 0
Alertness Modifier: +1
Stealth Modifier: +1

Pack Predator, Wolf-Sized

Abilities: Athletics 8, Health 3, Scuffling 4
Scuffling Weapons/Damage: bite +0
Hit Threshold: 4
Armor: 0

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier*: +1*

Tests and Supporting Characters

Game statistics in GUMSHOE are, whenever possible, player-facing. When you as GM have the choice between making a determination based on a player test, or on a test made by you on behalf of a supporting character, always choose the player. For example, you may want to specify that there's a chance a harried relative of a kidnapping victim might eventually lose her patience with the investigators and participate in a damaging press conference. Rather than having her make a Stability test to see when and if this happens, set it up so that a player makes a Reassurance spend to forestall her.

Likewise, if you want to have a supporting character steal something in a situation where the PCs are in no position to affect the outcome, simply decree that it happens. Don't bother testing the character's Filch ability. To do otherwise is to engage in false branching: you are creating unpredictability for yourself in a way that remains invisible to the players. They don't get a chance to alter the outcome, and thus gain no benefit from the uncertainty you've introduced.

Hazards

In or out of combat, the characters' survival may be threatened by assorted hazards, from electrical shock to poisoning.

Electricity and Other Shocks

Damage from exposure to electricity varies according to voltage. You can suffer:

Mild shock, equivalent to briefly touching an ungrounded wire or damaged electrical appliance. You lose 1 Health and are blown backwards for a couple of meters.

Moderate shock, equivalent to a jolt from a cattle prod. You lose 2 Health and (if in combat time) your next four actions. You always lose at least one action, but may buy off the loss of other actions by paying 3 Athletics points per action.

Extreme shock, equivalent to a lightning strike. You suffer one die of damage, with a +4 modifier.

The GM should always give you some opportunity to avoid being shocked, whether it be an Athletics test to avoid unexpected contact, or a Surveillance test to spot the danger.

If you are reduced to –6 or fewer Health, the current is assumed to have traveled through your heart or brain, causing cardiac arrest or brain damage, respectively. The GM describes appropriate symptoms and futuristic treatments during your sick bay convalescence.

Many other hazards can be emulated using the mild/moderate/extreme breakdown above. Simply change the narrative description and side effects, keeping the Health pool losses.

Example Hazard Description: Alien Fungal Infection

Mild: For the next two intervals, you lose 2 Health every time you make an Athletics test.

Moderate: Make a Health test against a Difficulty of 4. If you fail, you suffer an extreme shock at the beginning of the next interval.

Example Hazard Description: Ion Storm

Mild: For the next interval, you lose all benefits from your cybernetic enhancements.

Moderate: Your cybernetic enhancements all go offline, returning after three intervals. You may activate any or all of them before this time by spending 2 Health per enhancement.

Example Hazard Description:Temporal Shock

Mild: For the remainder of the interval, you lose 1 Health each time you use an Academic or Technical ability.

Moderate: For the remainder of the interval, the Difficulty of any general ability rolls increases by 2.

[Hazard descriptions from Ashen Stars.]

Fire

Damage from exposure to fire varies according to the surface area of your body exposed to the flame, and repeats for each round (or, outside of combat, every few seconds) you remain exposed to it.

Minor exposure, most often to an extremity like a hand or foot, carries a damage modifier of −2.

Partial exposure, to up to half of your surface area, carries a damage modifier of +0.

Extensive exposure, to half or more of your surface area, imposes a damage modifier of +2.

The GM should always give you a chance to avoid being set on fire. The difficulty of extinguishing a flame is usually 4, but might be higher for anomalous flame-like manifestations, or when you are coated with a futuristic accelerant.

Suffocation

When deprived of air, you get two minutes before the nastiness kicks in. After that point, you lose 1 Athletics every ten seconds, as you struggle to hold your breath. Once that pool depletes, you start losing Health, at a rate of 1 point every five seconds.

Toxins

Toxins are either inhaled, ingested or injected directly into the bloodstream. They vary widely in lethality. A dose of a low-tech cleaning substance may impose a damage modifier of −2, where a viro-active nerve gas might range from +6 to +16. Inhaled toxins tend to take effect right away. Injected and ingested toxins take delayed effect, anywhere from minutes to hours after exposure. Their damage might be parceled out in increments, and may prevent you from refreshing Health

points until somehow neutralized. As with any hazard, the GM should always give you a chance to avoid exposure to them.

Gear

[The importance of gear varies from game to game. In TimeWatch, each agent has specified starting gear, and can build or acquire additional gear using Preparedness.]

Standard Issue TimeWatch Gear

Most *TimeWatch* campaigns feature standard equipment that is issued to every Agent. If this equipment is lost or needs replacing, and you have access to an autochron, the Preparedness Difficulty to replace standard gear is usually 1 lower than normal.

Autochron

Future, Blatant, Standard

The autochron is TimeWatch's standard issue time machine, issued to agents because it balances portability and flexibility with ease of use. An inactive autochron looks like a 33 cm long metal bar with no visible controls. Inactive autochrons are incredibly robust and are quite difficult to damage (Armor 5; if unactivated, they generally aren't damaged by an attack unless the GM deliberately wishes them to be). When inactive, their rod form can be used in combat as an improvised weapon with little risk of damage to the device. An autochron is activated by a control thought from the biometrically linked agent it has been assigned to. A closed autochron can be hacked to open and activate, typically requires a Difficulty 6 Tinkering test.

Once activated, the rod extends one meter to act as a set of handlebars. Holographic controls project from the control bar, and the operator sets the destination time and location with voice, touch, or prerecorded tether command. Once time and destination are set and the autochron is activated, the device extends a brilliant purple sphere around the operator (and up to one adult-sized passenger, if neither mind close quarters). It spends 1 round calculating coordinates and charging its chronal field. One round after activation, the autochron and anything within its chronal field clocks out and disappears.

Time traveling mid-combat can be an extremely dangerous proposition. When the chronal field first activates, the autochron and the operator are both quite vulnerable. Any attack during that round that hits the time traveler, regardless of damage, collapses the chronal field and causes the autochron to stop working until repaired. Any individual in the chronal field at the time must make a Difficulty 6 / Loss 6 Paradox test. After the one round of vulnerability autochron chronal fields act as cover for the pilots inside them, raising Agent Hit Thresholds by 1 point. After a jump an autochron requires 1–3 rounds, rolled randomly as needed, before it recharges and can time travel or teleport again.

Broken autochrons can be repaired with several hours of work by an Agent with Timecraft 2 and an expenditure of 6 Tinkering, although the GM may decide to increase or reduce this repair time and Tinkering cost based on the availability of parts and tools. Spending a Science! or Timecraft point typically cuts this time in half, as does the Tinkering Booster *Rapid Deployment*.

Autochrons are usually set to adjust their arrival location to somewhere private where their distinctive sound and vibrant purple glow will not be seen. This can easily be turned off by an operator more interested in accuracy than secrecy. An autochron can safely materialize underwater or in outer space and will protect the operator from atmosphere-based environmental hazards so long as the device remains active.

Materialized autochrons cannot physically move under their own power, like a car or a carriage. They only re-emerge inside a solid object if deliberately hacked to do so, something that almost never occurs. This results in a Class 2 explosion.

Although operators can specify a spatial arrival coordinate, the autochron's physical arrival accuracy is somewhat dependent on the distance traveled in time. Travel within a year, and it's usually exact; within a decade, and it lands in the same room as the intended spot; within a century, and it arrives in the same building, up to an error of perhaps twenty kilometers after traveling hundreds of millions of years. The GM can increase or decrease this accuracy at her whim, and one Agent spending a Timecraft point before clocking out will usually ensure precise arrival for the entire group.

The chronal accuracy of an autochron does not suffer from this error. Barring interference or unusual circumstances, an autochron arrives exactly when it is set to, regardless of the amount of time jumped.

Impersonator Mesh

Future, Subtle, Standard

Impersonator mesh is a transparent, psi-active device that sits directly on the Agent's skin and immediately blends in with skin to become almost invisible. It samples nearby thoughts and causes observers to be casually uninterested in any individual wearing the mesh. Impersonator mesh grants a +3 Stealth Modifier on Unobtrusiveness tests so long as the Agent has not yet brought attention to himself in some way. It does not function against mechanical detection devices such as robots, AI, or security systems, and ceases functioning for the scene once the Agent deliberately or accidentally gets the attention of anyone outside of the mission team.

Medkit

Future, Blatant, Standard

A TimeWatch medkit consists of a drug synthesis micro-unit, a tether-linked bio-scanner, rapid-heal nanites, dermal repair units, and other technobabble-laden devices that provide rapid and high-tech healing. The Medic ability works at half efficiency unless the Agent possesses a medkit. The act of using a medkit when healing someone in an anachronistic time period is immediately obvious to anyone with the slightest degree of medical training, and may trigger a Paradox test and/or get you strung up as a witch.

MEM-Tags

Future, Standard, Hackable

When someone witnesses anachronistic events and can't be talked out of the memory in any

other way, TimeWatch agents turn to the MEM-tagging process. MEM-tags are small data chips that must be deliberately placed on an unconscious (and usually stunned) subject. They act as a chronal beacon for TimeWatch technicians in the far future to kidnap the subject with a directed tachyon beam. Subjects are kidnapped, mind-wiped, given reconstructed memories, and returned to their same locations a few milliseconds later, after which the agent removes the used MEM-tag. To local observers a MEM-tagged subject seems to flicker slightly; once woken, they will remember whatever variant memories that TimeWatch technicians have installed.

The process isn't perfect; it isn't uncommon for subjects to experience lost time or déjà vu, have contradictory memories, or to retain a feeling of being probed. The process leaves neurological traces in brain chemistry that can be detected with Medical Expertise or Science! by an investigator who is deliberately looking for irregularities. Rumors that some TimeWatch agents have themselves shown signs of MEM-tagging are surely just that: rumors.

One thing is clear: rendering the subject unconscious first isn't just a good recommendation to make the technicians' jobs easier. The tachyon-beam technology used for remote retrieval typically renders a conscious subject incurably insane. MEM-tags have a red LED that starts blinking when it locks onto a conscious target, and as per TimeWatch regulations, technicians refuse to retrieve them. This bureaucratic limitation can be sidestepped with a Bureaucracy spend (to have bribed the technician), or a Tinkering test (to have surreptitiously hacked the MEM-tag).

Clever Agents may try to use MEM-tags to heal their own fallen and unconscious Agents, something that is against TimeWatch policy but which sometimes occurs anyways. An expenditure of 2 Bureaucracy points is required; these points can either come from the unconscious Agent, the Agent slapping on the MEM-tag, or both. Without the Bureaucracy spend, the downed Agent is simply not retrieved by technicians who have a greater love of bureaucratic protocol than they do of heroism.

Successful retrieval delivers a fully healed but stunned Agent to the spot he disappeared from seconds before. As with any stunned character, a successful Difficulty 4 Medic test (typically taking a combat action) is needed to restore consciousness.

Anything that stops time travel, such as chronal inhibitors, mission-related time disruption, gratuitous GM plot devices, and the complete or partial elimination of TimeWatch through chronal hijinks will stop MEM-tags from functioning.

PaciFist Neural Disruptor

Future, Subtle, Chronomorphic, Standard, Hackable; Close range; Stun 5

PaciFists are stun guns usable with both the Scuffling (for Point-Blank range only) and Shooting (for up to Close range) abilities, and are specially designed for TimeWatch use. They are chronomorphic, blending in to a historical era by changing their physical shape and appearance. Agents can usually decide what shape their PaciFist assumes: a walking cane, a six-gun revolver, a mobile phone, a short stick, a cigarette case, a pipe, or whatever appropriate form the Agent wishes. The GM can pick the form for the player if she wishes, although she may want to toss the player a Stitch if she picks something awkward or incongruous.

PaciFists have a rating of Stun 5. They only work at Point-Blank and (if used with the Shooting

ability) Close range, and are ineffective at farther ranges. That's their trade-off for making no noise and having no visible beam; the only way to tell a PaciFist has been fired is by the slight scent of ozone and a toppling, unconscious body, which makes them perfect for undercover work.

Making a successful Tinkering test can **overcharge** a PaciFist, boosting its effect up to either Stun 6 or Near range, your choice, for its next shot. Rolling a 1 on the d6 during an overcharged attack burns out the weapon regardless of whether the attack was successful. Fixing a burned out weapon requires 10 minutes of work time and a successful Tinkering test.

Tether

Future, Subtle, Standard

No one expects your character — or you — to remember all the intricate details of recorded history. That's what your tether is for.

This 25th-century technology is a ring-sized personal digital assistant on overdrive. Your tether serves as your encrypted communicator, your camera, your encyclopedia, your journal, your holographic research assistant, and your personal historian for any information you don't already know. It can observe and record your surroundings, talk directly and secretly into your ear through a subdermal implant, feed information directly into linked contact lenses, holographically display and rotate 3-D maps, translate any known language instantaneously, interface with your weapons, manifest a holographic screen, and help you run technical tests if you need to investigate a crime scene. The AI in your tether is even capable of having its own personality, although not all agents enable this.

Tethers access records of true history, the correct recorded history as TimeWatch knows it. When history changes around you, your tether won't know anything about the newly created history, but it will tell you what originally should have happened instead.

Your tether is chronomorphic; that means that it adjusts its appearance to your current time period. If you're in the 20th century, its holographic readouts might look like a newspaper; in the 15th century, like a woodcut. You usually get to choose.

If you lack the Research Investigative ability, your connection with your tether is somewhat compromised when compared to other Agents. Your tether will still report to you on whatever eras of history you have selected as Investigative abilities, but will lose its data connection or have a tendency to report less relevant information when you are attempting to research other areas of interest. Don't be surprised if the GM has fun roleplaying this.

Tethers are a plot device that exist to make *TimeWatch* games more fun. They're the reason that Agents using their Research ability can spend most of their time in the field instead of in libraries. Not that libraries aren't fantastic, but when you need to know the exact details of the Battle of Hastings while someone with a sword is trying to kill you, you'll appreciate your tether's more immediate convenience.

Because their capabilities aren't minutely described, a tether's capabilities can be as advanced as you and the GM wish it to be. Tethers are superb for explaining how you can quickly gain information from your more obscure Investigative abilities. Whether you're secretly

subvocalizing with your team on an encrypted channel, interfacing with a missile's guidance system, hacking a massive information network, or viewing a 3-D map of Prussian battle sites, your tether is the tool of choice to use.

TimeWatch Uniform

Future, Subtle, Chronomorphic, Standard; Armor 1

It's common for TimeWatch agents to change clothes early and often as they disguise themselves for different time periods, and the TimeWatch uniform often remains on if it can be worked into the disguise. This comfortable two-part uniform of incredibly light, resilient futuristic material is chronomorphic and can be changed in color and shape to accompany many appropriate styles for a given era of history. Its most valuable quality is that despite its lack of heft, the nanofibers it is woven from act as Armor 1 against all Scuffling and Shooting attacks. It does not provide protection from incidents such as fire, explosions, and crashes.

It is up to the GM and the group to decide what TimeWatch's official uniform looks like in terms of color, pattern, and cut.

Translator

Future, Subtle, Standard

Using the sensory data from your tether, the translator instantly translates any historical language that TimeWatch linguists have investigated and instantly allows an agent to correctly vocalize that language as well. If desired, vocalization can include an accent. The translator can also translate written text and hieroglyphs, if they are in a known language and are legible.

There are some languages that the translator cannot help with until it has gathered a sufficient sample of audio and/or written data: extremely obscure languages, prehistoric languages, alien languages, and unique languages from parallel timelines.

Designing Scenarios

The GUMSHOE system supports a certain style of scenario design. The rules are less important to the success of your game than the way you structure your adventures.

Clues

If a piece of information is essential to move the story on, it's a **core clue**. It costs nothing. You can also offer minor tidbits of information at a 0 points, if the information not consequential enough to be worth a point spend.

If you have a piece of information that offers a fun sidelight on the action but is not essential to move through the story, you can make this available with a 1- or 2-point spend. Choose the cost of the spend according to the entertainment value of the information, not the game-world difficulty of completing the task. The whole point of the system is to make clues easy to acquire, so that players can get on with the fun of figuring out how they fit together. Facilitate this by making choices that get information into the hands of players. Habits die hard, so make sure you're not slipping back into the old paradigm and making the clues hard to get.

If an action's consequence of failure might be madness, death or injury, by all means make it a test. If game world logic suggests that a supporting character will actively oppose the PC, make it a contest.

Clue Types

Special clue types are as follows.

Floating Core Clues

It can be useful to structure a scenario with one or more free-floating core clues. These typically advance the story from one distinct section to another. Where an ordinary core clue is linked with a particular scene, a floating clue can be gleaned in any one of several scenes. The GM determines during play which scene gives up the clue.

Floating clues allow you to control the pacing of a scenario. They allow the characters to play out all of the fun or interesting experiences in one section of the scenario before the story takes a dramatic turn. For example, you might want them to separately meet all of the suspected esoterror suspects before they, and the Investigators, get locked up for the night in an old dark house. To achieve this, withhold the core clue that moves the investigators to the dark house until after they've met all of the relevant supporting characters. That way, you prevent them from leaping ahead into the narrative without getting all the information they need to fully enjoy what follows.

Likewise, a floating clue allows you to perform like a ruthless editor, skipping unnecessary scenes when you need to kick the narrative into a higher gear. Let's say you've chosen five possible scenes in which the Investigators might logically get a necessary core clue. You figure that this phase of the adventure should take about an hour. If the players breeze through the scenes in ten minutes apiece, you can save the core clue for the last scene. If they linger, taking twenty minutes per scene, you'll want to make the core clue available after the third scene.

Player frustration level usually serves as a better trigger for a floating core clue than a predetermined time limit. If they're having obvious fun interacting with the vivid supporting characters you've created, or being creeped out by uncanny phenomena, you can give them more of what they want by saving the core clue for the final scene. On the other hand, if you see they're getting bored and frustrated, you can slip in the floating clue earlier.

Leveraged Clues

A staple element of mystery writing is the crucial fact which, when presented to a previously resistant witness or suspect, causes him to break down and suddenly supply the information or confession the detectives seek. This is represented in GUMSHOE by the **leveraged** clue. This is a piece of information which is only available from the combined use of an interpersonal ability, and the mention of another, previously gathered clue. The cited clue is called a **prerequisite** clue, and is by definition a sub-category of core clue.

Pipe Clues

A clue which is important to the solution of the mystery, but which becomes significant much

later in the scenario, is called a pipe clue. The name is a reference to screenwriting jargon, where the insertion of exposition that becomes relevant later in the narrative is referred to as "laying pipe." The term likens the careful arrangement of narrative information to the work performed by a plumber in building a house.

Pipe clues create a sense of structural variety in a scenario, lessening the sense that the PCs are being led in a strictly linear manner from Scene A to Scene B to Scene C. When they work well, they give players a "eureka" moment, as they suddenly piece together disparate pieces of the puzzle. A possible risk with pipe clues lies in the possible weakness of player memories, especially over the course of a scenario broken into several sessions. The GM may occasionally have to prompt players to remember the first piece of a pipe clue when they encounter a later component.

Restricted Clues

Certain clues which are necessary to the solution of a mystery will not be known to everyone with the ability required to access them. Instead, these are restricted clues—secret, esoteric or otherwise obscure facts which one member of the group just happens to know.

Only a select few people know about OPERATION CORNWALLIS, but if it is necessary to the completion of an investigation, an investigator will be one of them.

To preserve the sense that the group has access to little-known facts, only one group member knows the information in question; its revelation comes as news to all of the other investigators, even those who have the same ability. The first character with the relevant ability to take an action that might trigger the clue is the one blessed with this fortuitous knowledge. Where no clear first actor exists, as in a clue provided as soon as the investigators enter a scene, the GM chooses the investigator with the highest current pool in that ability (if applicable) or the investigator who has had the least recent spotlight time or most requires a positive reversal of fortune. Alternately, the GM may allow applicable background considerations to determine the possessor of the restricted clue: for example, a character with high Bureaucracy might recognize an esoterror suspect from back office work.

Timed Results

The following structural technique applies to any GUMSHOE game where the characters have access to the services of a forensic lab, and rely on tests performed by others.

You can shape the pacing of a case with a **timed result**. This occurs when believability requires a suitable interval between the submission of evidence to forensic experts and the results of the testing they perform. In police procedurals, it is common for the direction of an investigation to be suddenly changed when the lab results come in. The scientific evidence may exonerate the current top suspect or point the investigators toward new witnesses or locations. Alternately, it can change the meaning of previously gleaned information, causing the investigators to conduct re-interview previous witnesses, or conduct closer searches of crime scenes.

A timed result can serve as a delayed-reaction core clue, directing the PCs to a new scene. These are useful devices in cases where the scenes can be connected in any order. If the PCs get

bored or bogged down in one scene, they can receive a phone call from the lab techs calling them in to receive some much-needed exposition, which sends them in a new direction.

The arrival of a timed result can also change the players' interpretation of their current case notes without moving them to a new scene. They might dismiss a suspect's alibi, alter their timeline of events, or reject information provided them by a witness whose perceptions are revealed as unreliable.

News of a lab report requiring the team's attention can also be used to cut short a scene that the players won't abandon, even though they've already collected all available clues.

[[SIDEBAR]]

Records are your Friend

In addition to your adventure notes, there are two other documents you need to run the game.

When you are creating your adventure, make a note of the investigative abilities you've used on the Investigative Ability Checklist. It's a good idea to add clues for as wide a range of abilities as possible. You can also use the Checklist during character creation to ensure all the abilities are covered, and that redundant abilities are left out.

Secondly, during character creation, have your players note their choices of investigative abilities on the GM's Investigator Roster. This enables you to pick out which characters might notice obvious clues, and ensure spotlight time is evenly spread.

When you prepare your next session, you can use the Investigator Roster to see what interests your players. If someone has a 3-point rating in Art History, you could add a some forged artwork or a menacing sculpture to your notes. This is particularly useful in an improvised game.

[[SIDEBAR]]

Scene Types

Having planned out your mystery, it's time to arrange it into scenes. Each of these takes place in a different location or involves an interaction with a different supporting character—usually both. Under the title of the scene, write the scene type, and the scene or scenes which lead to the current scene, and scenes which lead from it. Here is an example scene header from the introductory adventure.

The Good Reverend

Scene Type: Core
Lead-In: The Briefing
Lead-Outs: The Visionary, The Skeptic, Newshounds of Sequoia City
Scenes fall into the following types.

Introductory

This is the first scene of the episode. It establishes the premise of the mystery. If it's the characters' first meeting, have the agents first rendezvous with one another. Then, they meet Mr.

Verity in a second secure locale where you provide the briefing and answer questions. When sent to deal with an emergency already in, they go direct to the scene and are briefed there by Mr. Verity. You can extend this scene if it's your first session of the Esoterrorists. See the Introductory scene in Operation Prophet Bunco.

Core

Core scenes present at least one piece of information necessary to complete the investigation and get to the climactic scene.

Each core scene requires at least a single core clue.

A core clue typically points the group to another scene, often a core scene.

Avoid hard sequenced core clues, which can only lead to one another in a single order.

You're constructing one way to move through the story to another core clue, not the only way. In play, you may find yourself placing the core clue from one scene in another, improvised scene inspired by the logical actions undertaken by the players. (This is also true of published scenarios, by the way.) The scene structure guarantees that there's at least one way to navigate the story, but should not preclude other scene orders. By following the structure you also ensure that you're creating a branching narrative driven by player choices. This avoids the syndrome of the story driven by the actions of supporting characters, which the players observe more or less passively.

[[[Begin Sidebar]]]

Placing Information

A core scene typically includes many pieces of information in addition to its core clue. Facts may provide understanding and context. Or they may obscure the mystery, by focusing attention on irrelevant details. Creating a scene is about anticipating the questions the players will ask and figuring out which answers ought to be available to the investigative experts their characters happen to be.

Don't make all non-core clues spends. Add spends when:

- you think of facts that seem enjoyably arcane
- a piece of information is tangential or obscure
- lasers might get information more quickly than they otherwise would
- they might secure some other practical advantage

If a spend doesn't make the character giving up his points seem more impressive, or confer some other advantage, it shouldn't be a spend.[6]

[[[End Sidebar]]]

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[6]   The publisher goes out of his way to make sure that players consider every point spend to be worthwhile.

Alternate

Alternate scenes provide information which may be of some use in understanding and solving the central mystery, but aren't strictly necessary to reach the conclusion. They often provide context and detail. Or they might provide the same information as core scenes, but in another way. As a third option, they might allow the group to eliminate a red herring possibility. These exculpatory facts are valuable; they let the lasers narrow their search to the real answer, even though they don't strictly speaking, lead to another core clue.

Antagonist Reaction

This is a scene of danger or trouble in which supporting characters opposed to the group's success take action to stop them or set them back. This might be a fight scene, but could just as easily be a political hassle, act of sabotage, or other less direct challenge. If it helps you keep track, you might note in brackets that the enemies faced are tangential rather than primary opponents. Antagonist reactions can be floating, that is, you can use them to kick up the pace if things are flagging.

Hazard

A hazard scene presents the crew with an impersonal obstacle to their safety or ability to continue the investigation. It must typically be overcome through tests or contests.

Sub-Plot

A sub-plot scene gives the characters an opportunity to wheel, deal, explore and interact without directly altering the course of the investigation. These may arise from personal arcs, side deals, public relations efforts, or simply the curiosity of one or more agents. Where the central mystery provides structure and forward momentum, the sub-plot adds flavor and character. Sequences arising from it may be what the group remembers long after the mystery has been put to bed. Sub-plots are more suited to long-running campaign play.

Conclusion

The conclusion brings the group to the end of its investigation and often confronts it with a moral dilemma, physical obstacle, or both. Functionally, it's a final hazard or antagonist reaction scene, although it may be initiated by the players busting in on esoterrorists or ODEs. The classic conclusion of an RPG mystery is a big fight. Your group may insist on a climactic scrap, or prefer to avoid it through quick talking and clever thinking. It's easy to make a fight or other action scene feel exciting and conclusive. In The Esoterrorists conclusions tend to be gory and sanity-threatening.

Hybrid Scenes

Some scenes double up, most often when a general challenge leads to an information opportunity. It's okay to give out a core clue as a reward for overcoming an obstacle only if that core clue is also available by other means. Otherwise you risk creating a situation where a core

clue becomes unavailable, violating the central tenet of the GUMSHOE system.

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Scene Diagrams

To check that player choice matters in your scenario, diagram its scenes. Connect them with arrows, checking to make sure that they can be unraveled in any order. It's acceptable to add unpredictability and variance with non-investigative scenes (antagonist reactions, hazards, and sub-plots), but better form when the players can connect the core and alternate scenes in more than one way.

Activating Players

A common complaint about investigative scenarios is that they "railroad" players into tightly following a slavishly predetermined story path. Although you rarely see the opposite complaint voiced, a significant number of groups flail in confusion when not steered in an obvious direction.

Let players weigh options for as long as the discussion seems lively and fun. If you see the group get frustrated and unable to make a collective choice, gently insert yourself into the discussion. Summarize the various suggestions made and direct the discussion toward a conclusion. Guide the players in eliminating choices without nudging them to a preferred answer. This detachment is easier to attain when you don't settle on one.

Remind the players that the only way forward in a mystery scenario is to gather more information. When things get static, refer to the characters' drives. Ask them which choices before them most suit their specific drives.

Be ready for moments where players feel overwhelmed, either because there are too many choices to choose between or, more likely, no obviously risk-free choice. Nudge them onward by invoking their drives. Remind them that they've been trained by the OV as problem-solvers. Perhaps unlike the players, the characters are used to forming hypotheses, testing them by gathering information, and revising their theories, and moving forward. They respond to dilemmas by breaking them down into steps. With a little coaching, they'll quickly internalize this problem- solving methodology. Your players will learn to take the initiative, abandoning the "wait for clues" passivity trained into them as they were run through more predetermined scenarios.

Avoid Negation

When running a mystery scenario, it helps to think two or three scenes ahead of the players. It's often useful to have a possible climactic sequence in mind, too. That allows you to foreshadow enough to make the ending appear to be a logical outgrowth of the scenes that preceded it. (For more on this, see the next section.)

Don't let the possible plot forks you have in mind become too fixed in your imagination. Instead, keep them provisional, so that you can turn away from them and substitute new choices more in keeping with player input.

This is a long-winded way of restating the basic principle of improvisation used by stage actors: never negate. If, as a sketch unfolds, one performer identifies the other as his mother, the second performer must embrace and build on that choice. To simply swat down the choice and say, "I'm not your mother," is extremely poor form. It stops the story dead and punishes the other participant for attempting to advance it.

In a like vein, train yourself to respond to unexpected possibilities by embracing them and building them into the ongoing storyline. You may have decided that the pathologist Elsa Hower is an innocent dupe in an esoterror scheme which requires fresh corpses. However, the players heavily invest themselves in seeing her as a villain, you might consider setting aside that planned revelation, so they can feel a sense of unmitigated triumph when they bring her to justice.

You don't have to accept every piece of player direction at face value. Keep the story surprising by building twists onto the elements you do incorporate. When in doubt, make the player half-right. Perhaps Elsa has been parasitized by an ODE which can be extracted and subjected to an emotionally satisfying comeuppance, allowing the team to both save an innocent and punish the guilty.

It's not necessary to turn the narrative on a dime with every piece of player input. The key is to avoid a scene in which nothing happens, or in which your scene is less interesting than the one suggested by the player. When a player says that the computer archive in the ruined citadel must have a holographic librarian, it's a disappointing to rule it out, or prevent the players from finding it because they haven't the right skill to spend from. Extracting useful information from a holo-character is more fun, and more plot-advancing, than not. This doesn't mean, however, that there the program shouldn't afterwards spring a nasty surprise on them.

Leading and Following

Improvising is a technique, not an ultimate goal. Occasionally you'll find that it's more entertaining for all involved if you seize the narrative reins and steer them in a particular direction. This will tend to happen more near the end of a scenario, when you're trying to wrap all of the threads together into a coherent and satisfying conclusion.

Again this is a matter of responding to the mood and attitude of the players. When they're actively engaged in the story and throwing out fun suggestions, follow their lead. When their creativity hits the wall, pick up the slack. Improvisation is an organic process of give and take.

Running Scenarios

The GUMSHOE Rules System covers much of what you need to run The Esoterrorists; this section supplements that with additional GM-centric advice.

Giving Out Clues

To give out information, the PC needs to be in the right place, with the right ability, and use that ability. This section deals with each of these preconditions. In short though, whatever you've done in other games, you should always err on the side of giving out information, not holding it back.

Having the Right Ability

The rules offer a number of way to call on abilities, depending on the situation. Choosing the right way to call on an ability is crucial to the forward momentum of your investigative plot. Make this choice according to the consequences of failure.

If the consequence of failure is that a character fails to get a piece of crucial information, success should be automatic provided that the character has the ability in question, and the player thinks to ask for it. However, **any credible attempt to get information that would yield a given clue yields that clue, whether or not this is the ability you've specified in the scenario.**

(Even at that, you may need to improvise during play if no player steps up to claim the needed clue, bending the details of the scenario so that the same information can be garnered with a different ability, possibly by another player.)

Using the Right Ability

You can give out clues both actively and passively. By default, though, GUMSHOE assumes that the use of interpersonal abilities is active; the players have to correctly choose an appropriate ability and describe how they're using it to open a contact up to questioning. When you see that players are hesitant, tell the player with the relevant ability that his experienced OV character can sense that it will work here:

- "You get the feeling that this guy will crack if you lean on him a little." (Intimidation)

- "He seems kind of smitten by you." (Flattery)

- "The squeal of a police scanner tells you you've got a wannabe cop on your hands. " (Cop Talk)

Being in the Right Place

GUMSHOE procedural series require their own conceits in order to keep the story moving in an entertaining manner. They require the audience's complicity in looking the other way. Here GM and players handwave certain elements that break the rules of realism in order to keep the game running smoothly, just as TV scriptwriters. For example, *the conceit of primacy* in shows such as Law and Order ensure that the lead characters get the juiciest cases and more action than any cop is likely to experience in a lifetime. Just as the aforementioned devices arise from the requirements of TV drama, GUMSHOE's conceits grapple with the limitations of a roleplaying session.

The major device you'll want to adopt, needed for all but the smallest groups, is the conceit of *elastic participation*

Use the concept of elastic participation to ensure that there is always a PC in the right place.

GUMSHOE works best when you assume that everyone is kind-of sort-of along for every scene—without squinting too hard at any resulting logic or staging absurdities.

Rolling for Clues and the GUMSHOE Style

Just as in games where you roll for clues, players always have to describe a logical course of action that might lead to their getting information, directly or indirectly suggesting the ability you use to get it. In the traditional model, there's a roll; you supply the information on a success. In GUMSHOE, this step is skipped—but it's the only step skipped.

Traditional style:

Player: I examine the body looking for a cause of death .

GM: Roll Forensic Anthropology

Player: I succeed.

GM: It's blunt force trauma to the back of the skull. There are traces of a slimy residue

GUMSHOE style:

Player : I examine the body looking for a cause of death.

GM: [*Checks worksheet to see if the player's character has Forensic Anthropology, which she does.*] It's blunt force trauma to the back of the skull. There are traces of a slimy residue.

In neither style do you see players grabbing their character sheets as soon as they enter a new scene and shouting out "Anthropology! Archaeology! Art History! Evidence Collection!" They don't do this because it would be weird, boring, and stupid—and because in neither case does it fill all the requirements necessary to get information from a scene.

The only difference between GUMSHOE and those systems is the lack of a die roll. You know your group. Give out information in the same way you would usually give out information, actively, passively: GUMSHOE doesn't care. Your players will solicit it, or you will give it our, just as you always do. There will be a strong effect on your gaming, but from a subtle change.

Ending Scenes

In a novel or TV episode, writers can freely cut to the next scene when their characters have acquired all of the clues available in the current one. The characters might stick around for hours tying up loose ends and pursuing fruitless questions, but this doesn't happen on screen. We, the audience, are not forced to sit through such sequences.

This kind of concise editing isn't so easy in the roleplaying medium. Players don't know when they've got all the clues.

Here's a simple trick to gently steer them onwards, without unduly breaking the illusion of fictional reality:

Before play, take an index card and write on it, in big block letters, the word SCENE. As soon as the players have gleaned the core clue and most or all of the secondary clues in a scene, and the action begins to drag, hold up the card. When the players see this, they know to move on. (Of course, you have to explain the cue to them before play begins.) Easy, efficient, yet somehow not nearly as disruptive or jarring as a verbal instruction.

Even better, use one of the musical stings available from the Pelgrane Press website for just this purpose.

QuickShock GUMSHOE

QuickShock GUMSHOE features a faster, entirely player-facing combat system. It keeps Composure/Stability and Health as general abilities, but rather than functioning as hit points, they give the players opportunities to resist taking Injury and Shock cards. These exert ongoing effects, and take the character out of play if they get too many of them at once.

Getting Clues

As per standard GUMSHOE; see above.

The one change to investigative ability use in QuickShock is that spends to gain special benefits are replaced with Pushes:

Pushes

Characters can spend Pushes to gain benefits tied to their Investigative abilities. They never have to spend Pushes to get information, especially not information vital to moving forward through the story to solve its main mystery.

For example, you could spend an Art History Push to:

- acquire a painting you covet at a bargain price
- establish a friendly prior relationship with a famous artist appearing in the current scenario
- deflate a bullying sculptor by exposing the technical flaws in his work
- impress a snob with your fine taste, winning her confidence

You never use Pushes on General abilities.

Some Shock and Injury cards can be discarded by spending a Push.

On occasion the GM may allow players to gain benefits not connected to any ability in the game, in exchange for a Push. For example, a player might ask if a flammable haystack happens to be situated conveniently close to a farmhouse she wants to burn down. That isn't under the character's control in any way, but for the cost of a Push can be put within the player's.

Pushes replace investigative spends as you may know them from standard GUMSHOE. You no longer allocate separate pool points to your various Investigative abilities.

Tests

[Tests of general abilities are the same as given earlier in this document, with the following adjustments]

When Your Rating is 0

You can always test any ability, even when you didn't acquire any points in it during character generation.

When it breaks story credibility for you to show even rudimentary competence in an ability, your GM may ask you to justify how you could do whatever it is you are doing. When in doubt,

suggest that a PC who does have the ability gave you pointers, either directly or through observation.

Unrule*: This departs from the standard GUMSHOE, which forbids tests of abilities you have not invested in. QuickShock GUMSHOE demands more tests from the players than the baseline game; this more generous interpretation saves us from adding, and you from having to remember and implement, a bunch of special case rules.

Salience

The GM never calls for tests that don't advance the story. Some Injury and Shock cards allow you to discard the card, or gain some other benefit, on a successful test. These assume a test relevant to the storyline. Benefits are not available if the player initiates a test unrelated to the current action in a clearly gratuitous attempt to trigger them.

Time Increments

Certain GUMSHOE rules refer to various increments of time.

Intervals

A new interval begins each time the group acquires a new core clue. When more than one core clue can be gained during a single scene, only the first clue counts as starting a new interval. When a rule says, for example, that something happens after two intervals pass, it means that the group must gather two core clues in separate scenes.

Sessions

A session is the time spent playing one sitting of the game, whatever that happens to be.

If your sessions wildly differ from a baseline of three to four hours, you may find yourself adjusting the timing of effects keyed to sessions.

Scenarios

An effect that lasts until the end of a scenario concludes when the main answer to a mystery occurs, plus a perhaps a brief coda in which the team ties up loose ends, breaks terrible news to grieving relatives, make patrons aware of debts incurred or discharged, and so on.

Depending on how quickly the players crack the case at hand, a scenario might encompass multiple sessions, or last for one session only.

I try to time my scenarios to coincide with the ends of sessions, but sometimes the pacing gods mess with that desire, requiring me to start a new scenario in the middle of a session.

World Time

An hour, you will be shocked to learn, means an hour's worth of time.

But wait!

An hour of **world time** refers to time as it unfolds for the *characters*. As in a piece of fiction,

world time almost never elapses at the same rate for the characters as for the players and GM. A day might pass in a single sentence from the GM: "A day later, you find yourself at the inn." Or you could spend minutes describing an action that in world time takes only a second or two.

Game Time

An hour of **game time** refers to the real-world time you, *the GM and players,* spend at the gaming table (or lounging around in chairs in the den or whatever).

The distinction between world and game time mostly matters when measuring the duration of Shock and Injury cards.

Refreshing Points and Pushes

When points or pushes return to their starting values, we call that a **refresh**.

Pushes refresh to 2 per player at the start of each session.

General ability pools return to the value of their ratings at the start of each scenario.

This assumes a scenario that takes one or two sessions to complete.

GMs may wish to build moments into longer scenarios, or ones in which significant leaps of time occur, which allow General ability points to refresh.

When a rule, card text, or scenario refers simply to a refresh, read that to mean a full refresh—the character's pool returns to its full value.

Partial Refreshes

In some cases partial refreshes occur, in which the character regains a set number of points. These are marked with the number of points regained: so in a 2-point refresh, characters can top up their pools by 2 points.

Partial refreshes never allow characters to increase their pools above their ratings.

Fighting

Though the characters spend most of their time solving mysteries, sometimes the answers they seek lead them into violent conflict. Fight scenes in *YKRPG* unfold in the following stages.

Define Objectives

Define the objective of each side.

The GM chooses for the opposition.

Players confer to choose their collective objective. If they fail to agree, and any player chooses kill, that's the objective.

Common objectives are:

Kill: Keep fighting until everyone on the other side of the fight is dead.

Render Helpless: Keep fighting until everyone on the other side of the fight is too hurt to continue. Helpless opponents remain on the scene. You may take them prisoner or depart as

they roll around on the ground in pain. Killing helpless people, or intelligent creatures, generally requires Composure tests (baseline Difficulty of 6) to avoid Shock. **Minor**: A Crossed Line; **Major**: Out of Control.

Gain Surrender: Keep fighting until everyone on the other side agrees to be taken into custody, in exchange for a promise of fair treatment. Not all combatants will willingly surrender. When they don't, the GM treats the situation as if the players have chosen the Render Helpless objective.

Beat Up: Thrash your opponents and walk away, leaving them badly hurt but not dead.

Block: Stop your opponents from moving past you.

Drive Away: Keep fighting until everyone on the other side retreats. If they were attacking you, they flee back to wherever they came from. If they were defending a position, they flee in random directions or back toward the nearest position of safety. Use when you want to defeat your enemy without killing or capturing them.

Escape: Flee to a position of safety the enemy is not attempting to hold or protect.

Escape with a Captive: Grab a member of the opposing force, then flee with your new captive to a position of safety the enemy is not attempting to hold or protect. Where the enemy group includes combatants of varied ability, you take its weakest or most vulnerable member.

Gain an Item: Grab a portable, easily seized item held by a member of the opposing force, then flee with it to a position of safety the enemy is not attempting to hold or protect. Suitable items include books, weapons, amulets, purses, satchels, and documents.

Overrun: You forcibly move through a group of opponents attempting to block you from going somewhere.

Topple: You knock the target off its feet—which is only worth doing when your enemy stands on a cliffside, on the brink of a raging river, in a precarious rowboat, or in some like situation where a fall will cause a more-than-momentary setback.

Determine Difficulty

The GM (or scenario) defines a Difficulty reflecting the overall strength of the entire opposition, including any tactical advantages or disadvantages they may have in this particular situation. Difficulties for foes described in this book come with assigned Difficulties, but you can always bounce them up and down to fit the logic of your story. Describe situational modifiers to make shifts feel consistent to players.

Opt-Out Penalties

Foe Difficulties assume that the foe has to fight an entire party of PCs. When player characters elect to skip a fight, those who do take part in the battle suffer a -1 Fighting penalty per absent PC. The foe's Toll increases by 1 for each absent PC.

For further explanation of, and exceptions to, this rule, see "Fighting at Less Than Full Strength," p. XX.

Four Relative Challenge Tables

[[Choose the one that best fits your setting and adjust as desired.]]

Competent Amateur Adventurers

Relative Challenge	Difficulty (Escape)	Difficulty (Other)	Difficulty (Kill)	Toll
Weak	2	3	3	0
Tough but Outmatched	2	3	4	0
Evenly Matched	3	4	5	1
Superior	3	4	6	1
Vastly Superior	3	6	7	2
Overwhelming	4	7	8	3
Too Awful to Contemplate	5	8	10	4

Hardened Soldiers

Relative Challenge	Difficulty (Escape)	Difficulty (Other)	Difficulty (Kill)	Toll
Weak	2	3	3	0
Tough but Outmatched	2	4	3	0
Evenly Matched	3	5	4	1
Superior	4	5	4	1
Vastly Superior	3	6	7	2
Overwhelming	5	7	7	2
Too Awful to Contemplate	5	8	8	3

Ex-Insurgents

Relative Challenge	Difficulty (Escape)	Difficulty (Other)	Difficulty (Kill)	Toll
Weak	1	3	3	0
Tough but Outmatched	2	3	4	0
Evenly Matched	2	4	5	0
Superior	2	5	6	1
Vastly Superior	3	6	7	2
Overwhelming	3	7	8	2
Too Awful to Contemplate	3	8	10	3

Ordinary People Drawn Into Danger

Relative Challenge	Difficulty (Escape)	Difficulty (Other)	Difficulty (Kill)	Toll
Weak	2	3	4	0
Tough but Outmatched	2	3	5	0
Evenly Matched	3	4	5	1
Superior	3	4	6	2
Vastly Superior	3	5	7	3
Overwhelming	4	7	8	4
Too Awful to Contemplate	5	8	10	6

Tolls

The other key game statistic for a foe, listed above, is its Toll.

Even a protagonist who wins a fight sometimes gets banged up along the way. Tolls represent the negligible bumps, scrapes, jars, and jolts investigators sustain as they dish out worse to their enemies.

Players pay Tolls from any combination of Athletics, Fighting, and Health. Characters who can't or won't pay the Toll instead take foe's Minor Injury card.

As you can see from the above table, only the more formidable foes, who will knock you around a bit before you put them down, impose Tolls.

In standard GUMSHOE, the equivalent of a Toll is a Health point loss that leaves you above 0 Health.

You might also compare them to the small hit point losses common to other roleplaying games, like *D&D* and *13th Age*.

Fight Tracker

To aid you in running the fight, ready a copy of the handy blank table we call the Fight Tracker. A page of Fight Trackers appears in this book's Appendix, p. XX. Or find one formatted for your standard printer paper size at Pelgrane's Yellow King resource page, which you can locate from pelgranepress.com.

Player							
Spend							
Margin							
Total							

Write the names of the players attending the current session in the row marked "Player." You probably want to use their seating order from left to right but any order will do.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana	
Spend							
Margin							
Total							

Declare Spends

Ask each player in turn how many Fighting points they're spending on the coming test. Enter this number in the "Spend" row.

Noelle, Gianni, and Tsing all say they're spending 3 points.

Carrie tells you she's spending 4. Saif goes for 2. Ana only has 1 to spend.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana	
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1	
Margin							
Total							

Determine Order of Action

Players are about to take turns, in the following order:

High spends go first. Players spending 0 points go last.

When two or more players are making the same spend, the ones seated on the left (from your point of view) go before those seated on the right.

Carrie is spending more than anyone, at 4 points. She goes first.

Then come the players spending 3, from left to right: Noelle, Gianni, and Tsing.

Next, Saif, spending 2.

Finally, comes Ana, spending 1.

In an online game without an apparent seating order, break ties in the order of action in whatever manner you find most intuitive. Alphabetical by player or character name probably works best. Does the platform you're using create a virtual seating order? Use that.

ALTERNATE RULE: Some groups prefer to reverse the order of action, going from lowest to highest spends. This choice values narrative clarity over suspense. It allows players of the characters delivering what are likely to be the finishing blows to describe the definitive actions they take to beat the foe. If they win, that is.

Players Take Their Turns

Players take individual turns, in which they:

Describe what they're hoping to physically accomplish in the fight.

Make Fighting tests.

Compare Fighting test results against the foe's Difficulty number, including applicable modifiers

Players who meet or beat the number:

Describe themselves successfully doing what they set out to do in step 1.

Must either pay the foe's Toll (if any) or take its Minor Injury card. (A few foes instead deal out Shocks.) The Toll, listed in the foe's profile, can be paid from any combination of Fighting,

Athletics, or Health. If they take the Injury, you narrate how they suffer it, based on the card's title and text.

If they do not meet or beat the number:

You describe their chosen opponent defeating their attempt.

On a margin of 0 or 1, they take the foe's Minor Injury card.

On a higher margin, they take the foe's Major Injury card.

You mark the player's margin, which may be positive, negative, or zero, under their column in the margin row of the fight tracker. If the margin exceeds 3, it truncates, becoming a 3. Players whose margins are truncated get a special reward at the end, so mark this by underlining any truncated margin.

If other players have already acted, add the player's margin to the running combined total of all previous margins. Cross out the margin for the last player who acted. Call out the new running margin to the players.

If it is positive or zero, describe how they are collectively triumphing over their adversaries. Zero indicates that they're winning by the slimmest of hairs.

If it is negative, describe their enemies taking the upper hand in the fight.

As necessary, throw in bits of narration to keep the sense of threat alive.

If other players have yet to take their turn, return to step 1 with the next player in the order of action.

If this player was the last in the turn order, move to the next stage, "Name the Victors," below.

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

As previously determined, Carrie goes first. "Odile rushes in and tries to distract them by waving her parasol about, as if unhinged."

"Do you use the sword cane part of the parasol?" you ask, knowing Odile's ways.

"No, we don't want to hurt them."

Carrie has chosen to spend 4 and rolls a 3, for an outcome of 7. Given the Difficulty of 4, that succeeds, with a margin of 3. The watchmen, as relatively underpowered opponents, have Tolls of 0. Carrie avoids a Minor Injury without having to pay additional points from her Athletics, Fighting, or Health pools.

You tell Carrie that she succeeds, so she narrates the result: "Taken aback by my bizarre capering, they press themselves up against the alley walls, leaving the die on the ground."

You note her positive margin on the Fight Tracker:

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana	

Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1	
Margin		3					
Total		3					

Next comes Noelle: "I rush up and stoop down to scoop up the die."

Having spent 3, she rolls a 1. She succeeds, but with a margin of 0. Still, that means she can pay the watchmen's Toll of 0 to avoid Injury, which she does.

"You succeed," you say, "but by the skin of your teeth."

"I duck a blow from one of the watchmen, who I guess wanted to protect the magic die?" "Exactly right," you say, encouraging Noelle in her description not just of what her character is doing, but the overall action.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana	
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1	
Margin	0	3					
Total	3	3					

"Stefan leaps in," says Gianni, "to shoulder this aggressive fellow aside."

Gianni also rolls a 1, succeeding with a margin of 0. The foes' Toll of 0 means that he needn't pay additional pool points to avoid a Minor Injury card.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana	
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1	
Margin	0	3	0				
Total	3	3	3				

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

The scuffle so far has become a mite static, so you throw in a bit of narration that keeps the suspense going without depicting the heroes as suddenly losing: "The other watchmen unfreeze and come barreling toward the lot of you."

Now Tsing goes: "Jack redeems himself by putting his sculptor's muscles to use dishing out the honest punches of a stout-hearted Yankee!"

He spent 3 and rolls a 5, for a result of 8. Like the others he pays a Toll of 0 to avoid Minor Injury. His margin is 4, but that truncates to the maximum single margin of 3 when you note it on the tracker. You underline it to note that it has been truncated.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana	
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1	
Margin	0	3	0	<u>3</u>			
Total	3	3	3	6			

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

"You really have the upper hand now," you say. "Narrate those punches."

Miming a series of wild blows, Tsing acts them out with sound effects and a cry of: "That'll teach you to say no to an art student!"

Victory seems assured, but its magnitude remains up for grabs.

You call on Saif to act next.

"Each time Jack sends a watchman flying, I grab his collar to speed him on his way out of the alley."

Saif rolls a 5, adding his spend of 2 for an outcome of 7 and a margin of 3. The investigators have this matter well under control.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana	
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1	
Margin	0	3	0	<u>3</u>	3		

Total	3	3	3	6	9		

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

"They go left and right. I am a matador, and they are capes I discard!" exclaims Saif. He also pays the Toll of 0.

Finally Ana describes what she's doing. "I hold out my hands for Ella to toss me the die," she says.

She rolls a 2. With her spend of only 1, that leaves her with a 3, below the Difficulty. That gives her a margin of -1, bringing down the group total. Her margin is less than 2, so she takes only a Minor Injury. You give her the Cracked Skull card.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana	
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1	
Margin	0	3	0	<u>3</u>	3	-1	
Total	3	3	3	6	4	8	

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

With a watchman winning this round, you narrate the action: "As you catch the die, a watchman appears from behind to club you down. It falls from your grasp, bouncing along the cobblestones."

Now that everyone has acted, the group still has an impressive final total of 8.

Name the Victors

When the last player has acted, their entry in the "Total" row becomes the final group margin.

If it meets or beats 0, the group scores a victory and achieves its declared goal. Invite players with margins higher than 0 to describe the actions they perform to definitively achieve it. Go from highest to lowest margin, breaking ties from low to high spend, then seating order.

Did everyone get a 0? Then everyone narrates.

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

Carrie, Tsing, and Saif have margins higher than 0, so you invite them to narrate. Carrie has the same margin but a higher spend, so she goes last. Tsing and Saif both have the same spend and margin, so follow her in seating order.

"I grab the bouncing die and put it safely in my pocket!" Carrie cries.

"I complete the remaining thrashings," Tsing narrates.

"And I get in a few kicks as I guide the rest of my friends to a safe helter-skelter dash through Montparnasse!" adds Saif.

If not, the GM describes how the opposition thwarts them as they suffer a defeat. Their enemies can't hurt them any further, but they can put them in an otherwise worse situation. Of course, the character who took a third Injury card has been killed by that last Injury.

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

(Had the group failed in our ongoing example, the watchmen would have gotten away with the die.)

Characters scoring a margin greater than 3 get a Fight Benefit. They may either:

- gain a Push
- refresh a General ability other than Fighting, Health, or Athletics

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

Checking the Fight Tracker, you see that Saif's margin is underlined, meaning that you truncated it to 3. He chooses to refresh Sense Trouble.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

Fighting Quick Reference

Players define objectives.

GM determines Difficulty.

GM prepares the Fight Tracker.

Players declare spends.

GM determines order of action.

Participating characters take -1 Fighting and +1 to Tolls for each non-participating character (see p. XX for exceptions).

Next player in order:

Describes what the character is trying to do.

Makes a fighting test.

On a success, the player:

Narrates a successful action.

Either:

Pays the foes' Toll.

Takes a Minor Injury, which the GM narrates.

On a failure:

The GM narrates the foe's successful action.

On a margin of 0 or 1: the character takes a Minor Injury, which the GM narrates.

On a higher margin, the character takes a Major Injury, which the GM narrates.

The GM notes the player's margin, truncating margins of 4 or more to 3, and underlining them.

The GM incorporates the player's margin into the group's running total and announces it.

If it is greater than 0, the players narrate a situation in which they have the upper hand.

Otherwise, the GM narrates a situation in which the foes have the upper hand.

When all players have acted, consult the final margin.

If more than 0:

Players whose characters scored margins of 0 or more describe the group achieving its chosen objective.

Players whose margins were truncated choose to:

Gain a Push.

Refresh a General ability other than Fighting.

If less than 0, the GM describes their failure to achieve the objective, possibly including the circumstances preventing the victorious foe from killing the surviving PCs.

<mark>[[END BOX]]</mark>

Fighting as Quick Test

On occasion you might rule that a character can achieve an objective by scoring a Fighting success outside of the combat system. The PC might be, for example:

restraining or knocking out a physically unprepossessing person

wrenching a pistol from someone intent on self-harm

hunting a game animal

Treat this as you would any other General test.

Shocks and Injuries

When characters are physically harmed or undergo mental shocks, they gain cards reflecting the harm they suffer.

Depending on what you all find convenient, your GM may choose to give you:

- physical cards, in the form of slips of paper printed out from PDF and handed to you
- virtual cards; check pelgranepress.com for our most up-to-date tools for digital card dealing

Whatever the form factor, the game uses the language of playing cards to describe how you handle them. When you gain an Injury or Shock, you add it to your hand. When you get rid of it,

you discard it. You sometimes trade one card for another—most often a really bad shock or injury for a less bad one.

Text on the cards is exceptions-based, meaning that when the card text contradicts another game rule, it takes precedence over the general rules.

Discard all cards at the end of each scenario, with the exception of cards marked **Continuity**. Any card without this tag, and without an explicit discard condition, is discarded at the end of a scenario.

Most cards tell you what you have to do to get rid of them during a session. They may simply indicate that you have to pay a price or overcome an obstacle, leaving the details of that up to you to weave into the story, and the GM to approve. If it feels like something that would credibly get rid of the problem in a story or TV show, the GM approves it.

When an Injury card lists a First Aid Difficulty, another character with that ability can get rid of the card for you by successfully making that test.

Some cards allow you to fulfill conditions, like spending General points or Pushes, to discard the card. In certain cases you can do this only after a specified time has elapsed. Where no time is specified, you can get rid of the card immediately, suffering no ill effect other than the expenditure.

Some cards refer to abilities that appear in only some of the game's sequences. In such cases the *Use In*: notation appears below the card text, followed by abbreviations specifying the sequences the card can be used in. P for *Paris*, W for *The Wars*, A for *Aftermath*, and N for *This Is Normal Now*. (The core books don't include any cards specific to the first or last sequences, but maybe we'll think of some and publish them in later books.)

You may be tempted to make cards gained during the final scene of a scenario Continuity cards, on the grounds that their cool effects will otherwise never come into play. Though that makes some sense on a theoretical level, in practice you'll find this option too punitive. It can put characters in a death spiral right from the start of a new mystery. Instead, accept that cards given out in what turns out to be a concluding scene only matter if they become Final cards.

Death and Incapacity

A character dies and leaves play for good after receiving too many Injury cards.

A character suffers irreparable mental strain and leaves play (played by the GM if the character appears again at all) after receiving too many Shock cards.

In [[**Tough**]] mode, too many = 3. The third card in either category you take is called your Final card.

In [[**Forgiving**]] mode, too many = 4. The fourth card in either category you take is called your Final card.

On a Final Injury card, the GM invites you to describe a suitable death, given the circumstances that led to your gaining that fatal third card. You might:

- take inspiration from the situation currently being narrated
- describe an even worse version of the harm implied by the title and effects of the Final

card

- describe a fatal worsening of a condition suggested by a previous Injury card already in hand

Likewise, as soon as you have three Shock cards in hand, your character loses all grip on reality.

You might:

- take inspiration from the situation currently being narrated
- describe an even worse version of the emotional or perceptual break implied by the title and effects of the Final card
- describe a condition suggested by a previous Shock card already in hand shattering the character's psyche

This could be followed up with a suggestion of the character's eventual fate: commitment to a sanitarium, becoming a shut-in kept in the family attic back in Westchester, loping off into the woods to live as a hermit, or the like. Depending on where the characters are when you take the Final card, you might describe this right away, or after an appropriate break in the action. In some instances the GM may wish to reserve the right to treat the now-unbalanced character as an antagonist, ongoing or otherwise.

After the narration ensuing from a Final card, the player creates a new character, using the guidelines on p. XX.

If you hear a player conclude that their characters only have three (or four) hit points, they're setting themselves up for confusion and annoyance, as that's not how this rules set thinks. Head off that conceptual stumbling block by providing the explanation on p. XX.

Unrule: Unlike standard GUMSHOE, your Composure and Health pools never directly determine whether you remain in play. You never drop below 0 in those pools.

Card Terms

As a shorthand certain cards use standard terms, defined here.

+x to Tolls: The character holding the card treats foes as if their Tolls are a specified number of points higher. Tolls for characters not holding such cards do not increase.

Discard: Unless otherwise specified, the instruction "discard" applies to the card the text appears on.

GMC: A character run by the Game Moderator.

A night's sleep: The character must gain a solid night's sleep in circumstances not much less safe and comfortable than she would be used to during her ordinary, non-mystery investigating life. (Requiring a good night's sleep from the player, as opposed to the character, would be weird even for this game.)

Nonlethal: Cannot be your Final card. If received when you are one short of the Final card in its category, you take the card and undergo its effects, if any, but your character does not leave play.

> *You have 2 Injury cards in hand, in a game played in [[Tough]] mode. You receive the Tipsy Injury card, which is Nonlethal. Your character does not die.*

However, a nonlethal card **does** count toward you total when you have it in hand already and another incoming card becomes your Final card.

> *Later, after discarding one of your other Injury cards, you have 2 remaining: Breaking Point and Tipsy. You then get a third card, Ravaged by the Elements. In this instance Tipsy does count toward your total, and your character dies. You shouldn't have gone out into that blizzard half-tanked on brandy!*

Pay a price: When you suffer a significant negative consequence to bring about a situation that allows you to discard a card. GM decides what "significant" means.

Recipient: When one character performs a test or spends to benefit another, the character receiving the benefit is the recipient. When a card says you must be the recipient of a success or spend to discard a card, your character may not perform the action; any other PC can.

Take a risk: You perform an action that stands a decent chance of getting you into real trouble, as judged by the GM.

When card text tells you that you lose a number of points, your pool drops by that number. If you have fewer pool points than the card specifies, your pool drops to 0.

You might receive a card that costs you a number of points you don't have and therefore can't pay. In that case, count yourself lucky: you're off the hook! The GM does not swap your card for a different one to ensure that you suffer some other disadvantage. Having a Shock or Injury card is bad news all by itself, even if you can shrug off its specific ill effect.

Combat Special Cases, Exceptions, and Explanations

To make the basic combat rules easier to learn and refer to, we saved a subsection for the following entries.

Fighting at Less than Full Strength

The Relative Challenge of foes is calculated assuming that they're taking on a full group of PCs.

Weaker members of a group may be tempted to sit out a battle and let those with higher Fighting pools take all the risk.

This is not a smart move: it gives the enemy a numbers advantage.

Even a single foe capable of taking on many heroes will have an easier time against three investigators than it would against four, and easier still against only two adversaries.

This is how fights work in any roleplaying game: a dragon has an easier time against a fighter and a cleric than she would against a fighter, a cleric, a wizard, and a rogue.

When player characters elect to skip a fight, those who do take part in the battle receive a -1 Fighting penalty per absent comrade. The foe's Toll increases by 1 for each absent PC. This reflects the added challenge and costs of fighting while short-handed.

GMs may choose to ignore the penalty for fighting at less than full strength when it seems punitive or contrary to story logic. Apt times to waive the penalty include:

- When the party is at less than full strength due to circumstances contrived by the GM. If the group splits up and half of them get in a tussle with drunken rival students, or attacked by yeth-hounds, describe only enough adversaries to threaten half the group, and ignore the penalty. (In group vs. group melees, the number of foes you describe is a matter of atmosphere and description. It can be higher or greater than the size of the PC group without impacting the game mechanics.)

- When players (as opposed to their characters) are absent.

- When a character is not just unwilling but unable to fight due to the effects of a completely debilitating Shock or Injury card.

The GM need never waive the penalty when players bend the story out of shape to justify fighting at less than full strength.

When you waive the penalty, and another fight against the same enemy occurs later, you may need to describe countervailing changes in the situation to explain why she seems just as effective against a larger force of PCs. More likely, with die results and spends adding variance to the outcome, no one will notice or care.

(In bookkeeping terms, it's simpler to increase the foe's Difficulty number by the number of missing combatants than to ask players to calculate penalties. A few players find this confusing on a conceptual level, though. It feels to them that it's the foes who are becoming more or less powerful, as opposed to the PCs' force becoming relatively weaker as its numbers diminish. If your players don't have a problem with it, use this simpler option instead.)

Support Actions

When players ask if they can do things in combat other than make Fighting tests, answer by revealing these rules. This delayed introduction simplifies the combat system's learning curve. Support actions give players more choices, at the cost of additional complexity and rules consultation.

Characters can elect to take a **support action**, contributing to others' success in combat instead of taking on the enemy directly.

Players taking support actions can hold their actions, inserting themselves into the Fighting order when their help appears to be needed. They test the ability they're substituting for Fighting against the foe's Difficulty.

On a failure, the character taking the support action:

- takes a Minor Injury (if margin is 0 or 1) or a Major Injury (if margin is 2 or more)

- pays the foe's Toll

- subtracts the margin from the group's combat total

On a success, the character gains the benefit corresponding to the chosen type of support action:

- **First Aid**: When any one other character is assigned an Injury card, you may choose for it

to be discarded before it is received (in the case of a Minor Injury card) or (in the case of a Major Injury) downgraded to a Minor Injury.

- **Athletics**: Draw fire to yourself and away from a comrade. When another character is assigned an Injury card, you may choose to take that card instead. Restricted to one beneficiary per combat.

- **Composure** (if the goal is Gain Surrender): Grant a bonus to any one comrade's Fighting test. +1 if your margin is 1 or less; +2 if your margin is 2 or more. As with any bonus, this applies before the test is made.

- **Morale**: When any one other character is assigned a Shock card, cause it to be discarded before it is received (in the case of a Minor Shock card) or (in the case of a Major Shock) downgraded to a Minor Shock. (*Applies only to foes that dish out Shock cards in combat instead of Injury cards. The Morale ability appears in* The Wars *and* Aftermath.)

- **Traps and Bombs/Insurgency**: Soften up the foe with a grenade or other small explosive device. Allows one character of your choice making a Fighting test to roll two dice, picking the best one and ignoring the other. If you fail your test, you do not take an Injury card. Instead, your exploding device hurts someone on your own side. Choose another PC taking part in the fight to receive an Injury—Light Shrapnel if your margin is 1 or less; Shrapnel if the margin is 2 or more. (*Traps and Bombs appears in* The Wars, *as do the Light Shrapnel and Shrapnel cards; Insurgency appears in* Aftermath.)

- **Artillery**: Hem in the foe with a heavy arms barrage; requires access to such a weapon. Make this test before any other support actions or Fighting tests. Foe Difficulty decreases by 1 if your margin was 1 or less, by 2 if your margin was 2 or more. If you fail your test, you do not take an Injury card. Instead, Tolls paid by other characters increase by your margin + 1, and any other characters taking Minor Injuries instead take the Major Injury card Shrapnel.

The GM may allow support actions using abilities not listed above, if they make sense in the current situation. Apply one of the above-listed benefits of success, using the +1 or +2 bonus to another's Fighting test as default.

> *A Mechanics test might apply when the objective is Escape or Escape with a Captive, if there's a vehicle in need of repairing or hotwiring.*

Characters taking support actions count as present for the fight. They do not trigger penalties for fighting at less than full strength.

Reinforcements

When they want to solve a problem by fighting a challenging opponent, player characters often look for other people to suffer and die in their place.

This rarely works for characters in horror stories—or in more heroic genres, for that matter. Expect it to be just as hard to pull off in *The Yellow King Roleplaying Game*.

When the GM does reckon that your attempt to recruit cannon fodder makes sense within the story, those additional fighters don't count as full combatants the way player characters do.

Instead, the GM reduces the Difficulty of your Fighting tests, reflecting the assistance of

reinforcements.

Or she may decide that the presence of reinforcements discourages your enemies, preventing a fight altogether.

Imagining Combat

YKRPG combat differs from what your players might be used to in standard GUMSHOE, and from other roleplaying games. Help your players adjust to this more abstract approach with the following As to likely Qs.

What are the limits on what I can describe when narrating my character's Fighting success?

If you succeeded, have fun inventing imaginative and vivid visual descriptions of your contribution to the fight. You could calibrate your description to your margin, with 0 or 1 representing a small contribution; 2, something impressive but just short of decisive; and 3, an over-the-top example of thrilling triumph. Or just say what comes to mind and fits your character and the situation. Other than that, feel free to use maximum creative license. In the very unlikely event that your description contradicts a fact about the mystery or world that the GM understands as crucial to the rest of the story, she'll suggest an amended version of your proposed narration that preserves that essential plot point.

Why do we have to act in descending spend order?

This introduces suspense, keeping open the question of whether the group will succeed to the maximum extent possible. We know the high-spenders are likely to succeed, but what about those relying mostly on the luck of the die?

What if we go in ascending spend order?

This makes no mechanical difference, so if that makes better sense to your group, you can change that up without unpleasant surprises.

What happens when investigators join a fight in waves?

The GM alters the order of action so that you make Fighting tests in the order in which you join the fight. Assuming you had no time to collectively decide on a group goal beforehand, late joiners have to go along with the goal chosen by the first character(s) to enter the fight.

Can we switch our goal if the situation changes in mid-fight?

This will happen less often than you might think, but sure. If the entire group agrees, you can switch to a new goal when you describe your final victory, provided it carries an equal or less costly Difficulty number than the originally chosen goal.

We spend too much time deciding on our group goal.

That's less a question than a statement, but we'll allow it. If this remains an issue for your group, expect your GM to remedy it by suggesting the most obvious choice and guiding the discussion to a quick resolution.

We don't want to pick a goal; we want our characters charge in at cross-purposes and describe what our characters are doing tactically. Strategy is for suckers, man!

Groups devoted to this style of play will have a better experience by reverting from

QuickShock to standard GUMSHOE. Notes on how to do this may be available on the Pelgrane website by the time you read this.

I have 2 Injury cards, both describing pretty minor conditions. How can that put my character on the brink of death?

You're not on the brink of death at all. You're ever so slightly off your game—in a way that might tip the balance between survival and funeral arrangements the next time you face a dangerous situation. Think of the last time you had a really bad cold or flu, or when you last pulled a back muscle or hurt yourself in some other painful but minor way. Then imagine yourself in that state when you need to steer your car clear of a pile-up or jump out of the way of a collapsing store display. That extra drag on your awareness and ability to react is what your cards in hand represent—nothing if you stay out of trouble, but potentially disastrous if you don't.

Also remember that when you receive a Final Injury card, you describe a demise that best fits the situation, whether it matches the card concept or not.

Players steeped in classic roleplaying games like *D&D* and *Call of Cthulhu* may want to describe QuickShock GUMSHOE characters as having three hit points apiece. This conceptualization will confuse more than it clarifies, so shoot it down if someone brings it up. Injuries are status effects. You're not one-third or one-quarter dead on a single Injury, two-thirds or half dead on another, and then dead.

Think of it as "off your game," "vulnerable," and then dead ([[**Tough**]] **mode**) or "off your game," "vulnerable," "really shouldn't be fighting now," and dead ([[**Forgiving**]] **mode**).

Tolls are the closest thing QuickShock GUMSHOE has to hit points, but even there the analogy doesn't entirely track.

What does the GM do if the foe's goal is something other than kill, and its Injury card seems out of place for that less aggressive objective?

In most cases the foe still has to rough you up somewhat to get what it wants. The GM may choose to substitute other Injuries more fitting to the circumstances. In a pinch, the minor/major pairing of "You Should See the Other Fellow" and "Concussed" fit most non-lethal foe objectives.

When Player Characters Fight

We're tucking these rules here in our final appendix, as you'll need them rarely if ever. Ordinarily a physical struggle between members of the main cast tells you that the story has gone seriously sideways.

Still, in horror stories the protagonists now and then have to square off against each other. They might get possessed, suffer perceptual delusions, or be forced to do battle in a death-trap filled basement.

When threat of PC vs. PC violence sparks from a player choice, warn the one escalating to fratricidal violence that the system favors the sympathetic defender over the murderous

aggressor—as stories tend to do when protagonists come to blows.

Aggressor and Defender

Based on the events narrated by the group so far, the GM identifies which characters are the aggressors and which the defenders.

This becomes obvious in context: the character or group of characters who escalate from talking to fighting are the aggressors. Those being attacked are the defenders.

In the oddball case when both seem to start the fight at the same moment, choose the side with the player most responsible for steering the story to this point. If that doesn't make sense either, ask an involved player to roll a die. On an even roll, treat that player's side as defenders. On an odd result, they're the attackers.

Usually fights have one aggressor and one defender. Scraps featuring multiple player characters on one or both sides happen less often. It is conceivable that supporting characters may take part on one or both sides as well, though their effect on the outcome is indirect.

Define Objectives

The aggressor(s) starts by defining an objective, drawing from a slightly adjusted version of the familiar list:

Kill: Kill all defenders.

Render Helpless: Render defenders helpless and unable to escape for the time being. Killing helpless comrades requires an extremely tougher Composure test to avoid lasting trauma.

Block: Stop defenders from moving past you.

Drive Away: Keep fighting until the defenders retreat, leaving you safely in control of your current position.

An aggressor can't select **Escape** as an objective. Until the aggressor starts a fight, the defenders are not a threat to escape from.

Escape with a Captive: Grab a defender, then flee to a position of safety no one else is attempting to hold or protect. Pick the defender you want to grab.

Gain an Item: Grab a portable, easily seized item held by a defender, then flee with it to a position of safety where defenders can't interfere with you.

Overrun: Get past the defenders, who are physically standing in your way.

Then the defending side defines objectives:

Kill: Kill all aggressors. (An unlikely but possible choice.)

Render Helpless: Render aggressors helpless and in your custody. Killing helpless comrades requires an extremely tougher Composure test to avoid lasting trauma.

Block: Stop aggressors from moving past you.

Drive Away: Keep fighting until the aggressors are forced to retreat.

Escape: Disengage from, or avoid engagement with, the aggressors, evading any ensuing pursuit.

Escape with a Captive: Grab a defender, then flee to a position of safety no one else is attempting to hold or protect. Pick the defender you want to grab. Available only against multiple aggressors; otherwise, choose either Render Helpless or Escape.

Gain an Item: Grab a portable, easily seized item held by an aggressor, then flee with it to a position of safety where aggressors can't interfere with you.

Specify Weapons

Ask each character to specify the weapons they're using, if any.

Assign Difficulties

The base Difficulties for the upcoming Fighting tests start at 4.

Add 2 to the Difficulty for characters fighting to Kill.

Where one side is outnumbered, subtract the number of combatants on the outnumbered side from the number they're fighting, and add it to the outnumbered side's Difficulty.

If the GM can see from story context that one side should have an advantage over the other, the disadvantaged group adds 1-2 points to its Difficulty target, with 1 reflecting a detectable advantage and 2 a glaringly significant one.

Make Fighting Tests

All Combatants make Fighting tests.

Identify the Victor

When all aggressors fail their tests, the defenders attain their objective, even if all defenders also failed.

When everyone fails, a stalemate results and no one attains their objectives. Both sides suffer embarrassment and possible minor harm, but are unable to resolve their conflict with force.

When at least one aggressor succeeds, the GM asks for each participant's margin. Add margins for successful combatants to the total for their side, while subtracting margins for characters who failed their tests. Compare the total margins for each side. If the defenders' total equals or exceeds the aggressors, the defenders win and attain their objectives. Otherwise, the aggressors win and attain theirs.

Check for Injuries

If a side attained its objective and the objective was Kill, all characters on the losing side make Difficulty 6 Health tests. On a success, the character takes a Major Injury. On a failure, the character immediately dies. A character with two Injuries already in hand will die no matter what, rendering the test redundant.

Losers against opponents who were not trying to Kill take Minor Injuries if they succeeded at Fighting and Major Injuries if they failed. As always, a Final Injury card kills.

Regardless of objective, members of the winning side must pay a Toll of 3, from any combination of Fighting, Athletics, and Health, to avoid injury. Those declining to pay the Toll take a Major Injury if they failed their Fighting tests, and a Minor Injury if they succeeded.

Injuries vary according to the weapons used by the victim's opponents.

When opponents used differing weapons, the GM decides which one dishes out the Injury. Choose according to the logic of the situation you've all described, the weapon wielded by the opponent with the highest test result, or arbitrarily, if no obvious answer presents itself.

Unarmed: Bruised/Battered

Knife: Nicked/Stabbed

Blunt Instrument: Seeing Stars/Dented Skull

Sword/Other Large Blade: Superficial Laceration/Run Through

Gun: Powder Burn/GSW

Narrate Results

Knowing who won, and who got injured, guide the players to describe what happens. Invite the aggressors to describe what they're doing first, then the defenders, then have the victors (if any) lay out the fight's end conditions.

When multiple characters fight on a single side, start the narration with failed tests first, then move on to the successes.

Composure Tests

Use this step only if one or more player characters died in the fight.

All participants make Difficulty 6 Composure tests, with the following modifiers:

- +2 for each dead character after the first
- +1 for aggressors, regardless of who died
- an additional +1 for aggressors, if one or more defenders died
- +1 for defenders, if aggressors died
- -2 if aggressors were possessed or otherwise did not choose to attack

Successful tests result in a Minor Shock. Failures get a Major Shock. Aggressors and defenders get different shocks.

Aggressors: Blood Debt/Fratricide

Defenders: I Should Have Prevented This/Spiral into Violence

[[[Start Box]]]

PC vs. PC Quick Reference

1. GM identifies aggressor.

2. Define objectives:

(a) Aggressor: Kill, Render Helpless, Block, Drive Away, Escape with Captive, Gain an Item, Overrun.

(b) Defender: Kill, Render Helpless, Block, Drive Away, Escape, Escape with Captive, Gain an Item.

3. Combatants specify weapons.

4. GM assigns Difficulties: Base 4, +2 if fighting to Kill; +1 per additional combatant if outnumbered; +1 to +3 for situational modifiers if disadvantaged.

5. All combatants make Fighting tests.

6. GM uses their results to identify the victor (if any):

(a) All aggressors fail = defender wins.

(b) Everyone fails = stalemate.

(c) Otherwise, side with highest total margin wins.

7. Participants check for Injuries.

(a) Losers whose opponents were fighting to Kill make Difficulty 6 Health tests, taking Major Injuries on success or dying on failure.

(b) Losers whose opponents weren't fighting to Kill take Major Injuries if their Fighting tests failed and Minor Injuries if they succeeded.

(c) Victors pay a Toll of 3 or take a Major Injury if they failed their Fighting tests, or a Minor Injury if they succeeded.

8. The group narrates the fight.

9. If anyone died, survivors make Composure tests. Base Difficulty 6, +2 for each dead character after the first; +1 for aggressors, regardless of who died; an additional +1 for aggressors, if one or more defenders died; +1 for defenders, if aggressors died; -2 if aggressors were possessed or otherwise did not choose to attack.

[[END BOX]]

Hazards

Dangers faced outside of combat are called hazards. Hazards can be physical or mental.

Physical Hazards

Physical hazards can be avoided, or their effects minimized, by making Athletics or Health tests.

Athletics tests apply when harm can be avoided with a quick dodge or other overt, intentional defensive action. Examples include:

- falling from a great height
- ducking flying debris
- leaping out of the way of a plummeting object
- swimming in a dangerous current
- leaping over a chasm or between buildings
- rushing from a flaming building without getting burned

Health tests happen in passive situations where you are exposed to a physical danger and the question that remains is how badly it affects you. This applies to instances of:

- poisoning
- sickness
- exposure

The GM may also call for Health tests when the character has had no chance to actively evade a danger that would otherwise call for an Athletics test. For example, if doused in kerosene and set alight while helpless, a Health test might determine whether the character suffers severe burns, or merely loses some hair and perhaps an eyebrow or two.

Each physical hazard threatens a Minor or a Major Injury, depending on the test result. Characters who succeed are unaffected. On a failure by a margin of 2 or more, they take Major Injury cards. On a failure with a margin of 0 or 1, they take Minor Injury cards.

Common misreading warning! Common misreading warning! For some deep cognitive reason possibly indicating past exposure to a vast, inky alien lake, your brain may want you to remember the above, incorrectly, as success = Minor Injury, failure = Major Injury. That error will death-spiral your characters right quick.

To repeat, the correct rule is:

Success = no Injury; Failure (margin 0–1) = Minor Injury; Failure (margin 2+) = Major Injury

GMs can use the following physical hazards as a basis for others. The hazard format is as follows. The "Card Type" line can also note that the card is a Continuity card.

Here is the card format:

Name of Minor Injury	**Name of Major Injury**
Card Type	**Card Type**
Descriptive text including game mechanics if any.	Descriptive text including game mechanics if any.

Here are sample cards, for cases of sea sickness:

Woozy

Injury

Nonlethal. You can't make Pushes.

Discard when you leave the boat.

Poseidon's Wrath

Injury

Nonlethal. You can't make Pushes. -2 to all tests (except Preparedness).

Discard when you leave the boat.

The rest of the Injury cards for hazards appear in the back of the book.

Basic hazards, some specific to *Paris* but most usable in any sequence, are:

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Injury	Major Injury
Cobra Strike	4	Athletics	Snakebit	Deadly Venom
Drinking (Moderate)*	4	Health	Tipsy	Intoxicated
Drowning	4	Athletics	Cough, Choke, Sputter	Lungful of Water
Escape Burning Building	4	Athletics	Singed	Burned
Exploding Bomb	4	Athletics	Thrown Free of the Explosion	In the Blast Radius
Flying Debris	4	Athletics	Something in Your Eye	Puncture Wound
Food Poisoning	4	Health	Stay by the Water Closet	Ructious Innards
Leap From Second Story Window	4	Athletics	Hard Landing	Turned Ankle
Roughed Up While Helpless	4	Health	It Looks Worse Than It Is	Broken Fingers
Sea Sickness	4	Health	Woozy	Poseidon's Wrath
Sniper Fire	4	Athletics	Grazed	Shot
Thrown Rock	4	Athletics	Abrasion	Concussed
Toxin	4	Health	Mostly Resistant	Find the Antidote

Crushing Hazard	5	Athletics	Contused	Crushed
Angry Mob Sets Upon You	5	Athletics	Black and Blue	Badly Beaten
Falling Chandelier	5	Athletics	Glass Shards	Direct Chandelier Hit
Severe Exposure	5	Health	Warm Blanket Needed	Ravaged by the Elements
Smoke Inhalation	5	Health	Lingering Cough	Scarred Lungs
Tortured	5	Health	Through the Ringer	Breaking Point
Leap Between Rooftops	6	Athletics	Hard Landing	Fall to Street Level
Cyanide Poisoning	7	Health	Whiff of Cyanide	Snootful of Cyanide
Fall From Great Height	7	Athletics	It's a Miracle You're Alive	Massive Injuries
Drinking (Heavy)**	8	Health	Tipsy	Intoxicated
Inside a Structure When Bombers Take It Out	3	Battlefield	Beside Yourself	Pinned by Debris
Strafed	3	Battlefield	Your Lucky Charm Caught a Bullet	Perforated
Aerial Bombardment	4	Battlefield	Caked in Ash	Three Inches to The Left and You'd Be Dust
An Aircraft Crash Lands on You	4	Battlefield	Flying Leap	Flaming Debris
Cholera	4	Health	Muscle Cramps	Rapid Dehydration
Exposure to Earthly Parasites	4	Health	Unwell	Dysentery
Hunger	4	Health	Hunger	Respiratory Failure
Hypothermia	4	Health	Confusion	Gangrene
Influenza	4	Health	Sore Throat	Influenza

Land Mine	4	Battlefield	Shredded Flesh	"Am I Still in One Piece?"
Machine Gun Fire	4	Battlefield	Bruised While Taking Cover	Sprayed
Marched Past Endurance	4	Health	Winded	Exhausted
Mortar Fire	4	Battlefield	Ringing Ears	Hurled and Scorched
Poison Gas	4	Battlefield	Light-Headed	Lung Damage
Sharks Feed on Drifting Sailors	4	Battlefield	Those Telltale Fins	Shark Bite
Sleep Deprivation	4	Health	Bleary	Dead on Your Feet
Small Arms Fire	4	Battlefield	Bruised While Taking Cover	Through and Through
Small Arms Fire (White-Sky Round)	4	Battlefield	White-Sky Graze	White-Sky Hit
Sub-Sonic Barrage	4	Health	Sub-Sonic Thrum	Sub-Sonic Disruption
Sunstroke	4	Health	Light-Headed	Rapid Heartbeat
Tetanus	4*	Health	Tetanic Fever	Lockjaw
Thirst	4	Health	Agony of Thirst	Kidney Failure
Trenchfoot	4	Health	Necrotic Tissue	Gangrene
Tumble Down a Hillside (Exposed to Enemy)	4	Battlefield	Scuffed Up	Torn Ligament
Tumble Down a Hillside (No Enemy Present)	4	Athletics	Scuffed Up	Torn Ligament
Artillery Fire	5	Battlefield	Shell-Shocked	Hit Bad
Giant Squid Attack the Lifeboats	5	Battlefield	Tentacle Lash	Squid Bite
In a Forest as	5	Battlefield	Splinter	Struck by Wood Debris

Artillery Explodes the Trees				
Nerve Gas	5	Battlefield	Blurred Vision	Circulatory Damage
On a Torpedoed Boat	5	Battlefield	Shrapnel's Sharp, Water's Hard	Into the Drink
Radiation Poisoning (Earthly)	5	Health	Convulsions	Internal Bleeding
Rifle Fire	5	Battlefield	Bruised While Taking Cover	Rifle Hit
Stalker Fire: Flame Thrower	5	Battlefield	Burned	Roasted
Trapped on a Ship as It Sinks	5	Battlefield	Slammed Against the Hull	Into the Depths
Exposure to Alien Parasites	6	Health	Soul Decay	Black Blood
Radiation Poisoning (Alien)	6	Health	Susceptible	Black Tears
Stalker Fire: Machine Gun	6	Battlefield	Worse Than It Looks	Thoroughly Perforated
Stink Grenade	8	Health	Stink Grenade	Drenched in Stink
Grenade	4	Battlefield	Light Shrapnel	Grenade
Cannon Fire	6	Battlefield	Struck by Debris	Cannon Fodder

*Moderate, by today's standards

**Unrestrained binge drinking, as is the norm among Bohemians of Belle Époque Paris

Certain Injury cards gained from fights or hazards can be traded, under conditions specified in their text entries, for less punitive secondary cards. These secondary Injury cards appear in the back of the book, after the main hazard cards. For reference, they are:

Still Hurting

On the Mend

Permanent Injury

Dazed

Jarred

Precarious Recovery

Badly Hurt

Draggy

Mental Hazards

Mental hazards require characters to make Composure tests.

On a **success**, the character **does not take a Shock card**.

On a **failure** with a margin of **0 or 1**, the character takes the Minor Shock card.

On a **failure** with a margin of **2 or more**, the character takes the Major Shock card.

AGAIN, DON'T LISTEN TO YOUR BRAIN if it tells you to dole out a Minor card on a success and a Major on a failure.

Situation	Difficulty	Minor Shock	Major Shock
You Badger a Vulnerable Witness	3	Overstepped Bounds	Wracked by Remorse
You Find Yourself Hemmed In	3	Oh Dear	Bit of a Sticky Wicket
You Hear a Disquieting Sound	3	Unnerved	Agitated
You Make a Public Spectacle of Yourself	3	Embarrassed	Humiliated
Your Senses Deceive You (or Do They?)	3	Uncertainty	Questioning Your Senses
A Malign Spirit Tries to Direct Your Actions	4	Influence	Violent Impulse
A Psychic Sending Floods Your Mind	4	Alarming Vision	Ghastly Vision
A Supernatural Being Kills or Maims a Bystander	4	A Beastly Sight	If Only You Could Forget
A Worker of Dread Magic Curses You	4	The Curse is Thinking About Being Cursed	Cursed
After a Violent Demise, You Come Upon the Corpse	4	The Shudders	Shaken

An Alluring Entity Tugs at Your Heartstrings	4	Enthralled	Alien Passion
Alien Wildlife Dines on Your Soul	4	Fed Upon	Thought Drain
For the First Time in Your Life, Someone Just Tried to Kill You	4	Racing Pulse	Rampant Distrust
Glimpsing an Alien Realm	4	Tremors	Hackles Raised
Music Foreshadows a Coming Foe	4	Music of the Night	Point of No Return
Someone You Care About Is in Severe Distress	4	Pity	Sick with Worry
Something's Just Not Right Here	4	Unease	Dread
That Person You Just Spoke to Was a Ghost All Along	4	More Things in Heaven and Earth	Anyone Could Be Secretly Dead
Things Go from Bad to Worse	4	Cause for Concern	Time to Panic
You Court Bad Luck	4	Jinx	Ill-Omened
You Enter an Eerie or Haunted Place	4	Bad Place	Awful Place
You Revisit a Past Source of Distress	4	Butterflies	Collywobbles
You See a Monster Up Close but Do Not Further Interact With It	4	Haunted	Rationality's Cruel Veil
You See, But Do Not Interact With, a Ghost	4	Rattled	A Diverting Indiscretion Will Put This in Perspective
You Suspect That Reality is Being	4	Skewed Reality	Reality Horror

Rewritten

You Tempt Fate	4	Superstition	Magical Thinking
Your Snooping Led to a Witness' Murder	4	Rueful	Self-Reproachful
A Friend or Loved One Has Been Violently Killed	5	Stunned and Saddened	Waves of Grief
You Enter an Ultraterrestrial Zone Area	5	Must Have Been a Hallucination	Reality Collapse
You Just Killed a Person	5	A Touch of the Shakes	An Image Seared in the Mind
You Look at a Mind-Shattering Art	5	A Gnawing at the Back of the Mind	The Will Erodes
You See Many Corpses or a Large Battle	5	Witness to Carnage	Existence is a Meat-Grinder
You Witness Man's Inhumanity to Man	5	Humans are the True Monsters	Shattered Illusions
You Witness Torture	5	Appalled	A Dish Served Cold
Your Failure Brings About a Tragic Resolution	6	The Price of Failure	A Morbid Scene
You Kill in Cold Blood or Commit Torture	6	A Crossed Line	Out of Control
You Learn for Certain That You Helped the Weird Enemy	6	The Mind Reels	The Self Crumbles
You Read a Terrible Tome	7	The Self Crumbles	Moral Vertigo
You Leave This World to Explore an Alien Realm	7	Alien Shores	Unearthly Journey
You See a Weapon Do	3	Disbelief	Weird Weapon

		Something Eerie or Impossible	Trauma
You Think Too Hard About the Causes of the War	3	Dulled Thinking	Throbbing Migraine
A Leader Falls	4	Bereft	Rudderless
You are Targeted for the First Time by a Particular Weird Weapon	4	What th—?	World Gone Mad
You Meet a Creature Posing as a Dead PC	4	Haunted	Profaned Memories
You Promise to Protect a Civilian, and Fail	4	Hollow Promise	Resounding Failure
You See a Comrade or Innocent Civilian Killed with a Weird Weapon*	4	Tenuous Reality	Life's Value Ebbs
You See a Particular Horrible Battlefield Sight for the First Time	4	Revulsion	Nightmare Fuel
You Show Fright, Inviting the Mockery of Fellow Soldiers	4	Lily-Livered	Yellow-Bellied
You Use a Particular Weird Weapon for the First Time	4	Flirtation with the Enemy	Embracing the Enemy
Your Ship Is Taking on Water	4	Sinking Feeling	Panic
The Ghosts of the Fallen Come for You	4	Ghost Touch	The Vengeful Dead
You Consume Human Flesh	5	Tastes Like Chicken	A Crossed Line
You Let a Comrade Needlessly Die	5	Callous	Pit of Remorse
Your Submarine Has	5	Panic	Rat in a Can

Sprung a Leak			
Your Submarine is Under Attack by a Giant Squid	5	Rat in a Can	Tentacled Doom
You Take Part in a Mass Execution or War Crime	5 **	No Blood More Cold	Atrocity
A Revolutionary Hero Turns Out to Be a Heel	4	Dammit, Man	Seriously, Dammit
You Interpret Something Innocuous as Extremely Alarming	4	False Alarm	The Yips
You Meet, But Can't Strike Against, a Foe from the Old Days	4	Forehead Vein	It Eats You Up
You Remember Being Tortured	5	Grim Flashback	You Know You Broke
You Ally with a War Criminal	5	Sullied	Expedience
You Remember Committing Torture	5	Spasm of Guilt	The Monster Inside
You Remember the Terrible Thing You Did	4	Twinge	Spasm of Guilt
You Use an Immoral Weapon	4	Twinge	Lines Get Muddy
You See a Weird Creature But It is Not Currently Aggressive	3	Close Call	Edgy
You View Supernaturally Aided Propaganda	3	Susceptible	Ideological Capture
A Familiar Public Place Becomes a Site of Horror	4	No Safe Place	Awful Association
A Military Grade Weapon is Used	4	Gun Shy	Under Fire

Against You			
A New Personal Obligation Distracts from the Investigation	4	Harried	Overwhelmed
An Enemy Enters, or Manifests in, Your Home	4	Homebound	Fortified
Bad Hallucinogenic Trip	4	Melted Perceptions	Nothing is Real
Weird Magic or Science is Changing Your Body	4	"Does This Look Weird?"	Body Horror
Something Absurd Turns Out to be Deadly	4	Overconfident	Hideous Laughter
Unearthly Sounds Plague You	4	Unearthly Sounds	Auditory Hallucination
You Take a Weird Pharmaceutical	4	Proprioception Dysmorphia	Identity Decentralization
While in Danger, You Discover You Have No Data or WiFi	4	Cut Off	On Your Own
You Attract Unwelcome Publicity	4	Sleepless Nights	You Went Viral
You Become an Unwilling Experimental Subject	4	Lab Coat Unease	Lab Coat Terror
You Discover That a Past Traumatic Event Had a Supernatural Origin	4	Pack Rat	My Collection Will Never Betray Me
You Feel an Invasive Presence in Your Mind	4	Psi Probe	In Your Mind
You Gained a Fighting Bonus by Carrying a Weird Symbol	4	Stirred Up	Violent Side
You Go Online to Find	4	Trending Trauma	Omnipresent

			Horror
the News Dominated by a Horrifying Event (Unrelated to Your Current Situation)			
You Hear a Pop Tune as Something Terrible Happens	4	This Note's for Grue	Murder Music
You Realize That the Person You're Talking to Isn't Human	4	Rattled	Pervasive Distrust
You Realize the Cops Won't or Can't Help	4	This One's on You	Through the Looking Glass
You Realize You're Under Surveillance	4	Every Breath You Take	Every Move You Make
You See an Unknown Person Killed or Maimed by a Weird Enemy	4	Primal Outrage	Primal Bloodlust
You Take Possession of a Commonplace Item That Bears a Curse	4	Eerie Object	Cursed Item
You Witness an Creature Attack in Which No One is Seriously Hurt	4	Edgy	Hyper-Vigilant
You, an Ordinary Person, Perform an Act of Heroism	4	Spotlight Hog	Messiah Complex
Your Private Info Appears Online	4	Raw Nerve	Under a Microscope
An Intruder Has Been Living in Your Home	5	Invaded	Defiled
Weird Forces Access Your Phone or Computer	5	Scrub the System	They're in Your Auxiliary Brain
You Get Swatted	5	Coulda Been Hurt	Coulda Been

			Killed
You Learn That Your Actions Led to a Fatal SRI Reprisal	5	Nagging Guilt	Gnawing Guilt
You Meet a Past or Alternate Incarnation	5	Déjà Who?	Me Again
Your Actions Led to a Nationally Traumatizing News Event	5	Blowback	Unforgivable
You Kill a Past or Alternate Incarnation	7	Well, That Happened	Lateral Suicide

Regaining Pushes and Pool Points

Spent points from various pools are restored at different rates, depending on their narrative purpose.

Characters reset to 2 Pushes at the beginning of each new scenario. Most groups finish scenarios over one to three sessions. Players may revise their sense of how carefully to manage point spending as they see how quickly their group typically disposes of its cases.

General ability pools restore at the end of each scenario, or when a long break of world time uneventfully zips by in the course of a scenario. For example, if the group takes a cruise to America in the middle of a case, the time spent playing whist and chatting up fellow scions of the moneyed class while on board allows for a full refresh of all pools. However if they spend all their time on the ship ducking anarchists and discovering the dark secrets of the ship's crew, they continue to tick away.

[[BEGIN SIDEBAR]]

1. What Do Pool Points Represent?

Pool points are a literary abstraction, representing the way that characters get their own time in the spotlight in the course of an ensemble drama. When you do something remarkable, you expend a little bit of your spotlight time. More active players will spend their points sooner than less demonstrative ones, unless they carefully pick and choose their moments to shine.

Even when pools are empty, you still have a reasonable chance to succeed at a test, and you'll always get the information you need to move forward in the case.

Pool points do not represent a resource, tangible or otherwise, in the game world. Players are aware of them, but characters are not. The team members' ignorance of them is analogous to TV characters' obliviousness to commercial breaks, the unwritten rules of scene construction, and the tendency of events to heat up during sweeps.

The characters do not literally get worse at doing things as the players expend points.

Instead, the players have used up their share of big spotlight moments they tied to their key abilities.

You may choose to depict this with narration—describing characters as drawn and exhausted when their Athletics pools ebb.

But the system works just as well if you don't worry about matching literal description to abstract resource.

[[END SIDEBAR]]

Improving Abilities

At the conclusion of each scenario, each character gets 1 Improvement point.

Players can spend Improvement points right away, or save them and spend them at any time.

To gain a new Investigative ability, a player spends 2 Improvement points and requests the approval of the player (if any) who received it as part of a starting kit. As GM you may waive this requirement if the latter player is frequently unable to attend game sessions.

Players may add points to a General ability, including those rated at 0, gaining 1 rating point for each Improvement point spent.

Custom Interpersonal Abilities

Players can add custom Interpersonal abilities to the game as part of improvement. The player must explain how the ability helps the character gain cooperation from others, and give it a name that memorably sums it up.

Character Replacement

When you lose a character due to physical death or psychic breakdown, create a new one using the standard steps given for the sequence you're playing.

When choosing your Investigative kit, pick any kit no other player is using. That could be the same one your previous character had, or one nobody picked. If you want, swap out any of those Investigative abilities for any other one available in the current sequence. Don't swap in more than one ability already possessed by another player's character.

[[**Tough**]] **mode**: Spend the starting amount of build points on General abilities.

[[**Forgiving**]] **mode**: Spend the number of build points your departed character had, including both initial build points and Improvement points accumulated in play.

Foes

Name of Foe

Descriptive text.

Numbers: How many individuals this foe entry represents. A foe might be a singular entity, or a group of combatants. In the latter case, this may vary according to the number of player

characters present. This changes the way you narrate the fight but requires no further numerical change to any of the foe's numbers.

Difficulty: Name of Relative Challenge, followed by the Difficulty numbers for the Escape, Other, and Kill goals.

Difficulty Adjustments: Conditions under which a bonus or penalty applies to the above Difficulties. A foe might be, for example, harder to fight in the dark, or easier to defeat when characters have burned its copy of a terrible tome or are choosing the Drive Away objective.

Toll: Number of points a character who made the Fighting test must spend to avoid taking a Minor Injury. Points may be spent from any combination of Athletics, Fighting, and Health.

Tags: [[*If desired, assign category identifiers to foes that interact with certain Shock and Injury card effects. List and define those tags here.*]]

Injuries, Minor and Major: Name of Minor Injury card/Name of Major Injury card

Alien Assassin

Clad in a hooded cloak and armed with a sickle, this mute humanoid slayer has leapt between worlds to wipe out its masters' foes.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 for each past encounter between the assassin and the PCs

Toll: 1

Tags: Carcosan

Injuries, Minor and Major: Stab Wound/Slashed Throat

Brute

A meek, physically unprepossessing aesthete, academic, or scientist might, after discovering a weird science secret, endure periodic transformations into a brute. Muscles ripple to life across his body. His skull thickens and widens. His hair lengthens and coarsens, sprouting from his cheeks, ears, and neck. The meek sufferer's voice drops an octave, discarding perfect elocution for the patois of the Parisian gutters.

Along with the alterations to his frame and appearance, the brute behaves in a violent and uninhibited manner, indulging all the secret desires and aggressions he has long suppressed. The changes come at dusk; the brute reverts to true form either at dawn or when he falls asleep, whichever happens first. The man behind the brute may clearly recall his nocturnal depredations, understand them as fuzzy dreams, or experience complete amnesia.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if at least one of the combatants has figured out who the brute really is

Toll: 1

Tags: Alt
Injuries, Minor and Major: Cudgel Blow/A Thorough Thrashing

Cannibal, Rural

Numbers: Number of PCs, plus 3
Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)
Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if characters have eaten recently and are fragrant with garlic, or have been marinating in wine
Toll: 1
Tags: Human
Injuries, Minor and Major: Broken Bone/Knockout Dart

Civilian with a Gun

Use this foe profile when the seemingly innocuous witness a cast member is interviewing suddenly draws a pistol from the desk drawer and fires it. The gun-wielding civilian probably won't try this when facing more than two opponents, as the prospect of being eventually overwhelmed, disarmed, and arrested becomes a certainty.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 for each PC present after the first (penalties for fighting at less than full strength do not apply)

Toll: 0

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Not a Significant Bullet/Shot

Civilian with a Knife

As above, but less bang bang, more stab stab.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if character is not surprised by the attack; -1 for each PC present after the first (penalties for fighting at less than full strength do not apply)

Toll: 0

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Laceration/Flesh Wound

Dogs

Use this foe profile either for trained guard dogs or fierce feral dogs willing to attack humans.
Numbers: Two to three times the number of PCs
Difficulty: Weak (Escape 1, Other 3, Kill 4)

Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop Escape by 1; increase Kill by 1
Difficulty Adjustments: -2 on a Natural History Push
Toll: 0
Tags: Animal
Injuries, Minor and Major: The Atavistic Terror of an Animal Attack/Bitten

Enemy Soldiers

For small-scale engagements where the individual skills of combatants determine whether the battlin' heroes live or die, use these foe profiles.

When the PCs take part in a broader engagement whose outcome they cannot by themselves sway, subject them to war hazards, which they resist with Battlefield tests.

Hapless

Numbers: Less than party
Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 2, Kill 2)
Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if surprised; +1 if attacking with surprise
Toll: 0
Tags: Mundane
Encounter Style: Secondary
Injuries, Minor and Major: Knife Wound/Bayonet Wound

Outnumbered but Determined

Numbers: Less than party
Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 4, Kill 3)
Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if surprised; +1 if attacking with surprise
Toll: 0
Tags: Mundane
Encounter Style: Secondary
Injuries, Minor and Major: Barely a Scratch/Bullet Wound

Equally Capable

Numbers: Same as party
Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 5, Kill 4)
Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if surprised; +1 if attacking with surprise
Toll: 1
Tags: Mundane
Encounter Style: Secondary
Injuries, Minor and Major: Barely a Scratch/Bullet Wound

Elite

Numbers: Party + 50% (round up)
Difficulty: Superior (Escape 4, Other 5, Kill 4)
Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if surprised; +1 if attacking with surprise

Toll: 2/4
Tags: Mundane
Encounter Style: Secondary
Injuries, Minor and Major: Gash/Bullet Wound

Fish Humanoids

Numbers: Same size as party

Difficulty: Overwhelming (Escape 4, Other 7, Kill 8)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if in sight of their home waters

Toll: 3

Tags: Carcosan

Injuries, Minor and Major: Clawed/Eviscerated

Gargoyle, Solitary

Paris' remaining medieval architecture veritably crawls with gargoyles. Players often choose "I see gargoyles moving on the buildings" as their Deuced Peculiar Business. Animated gargoyles may serve merely as omens in your game. But if it comes to a scrap, here are the numbers.

Numbers: 1
Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)
Toll: 1
Tags: Construct
Injuries, Minor and Major: Gargoyle Strike/Crushing Gargoyle Strike

Gargoyles, Pack

Use these numbers when an entire group of the stony beasties confront the heroes.

Numbers: 3–7 (does not exceed number of characters)
Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)
Difficulty Adjustments: +3 vs. a single character; +2 vs. only two characters
Toll: 1
Tags: Construct
Injuries, Minor and Major: Gargoyle Strike/Crushing Gargoyle Strike

Garguille

The dragon of the Seine, sometimes referred to as a giant serpent and supposedly slain by the heroic 7th century bishop St. Romanus of Rouen, might be the ghost of the original dragon, a hallucination given partial substance by ultraterrestrial energy, or an aquatic predator that found a gateway between worlds.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Vastly Superior (Escape 3, Other 6, Kill 7)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if the group has learned the myth of St. Romanus; -1 if one of them

wields his sword

Toll: 2

Injuries, Minor and Major: Dragon Claw/Dragon Bite

Gendarmes

These trained police officers outnumber the player character combatants and are more than ready to show that Paris cops have always deserved their reputation for toughness.

Numbers: Number of characters × 2

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 2, Other 4, Kill 6)

Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop Escape to 2

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if heroes are drunk

Toll: 1

Injuries, Minor and Major: Black and Blue/Badly Beaten

Gene-Spliced Dogs

Numbers: Double the party

Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop Kill by 1

Toll: 0

Injuries, Minor and Major: Mutant Dog Bite/Mutant Dog Mauling

Ghost, Vengeful

Few ghosts show the inclination or ability to actively attack anyone. Most exist as spectral images frozen in time, mindlessly reenacting moments from the lives they echo.

Others appear to be alive, breathing and corporeal. When a PC meets someone apparently alive and breathing who later turns out to be a ghost, a Difficulty 4 Composure test ensues, to avoid Shock—**Minor**: More Things in Heaven and Earth; **Major**: Anyone Could Be Secretly Dead.

For the rare tormented soul capable of perceiving and harming the living, use this foe profile.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)

Difficulty Adjustments: -2 on an Occultism spend; -1 if the group knows key facts about the living person

Toll: 1

Injuries, Minor and Major: "But This is Wondrous Strange!"/Soul Strike

Hoodlums

Full of fight and low on brains, untrained brawlers like these infest decaying neighborhoods in any timeframe or reality you care to name.

Numbers: Number of characters, plus 2

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 1, Other 3, Kill 4)

Adjust to Other Sequences: Drop Escape by 1; increase Kill by 1

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if heroes are drunk

Toll: 0

Injuries, Minor and Major: You Should See the Other Fellow/Concussed

Horla

As described in Guy de Maupassant's short story of the same name, the horla is an invisible spirit entity that chooses and haunts an individual victim. By sensing and contemplating the presence of the horla, the victim becomes ever more obsessed by it. Unless somehow able to break its mental hold, the target eventually dies of apparently natural causes. Depending on the case, the victim may succumb to stroke, cardiac arrest, or suicide.

The spread of the horla phenomenon resembles an epidemic. Belief in horla spawns more horla. The first horla outbreak occurred in Brazil nine years ago, and spread to at least one victim in Rouen, who made the simple mistake of waving to a three-masted ship freshly arrived from Rio de Janeiro. In retrospect the investigators might conclude that this was sparked by Carcosan incursion.

Suppressing a horla epidemic can prove difficult, as it involves convincing people that there is no horla epidemic.

Also hard: fighting a horla. It attacks physically only when interlopers try to break its mental hold on its primary victim. It remains invisible, but its position might be intuited from its effect on the surrounding environment. Combatants might see grass or drapery moving, or see its footprints in sand or ripples in a puddle.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Vastly Superior (Escape 3, Other 6, Kill 7)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if heroes have figured out the horla facts given above; -3 if somehow made visible; -1 if a PC cares deeply for this horla's primary victim

Toll: 2

Injuries, Minor and Major: Steam-Drill Heart/Apoplexy

Killer Doll

A toy animated by a murderous spirit.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Vastly Superior (Escape 4, Other 4, Kill 7)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if you know the story of the spirit inside the doll; -1 if a character has a blowtorch or other weapon that melts plastic

Adapt to Other Sequences: Increase Escape by 1, drop Other by 1

Toll: 3

Tags: Construct

Injuries, Minor and Major: Stab Wound/Slashed Throat

Macabre Experimenter

A surgeon or scientist, the macabre experimenter follows a perverse compulsion to reconfigure the anatomies of the helpless. They may justify their grotesque procedures as necessary to breakthroughs that will benefit all mankind. Or perhaps they harbor few illusions about their perverse need. They attack by sneaking up from behind with a syringe full of special tranquilizer formula. After rendering their victims unconscious, they whisk them to their laboratory, likely with the aid of malleable confederates.

Numbers: 1
Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 1, Other 3, Kill 5)
Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop Escape by 1; increase Kill by 1
Difficulty Adjustments: -1 vs. all but one of main cast; -2 vs. entire cast
Toll: 0
Injuries, Minor and Major: Muzzy Headed/Heavily Sedated

Mesmerist, Sinister

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Vastly Superior (Escape 3, Other 5, Kill 6)

Adapt to Another Sequence: Drop Other and Kill by 1

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if you previously succeeded at a Composure test to resist his mental influence; -1 if the party has read the diary in which he records his methods

Toll: 2

Injuries, Minor and Major: Brain Fever/Shown Your Own Horrific Death

Night Watch

These paid guards, past their prime and probably outnumbered by the protagonists, deter trouble by their presence.

Numbers: 2

Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4)

Difficulty Adjustments: -2 if surprised

Toll: 0

Injuries, Minor and Major: Cracked Skull/Curb Stomped

Operatives

Use this profile for spies and assassins.

Numbers: Half the number of characters, or 1, whichever is higher
Difficulty: Superior (Escape 2, Other 4, Kill 6)
Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop Escape by 1
Toll: 1

Tags: Human
Injuries, Minor and Major: Cane Blow/Sword Cane Stab

Orderlies

Keeping patients compliant requires one part medical know-how to three parts muscle. These white-coated working men dispense sedatives and headlocks as required.

Numbers: Number of characters, minus 1
Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4)
Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if the character has First Aid
Toll: 0
Injuries, Minor and Major: Muzzy Headed/Sedated (if attempting sedation)
Injuries, Minor and Major: Strong Armed/Restrained (if using physical force)

Patchwork

Someone believing himself to be a modern Prometheus might sew together parts from various corpses and grant animation to the resulting hodgepodge of body parts. The resurrected being gets its intelligence and a semblance of personality from the brain used in the procedure. But if your version of the classic tale runs true to form, the awakening twists that mind into a murderously embittered analogue of its former self. And frankly, who can blame it?

The Patchwork displays a surprising propensity for returning to imitation life after its seeming destruction. Composure tests against Shock upon seeing it increase by 1 each time it comes back for a sequel.

Numbers: 1
Difficulty: Vastly Superior (Escape 3, Other 6, Kill 7)
Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if it has reason to think the PCs are in league with its creator; -1 if it has seen them take firm action against its creator
Toll: 1
Injuries, Minor and Major: Picked Up and Thrown Hard/Monstrous Battering

Peasants, Scythe-Wielding

Numbers: Number of PCs, plus 3
Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)
Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if the characters have previously had friendly interactions with the locals
Toll: 0
Injuries, Minor and Major: Impressive Yet Superficial Cut/Arterial Spray

Peasant Who Seems Lovely Until You Turn Your Back

This is for your classic little old lady or man who appears kindly and helpful until the time comes to get out the hammer.

Use this foe profile only when the civilian intends to knock a character unconscious for the

purposes of capture, and only against a soldier who has been separated from the rest of the squad.

First present the player with the "When You Regain Consciousness…" Injury card, offering the choice to take this card in lieu of combat. Explain that use of the Fighting rules gives some chance of winning flat-out, but also risks worse Injury cards in the case of loss. Also, remind the player that in an investigative game waking up in an antagonist's clutches always provides the opportunity to gain information.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: (*when suddenly attacking an unsuspecting PC*) Overwhelming (Escape 4, Other 7, Kill 7)

(*otherwise*) achieve any combat Goal on a Difficulty 3 simple Fighting test

Adjust to Other Sequences: Drop Escape by 1, drop Toll to 0

Toll: 0

Tags: Mundane
Encounter Style: Either
Injuries, Minor and Major: Seeing Double/Skull Fracture

Rakes

The rich fathers of these sneering ne'er-do-wells underwrote their study of fencing and fisticuffs before packing them off to Paris to get the havoc out of their system.

Numbers: Number of PCs

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 in the afternoon (fully sober); -1 at night (drunk); no adjustment in morning (hung over)

Toll: 1

Injuries, Minor and Major: Thrashed/Rapier Wound

Soul Moths

These eerily luminescent alien flying insects feed on emotion and memory. With flicking tongues they drain these from sapient prey, fearing only the King in Yellow and his kin.

Numbers: Dozens
Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)
Difficulty Adjustments: -1 for each Shock card the player holds
Toll: 0
Injuries, Minor and Major: Fed Upon/Thought Drain

Alien Spiders

These hard-shelled, fist-sized arthropods with gnawing mandibles that saw easily through

human flesh can't technically be described as spiders. The ninth leg affixed to the back of the abdomen, used for leaping, rules that out. Nonetheless, when you see a swarm of them scuttling at you, your first impulse will be to yell "*Spiders*!"

Numbers: Number of PCs
Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)
Difficulty Adjustments: +1 for characters holding 1 or more Injury cards
Toll: 0
Injuries, Minor and Major: The Shudders (Shock)/Sawed Flesh

Statue (Animated)

When you have a sculptor character type and a horror setting, the question is not "Will the characters fight an animated statue?" It is, "How long will it take them to fight an animated statue?"

The player probably supplies the physical description. This foe profile does the rest.

Numbers: 1
Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)
Difficulty Adjustments: +1 for each character trying to harm it with bullets, projectiles, or blades; -1 if characters wield heavy artillery or other high-end military weapons
Toll: 1
Injuries, Minor and Major: Fearsome Gut Punch/Broken Jaw

Students

Parisian students fight when drunk and affronted. They are often the former if not always the latter. Investigators can't kill them without risking pesky murder charges.

Numbers: Number of PCs present, plus 1
Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)
Toll: 0
Injuries, Minor and Major: Roughed Up/Sucker Punched

Swarm

Under alien influence, even the smallest of creatures can pose a threat. When countless vermin animals die together, they form a swarm, a rolling carpet of distorted, quasi-substantial fur, claws, and teeth. Or, when aerial creatures form a swarm, a cloud of beaks, talons, and feathers. Animals that can become swarms include rats, snakes, weasels, dogs, centipedes, birds, and bats. They mindlessly attack any fully living beings they come across, damaging bone and muscle on the molecular level. Wounds dished out by a swarm can't be seen with the naked eye, but show up when tissue samples are examined under a microscope.

Numbers: 1
Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 4, Kill 3)
Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if anyone dismissed the possibility of a few tiny creatures doing any real harm
Toll: 0

Encounter Style: Secondary
Injuries, Minor and Major: Microscopic Wounds/Cell Damage

Terror Birds

Nine to ten feet tall, equipped with an enormous, flesh-rending beak, this prehistoric avian apex predator can out-run a car, then rip its roof off to get at the delicious humans inside. Unlike more familiar flightless birds like the ostrich and emu, they do not use their clawed feet as weapons.

Numbers: 1-2

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 2, Other 5, Kill 6)

Toll: 1

Injuries, Minor and Major: Puncturing Beak/Rending Beak

Thermosaur

A fully aquatic relative of the spinosaurus, the thermosaur is 15 m long and equipped not only with front and back legs but a set of bat-like wings protruding from its shoulders. Though evocative of a dragon, the thermosaur uses these to propel itself through the water, not for flight. The thermosaur requires warm waters and was presumed by the paleontologists who captured it to be traveling along with the gulf stream.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Overwhelming (Escape 3, Other 7, Kill 8)

Toll: 2

Injuries, Minor and Major: Dinosaur Slash/Dinosaur Bite

Urban Legend

These nominal beings coalesce from the interaction of residual ultraterrestrial energy and the brainwaves of a distressed human mind. These thought forms appear in locations where people become susceptible to negative suggestion, such as haunted houses, graveyards, prisons, and murder scenes. They take the apparent shape of a horror an agitated person unconsciously fears or expects to encounter. Plucking a template from the mind of a tormented onlooker we'll call an experiencer, they may look like classic ghosts, night hags, or UFO aliens.

Pseudo-entities who manifest by belief can be destroyed by it as well. If an investigator thinks an urban legend has a physical form, that investigator can kill it. However, as soon as an individual encountering one concludes that it's unreal, it becomes nearly impossible to destroy—for that person, at least. Inconvenient!

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 2, Other 5, Kill 6)

Difficulty Adjustments: +3 for each PC combatant who knows it's a shatterling or thinks it's unreal

Toll: 0

Injuries, Minor and Major: Neuropathic Swipe/Neuropathic Disequilibrium

Vampires, Fledgling

Use these as your flock of recently turned, ferocious but inexperienced bloodsuckers. Their supernatural nature only becomes apparent if provoked to bare their teeth. Resulting Composure tests get a +1 bonus, +2 if the group has killed vampires before.

Numbers: 2 fewer than the group (unless this results in 0 vampires, in which case it's 1 vampire)

Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop Kill by 1

Difficulty Adjustments: Choose one or two standard vampire vulnerabilities (crosses, garlic, fire) and one oddball one; +1 for PCs using at least one of these measures

Toll: 0

Injuries, Minor and Major: Scratched/Throat Punctures

Vampire, Legendary

If this vampire isn't Dracula, Carmilla, or Addhema (scalp-stealing antiheroine of Paul Féval's gonzo 1856 novel *The Vampire Countess*), it can stand toe to toe with them.

If it makes eye contact with a character, it can issue a simple verbal instruction which must be obeyed if the character fails a Composure test. Commands that clearly threaten the life of the victim test against a Difficulty of 8. A command that clearly threatens the life of another PC or an innocent the victim has reason to sympathize with faces a Difficulty of 6. Otherwise the Difficulty is 4. Each time a character succeeds in resisting a vampire's command, the Difficulty of resisting further commands from any vampire during that scenario decreases by 1, for the duration of the scenario.

Legendary vampires didn't get that way by being stupid and will generally tailor their commands so that they are likely to be obeyed.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Overwhelming (Escape 4, Other 7, Kill 8)

Difficulty Adjustments: +5 if heroes are fighting to Kill or Render Helpless but have not investigated sufficiently to know the special means required to dispatch it (stake through the heart, silver bullets, decapitation, or what have you; otherwise, on a kill result, it appears to have been destroyed but then reforms, angry and ready for vengeance. +2 if heroes have tried to kill it before and failed. -4 if this is the last session of the sequence.

Toll: 3

Shocks, Minor and Major: Enrapturing Bite/Vampiric Death Strike

Vampire, Solitary

Use this vampire when you need a single, moderately powerful example of the breed.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)

Difficulty Adjustments: Choose one or two standard vampire vulnerabilities (crosses, garlic, fire) and one oddball one; -1 for PCs failing to use at least one of these precautions
Toll: 1
Injuries, Minor and Major: Throat Punctures/Intoxicating Bite

Viper Swarm

Numbers: 5 per hero
Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)
Difficulty Adjustments: 0
Toll: 2
Injuries, Minor and Major: Snakes, Our Oldest Fear/Venomous Fangs

Walking Corpse

This dead body has regained animation, but no will or volition. It may just wander around frightening people, draining their hold on reality through its very existence. If provoked, by the group or some less altruistic individuals, it becomes a violent attacker.

Unlike a Romero zombie, this does not eat the flesh of the living, nor does it exert a contagion effect on attack survivors.

Numbers: 1, or equal to group size
Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4)
Difficulty Adjustments: -1 for any Investigator who met the corpse when it was a person; -2 for any Investigator who knew and liked the corpse when it was a person (does not stack with previous penalty)
Toll: 0
Injuries, Minor and Major: Undead Thrashing/Monstrous Mauling

Yeth-Hound

When a child is murdered near a hub of ultraterrestrial activity, weird vibrations gather around it, coalescing into a yeth-hound. These headless, quasi-substantial, canine-shaped beings strike terror into those unfortunate enough to behold them. A newly fledged yeth-hound travels forests and uninhabited byways until it finds a pack to join. Sorcerers can find and command them, forcing them to track or attack specific individuals.

Because the creatures have no apparent heads, investigators may react with surprise when one of them leaps at them and invisible teeth tear through clothing to rend the flesh beneath.

Unless so impelled, they simply range through deep woods, joining each other in a hideous howling that sears the soul of those unlucky enough to hear: Difficulty 6 Composure test to avoid **Shock—Minor:** Unease; **Major**: A Diverting Indiscretion Will Put This in Perspective.

Numbers: Twice the number of PCs
Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)
Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if the group could have avoided a fight but goaded the creatures into it

Toll: 0
Injuries, Minor and Major: Yeth Bite/Yeth Mauling

Injury Cards

Select Injury cards relevant to your game from the table below. Use these as the basis for new cards of your own design.

Table key: **Title** *is the name of the card.*

Text: *Is the effect text, including discard condition.*

Mate: *Is the card it most obviously pairs with.*

Degree: *Shows you whether it originally appeared as a Minor or Major Injury.*

C?: *If Y, is a Continuity card.*

Combo: *If Y, is both an Injury and a Shock card.*

Title	Text	Mate	Degree	C?	Combo
Woozy	Nonlethal. You can't make Pushes. Discard when you leave the boat.	Poseidon's Wrath	Minor	N	N
Poseidon's Wrath	Non-lethal. You can't make Pushes. -2 to all tests (except Preparedness.) Discard when you leave the boat.	Woozy	Major	N	N
Tipsy	Nonlethal. -1 to tests. On a failed test, make a bad, drunk decision. Discard after two hours world time, or after a test to avoid Injury.	Intoxicated	Minor	N	N
Intoxicated	-2 to tests; +2 to Tolls. On a failed test, make a bad, drunk decision. After two hours world time, trade for "Tipsy."	Tipsy	Major	N	N
Cough, Choke, Splutter	-1 to non-Focus tests. Discard at next interval.	Lungful of Water	Minor	N	N
Lungful of Water	-2 to tests. As immediate recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success, or at end of next interval, trade for "Cough, Choke, Sputter."	Cough, Choke, Splutter	Major	N	N

Stay By the Water Closet	Nonlethal. You must remain within proximity of a water closet. -2 to tests. After four hours of world time, you may make a Difficulty 4 Health test at the beginning of any interval, discarding this card on a success.	Ructious Innards	Minor	N	N
Ructious Innards	Nonlethal. You must remain within proximity of a water closet. You can't make tests. After six hours of world time, you may make a Difficulty 4 Health test at the beginning of any interval, discarding this card on a success, and losing 3 Health on a failure.	Stay By the Water Closet	Major	N	N
Abrasion	Nonlethal. Roll a die before making an Interpersonal Push. On a 2 or less, you can't make the Push. Discard on a Physical test.	Concussed	Minor	N	N
Concussed	You can't make Pushes. Discard after 48 hours of world time.	Abrasion	Major	N	N
Hard Landing	Your next Physical test takes a penalty of 1; then discard.	Turned Ankle	Minor	N	N
Turned Ankle	-2 to Physical tests. Trade for "Hard Landing" on a Physical failure.	Hard Landing	Major	N	N
Something In Your Eye	-3 to Sense Trouble tests, -1 to Physical and Focus tests. Discard on a Sense Trouble, Physical or Focus failure.	Puncture Wound	Minor	N	N
Puncture Wound	-2 to tests (except Preparedness.) Discard as recipient of successful Difficulty 4 First Aid success, or at the end of any interval by spending 2 Health.	Something In Your Eye	Major	N	N

Singed	To make an Interpersonal Push you must also spend a Composure point. At any time after the next interval, you may spend 1 Health to discard.	Burned	Minor	N	N
Burned	-2 to tests (except Preparedness.) Trade for "Badly Hurt" after you fail a test and then receive a Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Singed	Major	N	N
Grazed	-1 to Physical tests. Discard on a Physical success.	Shot	Minor	N	N
Shot	-2 to Physical tests. Counts as 2 Injury cards. Trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of Difficulty 6 First Aid success. If still in hand at end of scenario, you succumb to your injuries and die.	Grazed	Major	N	N
Thrown Free of the Explosion	-1 to Physical tests. When you receive this card, and at every subsequent interval, roll a die. Even: discard.	In the Blast Radius	Minor	N	N
In the Blast Radius	-2 to Physical tests. Counts as 2 Injury cards. Trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of Difficulty 6 First Aid success. If still in hand at end of scenario, trade for "Permanent Injury."	Thrown Free of the Explosion	Major	N	N
Mostly Resistant	You can't spend Health points on tests. At the end of each interval, roll a die. Even: discard.	Find the Antidote	Minor	N	N
Find the Antidote	If scenario ends with this card still in hand, you die. Discard by finding the antidote.	Mostly Resistant	Major	N	N
It Looks Worse Than It Is	Upon seeing you for the first time after the incident that saddled you with this card, any other PC loses 1 Composure.	Broken Fingers	Minor	N	N

	Discard after 6 hours world time.				
Broken Fingers	Nonlethal. -2 to non-Presence tests. Penalty drops to -1 as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success. Penalty drops by 1 if in hand at start of session. Discard when penalty equals 0.	It Looks Worse Than It Is	Major	N	N
Through the Ringer	+1 to Tolls. Other PCs take -1 Composure penalties while in sight of you. Trade for "Black and Blue" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Breaking Point	Minor	N	N
Breaking Point	+2 to Tolls. For the next six hours of world time, other PCs take -2 Composure penalties while in sight of you. After six hours world time, trade for the Injury card "Black and Blue" and the Shock card "They Broke You."	Through the Ringer	Major	N	N
Contused	-1 to Physical tests. Discard on a Physical success.	Crushed	Minor	N	N
Crushed	-2 to Physical tests. Counts as 2 Injury cards. As recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "Black and Blue."	Contused	Major	N	N
Black and Blue	+1 to Tolls. Discard when you take a major Injury.	Badly Beaten	Minor	N	N
Badly Beaten	+2 to Tolls. After two intervals, trade for "Black and Blue" as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Black and Blue	Major	N	N

Glass Shards	-1 on your next Physical test. Any time after that test, discard with a Difficulty 3 Health success.	Direct Chandelier Hit	Minor	N	N
Direct Chandelier Hit	-2 on Physical tests, -1 on any other tests. After you fail a test and receive a Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "Glass Shards."	Glass Shards	Major	N	N
Lingering Cough	Lose 1 Health point (if available) every time you test a non-Focus ability. At the end of any interval, roll a die. Even: discard.	Scarred Lungs	Minor	N	N
Scarred Lungs	Lose 2 Health points and 1 Fighting and 1 Riding point (as available) every time you test an ability other than Preparedness. At the end of scenario, roll a die. On a 1, this becomes a Continuity card.	Lingering Cough	Major	N	N
Warm Blanket Needed	If you don't get to a warm, dry place by the end of the next Interval, you are unable to spend Health points for the following two hours of world time. Discard after two hours of world time.	Ravaged By the Elements	Minor	N	N
Ravaged By the Elements	Your Health pool drops to 0. After 2 hours of table time, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Badly Hurt."	Warm Blanket Needed	Major	N	N
Fall to Street Level	-1 to Physical and Presence. As recipient of an immediate Difficulty 5 First Aid success, discard at end of interval.	Hard Landing	Major	N	N
Snakebit	Unless you receive a Difficulty 4 First Aid success before end of interval, trade for the "Deadly Venom."	Deadly Venom	Minor	N	N

Deadly Venom	-2 to all tests (except Preparedness.) Counts as 2 Injury cards. Spend 3 Health to trade for "Badly Hurt." You may do this even if would otherwise be your Final card.	Snakebit	Major	N	N
Whiff of Cyanide	-1 to Physical tests. Health drops to 0. On a Physical success, refresh Health and discard this card.	Snootful of Cyanide	Minor	N	N
Snootful of Cyanide	-1 to Physical tests. You can't discard Injury cards.	It's a Miracle You're Alive	Major	N	N
It's a Miracle You're Alive	-1 to Physical tests. After a Physical failure, roll a die. Even: trade for Shock card "Rattled."	Massive Injuries	Minor	N	N
Massive Injuries	Counts as 2 Injury cards. Until end of interval you can't make tests. Thereafter, -2 to Physical and -1 to Focus tests. If scenario is not over at end of session, trade for "On the Mend."	It's a Miracle You're Alive	Major	N	N
Still Hurting	Discard on a Physical success with a Margin greater than 1.	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	N	N
On the Mend	-1 to all tests. Trade for "Still Hurting" on a Physical success.	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	N	N
Permanent Injury	[No text]	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	Y	N
Dazed	-1 to all tests. Discard at end of session.	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	N	N
Jarred	Discard at end of session.	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	N	N
Precarious Recovery	-1 to Physical tests. On a Physical failure, roll a die. Odd: Trade for you traded this card for. Discard on a Physical success with a margin of 3 or more.	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	N	N
Badly Hurt	-1 to Physical and Focus tests.	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	N	N

Draggy	Choose one general ability type: Focus, Physical, or Presence. -1 to tests of that type. After any failure, discard if you have no other non-Continuity Shock or Injury cards.	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	N	N
Choked	Lose 2 Health. +1 to Tolls for rest of scenario, even after this card is discarded. Discard after one interval.	Throttled	Minor	N	N
Throttled	Lose 2 Health. On or after one interval, trade for "Choked" as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Choked	Major	N	N
Cudgel Blow	-1 to Physical tests. At each new interval, roll a die. Odd: -1 to Focus until next interval. Even: discard.	A Thorough Thrashing	Minor	N	N
A Thorough Thrashing	-1 to Physical and Focus. On or after two intervals, trade for "Black and Blue" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Cudgel Blow	Major	N	N
Broken Bone	-2 to all tests. Lose 1 Health each time you make a Physical test. After 2 Intervals, as recipient of a Difficulty 4 First Aid success, trade for "On the Mend."	[Oddball case]	Minor	N	N
Stab Wound	-1 to Physical and Focus. Discard after a Physical or Focus success.	Slashed Throat	Minor	N	N
Slashed Throat	You can't take tests or make Pushes, or do anything but lie on the ground bleeding out. As recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "Stab Wound."	Stab Wound	Major	N	N
Shot	-2 to Physical tests. Counts as 2 Injury cards. Trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of Difficulty 6 First Aid success. If still in hand at end of scenario,	Not a Significant Bullet (a Shock card)	Major	N	N

	you succumb to your injuries and die.				
Laceration	When called on to make a Physical test, you may choose to take a -2 penalty on the test and then discard this card.	Flesh Wound	Minor	N	N
Flesh Wound	-1 to non-Focus tests. Trade for "Laceration" after any non-Focus success.	Laceration	Major	N	N
Stolen Years	Roll a die. Odd: permanently lose 1 point from your Health rating.	Stolen Decades	Minor	N	N
Stolen Decades	At the beginning of each scenario, pay a toll of 3. If this is your only injury card at the end of a scenario, roll a die. Even: discard.	Stolen Years	Major	Y	N
Bitten	-1 on Physical tests. To discard, receive a Difficulty 4 First Aid success, then make a Physical test.	Atavistic Terror of an Animal Attack (a Shock card)	Major	N	N
Gargoyle Strike	-1 to Physical and Focus. At end of any interval, roll a die. Even: discard.	Crushing Gargoyle Strike	Minor	N	N
Crushing Gargoyle Strike	-2 to Physical and Focus. After two intervals, trade for "Gargoyle Strike."	Gargoyle Strike	Major	N	N
Dragon Claw	-1 to Physical tests. Discard on a Physical success with a margin greater than 2.	Dragon Bite	Minor	N	N
Dragon Bite	If you have no other Injury cards when you receive this, counts as 2 Injury cards. If still in hand at end of scenario, you die. Trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Dragon Claw	Major	N	N

You Should See the Other Fellow	Nonlethal. You can't make Interpersonal Pushes. Discard after 24 hours of world time, or when you gain another Injury, whichever comes first.	Concussed	Minor	N	N
Concussed	You can't make Pushes. Discard after 48 hours of world time.	You Should See the Other Fellow	Major	N	N
Steam-Drill Heart	Lose 1 Health on any Physical success and 2 Health on any Physical failure. Discard by going for 3 intervals without making a Physical test.	Apoplexy	Minor	N	N
Apoplexy	All Physical pools drop to 0. -2 to tests. Trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of an immediate Difficulty 6 First Aid success or after 24 hours (world time) convalescing in hospital.	Steam-Drill Heart	Major	N	N
Alien Dagger	-1 to Physical tests. Discard if the entity responsible for your taking this card is destroyed.	Alien Rapier	Minor	N	N
Alien Rapier	-2 to Physical tests. Discard if the entity responsible for your taking this card is destroyed.	Alien Dagger	Major	N	N
Muzzy Headed	Lose 1 point from all Presence pools. At end of next interval, regain those points and discard this card.	Heavily Sedated	Minor	N	N
Heavily Sedated	Roll a die. You remain unconscious for that number of hours (world time). If all characters get this card, they all wake up, confined and in a bad situation. When you wake up, trade for "Muzzy Headed."	Muzzy Headed	Major	N	N

Scratched Psyche	-1 to Focus tests. Discard as recipient of an Occultism spend, or by taking a risk / paying a cost to locate a healing incantation in a rare grimoire.	Poisoned Psyche	Minor	N	N
Poisoned Psyche	You can't discard Shock cards. Discard by discovering and successfully performing the ritual that permanently kills the entity that did this to you. At end of scenario, roll a die. 1-2: becomes a Continuity card.	Scratched Psyche	Major	N	N
Clawed	-2 to all tests. Trade for "On the Mend" on any Physical success.	Eviscerated	Minor	N	N
Eviscerated	Counts as 2 Injuries. You can't make Physical tests. After 6 hours of world time, trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of Difficulty 6 First Aid success. After 12 hours of world time Difficulty of that test drops to 4.	Clawed	Major	N	N
Head Butt	10 minutes (world time) after the fight, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Concussed."	Curb Stomped	Minor	N	N
Curb Stomped	-3 to all tests. After 24 hours of world time, trade for "Cracked Skull."	Head Butt	Major	N	N
Cane Blow	At each new interval, roll a die. Even: discard.	Sword Cane Stab	Minor	N	N
Sword Cane Stab	Lose 1 Health each time you make a Physical test. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success. If still in hand at end of scenario, roll a die. Odd: you die.	Cane Blow	Major	N	N

Sedated	Lose 2 points from all Presence pools. You wake up three hours later in a place and circumstance of the foe's choosing, at which point you discard this card.	Muzzy-Headed	Major	N	N
Strong Armed	Lose 1 Athletics and 1 Fighting. At next interval, regain those points and discard this card.	Restrained	Minor	N	N
Restrained	Your foes succeed in rendering you helpless. -1 to Physical tests. When you are no longer helpless and fail a Physical test, discard.	Strong Armed	Major	N	N
Picked Up and Thrown Hard	Lose 2 Health and 2 Composure. Discard after half an hour (world time.)	Monstrous Battering	Minor	N	N
Monstrous Battering	-2 to Physical tests. Counts as 2 Injury cards. Trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of Difficulty 6 First Aid success. If still in hand at end of scenario, trade for "Permanent Injury."	Picked Up and Thrown Hard	Major	N	N
Impressive Yet Superficial Cut	+1 to Presence tests. (Yes, +1.) Spend 2 Health to trade any other non-Continuity Injury you hold for "On the Mend." Spend 2 Health to discard.	Impressive Yet Superficial Cut	Minor	N	N
Arterial Spray	If your Health exceeded 4 when you took this injury,-1 to Physical tests. Otherwise, -2 to Physical tests. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Arterial Spray	Major	N	N
Ghost Fire	Make a Difficulty 4 Composure test when you get this card. On a failure, it is also a Shock card. -2 on Physical tests and -1 on all other tests until next interval. For following interval, -1 to Physical tests. At end of that interval,	Singed	Major	N	N

	discard.				
Blow to the Head	-2 to Sense Trouble.	Ringing Cranium	Minor	N	N
Ringing Cranium	-2 to Focus and Presence; -1 to Physical tests. After four hours of world time, trade for "Blow to the Head."	Blow to the Head	Major	N	N
Sawed Flesh	Roll a die; lose that number of Athletics points. Discard as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	The Shudders (Shock card)	Major	N	N
Fearsome Gut Punch	-2 to Physical and Focus until end of interval. -1 until subsequent interval. Then roll a die. Even: discard. If not then discarded, keep trying at each new interval.	Broken Jaw	Minor	N	N
Broken Jaw	-2 to Physical and Focus tests. You can't make Interpersonal Pushes. Trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Fearsome Gut Punch	Major	N	N
Roughed Up	Lose 1 Composure. Discard after any Physical success, or by spending 1 Athletics.	Sucker Punched	Minor	N	N
Sucker Punched	Lose 2 Health. Roll a die; discard after that number of successes.	Roughed Up	Major	N	N
Scratched	Discard as recipient of successful Difficulty 5 First Aid success. After one interval, test Difficulty drops to 3.	Throat Punctures	Minor	N	N

Throat Punctures	Health pool drops to 0. -2 to Focus tests. After two intervals, trade for "Scratched" by spending 2 Composure.	Scratched	Major	N	N
Venomous Fangs	Roll a die; lose that number of Health points. -2 on Physical tests. Discard as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success. Difficulty increases to 7 if your Health is 0.	Snakes, Our Oldest Fear (Shock card)	Major	N	N
Undead Thrashing	When the walking corpse(s) is / are killed, roll a die. Even: trade for the Injury card "Jarred." Odd: trade for the Shock card "The Tremors."	Monstrous Mauling	Minor	N	Y
Monstrous Mauling	-1 to tests. Trade for "Still Hurting" by paying a price or overcoming a relevant obstacle. If still in hand at end of scenario, gain the card "Permanent Injury."	Undead Thrashing	Major	N	Y
Yeth Bite	-1 to Focus tests. Discard when you take part in a fight ending in defeat for the sender of the Yeth-Hound.	Yeth Mauling	Minor	N	N
Yeth Mauling	-1 to tests. Trade for "Still Hurting" when you take part in a fight ending in defeat for the sender of the Yeth-Hound.	Yeth Bite	Major	N	N
Pinned by Debris	As immediate recipient of a Difficulty 5 Athletics test, trade for "Beside Yourself." Otherwise your Health pool drops to 0 and -1 to Physical tests. Discard at end of session.	Beside Yourself [Shock]	Major	N	N
Your Lucky Charm Caught a Bullet	At end of interval, discard and make Difficulty 4 Composure test. Failure: take the Shock card "Cortisol Spike." Success: refresh	Perforated	Minor	N	N

	Composure.				
Perforated	-1 to Physical tests. As recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success, roll a die. Odd: trade for "Patched Up." Even: discard.	Your Lucky Charm Caught a Bullet	Major	N	N
Caked in Ash	Make a Difficulty 4 Composure test, or also gain "Shell-Shocked." If your Health pool is greater than 3, discard at end of interval. Otherwise, discard as recipient of Difficulty 3 First Aid test.	Three Inches to The Left and You'd Be Dust	Minor	N	N
Three Inches to The Left and You'd Be Dust	-1 to tests. Also gain "Shell-Shocked." After one or more intervals, discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Caked in Ash	Major	N	N
Flying Leap	-1 on your next Physical test. Any time after taking that penalty, pay 1 Athletics to discard.	Flaming Debris	Minor	N	N
Flaming Debris	-1 to Composure, Fighting, and Battlefield tests. Any time after failing a test of any of those abilities, discard as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid test.	Flying Leap	Major	N	N
Muscle Cramps	-1 to tests. After any failure, you may roll a die, paying Health equal to the result to discard. If the result exceeds your available Health, trade for "Rapid Dehydration."	Rapid Dehydration	Minor	N	N
Rapid Dehydration	Your Health drops to 0. Trade for "Dazed" as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success. If still held at end of scenario, you die.	Muscle Cramps	Major	N	N

Hunger	-1 to Physical and Focus tests. Discard by eating a meal.	Respiratory Failure	Minor	N	N
Respiratory Failure	-2 to Physical tests. After eating a meal, make a Difficulty 6 Health test. On a success, trade for "Hunger." On a failure, trade for "Permanent Injury."	Hunger	Major	N	N
Unwell	Lose 1 Health. At the end of each interval, roll a die. Odd: lose 1 Health. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 3 First Aid success.	Dysentery	Minor	N	N
Dysentery	Lose 2 Health and 1 point from every other Physical pool. As recipient of a Difficulty 4 First Aid success, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Unwell."	Unwell	Major	N	N
Confusion	-1 to Focus tests. Trade for "Gangrene" if not removed from exposing conditions within 10 minutes (world time).	Gangrene	Minor	N	N
Gangrene	Counts as 2 Injury cards. Trade for "Permanent Injury" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Confusion	Major	N	N
Sore Throat	Non-lethal. Lose 1 Health. At end of each interval, roll a die. On a 1, trade for "Influenza." On a 5 or higher, discard.	Influenza	Minor	N	N
Influenza	-2 to Physical tests, -1 to other tests. At end of any interval, you may pay 1 Health and roll a die. On a 5 or 6, trade for "Sore Throat." If you ever get a result of 1 on this roll, and still have this card at end of scenario, you die.	Sore Throat	Major	N	N

Shredded Flesh	To spend points on any Athletics, Fighting, or Battlefield test, you must also spend 1 Health point. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	"Am I Still in One Piece?"	Minor	N	N
"Am I Still in One Piece?"	You can't make Physical tests. -1 to Focus tests. You can't walk. Trade for "Shrapnel" as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Shredded Flesh	Major	N	N
Bruised While Taking Cover	Discard by spending 1 point of Health, Fighting, or Battlefield, or as recipient of 1-point First Aid spend.	Sprayed	Minor	N	N
Sprayed	-2 to Physical tests. As recipient of Difficulty 7 First Aid success, roll a die. Even: trade for "Patched Up." Odd: trade for "Shot Up Good." If still held at end of scenario, you succumb to your injuries and die.	Bruised While Taking Cover	Major	N	N
Winded	Non-lethal. -1 to Physical tests. Discard after an hour's rest (world time).	Exhausted	Minor	N	N
Exhausted	-2 to Physical tests. Discard when the squad Hunkers Down, or trade for "Winded" as recipient of a Difficulty 4 Scrounging success. Scrounger must describe the scrounged item that revives you.	Winded	Major	N	N
Ringing Ears	-1 to Focus tests. After one interval, make a Difficulty 4 Health test to discard. If you fail, you can retry as needed at the end of any interval.	Hurled and Scorched	Minor	N	N

Hurled and Scorched	Roll a die. Even: lose 2 Health and 1 Athletics. Odd: lose 1 Health and 2 Athletics. Discard as recipient of a Difficulty 4 First Aid success, or after two intervals.	Ringing Ears	Major	N	N
Light-Headed	-1 to Physical and Focus tests. At end of interval, make a Difficulty 5 Health success to discard. You may attempt again at each subsequent interval, with Difficulty dropping by 1 each time.	Lung Damage	Minor	N	N
Lung Damage	-2 to Physical tests, -1 to Focus tests. At end of scenario, make a Difficulty 5 Health test. Success: discard. Failure: this becomes a Continuity card.	Light-Headed	Major	N	N
Shark Bite	Roll a die: add the result to the margin of the test to avoid this hazard. Lose that number of Health points. Trade for "Patched Up" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Those Telltale Fins [Shock]	Major	N	N
Bleary	-1 to tests. Discard by getting ten hours sleep (world time).	Dead on Your Feet	Minor	N	N
Dead on Your Feet	-2 to tests. At the end of each interval, make a Difficulty 5 Health check. Failure: you lose consciousness, regaining it only after three hours or if forcefully awakened. Trade for "Bleary" by getting six hours sleep (world time).	Bleary	Major	N	N
Through and Through	-1 to next Physical test, after which roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Impediment."	Bruised While Taking Cover	Major	N	N

Sub-Sonic Thrum	-1 to Composure and Battlefield tests. Discard on a salient Composure or Battlefield failure, or after one hour (world time).	Sub-Sonic Disruption	Minor	N	N
Sub-Sonic Disruption	Injury -2 to Composure and Battlefield tests. After one hour of world time, discard on a Difficulty 4 Health success. You may retry the test once per interval.	Sub-Sonic Thrum	Major	N	N
Rapid Heartbeat	-2 to Physical tests. On a Difficulty 4 First Aid success, roll a die. Even: trade for "Light-Headed." Odd: trade for "Recovering."	Light-Headed	Minor	N	N
Tetanic Fever	-1 to Physical tests. At end of any interval, you may pay 2 Health and roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Lockjaw."	Lockjaw	Major	N	N
Lockjaw	-2 to Physical tests. At end of any interval, you may pay 3 Health and roll a die. On a result higher than 1, discard. On a result of 1, you die.	Tetanic Fever	Minor	N	N
Agony of Thirst	-1 to Physical tests. Discard by slowly drinking a full serving of any non-dehydrating beverage.	Kidney Failure	Major	N	N
Kidney Failure	Counts as 2 Injury cards. After taking the opportunity to slowly drink any non-dehydrating beverage, roll a die. Odd: trade for "Permanent Injury." Even: trade for "Recovery."	Agony of Thirst	Minor	N	N

Necrotic Tissue	Lose 1 Health each time you walk for more than half a mile. Discard on a Difficulty 3 First Aid success and a 1-point Health spend. You may make the test yourself or receive it.	Gangrene	Minor	N	N
Scuffed Up	Your next Physical test takes a penalty of 1. Discard after that test.	Torn Ligament	Minor	N	N
Torn Ligament	-2 to Physical tests. Trade for "Impediment" when you fail a Physical test.	Scuffed Up	Major	N	N
Hit Bad	-2 to Physical tests. Spend 2 Health to trade for "Shell-Shocked" and "Patched Up." Spend 4 Health to trade for your choice of either.	Shell-Shocked [Shock]	Major	N	N
Tentacle Lash	Lose Health equal to your margin on the Battlefield test +1. Discard after two intervals on shore.	Squid Bite	Minor	N	N
Squid Bite	Roll a die: add the result to the margin of the test to avoid this bite. Lose that number of Battlefield points. Trade for "Cough, Choke, Splutter" on a Difficulty 4 First Aid success, received during the current interval. If received later, trade for "Recovering."	Tentacle Lash	Major	N	N
Splinter	Non-lethal. -1 to Physical tests. After a Physical failure, spend 1 Health to discard.	Struck by Wood Debris	Minor	N	N
Struck by Wood Debris	-2 to Physical tests. As recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success, roll a die. Even: trade for "Splinter." Odd: trade for "Patched Up."	Splinter	Major	N	N

Blurred Vision	-1 to tests. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success, conducted by a character with access to the antidote.	Circulatory Damage	Minor	N	N
Circulatory Damage	-1 to Physical tests. For the first three hours (world time) after getting this card, gain "Blurred Vision" on any Physical failure.	Blurred Vision	Major	Y	N
Shrapnel's Sharp, Water's Hard	-1 to Focus tests. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 Scrounging success. Scrounger must describe the found item that restores you.	Into the Drink	Minor	N	N
Into the Drink	At end of scene, if you have less than 3 Battlefield points, trade for "Cough, Choke, Sputter." Otherwise, discard.	Shrapnel's Sharp, Water's Hard	Major	N	N
	-2 to Physical tests, -1 to other tests. You can't make Pushes. Discard by spending 3 Health or as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Internal Bleeding	Minor	N	N
Internal Bleeding	-2 to Physical tests. After one hour of world time, you must become recipient of a Difficulty 6 First Aid success. If so, trade for "Convulsions." If not, you die.	Convulsions	Major	N	N
Rifle Hit	-2 to Physical tests. Trade for the card "Patched Up" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success. If still held at end of scenario, you succumb to your injuries and die.	Bruised While Taking Cover	Major	N	N
Roasted	-2 to tests. As recipient of Difficulty 6 First Aid success, trade for "Burned."	Burned	Major	N	N

Slammed Against the Hull	-1 to Physical tests. Discard after two salient Physical failures.	Into the Depths	Minor	N	N
Into the Depths	Battlefield drops to 0. Once on shore, as recipient of Difficulty 4 Scrounging test, roll a die. 1-2: trade for "Slammed Against the Hull." 3-4: trade for "Cough, Choke, Splutter." 5-6: refresh Battlefield and discard.	Slammed Against the Hull	Major	N	N
Soul Decay	Lose 1 Composure. At the end of each interval, roll a die. Odd: lose 1 Composure. Discard on a success that aids you against a supernatural entity.	Black Blood	Minor	N	N
Black Blood	Roll a die. Lose Health points equal to the result. If you are then at 0 Health, this becomes a Continuity card. On a success that aids you against a supernatural entity, roll a die. Even: discard at end of session.	Soul Decay	Major	N	N
Susceptible	-1 to tests when in the presence of weird enemiess. Discard as recipient of an Occultism Push or Difficulty 6 Morale success.	Black Tears	Minor	N	N
Black Tears	All PCs take -1 to tests. Effects of multiple "Black Tears" cards do not stack. Discard by contributing to the defeat of a weird enemy.	Susceptible	Major	N	N
Worse Than It Looks	On the next Physical test you fail by 1, discard this card, and succeed at the test with a margin of 0.	Thoroughly Perforated	Minor	N	N

Thoroughly Perforated	-2 to tests. As recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success, roll a die. Even: trade for "Worse Than It Looks." Odd: trade for "Shot Up Good."	Worse Than It Looks	Major	N	N
Stink Grenade	-3 to tests. Discard by leaving the area of effect. Regain this Injury if you re-enter.	Drenched in Stink	Minor	N	N
Drenched in Stink	-3 to tests within area of effect. -1 to tests otherwise. Discard after a three-hour bath in anti-stink solution (world time).	Stink Grenade	Major	N	N
Light Shrapnel	-1 to Physical tests. Discard at next interval.	Grenade	Minor	N	N
Grenade	The margin of your failed Physical tests increases by 1. When you fail a Physical test, all Focus tests take -1 penalty until end of interval. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 6 First Aid success.	Light Shrapnel	Major	N	N
Struck by Debris	1 to tests. Discard on a successful test.	Cannon Fodder	Minor	N	N
Cannon Fodder	Counts as 2 Injury cards. -4 to all tests. After 24 hours of world time, trade for "Patched Up."	Struck by Debris	Major	N	N
Impediment	-1 to Physical tests. After 24 hours of world time, discard as recipient of a 1-point First Aid spend. After 48 hours of world time, discard.	[Secondary]		N	N
Patched Up	-1 to tests. Trade for "Recovering" on a salient Physical success.	[Secondary]		N	N
Recovering	Trade for "Patched Up" when you take another Injury card. Discard at end of session.	[Secondary]		N	N

Shot Up Good	-1 to all tests. First Aid tests in which you are the recipient take a -1 penalty. Trade for "Patched Up" as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	[Secondary]		N	N
Still Crispy	First Aid tests in which you are the recipient take a -2 penalty. Trade for "Recovering" after 24 hours of world time.	[Secondary]		N	N
Sliced and Diced	-1 to Physical tests. After failing a salient Physical test, roll a die. If the foe who dealt you this Injury (or "Skinned Alive") is dead, discard on an even result. If not, discard on a 6.	Skinned Alive	Minor	N	N
Skinned Alive	You can't perform Physical tests. -2 to Focus and Presence tests. After one day of world time and as recipient of a Difficulty 6 First Aid success, trade for "Sliced and Diced." If still held at end of scenario, you die.	Sliced and Diced	Major	N	N
Knife Wound	Roll a die. Odd: -2 to your next test. Even: -1 to your next test. Discard after next test.	Bayonet Wound	Minor	N	N
Bayonet Wound	-2 to Physical tests. -2 to First Aid tests performed on you. Trade for "Patched Up" as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success. If still held at end of scenario, you succumb to your injuries and die.	Knife Wound	Major	N	N
Barely a Scratch	-2 on your next test. If you succeed at the test, you may discard a non-Continuity Shock card. After your next test, discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Bullet Wound	Minor	N	N

Bullet Wound	-2 to Physical tests. Counts as 2 Injury cards. Trade for "Patched Up" as recipient of Difficulty 6 First Aid success. If still held at end of scenario, you succumb to your injuries and die.	Barely a Scratch	Major	N	N
Gash	Before your next test, roll a die and discard this card. Odd: -2 on test.	Bullet Wound	Minor	N	N
Jabbed	Discard by spending 2 Health, or as recipient of 1-point First Aid spend from another player.	Impaled and Partially Exsanguinated	Minor	N	N
Impaled and Partially Exsanguinated	-3 on next Physical test, -2 on next test of any kind after that; then you may spend 2 Health to trade for "Recovering" or 4 Health to trade for "Dazed."	Jabbed	Major	N	N
Beak Jab	Roll a die. Even: discard immediately. Odd: lose Health equal to your die roll. Discard after an hour (world time).	Beak Stab	Minor	N	N
Beak Stab	Roll a die: lose that number of points from Health, Athletics, and Fighting in a distribution of your choice. Discard after an hour (world time).	Beak Jab	Major	N	N
Nearly Stomped	Lose 2 Athletics. Discard after 10 minutes (world time).	Steel Beam Stomp	Minor	N	N
Steel Beam Stomp	-2 to tests. Counts as 2 Injury cards. As recipient of Difficulty 6 First Aid success, roll a die. Even: trade for "Patched Up." Odd: trade for "Precarious Recovery."	Nearly Stomped	Major	N	N
When You Regain Consciousness...	You are knocked out and will wake up in the foe's clutches. Discard when you gain a core	N/A	Minor	N	N

	clue while in custody, or when you escape.				
Seeing Double	You are knocked out and wake up in the foe's clutches. -1 to Presence tests. Discard on your first Presence test following your escape or rescue.	Skull Fracture	Minor	N	N
Skull Fracture	You are knocked out and wake up in the foe's clutches. -2 to tests. After you escape or are rescued, trade for "Patched Up" as recipient of 2-point First Aid spend or "Dazed" on a 4-point spend.	Seeing Double	Major	N	N
Punched	Discard after your next test. If that test is a Focus test, it takes a -2 penalty. Otherwise, the test takes a -1 penalty.	Parasitic Link	Minor	N	N
Parasitic Link	-1 to any test you spend points on. Discard by killing the redmedic who healed you.	Punched	Major	N	N
Superficial Burns	-1 to Physical tests. Discard by spending 2 First Aid on yourself, or having 1 First Aid spent on you.	Deep Burns	Minor	N	N
Deep Burns	-2 to Physical tests. After any successful Physical test, spend 1 Health to trade for "Superficial Burns."	Superficial Burns	Major	N	N
Microscopic Wounds	-1 to First Aid tests performed on you by other characters. Discard when you are the would-be recipient of a failed First Aid test.	Cell Damage	Minor	N	N

Cell Damage	-1 to First Aid tests performed on you by other characters. When a first First Aid test works on you, roll a die. Even: trade for "Microscopic Wounds."	Microscopic Wounds	Major	N	N
Hoof Strike	Any time after the current interval, you may spend 1 Health or have 2 First Aid spent on you to discard.	Warhorse Bite	Minor	N	N
Warhorse Bite	-1 to Physical tests. At end of interval, roll a die. Even result: discard. Odd result: trade for "Patched Up."	Hoof Strike	Major	N	N
Blown Back	Lose 1 Composure and 1 Health. After any success with a margin of 0 or 1, you may pay 1 Composure to discard. After any success with a margin of 2 or more, discard.	"Am I Still In One Piece?"	Minor	N	N
A Mere Nip	Your next test takes a penalty: -2 for a Physical test, -1 for any other test. Then discard.	Torn Throat	Minor	N	N
Torn Throat	-2 to Physical tests. Trade for "Patched Up" and "Shaken" as recipient of a successful Difficulty 6 First Aid test.	A Mere Nip	Major	N	N
Knocked Out	You fall unconscious and can take no further actions for 30 minutes of world time. Then wake up and discard. If you wake up as a prisoner, and do not get an opportunity to gain key information as a result, you may then discard a non-Continuity Shock card.	Neural Hemorrhage	Minor	N	N

Neural Hemorrhage	You fall unconscious and can take no further actions. After 30 minutes of world time, you wake up, trading this card for your choice of the Injury card "On the Mend" or the Shock card "Rattled." If you wake up as a prisoner, and do not get an opportunity to gain key information as a result, you may then discard a non-Continuity Shock card.	Knocked Out	Major	N	N
Enhanced Punch	Roll a die. Even: lose 2 Health. Odd: -1 to Physical tests. Discard at end of interval.	Ultra-Beatdown	Minor	N	N
Ultra-Beatdown	-2 to tests. Trade for "Patched Up" as recipient of a 3-point First aid spend and a 2-point Morale spend (can be from different PCs). If still in hand at end of scenario, gain "Permanent Injury."	Enhanced Punch	Major	N	N
Spore Exposure	At end of next interval, make a Difficulty 4 Health test. On a failure, trade for "Precancerous." On a success, discard.	Precancerous	Minor	N	N
Precancerous	At the end of every scenario after this one, roll a die. Even: lose 1 point of your Health rating; you may not increase your rating through improvement while holding this card. Odd: after a final speech to comrades, your character dies. Discard by finding a rare treatment. (Your GM will provide a plot or subplot making this possible.)	Spore Exposure	Major	Y	N

Shattering Hand Strike	You can't take tests or make Pushes. Every hour (game time) you may make a Difficulty 4 Health test. Success: discard.	Razor Hand Strike	Minor	N	N
Razor Hand Strike	You can't take tests or make Pushes, or do anything but lie on the ground bleeding out. Every hour (game time) you may make a Difficulty 5 Health test or receive a Difficulty 5 First Aid test. Success: trade for "Shattering Hand Strike."	Shattering Hand Strike	Major	N	N
Zapped	-3 on Athletics and Fighting tests vs. beings like the one who zapped you. After an hour of world time, discard by spending 1 Health.	High Voltage	Minor	N	N
High Voltage	-2 to your next Physical test, -1 to the Physical test after that. Then trade for "On the Mend."	Zapped	Major	N	N
Wrenched Neck	Lose 1 Health each time you make a Physical test. If your Health is 0, lose 1 Composure. Discard on a Physical success with a margin greater than 1.	Weird Bite	Minor	N	N
Weird Bite	Receive a Difficulty 3 First Aid success within 15 minutes of world time or die. Each PC can try First Aid on you once during that time.	Wrenched Neck	Major	N	N
Scratched	-1 on tests. At end of interval, spend 2 Health to discard. If you don't have the Health to spend, trade for "Ticking Time Bomb."	Ticking Time Bomb	Minor	N	N

Ticking Time Bomb	After 24 hours of world time, you feel a compulsion to find a crowd and wander into it, at which point you explode and die, killing everyone within 50 m. Discard as recipient of a special blood transfusion from a Specialized Bomb Disposal Medical Unit. Your GM will make this possible in the story, though maybe at some cost or risk to the group.	Scratched	Major	N	N
Fin Scratch	At next interval, pay 1 Health and discard. If you have no Health to spend, discard after two intervals.	Jostled	Minor	N	N
Jostled	At next interval, pay 1 Health and 1 Athletics and discard. If you don't have the points to spend, discard as recipient of a Difficulty 3 First Aid success.	Fin Scratch	Major	N	N
Knife Slash	After a successful Physical test, pay 1 Health to discard.	Deep Stab	Minor	N	N
Deep Stab	Counts as 2 Injury cards. You can't make tests or spend Pushes. After an hour of world time, trade for "On the Mend," as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Knife Slash	Major	N	N
Knock to the Head	Discard as recipient of a 1-point First Aid spend.	Gunshot Wound	Minor	N	N
Gunshot Wound	-2 to Physical tests. Trade for the card "On the Mend" as recipient of a Difficulty 6 First Aid success. If still in hand at end of scenario, you succumb to your injuries and die.	Knock to the Head	Major	N	N

Throat Squeeze	-1 to Physical and Composure tests. Discard as recipient of a First Aid test. Difficulty starts at 6 and drops by 1 at the start of each new interval.	Breastbone-Piercing Punch	Minor	N	N
Breastbone-Piercing Punch	-2 to Physical and Composure tests, -1 to all other tests. As recipient of a Difficulty 6 First Aid success, trade for "On the Mend."	Throat Squeeze	Major	N	N
Mutant Animal Bite	-2 to Composure tests. Discard as recipient of a Difficulty 4 Morale success.	Mutant Animal Mauling	Minor	N	N
Mutant Animal Mauling	-2 to Composure tests. After a Composure failure, discard as recipient of a Difficulty 5 Morale success.	Mutant Animal Bite	Major	N	N
Superhuman Blow	Roll a die. Even: Health drops to 0. Odd: Athletics drops to 0. Discard as recipient of a Difficulty 4 First Aid test. If the margin is greater than 2, refresh the affected pool.	Superhuman Smash	Minor	N	N
Superhuman Smash	Health, Athletics, and Fighting drop to 0. As recipient of a Difficulty 4 First Aid success, trade for "On the Mend."	Superhuman Blow	Major	N	N
Neuropathic Swipe	Trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Neuropathic Disequilibrium	Minor	N	Y
Neuropathic Disequilibrium	If this card and the next Shock card you receive are still in hand at the end of the session, the Shock card becomes a Continuity card. When you discard a Shock card, make a Difficulty 4 Composure test. On a success, discard this	Neuropathic Swipe	Major	N	N

	card too.				
Surprise Throat Slash	You can't take tests or make Pushes, or do anything but lie on the ground bleeding out. Any PC seeing you take your injury must succeed at Composure vs. Difficulty 5, or take the Shock card "Rattled." As recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "Laceration."	Surprise Kidney Stab	Minor	N	N
Laceration	When called on to make a Physical test, you may choose to take a -2 penalty on the test and then discard this card.		Major	N	N
Flesh Wound	-1 to non-Focus tests. Trade for "Laceration" after on a non-Focus success.	Laceration	Minor	N	N
Dinosaur Wound	-2 to Physical tests. After an hour or more of world time, as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid test, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "On the Mend."	Dinosaur Bite	Major	N	N
Dinosaur Bite	Counts as 2 injuries. You can't make tests. After a day or more of world time, as recipient of a Difficulty 6 First Aid success, roll a die. Even: trade for "On the Mend." Odd: trade for "Dinosaur Wound."	Dinosaur Wound	Minor	N	N
Puncturing Beak	If you have 3 Fighting to lose, lose 3 Fighting. Otherwise, -1 to tests. Receive a Difficulty 4 First Aid success to discard after any failure.	Rending Beak	Minor	N	N

Rending Beak	You can't make tests or spend Pushes. As recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "Puncturing Beak."	Puncturing Beak	Major	N	N
Psychic Dislocation	At any time, trade for the Shock card "Hackles Raised."	A Mere Nip	Minor	N	N
Tentacle Stun	Making a Presence test also requires a spend of 1 Health, which does not add to your roll. Discard on a Difficulty 5 Health success. You may attempt this test once per interval.	Xenobeast Bite	Major	N	N
Xenobeast Bite	-1 to Physical tests, -2 to Composure tests. Trade for "Tentacle Stun" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Tentacle Stun	Minor	N	N
Raking Claws	-1 to Physical tests; lose 2 Health. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Savage Mauling	Major	N	N
Savage Mauling	-2 to Physical tests; lose 2 Health. Trade for "Precarious Recovery" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Raking Claws	Minor	N	N
Scalpel to the Face	-1 to Presence tests. Receive a Difficulty 4 First Aid success during the session in which you receive this card to remove the Continuity tag. If it has the Continuity tag, discard by overcoming an obstacle to gain access to top-notch cosmetic surgery.	Power Tool to the Head	Major	Y	N
Power Tool to the Head	-1 to tests; lose 2 Health. All other PCs who see you take this Injury must make Difficulty 5 Composure tests or gain the Shock card "Witness to Carnage." Trade for "Precarious Recovery" as recipient of Difficulty 6 First	Scalpel to the Face	Minor	N	N

	Aid success.				
Nicked	-1 on your next Physical or Focus test, then discard.	Stabbed	Minor	N	N
Stabbed	-1 to tests (except Preparedness). After one interval, trade for "Nicked" as recipient of a Difficulty 4 First Aid test.	Nicked	Major	N	N
Superficial Laceration	-1 to Physical tests. Discard on a Physical success.	Run Through	Minor	N	N
Run Through	You can't take tests or make Pushes, or do anything but lie on the ground bleeding out. As recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "Stabbed."	Superficial Laceration	Major	N	N
Powder Burn	-2 to Focus tests. Discard after Focus test that would have succeeded if not for this penalty.	GSW	Minor	N	N
GSW	-1 on tests. Lose 1 Health after each Physical test. As recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "Powder Burn."	Powder Burn	Major	N	N
Psi Pulse	-1 to Focus tests. Discard when the person who dealt you this card is cured of the syndrome granting psychic abilities.	Psi Blast	Minor	N	N
Psi Blast	-1 to Focus. Roll a die: subtract a number of points equal to the result from your Physical pools. You choose distribution. Discard when the person who dealt you this card is cured of the syndrome granting psychic	Psi Pulse	Major	N	N

	abilities.				
Tag	-1 Fighting vs. this creature's masters and allies. Discard on a Fighting success vs. this creature's masters or allies.	You're It	Minor	N	N
You're It	-2 Fighting vs. this creature's masters and allies. -4 Sneaking in locations controlled by this creature's masters and allies. Discard on a Fighting success vs. this creature's masters or allies.	Tag	Major	N	N
Heart Murmur	Treat any 4 you roll as a 1. If this is the only Injury card you hold at the end of a scenario, discard.	Cardiac Arrest	Minor	N	N
Cardiac Arrest	All of your Physical pools drop to 0. -4 to Physical tests; -2 to all other tests. Trade for "Heart Murmur" as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid test (must take place during the interval in which you receive this Injury) or after 24 hours world time convalescing in hospital.	Heart Murmur	Major	N	N
Eel-Like Teeth	Discard by spending 1 Health as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success, or after 24 hours world time.	Pseudo-Canine Bite	Minor	N	N
Pseudo-Canine Bite	-1 to Physical tests. Discard by receiving a Difficulty 4 First Aid success and then failing any subsequent test. First Aid Difficulty increases by 1 every time you enter a new interval.	Eel-Like Teeth	Major	N	N

Savaged	-2 to Physical tests; -1 to Focus tests. Trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of Difficulty 6 First Aid success.	Pseudo-Canine Bite	Minor	N	N
Mighty Punch	-1 to Physical tests. Make a Difficulty 4 Health test. Failure: remain unconscious until end of next interval. Discard after two intervals.	Toxic Spit	Minor	N	N
Toxic Spit	Lose 1 Composure on any failed Focus test. Make a Difficulty 6 Health test. Failure: remain unconscious until end of next interval. After two intervals, make a Difficulty 4 Health test. Success: discard.	Mighty Punch	Major	N	N
Gutted	Lose 4 Health. You can't take tests or make Pushes, or do anything but lie on the ground bleeding out. Trade for "Stab Wound" as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid test. If still in hand at end of scenario, you succumb to your injuries and die.	Stab Wound	Major	N	N
Monster Bite	-3 to your next test. -1 to subsequent Physical and Focus tests. Any time after your next test, trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Picked Up and Thrown Hard	Major	N	N
Light Scratch	Lose 1 Health. At end of next interval, discard and roll a die. Odd: lose 1 Health.	Deep Gouge	Minor	N	N

Deep Gouge	Roll a die. Odd: Health drops to 0. Even: lose half of your Health pool (rounding up). As recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success, trade for "On the Mend."	Light Scratch	Major	N	N
Poisoned Scrape	When you make a Presence or Focus test and your unmodified die result comes up as an odd number, lose 1 Athletics and 1 Fighting. When this happens, roll another die. Even: discard.	Poisoned Stab	Minor	N	N
Poisoned Stab	When you make a Presence or Focus test, lose 1 Athletics and 1 Fighting. As recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid test, trade for "Poisoned Scrape."	Poisoned Scrape	Major	N	N
Inky Veins	All Tolls increase by 1. After paying a Toll, roll a die. Even: discard.	Organ Rot	Minor	N	N
Organ Rot	Roll a second die when making any test, subtracting it from your result. After failing a test, roll a die. Even: trade for "Inky Veins." If still in hand at end of scenario, make a Difficulty 5 Health test. On a failure, you die.	Inky Veins	Major	N	N
Telekinetic Grab & Throw	-1 to Physical tests. Discard on a Physical success, or as recipient of 1-point First Aid spend.	Telekinetic Beatdown	Minor	N	N
Telekinetic Beatdown	-2 to Physical and Focus tests. After failing one Physical and one Focus test, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "On the Mend."	Telekinetic Grab & Throw	Major	N	N

Saw Cut	Lose 1 Health per interval for the next three intervals, then discard. Discard at any time as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Sawed Throat	Minor	N	N
Sawed Throat	You can't take tests or make Pushes, or do anything but lie on the ground bleeding out. Trade for "Saw Cut" as recipient of a Difficulty 6 First Aid test.	Saw Cut	Major	N	N
Static Energy Punch	-1 to Fighting tests. Discard on a salient Fighting success.	Static Energy Bolt	Minor	N	N
Static Energy Bolt	-1 to Physical tests. After two intervals, discard and roll a die. Odd: gain "Still Hurting."	Static Energy Punch	Major	N	N
Electric Bolt	Lose 1 Health. -1 to Physical tests. Roll a die and spend 1 Health at end of any interval. Even: discard.	Lightning Bolt	Minor	N	N
Lightning Bolt	Lose 2 Health. -1 to Physical tests. Roll a die and spend 2 Health at end of any interval. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Electric Bolt."	Electric Bolt	Major	N	N
Alien Pallor	When you receive this, you may specify that it is a Shock instead of an Injury. You can't attack a supernatural entity before it attacks you. Discard by destroying the being whose presence gave you this card.	Alien Transformation	Minor	N	N
Alien Transformation	To fight a supernatural entity: • You must first succeed at a Difficulty 5 Composure test or make an Intimidation spend • It cannot be talking to you Discard by destroying the being whose presence gave you this card.	Alien Pallor	Major	N	N

Bruised	The next time you try to make an Interpersonal Push, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: you can't make the Push.	Battered	Minor	N	N
Battered	-3 on your next Physical test. -1 on the Physical test after that, then discard.	Bruised	Major	N	N
Seeing Stars	-2 on Sense Trouble tests until end of session.	Dented Skull	Minor	N	N
Dented Skull	You always fail Physical tests. -2 to all other tests. After four hours of world time, trade for "Seeing Stars."	Seeing Stars	Major	N	N
Jenkin Nip	If your Health exceeds 0 when you receive this card, treat as Non-Lethal. Discard after an entire scene passes without encountering a Brown Jenkin.	Jenkin Bite	Minor	N	N
Jenkin Bite	If your Health exceeds 2 when you receive this card, treat as Non-Lethal. Discard when you see a Brown Jenkin die, or by spending 2 Health.	Jenkin Nip	Major	N	N
Snaring Tendril	Roll a die. Odd: lose 3 Health. Even: lose 1 Health. -1 to Physical until end of scenario, even after you discard this card. Discard after one interval.	Blood Drain	Minor	N	N
Blood Drain	Health drops to 0. Counts as 2 Injury cards for two intervals after you receive it. Trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Snaring Tendril	Major	N	N
Crushing Roll	-1 to Physical. As recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "On the	Projectile Sputum	Minor	N	N

	Mend."				
Projectile Sputum	-2 to Physical. Counts as 2 Injury cards. As recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "Precarious Recovery."	Crushing Roll	Major	N	N
Wind Buffet	Nonlethal if you hold 0 Shock cards. Discard as recipient of a Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Wind Blast	Minor	N	N
Wind Blast	Lose 4 points from your Physical pools, distributed as you prefer. Discard as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Wind Buffet	Major	N	N
Ghast Bite	-1 to Focus. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Scratched	Major	N	N
Ghoul Claw	-1 to Physical. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success. If a First Aid attempt on you fails, trade for "Ghoul Frenzy."	Ghoul Frenzy	Minor	N	N
Ghoul Frenzy	-1 to Physical. Counts as 2 Injury cards. Trade for "Ghoul Claw" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Ghoul Claw	Major	N	N
Lightning Gun	-3 on Athletics and Fighting tests vs. beings like the one who zapped you. Discard on an Athletics or Fighting failure.	Pincer Strike	Minor	N	N
Pincer Strike	-1 to Physical. Counts as 2 Injury cards. After watching the death of the creature that did this to you, trade for "Still Hurting."	Lightning Gun	Major	N	N

Claw Strike	-1 to Physical. Discard on a Physical failure, or as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Claw Frenzy	Minor	N	N
Claw Frenzy	-2 to Physical. -1 to Focus. After a failure, trade for "Claw Strike" as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Claw Strike	Both	N	N
Hunting Horror Bite	-2 to Physical this and next interval; -1 to Physical for the interval after that. After yet another interval, discard.	Tail Loop	Minor	N	N
Tail Loop	If the hunting horror won the fight, you lose consciousness, regaining it in the creature's distant lair an hour later (world time.) Only one PC per creature can take the "Tail Loop" Injury; if needed, GM decides who gets nabbed. Discard when you escape the lair.	Hunting Horror Bite	Major	N	N
Corpse Bite	-1 on tests. Discard on any success.		Minor	N	N
Mace Strike	-1 to Physical. If your Health is less than 3, counts as 2 Injury cards.	Bitten	Major	N	N
Leg Strike	At end of any Interval, spend 1 Health and roll a die. Even: discard. Any time after the current interval, you may spend 1 Health or have 2 First Aid spent on you to discard.	Mandible Strike	Minor	N	N
Mandible Strike	-1 to Physical. At end of interval, roll a die. Even result: discard. Odd result: trade for "Still Hurting."	Leg Strike	Major	N	N

Nipper Strike	-1 to Focus. Discard when you destroy a key piece of mi-go technology.	Mist Gun	Minor	N	N
Mist Gun	-2 to Focus. Discard when you destroy a mi-go.	Nipper Strike	Major	N	N
Pseudopod Stun	Making a Presence test also requires a spend of 1 Health, which does not add to your roll. Discard on a Difficulty 5 Health success. You may attempt this test once per interval.	Moon-beast Bite	Minor	N	N
Moon-beast Bite	-1 to Physical; -2 to Composure. Trade for "Pseudopod Stun" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Pseudopod Stun	Major	N	N
Infernal Piping	-1 to Presence. Discard after six hours (world time) not hearing or seeing any creatures like the one that did this to you.	Tentacle Strike	Minor	N	N
Tentacle Strike	-1 to tests. Counts as 2 Injury cards. As recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "Still Hurting."	Infernal Piping	Major	N	N
Shantak Smash	Counts as 2 Injury cards. You can't make tests. After a day or more of world time, as recipient of Difficulty 6 First Aid test, roll a die. Even: trade for "On the Mend." Odd: trade for "Precarious Recovery."	Beak Stab	Major	N	N
Disemboweled	You can't make tests or do anything but lie prone, staring at your exposed innards. Counts as 2 Injury cards. As recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "Still Hurting" and the Shock card	Tentacle Strike	Major	N	N

	"Witness to Carnage."				
Tentacle Sting	Nonlethal. You can't make Pushes. Discard at end of next interval.	Black and Blue	Minor	N	N
Your GM Warned You Not to Do This	You die at end of session.	You Fought Cosmic Indifference, and Cosmic Indifference Won	Minor	N	N
You Fought Cosmic Indifference, and Cosmic Indifference Won	You're dead.	Your GM Warned You Not to Do This	Major	N	N
Punch	Discard after half an hour (world time.)	Unclean Bite	Minor	N	N
Unclean Bite	After half an hour (world time), roll a die. 2-6: discard. 1: trade for "Tetanic Fever."	Punch	Major	N	N
Face Suck	After half an hour (world time), discard and roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for Shock card "Unnerved."	Unclean Bite	Minor	N	N
Heat Drain	Pay a Toll of 3. If you can't pay the Toll, trade for "Massive Injuries." Discard by spending three hours (world time) in front of a powerful heat source, such as a fireplace or furnace.	Raking Claws	Major	N	N
Energy Drain	Pay 5 points from any combination of Physical abilities. If you can't pay, trade for "Massive Injuries." After six hours (world time),	Clawed	Both	N	N

	trade for "On the Mend" as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.				
PSI Drain	Pay 5 points from any combination of Focus abilities. If you can't pay, trade for "Massive Injuries." After two intervals, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Energy Drain."	Raking Claws	Major	N	N
Radiation Poisoning	Lose 1 Health at the beginning of each interval. If your Health is 0, counts as 2 Injuries. If your Health is 0 at end of scenario, you die. Trade for "On the Mend" a day (world time) after you undergo treatment for radiation poisoning.	Superhuman Smash	Minor	N	N
Anaesthetic Bite	-1 to Focus tests. Discard when you are sure the creature that dealt you this Injury is dead.	Eel-Like Teeth	Major	N	N
Essence Drain	Lose 1 Push. Roll a die when you next travel to a new location. 1-3: trade for "Psi Drain." 4-6: trade for "Soul Drain." +1 to roll if you had no Pushes to lose.	Throat Punctures	Major	N	N
Draining Touch	Lose 3 Health. Discard on a Physical success.	Draining Strike	Minor	N	N
Draining Strike	Health drops to 0. If Health is already 0, trade for "Blood Drain." On a Physical success, roll a die. Even: discard this card and refresh Health.	Draining Touch	Major	N	N

Sawing Bite	Lose 1 Health per interval until you receive a Difficulty 4 First Aid success. If margin on that success exceeds 1, discard.	Sucking Tongue	Minor	N	N
Sucking Tongue	Pay 5 points from any combination of Physical abilities. At end of any interval, you may make a Difficulty 4 Health test. Success: discard.	Sawing Bite	Major	N	N
Soul Drain	Pay 5 points from any combination of Presence abilities. If you can't pay, trade for "Massive Injuries." After two intervals, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Psi Drain."	Torn Throat	Major	N	N
Massive Bite	-2 to tests. Counts as 2 injuries. After twelve hours or more (world time), as recipient of a Difficulty 6 First Aid success, roll a die. Even: immediately trade for "On the Mend." Odd: trade for "On the Mend" after twelve more hours (world time.)	Claw Frenzy	Major	N	N
Blight Swipe	Roll a die; lose that number of Health points. Discard on a Health failure.	Blight Strike	Minor	N	N
Blight Strike	At the end of each interval, you lose 2 Health, and all other PCs within 100m of you lose 1 Health. On a Health failure, roll a die. Even: discard.	Blight Swipe	Major	N	N
Barbed Wire Punch	You can't make Interpersonal Pushes until you receive a Difficulty 3 First Aid success. After making an Interpersonal Push, discard. Discard at end of session.	Walked Into a Buzz-saw	Minor	N	N

Walked Into a Buzz-saw	For the next three hours (world time) you can't make tests, spend Pushes, or discard Injury or Shock cards. After that, -2 to tests, and you may trade for "Patched Up" as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Barbed Wire Punch	Major	N	N
Spectral Bite	Lose 3 Composure immediately, and 1 per subsequent hour (world time.) At end of any interval, make a Difficulty 5 Health test. Success: discard; if margin is greater than 2, refresh Composure.	Unclean Bite	Major	N	N
Clown Bite	If any player says something that gets a laugh from any other player, "Clown Bite" also counts as a Shock card until end of interval. Discard when you go for an entire interval without any player laughing.	Claw Strike	Major	N	N
Nightmare Touch	-2 to Composure tests. Discard when you take a Shock card.	Mind Strike	Minor	N	N
Mind Strike	-2 to Presence tests. When you take a Shock card, roll a die. Even: discard.	Nightmare Touch	Major	N	N
Tail Slam	-1 to Physical tests. On a Physical failure, roll a die. 1: trade for "Concussed." 5-6: discard.	Flesh-Rending Bite	Minor	N	N
Flesh-Rending Bite	Pay 5 points from any combination of Physical abilities. As recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid test, roll a die. 1-2: trade for "Precarious Recovery." 3-6: discard.	Tail Slam	Major	N	N

	-1 to Physical and Focus tests. After two hours (table time), penalty to Physical tests increases to -2. Discard by undergoing surgery from skilled doctors at a top hospital, either spending a Push or having a Push spent on you. If still in hand at end of scenario, you die, your body becoming a mass of hatching parasites.	Ructious Innards	Major	N	N
Egg-Laden					
Poisoned Blade	When you make a Presence or Focus test, lose 1 Fighting and 1 Health. As recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid test, trade for "Nicked."	Nicked	Major	N	N

Shock Cards

Title	Text	Mate	Degree	C?	Combo
"But This is Wondrous Strange!"	-2 to Focus. (-1 if you have the Occultism ability.) Discard on an Occultism Push from any character, or on a Focus success.	Soul Strike	Minor	N	N
Soul Strike	Discard when the ghost is destroyed or banished from the world of the living. If still in hand at the end of the scenario, your hair turns as white as bone.	"But This is Wondrous Strange!"	Major	N	Y
Overstepped Bounds	-1 on your next Composure test, then discard.	Wracked by Remorse	Minor	N	N
Wracked by Remorse	Your next Composure test automatically fails, with a margin of 2. Then discard.	Overstepped Bounds	Major	N	N
Oh Dear	Discard by finding a means of escape.	Bit of a Sticky Wicket	Minor	N	N

Bit of a Sticky Wicket	-1 to Focus. When you escape your current predicament, discard and roll a die. Odd: gain Shock card "Unnerved."	Oh Dear	Major	N	N
Unnerved	Discard by using an investigative ability to gain information.	Agitated	Minor	N	N
Agitated	-1 to Presence. When you use an investigative ability to gain information, roll a die. Even: discard.	Unnerved	Major	N	N
Uncertainty	Discard when something you thought might be unreal turns out to be real.	Questioning Your Senses	Minor	N	N
Questioning Your Senses	-1 to Presence. Discard when something you thought might be unreal turns out to be real.	Uncertainty	Major	N	N
Enthralled	You may not act against the interests of the entity responsible for your taking this card, as you reasonably understand them. When the entity harms another PC, roll a die. Even: discard. Discard if the entity harms you or is destroyed (not by you, of course.)	Alien Passion	Minor	N	N
Alien Passion	You love the entity responsible for your taking this card and may not act against its interests, as you reasonably understand them. Discard when the entity is destroyed (not by you, of course.)	Enthralled	Major	N	N

Influence	The GM may require you to make a Difficulty 5 Composure test. On a failure, you take a subtly destructive, barely detectable action, specified by the GM, that would please the entity that gave you this card. After completing the action, roll a die, discarding this card on an even result. GM must wait two intervals before triggering the effect again. Discard when the entity is destroyed.	Violent Impulse	Minor	N	N
Violent Impulse	After two or more intervals, the GM specifies that you strike violently against another PC. Test Fighting, spending 2 points (if available.) The PC tests Athletics, with your result as the Difficulty, taking the Injury card "Abrasion", "Laceration", "Scratched", or "Roughed Up" (GM chooses.) After completing the action, roll a die, discarding this card on an even result. GM must wait two intervals before triggering the effect again. Discard when entity is destroyed.	Influence	Major	N	N
Alarming Vision	-1 Fighting vs your main foe and its allies. +1 Fighting vs your main foe's rivals. When you gain important information about your main foe, roll a die. Meet or beat the number of Shock and Injury cards you hold to discard.	Ghastly Vision	Minor	N	N

Ghastly Vision	All PCs take -1 Fighting vs your main foe and its allies. All gain +1 Fighting vs your main foe's rivals. When you aid your main foe, roll a die. Even: discard.	Alarming Vision	Major	N	N
Embarrassed	Nonlethal. -1 to Focus. Discard on a Composure failure.	Humiliated	Minor	N	N
Humiliated	Nonlethal. -1 to Presence. Discard by winning over a difficult or intimidating witness.	Embarrassed	Major	N	N
Unease	Your next Presence or Focus test takes a -1 penalty. Then discard.	Dread	Minor	N	N
Dread	-1 to Presence and Focus tests. After any such test, roll a die. Even: trade for "Unease."	Unease	Major	N	N
Pity	Lose 2 Health and 2 Composure when you make a Push. You received this card through concern for another. Discard by at least partially alleviating that character's distress.	Sick with Worry	Minor	N	N
Sick with Worry	Lose all of your Health or Composure pool, whichever is higher, when you make a Push. If the pools are equal, you choose. You received this card through concern for another. Discard by conclusively solving that character's main problem.	Pity	Major	N	N
Jinx	Player to your left takes -1 to tests. Discard when that player fails a test.	Ill-Omened	Minor	N	N

Ill-Omened	When your group starts its next fight, its margin before anyone tests Fighting is -2, not the usual 0. Discard when your group loses a fight.	Jinx	Major	N	N
Bad Place	Counts as a Shock card only when you are in the place where you got it.	Awful Place	Minor	N	N
Awful Place	-1 to Presence. Discard if, while in the awful place, you find a core clue or make a Push.	Bad Place	Major	N	N
Rueful	If the murderer is still at large or unidentified at the end of a session, lose 2 Composure. Trade for "Self-Reproachful" if you have 0 Composure in your pool at end of scenario.	Self-Reproachful	Minor	N	N
Self-Reproachful	You can't refresh Composure in mid-scenario. If the murderer is found to be human, discard this card by bringing the murderer to justice. If the murderer is inhuman, discard by killing the murderer.	Rueful	Major	Y	N
Skewed Reality	-1 to Focus. When you get information from a GMC other PCs are reluctant to speak with, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: give this Shock card to another player.	Reality Horror	Minor	N	N
Reality Horror	-1 to Focus. At the end of a scene in which you take the lead in gaining a core clue from a GMC, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: give this Shock card to another player.	Skewed Reality	Major	N	N

Rattled	Your next test takes a -1 penalty. Then discard.	A Diverting Indiscretion Will Put This In Perspective	Minor	N	N
A Diverting Indiscretion Will Put This In Perspective	-1 to Presence. Discard by taking a risk to indulge a vice.	Rattled	Major	N	N
Racing Pulse	Lose 1 Health each time you attempt a Physical test. Discard after your next Physical success.	Rampant Distrust	Minor	N	N
Rampant Distrust	-1 to Composure against mental hazards. Discard by making a false alarm that creates a risk for any player character.	Racing Pulse	Major	N	N
More Things In Heaven and Earth	When testing Composure due to a supernatural event, you get a +2 bonus when your die roll is even, and a -2 penalty when odd. Discard when you succeed at such a test.	Anyone Could Be Secretly Dead	Minor	N	N
Anyone Could Be Secretly Dead	You can't make Interpersonal Pushes. Discard when your check to see if someone really has a material form causes you to pay a price.	More Things In Heaven and Earth	Major	N	N
Cause for Concern	Discard when another PC makes a successful test.	Time to Panic	Minor	N	N
Time to Panic	-1 to Focus. Make a tick mark whenever another PC succeeds at a test. Start over on any failure. Discard when you have three tick marks.	Cause for Concern	Major	N	N

The Shudders	Roll a die; lose that number of Composure points, noting the number lost. If your Composure is already 0, trade for "An Image Seared in the Mind." Discard after a night's sleep. When you discard, roll a die. Even: regain those lost Composure points.	Shaken	Minor	N	N
Shaken	-1 to Composure.	The Shudders	Major	N	N
Hardened	When you make a ruthless choice that saves a life, spend 3 Composure to discard.	Dead-Eyed Stare	Minor	y	N
Dead-Eyed Stare	Once per session, you may make a free Intimidation Push. All PCs lose 2 Composure. When you make a ruthless choice that saves a life, roll a die. Even: trade for "Hardened."	Hardened	Major	y	N
Superstition	-1 to Focus. Discard by taking a risk to avoid bad luck.	Magical Thinking	Minor	N	N
Magical Thinking	Roll a die when receiving this card. Odd: you can only make even-numbered point spends. Even: you can only make odd-numbered spends. Discard when an apparently supernatural event has a logical explanation.	Superstition	Major	N	N
Appalled	-1 to Composure. Discard by bringing justice to the torturer.	A Dish Served Cold	Minor	N	N
A Dish Served Cold	-1 to Composure. Discard, and refresh your Composure pool, by playing a role in the torturer's demise.	Appalled	Major	N	N

The Price of Failure	You can't spend Improvement points. Discard by pursuing a lead the team first learned of more than an hour ago (table time.)	A Morbid Scene	Minor	Y	N
A Morbid Scene	You can't spend Improvement points. Lose 1 Health after any failed test. Discard by pursuing a lead the team first learned of more than two hours ago (table time.)	The Price of Failure	Major	Y	N
Butterflies	Discard at end of scene.	Collywobbles	Minor	N	N
Collywobbles	-1 to Focus. Discard by nullifying the consequences of a previous setback.	Butterflies	Major	N	N
Humans are the True Monsters	-1 to Presence. Discard when you witness an act of redemptive altruism.	Shattered Illusions	Minor	N	N
Shattered Illusions	Take a Presence penalty equal to the number of Shock cards held by the PC (other than you) holding the highest number of Shock cards. Discard when you witness an act of redemptive altruism.	Humans are the True Monsters	Major	Y	N
A Touch of the Shakes	-1 to Focus. Discard by engaging in a restful activity.	An Image Seared in the Mind	Minor	N	N
An Image Seared in the Mind	-1 to Focus. At the end of any interval, make a Difficulty 3 Composure test. Success: discard. Becomes a Continuity card if in hand at end of scenario.	A Touch of the Shakes	Major	N	N

The Curse is Thinking About Being Cursed	+1 to Sense Trouble. Lose 1 Health on any character's Sense Trouble success. Discard when the person who cursed you releases you from the curse or dies.	Cursed	Minor	Y	N
Cursed	Discard when the person who cursed you releases you from the curse or dies. If still in hand at end of scenario, you inexplicably die.	The Curse is Thinking About Being Cursed	Major	N	N
A Gnawing at the Back of the Mind	-1 to Composure. When you take another Shock card, spend 1 Composure to discard this one.	The Will Erodes	Minor	N	N
The Will Erodes	+1 to Tolls of supernatural creatures. When you take another Shock card, spend 1 Composure to discard this one.	A Gnawing at the Back of the Mind	Major	N	N
Tremors	Your next Interpersonal Push costs 2 Pushes. Discard when you make an Interpersonal Push.	Hackles Raised	Minor	N	N
Hackles Raised	Pay 1 Health or Composure each time a player character (including you) attempts a Sense Trouble test. Trade for "The Tremors" when your Health and Composure pools both equal 0.	Tremors	Major	N	N
Music of the Night	When you are about to fight the scenario's main foe, roll a die. On an odd result, -1 to Fighting until end of scenario. Discard on a Fighting success against the scenario's main foe.	Point of No Return	Minor	N	N

Point of No Return	If you meet the scenario's main foe, -1 to Fighting until end of scenario. Discard on a Fighting success against the scenario's main foe.	Music of the Night	Major	N	N
Witness to Carnage	-1 to all tests. Discard as recipient of a Push. Explain why that Push would help with this.	Existence is a Meat-Grinder	Minor	N	N
Existence is a Meat-Grinder	Tests take a penalty equal to the number of Shock cards you have in hand. Discard after participating in an event that restores your faith in humanity.	Witness to Carnage	Major	Y	N
Haunted	Tests take a penalty equal to the number of Shock cards you have in hand. Discard on a successful test that aids the group against supernatural horror.	Rationality's Cruel Veil	Minor	N	N
Rationality's Cruel Veil	All tests take a penalty equal to the number of Shock cards you have in hand, plus 1.	Haunted	Major	N	N
Stunned and Saddened	Lose 1 Composure at the end of each scene in which the deceased is mentioned. At end of session, if you have more Composure in your pool than any other player character, discard this card.	Waves of Grief	Minor	N	N
Waves of Grief	Whenever you regain lost Composure, subtract 1 from the number of points you would otherwise regain. Discard by decisively defeating or countering the being or force that caused the death you mourn.	Stunned and Saddened	Major	Y	N

A Beastly Sight	Tests take a penalty equal to the number of Shock cards you have in hand. Discard by killing or helping to kill the being, or another one like it.	If Only You Could Forget	Minor	N	N
If Only You Could Forget	All tests take a penalty equal to the number of Shock cards you have in had, plus 1. Discard by killing or helping to kill the being, or another one like it.	A Beastly Sight	Major	N	N
Must Have Been a Hallucination	-1 to Sense Trouble. Discard when you uncover a core clue.	Reality Collapse	Minor	N	N
Reality Collapse	-2 to Sense Trouble. Lose 1 Health each time you make a Push. Trade for "Must Have Been a Hallucination" on a success that restores normality to the world.	Must Have Been a Hallucination	Major	N	N
A Crossed Line	[[no card text]]	Out of Control	Minor	Y	N
Out of Control	-1 to Composure to contain your emotions or resist destructive urges.	A Crossed Line	Major	Y	N
The Self Crumbles	+3 to Tolls of supernatural creatures. Trade for "The Mind Reels" when you destroy (or deliver to the reliable safekeeping of your allies) a copy of The King in Yellow.	The Mind Reels	Major	Y	N

Moral Vertigo	When you are in a position to kill an adversary in cold blood, score a Difficulty 4 Composure success or give in to that impulse. +2 to Sense Trouble when the danger emanates from your weird enemy. Trade for "The Self Crumbles" when you destroy (or deliver to the reliable safekeeping of your allies) a copy of The King in Yellow.	The Self Crumbles	Major	Y	N
Alien Shores	-1 to all tests. Discard by succeeding at a test that harms the schemes of the King in Yellow or his minions.	Unearthly Journey	Minor	Y	N
Unearthly Journey	-2 to all tests. Trade for "Alien Shores" by succeeding at a test that harms the schemes of the King in Yellow or his cat's-paws. If still in hand at end of scenario, counts as 2 Shock cards and becomes a Continuity card.	Alien Shores	Major	N	N
They Broke You	When you see an act of torture or violent bullying, you must make a Difficulty 4 Composure test to do anything other than hunch over, frozen in panic. Trade for "Avenger" by succeeding at the test and then taking decisive action against the perpetrator.	Avenger	Minor	Y	N

Avenger	When you see an act of torture or violent bullying, you must take decisive action against the perpetrator, or suffer -1 to Presence for the rest of the scenario. When you take decisive action, roll a die. Even: discard.	They Broke You	Major	Y	N
Distracted	-1 to Focus. After a Focus failure, spend 1 from the pool of any Focus ability to discard this card.	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	N	N
Visibly Distraught	-1 to Presence. After a Presence failure, spend 1 point from the pool of any Presence ability to discard this card.	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	N	N
Do Not Go Forth Into the Agora	Make a Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble test every time you enter a place you have never been before. On a failure, -1 to all tests while in that location. Discard when you take an Injury card in a location you are very familiar with.	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	N	N
Weird Insight	Spend 3 Composure to allow another player to discard a non-Continuity Shock card. Each time you do this, roll a die. On an odd result, this becomes a Continuity card.	[Secondary]	[Secondary]	N	N
Knockout Dart	Unless your side routs the cannibals, you are captured and wake up in a basement veal-fattening pen. When the rest of the group rescues you from an appointment with a roasting spit, trade for Shock card "Humans are the True Monsters."	Broken Bone [Injury]	Major	N	N

Not a Significant Bullet	On your next test, roll a die and discard this card. Even result: +1 on test. Odd: -2 on test.	Shot [Injury]	Minor	N	N
The Atavistic Terror of an Animal Attack	Lose 2 Health when you make a Push. If you can't spend the points, you can't make the Push. Discard by establishing your mastery over this type of creature.	Bitten [Injury]	Minor	N	N
Brain Fever	When you encounter the Sinister Mesmerist, -2 to Composure and -1 to Health until end of session. Discard when Sinister Mesmerist is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, dead.	Shown Your Own Horrific Death	Minor	Y	N
Shown Your Own Horrific Death	-2 to Composure; -1 on all other tests. Discard when Sinister Mesmerist is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, dead.	Brain Fever	Major	Y	N
Fed Upon	-1 to Composure. Discard on a Composure success.	Thought Drain	Minor	N	N
Thought Drain	-1 to any Presence test on which you spend ability points. If you gained this card while in an ultraterrestrial zone, discard when you leave it.	Fed Upon	Major	N	N
Intoxicating Bite	Each time you attempt to act against the interest of the vampire who bit you, you must succeed at a Difficulty 6 Composure test to proceed. Trade for "Haunted" as recipient of an Occultism Push.	Throat Punctures [Injury]	Major	N	N

Enrapturing Bite	You can't take part in fights against vampires and actively interfere with your comrades' attempts to fight them. -2 Fighting for PCs against vampires in your presence. -2 to Composure to resist vampire commands. Discard when the vampire that bit you is destroyed.	Vampiric Death Strike	Minor	N	N
Vampiric Death Strike	Counts as 2 Injuries and 1 Shock. Vampire may choose to instead deliver an "Enrapturing Bite." Discard after vampire is killed and you become recipient of a Difficulty 7 First Aid success. If still in hand at end of scenario, your character becomes an undead foe controlled by the GM and you create a new one.	Enrapturing Bite	Major	N	Y
Snakes, Our Oldest Fear	Roll a die. Even: lose 1 Composure. Odd: lose 2 Composure. Discard after a Composure success.	Venomous Fangs [Injury]	Minor	N	N
Keening of the Damned	Whenever you hear music, or a loud or strange sound, -1 to Presence until the next interval. Discard at end of any scenario, by spending 2 Composure.	Hellish Aria	Minor	Y	N
Hellish Aria	Whenever you hear music, or a loud or strange sound, this also becomes an Injury card, and remains so until the end of the next interval. Discard whenever it is an Injury card by spending 3 Composure.	Keening of the Damned	Major	Y	N
Dulled Thinking	Non-lethal. -1 to Focus tests.	Throbbing	Minor	N	N

	Discard on a Focus failure.	Migraine			
Throbbing Migraine	Non-lethal. -1 to Focus tests. On a Focus failure, spend 2 Health to discard.	Dulled Thinking	Major	N	N
Disbelief	-1 to Focus tests. Discard on any Focus success.	Weird Weapon Trauma	Minor	N	N
Weird Weapon Trauma	-1 to Composure tests involving unearthly weapons. Discard when you disassemble a captured weird weapon.	Disbelief	Major	N	N
Bereft	Before spending Morale to refresh another PC's Composure, you must roll a die, getting an even result. Discard as recipient of a 3-point Morale spend. Use in: W, A	Rudderless	Minor	N	N
Rudderless	PCs can spend Morale only after rolling a die and getting an even result. Discard as recipient of a Leadership spend.	Bereft	Major	N	N
What th—?	-1 to your next Presence test. Discard when a PC (yourself included) discards an Injury card taken in a fight in which your side was targeted by a weird weapon.	World Gone Mad	Minor	N	N
World Gone Mad	-1 to Presence tests. Discard when a PC (yourself included) discards an Injury card taken in a fight in which your side was targeted by a weird weapon.	What th—?	Major	N	N

Profaned Memories	When you mention or talk about your fallen comrade for the first time in any scene, make a Difficulty 4 Composure test. On a failure, this becomes a Continuity card.	Haunted	Major	N	N
Hollow Promise	Your Morale pool drops to 0. You can't refresh Morale in mid-scenario or make Reassurance spends. Discard by successfully protecting a civilian.	Resounding Failure	Minor	Y	N
Resounding Failure	Your Morale pool drops to 0. Morale spends by other players do not refresh your Composure. You can't make Reassurance spends. When you successfully protect a civilian, roll a die. On an even result, discard.	Hollow Promise	Major	Y	N
Tenuous Reality	-1 to Focus tests. When the discard condition of another Shock card occurs, you may discard this card instead.	Life's Value Ebbs	Minor	N	N
Life's Value Ebbs	-2 to Composure tests. You may choose to take a +1 Fighting bonus when using a weird weapon, but that makes this a Continuity card.	Tenuous Reality	Major	N	N
Revulsion	Lose 2 Morale. Discard after three hours of world time, or when you gain another Shock card.	Nightmare Fuel	Minor	N	N
Nightmare Fuel	You can't spend Morale points. After six hours sleep (world time) in a safe location, roll a die. Discard on an even result. Becomes a Continuity card if still held at end of scenario.	Revulsion	Major	N	N

Lily-Livered	Lose 2 Morale. Discard on a salient Battlefield or Fighting success, refreshing 2 Morale.	Yellow-Bellied	Minor	N	N
Yellow-Bellied	Roll a die; lose that number of Morale points, or 2 Morale, whichever is higher. Discard on a Fighting success with a margin greater than 1.	Lily-Livered	Major	N	N
Flirtation with the Enemy	-1 to Composure tests. Discard when a success saves you from taking a Shock card.	Embracing the Enemy	Minor	N	N
Embracing the Enemy	Composure tests take a penalty equal to the number of Shock cards you hold.	Flirtation with the Enemy	Major	N	N
Sinking Feeling	Lose 1 Morale. Discard by getting off the boat.	Panic	Minor	N	N
Panic	Other PCs can't spend Morale to refresh your Composure or Scrounging to refresh your Battlefield. When the danger has passed, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Rattled."	Sinking Feeling	Major	N	N
Those Telltale Fins	-1 to Focus tests. When you get to shore, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: discard after two salient Focus failures.	Shark Bite [Injury]	Minor	N	N
Ghost Touch	Lose 1 Composure each time one or more players breaks from the action to reference or discuss pop culture. Discard as recipient of a Difficulty 4 Morale test.	The Vengeful Dead	Minor	N	N

The Vengeful Dead	Lose 1 point from your lowest pool each time one or more players breaks from the action to reference or discuss pop culture. Discard after a ghost encounter that does not leave you with a Shock or Injury card.	Ghost Touch	Major	N	N
Tastes Like Chicken	-2 to Composure tests. At end of scenario, if your Composure is higher than 3, discard. Otherwise, trade for "A Crossed Line."	A Crossed Line	Minor	N	N
A Crossed Line	[No card text]	Tastes Like Chicken	Major	Y	N
Callous	When you become the recipient of a Morale spend, lose 1 Composure. Discard by taking a risk to help a GMC Loyalist soldier.	Pit of Remorse	Minor		N
Pit of Remorse	When presented with an opportunity to save a wounded GMC Loyalist soldier from death or further harm, you must make a Difficulty 6 Composure test to avoid doing so. When you do act and clearly save the character's life, roll a die. Discard on an even result.	Callous	Major	Y	N
Rat in a Can	Lose 1 Composure and 1 Morale every 15 minutes (game time). When the danger has passed, discard as recipient of a 1-point Scrounging spend.	Panic	Either		N

Tentacled Doom	-1 to Presence tests while in sight of the ocean, -2 to Presence tests while underwater. Does not count as a Shock card at the beginning of a scenario. Becomes a Shock card if you see the ocean or go underwater.	Rat in a Can	Major	Y	N
No Blood More Cold	-2 to Composure tests. During any scenario after the one where you gained this card, discard by spending 6 Composure.	Atrocity	Minor	Y	N
Atrocity	-2 to Composure tests. At beginning of any scenario, spend 3 Composure and roll a die. On an even result, trade for "No Blood More Cold."	No Blood More Cold	Major	Y	N
Overwhelmed	Before any test, roll a die. Odd: lose 1 point from the ability being tested. Discard when you use an Investigative ability to get a core clue.	Pervasive Distrust	Minor	N	N
Pervasive Distrust	Lose 3 Composure each time another investigator makes an Interpersonal Push. Discard by throwing a punch at a GMC who seems to be up to something.	Overwhelmed	Major	N	N
Beside Yourself	-1 to tests. Discard on the next test you miss by 1.	Rattled	Minor	N	N
Shell-Shocked	-1 to Presence and Focus tests. After your next failed Presence or Focus test, you may discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 Morale test.	Hit Bad [Injury]	Minor	N	N

Name	Effect	Pairs With	Severity		
Hellish Reptile-Crab	You and all PCs who have seen the creature up close take -1 to Focus tests. Penalties from multiple "Hellish Reptile-Crab" cards do not stack. On any failed Composure test, roll a die. Even: all "Hellish Reptile-Crab" cards in play are discarded.	Reality Drift	Minor	N	N
Reality Drift	When you score a success with a margin of 2, it instead becomes a failure with a margin of 2. On a failure with a margin of 2, trade for "Unease."	Hellish Reptile-Crab	Major	N	N
Ghost Sighting	-1 to Presence tests. Discard by spending a Push.	The Mourned Dead	Minor	N	N
The Mourned Dead	-1 to Fighting and Composure tests.	Ghost Sighting	Major	N	N
Its Jellied Visage	Any time another PC tries to use First Aid on you, make a Difficulty 4 Composure test. On a failure, you panic and punch your healer, giving that character the Injury card "Punched" and may then discard this card.	You Saw the Tendrils Go In	Minor	N	N
You Saw the Tendrils Go In	Any time another PC tries to use First Aid on you, make a Difficulty 4 Composure test. On a failure, you panic and punch your healer, giving that character the Injury card "Punched." Then discard on a Difficulty 5 Composure success.	Its Jellied Visage	Major	N	N
Did Anyone Else See That?	-1 to Sense Trouble tests. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 Morale success.	You Saw It, So It Must Be Real	Minor	N	N

You Saw It, So It Must Be Real	-2 to Sense Trouble tests, -1 to Composure tests. Discard by spending 2 Sense Trouble and 1 Composure.	Did Anyone Else See That?	Major	N	N
Faulty Perceptions	-2 to Presence tests. You must behave as if the thing you're seeing is absolutely, literally real. Discard by spending 2 Sense Trouble and 2 Composure, or on the conclusive defeat of the force that has confused your senses.	Distorted Perceptions	Minor	N	N
Distorted Perceptions	-2 to Presence tests. You must behave as if the thing you're seeing is absolutely, literally real. Discard on the conclusive defeat of the force that has confused your senses.	Faulty Perceptions	Major	N	N
No, It Can't Be!	+1 to Sense Trouble tests. When you fail a Sense Trouble test in the presence of one or more innocent GMCs, make a Difficulty 4 Composure test. Failure: you attack and seriously wound a GMC chosen by the GM, then discard this card.	I Remember Him Like He Was Real	Minor	N	N
I Remember Him Like He Was Real	You continue to behave as if the dead, impersonated comrade is alive, in your presence, and talking to you. Other PCs take -1 to Composure. Discard when you pay a price for this behavior.	No, It Can't Be!	Major	N	N
Cortisol Spike	-1 to Composure tests. Discard at end of session.	Bullet Wound [Injury]	Minor	N	N

Why Can't I Just Shoot Him?	You recognize this false comrade as an alien being but can't break its mental hold on you in order to act against it. Discard when a comrade attacks it, or when it departs.	Probably I Should Shoot Him	Minor	N	N
Probably I Should Shoot Him	Whenever you meet a Loyalist soldier for the first time, make a Difficulty 4 Composure test. Failure: -1 on all Focus and Presence tests until next interval. Discard when you get a margin of 3 or more on that test.	Why Can't I Just Shoot Him?	Major	N	N
Hungry Like the…	-1 on your next Focus test. Discard by killing and eating a game animal, raw.	Lycanthropy	Minor	N	N
Lycanthropy	-1 to Focus tests. You believe that you will turn into a werewolf at the next full moon (three days from now unless the GM has already established a different date) and behave accordingly. The morning after the next full moon, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Hungry Like the…"	Hungry Like the…	Major	Y	N
Unearthly Sounds	-1 to Focus tests. When you correctly identify the origin of the sounds, roll a die. Even: discard.	Melted Perceptions	Minor	N	N
Melted Perceptions	Roll a die when you receive this card. Odd: -1 to Focus tests. Even: -1 to Presence tests. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.	Unearthly Sounds	Major	N	N
Forehead Vein	+1 to Fighting tests. After you take part in a fight and win, discard.	It Eats You Up	Minor	N	N

It Eats You Up	Discard by conclusively striking against an old foe. If still in hand at end of scenario, roll a die. Odd: becomes a Continuity card.	Forehead Vein	Major	N	N
Pang of Doubt	The next time the GM calls for a Composure test, roll a die first. Odd: -1 on your test. Even: discard.	Lines Get Muddy	Minor	N	N
Lines Get Muddy	-1 to Focus and Presence tests. Discard when you take an Injury card.	Pang of Doubt	Major	N	N
False Alarm	-1 to Sense Trouble tests; +1 to Composure tests. On your next Composure failure, lose 1 Composure and discard this card.	The Yips	Minor	N	N
The Yips	x = the result of a die roll, plus 1. Lose x Composure. Discard as recipient of an x-point Morale spend.	False Alarm	Major	N	N
Dammit, Man	-1 to Focus tests. Discard by paying a price to gain redemption.	Seriously, Dammit	Minor	N	N
Seriously, Dammit	-2 to Focus tests. Discard by doing something redemptive that hurts you politically.	Dammit, Man	Major	N	N
Twinge	-1 on Focus tests. After a failed Focus test, discard as recipient of 1-point Morale spend.	Spasm of Guilt	Minor	N	N
Spasm of Guilt	-2 to Focus tests. Discard by taking a risk to atone for your past.	Twinge	Major	N	N
Grim Flashback	-1 to Morale tests. Discard as recipient of a Difficulty 4 Morale success.	You Know You Broke	Minor	N	N

You Know You Broke	Roll a die: lose Morale equal to the result. On a Fighting success, roll a die. Even: discard.	Grim Flashback	Major	N	N
The Monster Inside	Roll a die: lose Morale equal to the result.	Spasm of Guilt	Major	N	N
Sullied	-1 to Presence tests for each Shock card you hold. Spend 1 Morale and roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "A Diverting Indiscretion Will Put This in Perspective."	Expedience	Minor	N	N
Expedience	-2 to Presence tests. Discard by doing the right thing, even though it will hurt you politically.	Sullied	Major	N	N
Mental Probe	Roll a die. Even: -1 to your next Focus test, then discard. Odd: -1 to your next Presence test, then discard.	It Licked Your Mind	Minor	N	N
It Licked Your Mind	-1 to Focus and Presence tests. Discard when the parasite is destroyed.	Mental Probe	Major	N	N
Stolen Memory	-1 to Focus tests. Discard when you destroy or help to destroy the being who did this to you.	Stolen Loyalty	Minor	N	N
Commandment from the Grave	Effect comes into play when the shade gives you an order: if at the end of an interval you have taken no action to obey the shade, lose 1 Health, 1 Athletics, and 1 Fighting. Discard by fulfilling the order to the shade's satisfaction.	Soul Shook	Major	N	N
Close Call	Discard when you go for an entire interval without having to make a Composure test.	Edgy	Minor	N	N

Edgy	At the end of any interval, you may choose to roll a die and pay 1 Composure. Even: discard.	Close Call	Major	N	N
Susceptible	Lose 1 Composure when exposed to images or ideas of the ideological tendency promoted by the original propaganda message. Loss limited to 1 point per scene. After taking a risky action that furthers the propagandist's objectives, you may discard on a Difficulty 4 Composure success.	Ideological Capture	Minor	N	N
Ideological Capture	When confronted by an opportunity to further the propagandist's objectives, make a Difficulty 4 Composure test. Failure: you must take that action. When the action has a negative result for you, your friends, or the investigation, you may spend a Push to roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Susceptible."	Susceptible	Major	N	N
No Safe Place	After returning to the place of horror, or entering another place like it, -1 to Focus tests for the next six hours (world time). Discard by ending the menace that made the place unsafe.	Awful Association	Minor	N	N
Awful Association	When you return to the place of horror, or enter another place like it, lose 1 Push and 3 Composure. Discard by ending the menace that made the place unsafe. Gains Continuity tag if still in hand at end of scenario.	No Safe Place	Major	N	N

Gun Shy	-1 to Fighting tests. Discard when you take part in the defeat of a foe armed with military weapons.	Under Fire	Minor	N	N
Under Fire	-2 to Fighting tests. Discard when you take part in the defeat of a foe armed with military weapons.	Gun Shy	Major	N	N
Harried	Before any Composure test, roll a die. Odd: lose 1 Composure. Discard on a failed Composure test.	Overwhelmed	Minor	N	N
Overwhelmed	Before any test, roll a die. Odd: lose 1 point from the ability being tested. Discard when you use an Investigative ability to gain a core clue.	Harried	Major	N	N
Homebound	-X to tests. X = the number of scenes that have passed since you spent four or more hours (world time) at home.	Fortified	Minor	N	N
Fortified	-X to tests. X = the number of scenes that have passed since you spent 4 or more hours (world time) adding a lock or booby trap to your home.	Homebound	Major	N	N
Nothing is Real	Margin on failed Composure tests increases by 1. Discard as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.	Melted Perceptions	Major	N	N
"Does This Look Weird?"	Now and at the beginning of each session, roll a die. 1-2: lose 1 Composure. 3-4: lose 1 Health. Discard by finding the antidote, treatment, or counterspell to your condition.	Body Horror	Minor	N	N

Body Horror	Now and at each interval, roll a die. 1-2: lose 2 Composure. 3-4: lose 2 Health. Discard by finding the antidote, treatment, or counterspell to your condition. If your Health is at 0 at end of scenario, this card gains the Continuity tag.	"Does This Look Weird?"	Major	N	N
Overconfident	Margin of your next Fighting failure increases by 2. Then discard.	Hideous Laughter	Minor	N	N
Hideous Laughter	At the start of any fight, roll a die. Odd: -1 to Fighting. Even: -1 to everyone's Fighting. At end of fight, roll a die. Even: discard.	Overconfident	Major	N	N
Unearthly Sounds	-1 to Focus tests. When you correctly identify the origin of the sounds, roll a die. Even: discard.	Auditory Hallucination	Minor	N	N
Auditory Hallucination	-1 to Focus tests. When you correctly identify the origin of the sounds, spend a Push and roll a die. Even: discard.	Unearthly Sounds	Major	N	N
Proprioception Dysmorphia	Margins of your failed tests increase by 1. Discard the next time you take an Injury card.	Identity Decentralization	Minor	N	N
Identity Decentralization	Margins of your failed tests increase by 2. When you take an Injury card, roll a die. Even: discard.	Proprioception Dysmorphia	Major	N	N
Cut Off	Once per session, the GM may require you to undertake a foolhardy action in search of a wireless signal. Discard when your access to a reliable, ongoing signal	On Your Own	Minor	N	N

resumes.

On Your Own	Composure drops by 1 at the end of each interval. Discard when your access to a reliable, ongoing signal resumes.	Cut Off	Major	N	N
Sleepless Nights	Focus tests take a penalty equal to the number of mornings that have passed since you got this card (world time). After shutting down the story bringing you notoriety, roll a die each world-time morning. Even: discard.	You Went Viral	Minor	N	N
You Went Viral	Lose 2 Composure and 2 Health each morning (world time). After shutting down the story bringing you notoriety, roll a die each world-time morning. 5 or 6: discard.	Sleepless Nights	Major	N	N
Lab Coat Unease	When you enter a hospital, doctor's office, or medical facility and have 1 or more Pushes, lose 1 Push. Discard by putting your experimenter permanently out of business.	Lab Coat Terror	Minor	N	N
Lab Coat Terror	When you enter a hospital, doctor's office, or medical facility, -1 Composure until end of scenario. Discard by putting your experimenter permanently out of business. Gains Continuity tag if in hand	Lab Coat Unease	Major	N	N

at end of scenario.

Pack Rat	All characters take -1 to Preparedness tests. Roll a die on any character's Preparedness failure. Odd: everyone can tell that you tossed out the desired item to make room for a useless souvenir from a previous scene. Discard by ridding yourself of an item you established in a previous scene as being important to you and spending 3 Composure. If still in hand at end of scenario, trade for "My Collection Will Never Betray Me."	My Collection Will Never Betray Me	Minor	N	N
My Collection Will Never Betray Me	All characters take -1 to Preparedness tests. Roll a die on any character's Preparedness failure. Odd: everyone can tell that you tossed out the desired item to make room for a useless souvenir from a previous scene. If your Composure exceeds 2 at end of scenario, trade for "Pack Rat."	Pack Rat	Major	N	N

Psi Probe	Roll a die. 1-2: X=1. 3-4: X=2 5-6: X=3. Lose X Composure points. When you figure out the plans of the being that invaded your mind, discard this card and regain X Composure.	In Your Mind	Minor	N	N
In Your Mind	Roll a die: lose Composure points equal to the result. When you foil the plans of the being that invaded your mind, discard this card and regain the number of Composure points you lost when you gained this card.	Psi Probe	Major	N	N
Stirred Up	-1 to Focus tests. Discard by drinking or drugging yourself into a stupor.	Violent Side	Minor	N	N
Violent Side	-1 to Focus tests. Discard by sucker-punching someone who has nothing to do with the investigation.	Stirred Up	Major	N	N
Trending Trauma	-1 to Focus tests. At end of each interval, roll a die. Odd: lose 1 Composure. Even: discard. Discard when you take an Injury card.	Omnipresent Horror	Minor	N	N
Omnipresent Horror	-1 to Focus tests. You can't refresh Composure. Discard when you take an Injury card.	Trending Trauma	Major	N	N
This Note's for Grue	After hearing the song again, -1 to Presence tests until end of scenario. If that penalty is in effect at end of scenario, and the group solved the mystery, discard.	Murder Music	Minor	Y	N

Murder Music	After hearing the song again, -1 to tests until end of scenario. If that penalty is in effect at end of scenario, and the group solved the mystery, roll a die. Even: discard.	This Note's for Grue	Major	Y	N
This One's on You	Lose 3 Composure. When you take a risk to advance the investigation, gain 4 Composure and discard.	Through the Looking Glass	Minor	N	N
Through the Looking Glass	-1 to Focus tests. When you take a risk to advance your investigation, roll a die. Even: discard.	This One's on You	Major	N	N
Every Breath You Take	You may spend Composure points on Sense Trouble tests—and must spend a minimum of 1 per test, so long as your Composure exceeds 0. Discard when you know you're no longer being watched.	Every Move You Make	Minor	N	N
Every Move You Make	Lose 3 Composure every time anyone tests Sense Trouble. Discard when you know you're no longer being watched.	Every Breath You Take	Major	N	N
Primal Outrage	You may spend Composure or Health points on Fighting tests against Rampagers. If you choose to do this, "Primal Outrage" becomes a Continuity card.	Primal Bloodlust	Minor	N	N
Primal Bloodlust	-2 Fighting against weird enemies when the objective ≠ Kill. Discard when you take part in a winning fight against a weird enemy when the objective = Kill.	Primal Outrage	Major	N	N

Eerie Object	Lose 2 Health, Composure, and Athletics each time the distance between you and the object exceeds 2 m. [[Tough]] mode: If the item is destroyed, you die. [[Forgiving]] mode: If the item is destroyed, take Injury card "Cardiac Arrest."	Cursed Item	Minor	N	N
Cursed Item	All other PCs take -1 to tests. You gain +1 to tests. [[Tough]] mode: If the item is destroyed, you die. [[Forgiving]] mode: If the item is destroyed, take Injury card "Cardiac Arrest." If another PC tries to take the item from you, roll a die. Odd: you attack them, giving them the Paris card "Shot" or "Slashed Throat" (your choice). Even: discard. The other PC gains the item and makes a Difficulty 4 Composure test, gaining this card on a failure and "Eerie Object" on a success.	Eerie Object	Major	N	N
Hyper-Vigilant	+1 to Sense Trouble tests. Lose 1 Health and 1 Composure on any Sense Trouble success. Discard when something bad happens to you, exactly like you said it would.	Edgy	Major	N	N
Spotlight Hog	-1 to Focus tests. At the end of any interval, take an action calling attention to yourself. Roll a die. Even: discard.	Messiah Complex	Minor	N	N

Messiah Complex	Once per session, you may gain +3 to any non-Composure test. The player to your left loses 3 points from their highest General pool. If pools are tied for first, you pick which one. If the result of your test is even, discard this card.	Spotlight Hog	Major	N	N
Raw Nerve	-2 to Composure tests that won't give you a Shock card if you fail. Discard when you fail such a test.	Under a Microscope	Minor	N	N
Under a Microscope	Roll a die when discarding any other Shock card. Odd: that Shock returns to your hand.	Raw Nerve	Major	N	N
Invaded	-1 to tests. If the intruder is inhuman, discard by finding and killing it. If the intruder is human, discard by contributing to the intruder's arrest and imprisonment.	Defiled	Minor	N	N
Defiled	-1 to tests. If the intruder is inhuman, discard by finding and killing it. If the intruder is human, roll a die when you contribute to the intruder's arrest and imprisonment. Even: discard. If still in hand at end of scenario, gains Continuity tag.	Invaded	Major	N	N
Scrub the System	-2 to Presence tests and -1 to Focus tests. If your phone is affected, discard this card eight world hours after you restore to factory settings. If it's your computer, discard after you have everything properly installed again after a ground-	They're in Your Auxiliary Brain	Minor	N	N

up reinstall.

They're in Your Auxiliary Brain	-2 to Presence tests and -1 to Focus tests. Discard by permanently destroying the affected device and all devices you own that it backed up to, while alone and in a remote location.	Scrub the System	Major	N	N
Coulda Been Hurt	Roll a die when discarding any other Shock card. On a result of 1 0r 2, that Shock returns to your hand. Discard this card by tracking down and confronting the guilty party in meat space.	Coulda Been Killed	Minor	N	N
Coulda Been Killed	Pay 3 Composure when discarding any other Shock card. If you can't pay, you can't discard. Discard this card by tracking down and confronting the guilty party in meat space.	Coulda Been Hurt	Major	N	N
Nagging Guilt	-1 Fighting tests vs. weird enemies.	Gnawing Guilt	Minor	N	N
Gnawing Guilt	-1 Fighting tests vs. weird enemies.	Nagging Guilt	Major	Y	N

Déjà Who?	Roll a die. Even: gain Composure equal to the result. Odd: lose a total of 5 points from General pools, as chosen by the GM, and discard this card at next interval. After any 1-hour increment (game time), you may choose to repeat the above effect. At end of scenario, you may declare this a Continuity card.	Me Again	Minor	N	N
Me Again	-1 to Presence tests if the current scenario has yet to reveal information regarding your strange cosmic significance. +1 to Presence tests if it has. Any time you learn a new fact about your cosmic significance you may choose to discard this card.	Déjà Who?	Major	N	N
Blowback	Roll a die. Odd: lose 1 point from each ability pool. Even: lose 1 Push.	Unforgivable	Minor	N	N
Unforgivable	Margins of your failed tests increase by 1. When you are drunk or intoxicated, discard this card. When you sober up, you regain this card.	Blowback	Major	Y	N
Premonition	Lose 3 Composure. When you gain your next Shock card, refresh 3 Composure and discard this card.	Weird Insight	Minor	N	N
Weird Insight	Spend 3 Composure to allow another player to discard a non-Continuity Shock card. Each time you do this, roll a die. Odd: this becomes a Continuity card.	Premonition	Major	N	N

Blood Debt	-1 to Focus tests. Discard by convincingly discharging your debt to the slain.	Fratricide	Minor	Y	N
Fratricide	Counts as two Shock cards. After you convincingly discharge your debt to the slain, counts as a single Shock card.	Blood Debt	Major	Y	N
I Should Have Prevented This	At the end of scenario in which you acquired this card, make a Difficulty 6 Composure test. Success: discard. Failure: this becomes a Continuity card.	Spiral into Violence	Minor	N	N
Spiral into Violence	-1 to Focus tests.	I Should Have Prevented This	Major	Y	N
Well, That Happened	After a Fighting success, roll a die. Odd: treat as a Fighting failure with a margin of 3, and discard this card.	Lateral Suicide	Minor	N	N
Lateral Suicide	You may spend 6 Composure to gain +1 to all tests until end of session. When you gain new information regarding your strange cosmic significance, roll a die. Odd: discard this card. At end of scenario, you may declare this a Continuity card.	Well, That Happened	Major	N	N
Intoxicating Gaze	Each time you attempt to act against the interest of the foe who hypnotized you, you must succeed at a Difficulty 6 Composure test to proceed. Discard when you are sure this foe has been destroyed.	Throttled [Injury]	Major	N	N
Haunted Blade	-1 to Focus. -2 to Fighting for objectives other than Kill. Discard when the blade possesses a new host.	Spirit Possession	Minor	N	N

Spirit Possession	If you have less than 3 Composure at end of scenario, your character leaves play, becoming the latest vampiric incarnation of Jack the Ripper. This also happens if your character leaves play in any other way. This GMC version of your character regains Jack's knife by means that may or may not be apparent to the group right away.	Haunted Blade	Major	Y	N
Occult Dabbler	Users of efficacious magic can identify you as one of their own. Counts as a Shock card only if you used magic during the current scenario. At end of scenario in which you use no magic, roll a die. Even: discard.	Warped Ethos	Minor	Y	N
Warped Ethos	When you meet a more powerful user of efficacious magic, roll a die. Odd: you reveal a secret to this individual, or lend some other assistance. If that assistance brings harm to the group, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Occult Dabbler."	Occult Dabbler	Major	N	N
Nullify	You can't attack the entity who gave you this Shock. Counts as a Shock card only if you have met or communicated with the entity during the current scenario. Discard when you're sure the entity has been destroyed.	Nightmare Zone	Minor	Y	N

Nightmare Zone	-2 to Focus. You believe yourself to have slipped into an inescapable nightmare reality, and behave accordingly. On a Difficulty 6 Composure test, which you can take whenever you gain a core clue, trade for "Nullify."	Nullify	Major	N	N
Place of Sorrow	-x to Fighting tests vs. weird enemies. X starts at 1 and increases by 1 at the end of each scene in which the terrible events tied to this place are mentioned. Discard when you fight the foe that gave you this card and meet or beat its Difficulty during a combat.	Residual Grief	Minor	N	N
Residual Grief	-1 to Fighting tests. Discard when you fight the foe that gave you this Shock and meet or beat its Difficulty during a combat. At the beginning of an episode, spend a Push and roll a die. Even: discard.	Place of Sorrow	Major	Y	N

GUMSHOE One-2-One

This section contains rules text for using GUMSHOE One-2-One, the engine for investigative roleplaying with one player and one GM.

Rules Quick Reference

This summary quickly presents the game's essential rules concepts, which we'll go on to explain in greater depth.

Your character attempts actions in the storyline by using abilities.

Abilities come in two main types: Investigative and General.

Investigative Abilities allow you to gather information. The animating principle behind *GUMSHOE* states that *failing to get key information is never interesting*. If you have the right ability and you look in the right place for clues you need to solve the mystery, you will always find the information you seek. If you lack the relevant ability, your character can talk to a friendly **Source**, who will also provide guidance and assurance as needed.

A piece of information need not be critical to the case for you to gain it without chance of failure and at no cost. Much of mystery-solving lies in sorting the important from the tangential. If only the crucial clues came for free, it would give the game away.

In some situations, you can spend a resource called a **Push** to gain an additional benefit. This might be information you don't absolutely need to solve the case; more often it consists of advantages that clear the character's path through the story, such as favors from witnesses, knowledge that keeps the character safe, or prior relationships to central figures.

You start the game with 4 Pushes, and can gain others during play.

General Abilities determine whether you succeed or fail when trying to take actions other than gathering information, usually in an event called a test. The most important kind of test is the **Challenge.**

You have either 1 or 2 dice in each General Ability your character possesses.

The game uses standard six-sided dice, which roleplayers sometimes refer to as D6s.

Whenever it might be as interesting for you to fail as it would be to succeed — say, fighting a thug, running away from a creature, or trying to repair your car before you die in the desert — you roll your die or dice.

When rolling multiple dice, roll one at a time: you may succeed without having to roll all of them.

At the end of the Challenge, your die roll total may match or exceed that of an **Advance** (the best result), or a **Hold** (an okay or middling result). If not, your Outcome is a **Setback**, which means that something bad happens.

On an Advance you will probably gain an **Edge,** an advantage you can use later in the scenario. As a reminder, you gain an Edge card. The card's text will tell you how it works. Often, you must discard the card to gain the advantage. If you reached the Advance threshold without rolling all

of the dice you were entitled to, you **also** gain a Push.

On a Setback, you often gain a **Problem**, representing a dilemma that might cause trouble for you later. Again, you receive a card to remember it by — a Problem card. Certain cards might lead to a terrible end for your detective should you fail to get rid of, or **Counter**, them before the scenario concludes.

Most Challenges allow you to voluntarily take on an Extra Problem, in exchange for rolling one more die.

Every so often you'll make a simple roll, called a **Quick Test**, to see if you succeed or fail, without the possibility of Advances, Edges, Setbacks, or Problems.

The rest is detail. You don't have to learn any special rules for combat or mental distress, as you would in standard *GUMSHOE* and most other roleplaying games. The Challenge system, with its descriptions of outcomes, and its resulting Edges and Problems, handles it all.

Pushes

The character starts each scenario with four Pushes.

In certain situations, the player may spend a Push to use an Investigative Ability to gain something above and beyond information.

For example, you might:

- spend a Push on Assess Honesty to guess the motivation behind a character's deception
- spend a Push on Intimidation to convince a barfly not to tell Vinnie the Horse that you're looking into his alibi
- spend a Push on Law to get sprung from jail on that bogus trespassing rap
- spend a Push on Chemistry to formulate an antidote to the sleeping potion you have been dosed with, using only the contents of an ordinary medicine cabinet

Sometimes scenario text refers to Pushes by Investigative Ability category, saying, for example, "Langston gets past the security guard with an Interpersonal Push." This means that the player can use any Interpersonal ability that applies to the situation, spending a Push on it to gain the specified benefit.

Character Cards

All of the information you need about your character appears in the compact space of a single Character card, like this one.

[[BEGIN CHARACTER CARD FORMAT]]

[[I-ICON = Interpersonal Icon; A-ICON = Academic, T-ICON = Technical]]

Lauren Ipsum

Hard-Nosed Reporter

Investigative Abilities: Accounting [[A ICON]] Assess Honesty [[I ICON]], Bureaucracy [[I

General Abilities: Athletics 1, Cool 1, Disguise 1, Driving 1, Fighting 2, Filch 1, First Aid 1, Fleeing 2, Preparedness 1, Sense Trouble 2, Shadowing 1, Stability 2, Stealth 1

Using Investigative Abilities

Your character solves the mystery driving the scenario by moving from scene to scene gathering information. You, the player, solve the mystery by figuring out what the information means. As you piece together a narrative and sort relevant facts from evocative side detail, you work out who did what to whom, and why.

As you can see from Lauren's character card, she has a number of Investigative Abilities, ranging from Accounting to Streetwise. Descriptions defining what each of these do appear later in this section.

When a scene starts, the GM describes what your character can sense about it right off the bat. What does the place look like? What mood does it conjure? What objects or furnishings does it contain, and what do they tell you? Who, if anyone, is present, and what do they do or say in response to your arrival?

You then respond by posing questions. You might ask these directly to the GM, or, through in-character dialogue, to the supporting characters present at the scene. In the second case, the GM acts out the roles of these characters, improvising dialogue and describing their actions.

Some facts appear in plain sight, right in front of you. The GM mentions these straight out when painting the scene. "There's a bloodstain on the carpet and everything in the apartment lies in disarray, as if someone — or more than one someone — were looking for something."

In key instances, though, you'll have to ask about the scene in a particular way to get the clues you need. Describe how you're gathering information and what Investigative Abilities, if any, you're using to get it. When you just say what you're doing without specifying an ability, the GM may immediately see what ability you're using without having to ask.

When your character looks for information in the right place, and has a credible way to get it, you get the clue, simple as that.

Some roleplayers might be used to games where they have to roll dice, scoring a successful result of some kind, to get information. *GUMSHOE* works exactly like that, except without the roll, removing the chance of a failure that doesn't advance the story.

In order to obtain clues, you always have to describe your character interacting with the contents of the scene. You never just read the names of your abilities off your character card and wait for more description. Instead you have to talk to Waldron, or ask about the strange mold on the windowsill, or go talk to the Professor about that weird manuscript you found in the

sideboard.

Sometimes, you discover clues just by describing your character completing simple tasks. This happens when no special training or method is required. For example, if there are financial documents taped to the bottom of a desk, and you say, "I look under the desk," the GM replies, "You find an envelope taped to the underside of the desk top."

For certain clues, ones that an expert character with specialized training would not miss, the GM gives you time to ask. Before the scene ends, the GM describes you noticing whatever the clue happens to be, even if you didn't specifically ask. That gives you the opportunity to have the fun of discovering the clue, without painting your detective as incompetent or unaware.

Usually, the best information comes from conversations — sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile — with other characters played by the GM. We call these supporting characters, or **Game Moderator Characters** (GMCs for short). GMCs include your ongoing allies, brief contacts who play walk-on roles, and the major figures of the case at hand, from your client to suspects to the imminent victims of dread forces.

Investigative Ability List

Ability	Type
Accounting	Academic [[A ICON]]
Anthropology	Academic [[A ICON]]
Archaeology	Academic [[A ICON]]
Architecture	Academic [[A ICON]]
Art History	Academic [[A ICON]]
Assess Honesty	Interpersonal [[I ICON]]
Astronomy	Technical [[T ICON]]
Bargain	Interpersonal [[I ICON]]
Biology	Academic [[A ICON]]
Bureaucracy	Interpersonal [[I ICON]]
Chemistry	Technical [[T ICON]]
Cop Talk	Interpersonal [[I ICON]]
Craft	Technical [[T ICON]]
Cryptography	Academic [[A ICON]]
Evidence Collection	Technical [[T ICON]]
Flattery	Interpersonal [[I ICON]]
Forensics	Technical [[T ICON]]
Geology	Academic [[A ICON]]
History	Academic [[A ICON]]
Inspiration	Interpersonal [[I ICON]]
Intimidation	Interpersonal [[I ICON]]

Languages	Academic	[[A ICON]]
Law	Academic	[[A ICON]]
Locksmith	Technical	[[T ICON]]
Medicine	Academic	[[A ICON]]
Occult	Academic	[[A ICON]]
Oral History	Interpersonal	[[I ICON]]
Outdoorsman	Technical	[[T ICON]]
Pharmacy	Technical	[[T ICON]]
Photography	Technical	[[T ICON]]
Physics	Academic	[[A ICON]]
Psychology	Interpersonal	[[I ICON]]
Reassurance	Interpersonal	[[I ICON]]
Research	Academic	[[A ICON]]
Streetwise	Interpersonal	[[I ICON]]
Theology	Academic	[[A ICON]]

[[End Sidebar]]

Sources

Though smart and resourceful, your investigator has not mastered every field of human endeavor. Some clues require you to consult **Sources**: experts in various fields with whom you've cultivated a relationship. Unlike the witnesses and suspects who figure in the particular case you're working, you don't need to overcome their resistance to gain their cooperation.

When you ought to call on a Source, your GM lets you know. Questions to Sources take you out of the current scene, so deal with all the questions that arise on-site before moving on.

The first time you meet with a Source character in the game, your GM describes their appearance and attitudes. Given this basic information, you then quickly sketch out the common bond that accounts for your association.

Sources exist to convey information to you, so your character does not seem ridiculously well-informed in every field of knowledge. They also give you and your GM a chance to play out relaxed, lower-key scenes featuring supporting characters who basically like or respect your investigator. These supply the camaraderie that springs up between player characters in group games.

An extraordinary case might place a Source in jeopardy, or risk rupturing that ongoing relationship. If you lose a Source, you later gain another one who covers the same blank spots on your resumé as the previous one did. Events that threaten a Source raise the emotional stakes, but this storytelling technique gets old when overused. Don't expect your GM to do it often, or at all.

Theoretically, the player could spend a Push to enable a Source to extract additional benefit from an ability use. This requires a scene in which the Source is present to take an active hand. A

well-crafted scenario steers clear of this possibility, especially if it calls on the GM to talk to himself as two separate characters.

Choosing Your Starting Problem

You begin play with at least one Problem: a card representing some kind of ongoing trouble, which you pick for your character from a list of four. This starts the process of personalizing your character, turning the baseline investigator supplied by the game into the player's distinctive version of the character. Text on the card explains the exact nature of the Problem, often specifying its rules effect and perhaps a way to Counter it. During play, you may gain additional Problems.

[[[Begin Problem Card]

Anything for the Story

Continuity

Every good reporter remembers the time their nose for a story put them in danger. You, on the other hand? You remember the time or two it *didn't*.

[[[End Problem Card]

Investigative Ability Definitions

[[Use ability descriptions from standard GUMSHOE (p. 9), selecting the ones that fit your games genre. 12-14 is a good number for the PC to have; the rest are picked up by Sources.]]

General Abilities

When attempting actions that don't directly gather information, and which can lead to engaging story possibilities whether you succeed or fail, use your General Abilities.

General Abilities fall into three categories:

- Manual [[MANUAL ICON]], drawing on a combination of skill training and fine motor skills.
- Mental [[MENTAL ICON]], drawing on mostly on intellectual study, perception, thought, and/or memory
- Physical [[PHYSICAL ICON]], using your gross motor skills.

For each General Ability you have, you will see a number of dice shown on your character sheet. These are your Ability Dice, which you roll, one by one, attempting to avoid a bad result (a Setback), hoping to improve your position (an Advance), but sometimes settling for a middle-ground result (a Hold). The explanation of tests appears on p. XX.

The benefits of Edges and penalties imposed by Problems often specify that they apply to a

particular one of these three categories.

To see if you succeed with the use of a General Ability — and, if so, how well — you'll engage in a Challenge, which we'll explain shortly. That will make more sense if we first show you what each ability does.

[[Begin Sidebar]]

General Ability List

[[General Abilities available to Investigators vary depending on the setting. As needed, adapt others from the master set of General Ability descriptions starting on p. 34.]]

Athletics [[PHYSICAL ICON]]

Conceal [[MANUAL ICON]]

Cool [[MENTAL ICON]]

Devices [[MANUAL ICON]]

Disguise [[MANUAL ICON]]

Driving [[MANUAL ICON]]

Explosives [[MANUAL ICON]]

Fighting [[PHYSICAL ICON]]

Filch [[MANUAL ICON]]

First Aid [[MANUAL ICON]]

Fleeing [[PHYSICAL ICON]]

Hypnosis [[MENTAL ICON]]

Magic [[MENTAL ICON]]

Preparedness [[MENTAL ICON]]

Psychoanalysis [[MENTAL ICON]]

Sense Trouble [[MENTAL ICON]]

Shadowing [[PHYSICAL ICON]]

Stability [[MENTAL ICON]]

Stealth [[PHYSICAL ICON]]

To tune your game to Lovecraftian settings outside the noir framework, you might want to import General Abilities from standard *Trail of Cthulhu* we've omitted from this version, such as Piloting [[PHYSICAL ICON]] and Riding [[PHYSICAL ICON]]. Other settings may call for the addition and removal of other abilities appropriate to their genre conventions.

[[End Sidebar]]

General Ability Definitions

When you're not sure what a General Ability does, consult these definitions.

Athletics (Physical) [[PHYSICAL ICON]]

Athletics allows you to:

- perform general acts of physical derring-do, from running to jumping to throwing bundles of dynamite to dodging oncoming objects
- resist the effects of disease, poisoning, and intoxicants
- resist the effects of exposure, such as hypothermia, frostbite, and sunstroke

Any big physical action not covered by another ability probably goes here.

Old *GUMSHOE* hands will note that some benefits of the Health ability, which *One-2-One* does not use, have been moved here.

Conceal (Manual) [[MANUAL ICON]]

You can hide things from view and conceal them from searchers. Methods might include camouflage, holding items out on your person, sneaking things into drawers unobserved, building secret compartments, or even altering an object's visual signature with paint or plaster.

To discover items others have concealed, use the Investigative Ability Evidence Collection. In odd instances where finding the item grants you an advantage other than information — let's say locating the small Mauser in the false compartment just as Horgan's torpedoes come through the door — use a Conceal Challenge.

Cool (Mental) [[MENTAL ICON]]

Measures your ability to make the smart play, instead of the impulsive one, in response to emotional temptation. Cool saves you from such standard errors of the private dick game as:

- falling for the wrong kind of dame
- showing a tell that warns the killer that you know he did it
- smart-mouthing the cop who's itching to club you
- hitting the roulette wheel when you know you shouldn't
- attempting a futile grand gesture to wring real justice from a rigged system
- resist supernatural forces attempting to influence your behavior

Devices (Manual) [[MANUAL ICON]]

You build, repair, and operate electrical or mechanical devices. And what you can put together, you can take apart, disabling equipment either unnoticeably or completely.

You know the workings of electrical devices from simple alarm systems to the most advanced radios. You can also hot-wire a car with an electrical ignition, which is most of those built since 1920. Given the right components, you can create jury-rigged devices from odd bits of scrap.

This expertise also encompasses machines from simple stick traps to the most complex adding machines or steam turbines. (With the exception of simple latches; working with locks is covered by the Locksmith ability). Given the right components, you can create jury-rigged devices and booby-traps from odd bits of scrap.

This doubles as an Investigative Ability when used to:

- determine the function of a given piece of equipment
- evaluate the quality of workmanship used to create an item
- make high-quality audio recordings on records, Dictaphone cylinders, or wire
- read Morse Code
- tap telephone or telegraph lines
- use a device in good repair as intended

Once per case, you may specify that you can operate and (where relevant) drive a new type of heavy machinery, such as: back-hoe, steam roller, construction crane, or steam shovel. Your GM may ask you to supply a line of dialogue explaining where you picked this up.

Disguise (Manual) [[MANUAL Icon]]

You can become someone else: clothes, voice, mannerisms, and posture. You can:

- impersonate someone on the phone
- blend into a crowd in the street
- mingle at a party with those outside your social station
- hold an entire conversation with an unwitting friend or suspect

Expect to have to beat a high number in order to Advance while impersonating a real person to their friends or acquaintances. Depending on the situation, impersonating a plausible and even fictitious stranger ("oh, I'm his cousin from upstate New York") to people one has never met might require only a Difficulty 4 Quick Test.

Driving (Manual) [[MANUAL ICON]]

Anyone who's been taught can drive a car down the road without this ability. You, on the other hand, are a skilled defensive driver, capable of wringing high performance from even the most recalcitrant automobile, pickup truck, or bus. You can:

- evade or conduct pursuit
- avoid collisions, or minimize damage from collisions
- navigate, read maps, and maintain a sense of direction

The ability assumes you can drive cars, trucks, motorcycles and small motor boats. Once per case, you may reveal that you can drive another type of vehicle requiring specialized training, such as a bus, yacht, plane, tank, or gyrocopter. Where this seems unlikely, the GM may invite you to improvise a line describing the circumstances under which you learned this.

Explosives (Manual) [[MANUAL ICON]]

As an expert in bombs and booby-traps, you can:

- defuse bombs and traps
- handle nitroglycerin or other dangerously unstable materials with relative safety

- given time, blow open safes or vaults without damaging the contents
- mix explosive compounds from common chemicals
- safely construct and detonate explosive devices or booby-traps of your own

Explosives doubles as an Investigative Ability when used to:

- figure out the configuration of a bomb from its blast effect and shrapnel
- for any bomb (exploded or unexploded), determine the method and materials of the bomb-maker, and deduce his sophistication, background, and skill

Fighting (Physical) [[PHYSICAL ICON]]

Whether duking it out with fists and the occasional kick, defending against an incoming shovel with an opportunistically grabbed two-by-four, or trading pistol shots with hot-tempered gangsters, your Fighting ability dictates the result of the scrap. When facing impossible odds, an Advance or Hold might allow you to engage your enemies favorably enough to launch a successful escape.

This covers all forms of combat, from scuffling to shooting to hand-to-hand weapons. (Multiplayer *Trail of Cthulhu* treats these as three separate abilities. A solo game eliminates the need to give various player characters differently flavored ways to harm opponents, so *One-2-One* collapses them into a single ability).

Filch (Manual) [[MANUAL ICON]]

Your nimble fingers allow you to unobtrusively manipulate small objects. You can:

- pilfer clues from (or plant clues at) a crime scene under the very noses of unsuspecting authorities
- pick pockets
- plant objects on unsuspecting subjects

First Aid (Manual) [[MANUAL ICON]]

You can perform first aid on sick or injured individuals, including yourself. Depending on how the GM structures the Challenge, an Advance or Hold might stabilize the patient, keep him alive just long enough to hear a whispered confession, or fix him up entirely. Injuries the GM describes as relatively minor will be easier to score Advances and Holds on than ones he describes as serious or life-threatening.

Fleeing (Physical) [[PHYSICAL ICON]]

This ability governs how speedily you run away from impending danger, whether it comes from a gambler's gun, cops intent on locking you up, or a formless entity from beyond space. Used for characters who aren't otherwise Athletic, to give them some chance of avoiding physical harm. If you don't have Fleeing, because you instead use the better, all-around ability of Athletics, such Challenges instead default to Athletics.

Hypnosis (Mental) [[MENTAL ICON]]

You can hypnotize a willing subject, recovering lost memories, suppressing unwanted ones, or removing destructive compulsions. Your technique likely involves the use of narcosynthesis, in which you administer a small dose of sodium pentothal to your subject. Treat as an Investigative Ability when gaining information useful to your case. The investigator may submit to narcosynthesis under a supporting character's care in hopes of Countering Continuity Cards.

Magic (Mental) [[MENTAL ICON]]

Your GM may decide that his version of *Cthulhu Confidential* allows the investigator to eventually learn and practice efficacious magic. This might be used to summon Mythos entities, or bind them once summoned (a crucial step, yet all too often overlooked!).

A few spells allow sorcerers to harm their opponents directly, or to subject them to mental influence. Use Athletics to resist the former, and Cool for the latter. If your Magic dice exceed your dice in the ability used to resist magic, use Magic instead.

(To my taste, giving a noir detective sorcerous powers veers too far from noir horror into the tongue-in-cheek urban fantasy of the film *Cast a Deadly Spell*. But once you start playing, it's your game, not mine, so if that's what you want, do it).

Preparedness (Manual) [[MENTAL ICON]]

You expertly anticipate the needs of any investigation by packing a kit efficiently arranged with necessary gear. Assuming you have immediate access to it, you may be able to produce an object needed to overcome an impediment to your progress. A Quick Test simply determines whether you have the item in question. A Challenge allows you to not only have the object, but also overcome an associated obstacle.

Equipment standard to the private investigation racket does not require a test. This includes but are not limited to: notebooks or paper, writing implements and ink, flashlights, candles and matches, colored chalk, pen-knives, magnifying glasses, pocket mirrors, string, sandwiches, and a flask of middling whiskey.

Other abilities imply the possession of basic gear suitable to their core tasks. Characters with First Aid or Medicine have their own first aid kits or medical bags; Photographers arrive on the scene with cameras, film, and flash bulbs.

Narrative credibility constrains the sorts of items you might have brought with you. If the GM determines that your possession of an item would seem ludicrous, anachronistic, or out of genre, you don't get to test for it. You simply don't have it. When in doubt as to allow an item, the GM imagines the film version of your adventure. If the detective's suddenly having the desired object on hand without prior setup would earn a derisive laugh from moviegoers, the GM disallows the attempt.

Psychoanalysis (Mental) [[MENTAL ICON]]

You can provide comfort, perspective, and solace to the mentally troubled. You may be a Freudian alienist, a priest or pastor, or just an empathetic and intuitive individual. Unlike Reassurance spends, your counsel can aid supporting characters mentally scorched by

confrontation with the Mythos. You can't use your own Psychoanalysis ability to counter your own Continuity Cards.

Sense Trouble (Mental) [[MENTAL ICON]]

This ability allows you to perceive (either with sight or other senses) potential hazards to yourself or others. For example, you can:

- hear the splash of an Aquatic Humanoid dropping into the sewer behind you
- see a flittering shape cross the moon
- have a bad feeling about that eerily hunchbacked priest at the seemingly deserted cathedral
- notice that those two palookas in the dark corner of the bar have been intently watching you all night long
- realize that anyone up in that lighthouse will have seen you coming a mile away

You always make Sense Trouble Challenges, even if you get a Hold or Setback and have to play your character as unaware of impending trouble: see p. XX.

GMs should never require the use of this General Ability to find clues to the mystery at hand. Instead, use Investigative Abilities, defaulting to Evidence Collection when no ability seems more appropriate. Sense Trouble applies during a scenario's action and suspense sequences. In short, if not seeing something will get you attacked or confront you with some other practical ill-consequence, it's Sense Trouble.

Shadowing (Physical) [[PHYSICAL ICON]]

You follow suspects without revealing your presence. You can:

- use binoculars or telescopes to keep watch on a target from a distance
- find undetectable vantage points
- hide in plain sight
- anticipate blind spots in your coverage and plan for them, or use them to lose your own shadowers

Stability (Mental) [[MENTAL ICON]]

Remain in control of your thoughts and actions when confronted with frightening or traumatic sights, sounds, or other sensory input. Stability allows you to:

- move toward danger a self-protective person would avoid
- avoid or suppress physical symptoms of terror and disgust, from nausea to adrenaline rush
- appear calm to others, even when terrified inside
- file a weird sight deep in your memory, keeping your mind intact by refusing to entertain its true significance

Encounters with the especially destabilizing forces and entities of the Mythos may leave you

with a Continuity Card Problem. If you fail to counter it during play, you may suffer a mental breakdown during the story's denouement.

Stealth (Physical) [[PHYSICAL ICON]]

You're good at moving (and standing still) without being noticed. You can:

- move silently
- hide in shadows or cover
- evade visual security, whether guards (usual) or cameras (unusual)
- listen at doors or windows without being overheard yourself

Use Stealth when you are creeping around unnoticed; if you are trying to lose a pursuer, use Shadowing. Outrunning a pursuer is Athletics or Fleeing.

Tests

A **test** determines what happens when your investigator tries to do something that might not work. Your GM decides whether your proposed action requires a test. If it doesn't matter to the outcome of the investigation, or if your failure to perform the action offers no interesting story choices, you succeed, no test required.

Two types of tests appear in the game: Quick Tests and Challenges. Challenges are more interesting and require a little more explanation, so we'll start there.

Challenges

Challenges occur in situations where degrees of success or failure can send the story into different possible branches, each of them interesting in its own way. Examples include:

- running away from a creature that surges out of the La Brea tar pits
- sneaking backstage at the nightclub
- fixing the car before the yokel with the rifle gets back

Sometimes you know that you'll get what you want, but you are only determining the costs of success (if any).

When you make a test, you describe what your investigator is trying to do. You might directly suggest the General Ability you're using, or your GM may infer it from context.

Die Rolls

Make a test by rolling a die. (*GUMSHOE* always uses an ordinary 6-sided die). Each General Ability has a number associated with it — for starting characters, always 1 or 2. This number indicates how many times you may roll the die when testing that ability. When you have multiple dice to roll, roll them one at a time, adding to your total as you go.

Outcomes

Your final total determines the **Outcome** of your action. You either:

- **Advance**, succeeding especially well. This might grant you an Edge card, or allow you extra leverage in the situation at hand.

- **Hold**, which generally leaves you no worse off than you were before, or allows you to move forward, though without additional benefit. (The occasional especially daunting Challenge may present a Hold that puts you in a tough spot, but which is not nearly as bad as the Setback).

- endure a **Setback**, worsening your situation. It may saddle you with a Problem card. Or it might simply make your immediate dilemma worse in some way.

Your GM tells you the number you need to meet or beat to score an Advance.

Earning Additional Rolls

After rolling any die, you may gain an additional die roll by either spending an applicable Edge or taking on an **Extra Problem**.

When you take on an Extra Problem, you commit more to the task, but at a price. Think of it as going into debt, incurring future trouble to overcome your current obstacle. If you Advance or Hold, you leave the situation with only that Problem hanging over your head. If you suffer a Setback, you could wind up with two new Problems: the one listed in the Setback description, and the one you voluntarily took on. You can incur only one Extra Problem per test. Most represent minor setbacks, but a few turn out to be truly nasty. The GM does not reveal the nature of the Extra Problem until the end of the test, making the choice fraught and uncertain.

You may gain one extra die from spending an Edge and another from taking on an Extra Problem. You may never spend two Edges on a single Challenge. No Challenge provides more than one Extra Problem.

Bonuses and Penalties from Edges

Some Edges add a bonus to your Outcome for as long as they remain in your hand. Add these bonuses to the first roll.

Others grant bonuses if you choose to discard the card. You can decide to do this at any time.

Problem cards in hand may impose penalties to the Outcome. Factor these in after the first roll. In some cases, a card's text applies only to your next test of an ability, and the card may then be discarded. Other, less obliging Problems hang around until you Counter them in some other way.

Gaining Pushes

When you reach an Advance with dice still unrolled, you gain a Push (p. XX). This might well mean that you got both an Edge and a Push.

If you have an Edge card that allows you to roll an extra die on a test, you can spend it before rolling any of your Ability dice, or wait until you've rolled them all. The first option increases your chances of earning a Push. The second lets you wait and see if you really need to spend that Edge on this Challenge, giving you the option of holding onto it for later.

Back to the Story

After you have either:

- equaled or surpassed the number needed for an Advance, or
- rolled the die as many times as you are allowed and not scored an Advance

…the GM describes the story result of the Outcome, paraphrasing from the narrative text provided in the Challenge (or, if improvising Challenges on the fly, the GM describes the Outcome extemporaneously).

[[[Begin Sidebar]]]

Challenge Quick Reference

On an Advance:

- You **always** get a special benefit, usually including an Edge.
- If you still have unrolled dice, you **also** get a Push.

On a Hold:

- You end up neither worse nor better off, taking neither penalties or benefits.

On a Setback:

- Something bad happens to you in the story, often represented by a Problem.

To increase the chance of gaining an Advance, you may take on an Extra Problem, allowing you to roll an additional die.

[[[End Sidebar]]]

Challenge Format

Published investigations present Challenges in the following format:

[[[Begin Challenge BOX]]]

Name of Challenge

Name of Active Ability

Penalty: If applicable, lists a penalty applied to your first die roll under certain circumstances. Most often applies when you have a particular Problem card.

Advance #+: Quick description of what happens in the story when you advance. A published scenario, like the one in this book, may refer you to the main text for more detail. The number is the test's target to Advance. Any result equal to or higher than that lets you Advance. Often you earn an Edge; if so, it is named here.

Hold #-#: Description of what happens when the Outcome is a Hold. The numbers show the range in which a Hold occurs. The second number is always 1 less than the target to Advance.

Setback # or less: Description of what happens in the story when the Outcome is a Setback. Numbers show the range in which a Setback occurs. Names the Problem you incur, if any.

Extra Problem: Describes the most obvious Extra Problem the investigator can take on to gain an additional die against this Challenge.

Write Challenges in the second person, as if addressed to the character. Here's an example:

Sneaking into Jimmie Horgan's Joint

Stealth

Advance 8+: You get in and out of Horgan's joint unseen, with the contents of the file folder in Horgan's desk. Kicks off the scene "File Folder" below. Gain Edge 3, "Blackmail Photos."

Hold 4-7: You realize that Horgan's men pay much more attention than you'd like to the door you want to sneak through. You can leave without their realizing you were casing the joint, but you'll have to figure out some other way to get that file.

Setback 3 or less: Horgan's men confront you. Spend a Push on a suitable Interpersonal ability, or they take you out to the alley to make with the brass knuckles.

Extra Problem: Problem 7, "They're Onto You"

Blackmail Photos

Spend for an Interpersonal Push when dealing with Horgan or either of the Kane sisters. You have to be willing to show them the photos and portray yourself as ruthless enough to use them.

They're Onto You

Horgan and McShane suspect you might be poking into their illegal affairs. They might take action against you if they see you around again.

Until you win back their trust, possibly with a Reassurance Push, you can't make other Interpersonal Pushes on them.

Immediate Consequences

Some Advances confer a bonus or extra die on another test that will happen right away. Some Setbacks impose a penalty. Since they are resolved right away and don't need to be tracked from one scene to the next, they don't require the use of Edge or Problem cards.

Voluntary Losses

The player can always decide not to engage in a test, but instead to accept the consequences of a Setback result. This might happen when the player decides that failure introduces an interesting or challenging story possibility. Stability and Cool tests are the most likely to inspire a player to take a voluntary loss.

Reading Results Text

Snippets of text portray the Advance, Hold, and Setback results as second-person narration, directed at the detective. In some cases, usually in Stability and Cool tests, they may even suggest the character's perceptions, emotional responses, or thoughts. Although the GM can always read them out verbatim, usually the player will find it more natural to hear them paraphrased into a less polished, but more spontaneous, narration. Where possible, the GM should break this text into small chunks, inviting the player to participate in a back-and-forth dialogue. See the example below.

Challenge Example

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

You undertake the Challenge "Sneaking into Jimmie Horgan's Joint," above. You have two Ability Dice in Stealth. The GM tells you that you need an 8 to Advance. You roll the first of your dice and get a 5. That isn't enough, so you roll again and get a 2, for a total of 7 — still short of your target. You can either accept a Hold result, or take on an Extra Problem in order to get the third die roll that will assure an Advance. You decide to take the Extra Problem, and gain both the Advance (and its "Blackmail Photos" Edge) and the Extra Problem, "They're Onto You."

The GM paraphrases the Advance text, leaving you spaces to contribute additional narrative detail. "How do you get in?"

"I wait until his floor-walkers are distracted by something."

"There's a big jackpot at the craps table, and a drunk jumps up and down excitedly, drawing everyone's attention."

"That's my moment. I slip into the hallway leading to Horgan's office."

"You see the folder you're looking for on his desk."

"I grab it and head back out again."

"As you head out, you see McShane on the other side of the casino."

"Uh-oh. Does he see me?"

"He sure seems to."

"That's bum luck. But I got what I needed. Let's hope it's worth the price."

The GM then gives you the Extra Problem card.

Handling Problems and Edges

These notes guide you in using Edges and Problems during play.

Formatting

The cards in this game use the following format.

Story material comes first; this is italicised under the heading, and provides a desciption of what prompts the card. Next comes rules material, in regular style; this includes the Ability the card relates to, and then the outcome of an Advance, Hold and Setback result. Any Extra Problems which can be taken are listed at the bottom of the card.

Some cards might not have both - cards omit the story material when their title says everything there is to say: "Stabbed" or "Smashed Headlight" require no further elaboration. Other cards present only story material, leaving the player and GM to weave them into the narrative in the course of play. The four possible opening Problem cards for "The Fathomless Sleep" work this way, for example, as do most Continuity Card cards.

What "Next" Means

Some Problems apply a penalty to the character's next test, or next test of a particular type. As a player, you can't burn off the penalty by using it on a pointless test with no meaningful bearing on the storyline. Only tests called for by the GM or the scenario, or which: a) make narrative sense; and b) threaten to put you in a worse position on a Setback, count as "next tests" for this purpose.

When Instructions Differ

When the text of an Edge or Problem card contradicts that of a Challenge, treat the card as an exception that takes precedence.

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

> *For example, the text of a Challenge may specify that Edges applying to tests of General/Physical General Abilities, or Fleeing in particular, can be applied to the present test, in which the detective and an innocent bystander are running away from ghouls. If, however, the player has an Edge called Ghoul Lore, which can be applied to any test where ghouls are present, the card wins out, ignoring the apparently more restrictive Challenge text.*

Where the text of a Problem and an Edge conflict, the Edge takes precedence.

Duplicates

Except where indicated, if you get an Edge or Problem you already have, it is duplicated, adding an additional copy to your stack. In the case of an Edge, this represents a benefit you can use more than once, and/or one that conveys an additional benefit. For a Problem, it means your dilemma has doubled in intensity. You must Counter each card separately, reflecting a dilemma that has just become twice as bad as it was.

Bonuses and penalties "stack," to use gaming parlance. Add together all active Penalties/Bonuses when applying them to a Challenge.

> *The text of the Problem "Wrenched Back" reads:*

-2 on your next General/Physical test, -1 on the test after that, then discard.

You have one copy of "Wrenched Back", and have already applied its -2 penalty to a test. Now you get another. In the following scene you take a fighting Challenge against mind-controlled senators. You take the -1 penalty accruing from the first copy of "Wrenched Back" and the -2 from the second (since this is your first General/Physical test since getting that copy of the card). The total penalty is -3.

Countering Problems

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

Problems may reduce your range of options in the story at hand. For example, "They're Onto You" forces you to tread warily around Horgan and McShane, or spend time trying to allay their suspicions.

Problems left unaddressed at the end of the story can lead to a downbeat ending. To prevent your adventure from ending in remorse, dissipation, bruises, or macabre demise, do your best to counter your Problems before the mystery resolves.

To counter a Problem, you must do something that would credibly get it out of your way. This may require a successful Test or the expenditure of a Push or Edge.

Realizing that Horgan is probably onto you, you head over to his office to trade wisecracks. You successfully portray yourself as a go-along-to-get-along type who would never dream of upsetting his applecart. The GM charges you a Reassurance Push to achieve this.

Taking Time

The most common way to Counter a problem is to Take Time. When Taking Time, the detective momentarily puts the investigation aside to deal with the issue raised by the problem.

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@
Lauren watches from hiding as crooked Broadway producer Sid Diamond and his thugs kill songwriter Danny Munich. She can't save him, but at least she can try to stay alive to make sure Diamond later faces justice. The scenario calls for a Cool Challenge not to gasp in horror as they beat Danny to death. As player, you elect to take on an Extra Problem to make sure you get at least a Hold, and manage to stay silent. You do, but are left with this card:

[[[Begin Problem Card]

Facial Twitch

Your rational mind knows you had no way to save Danny. The rest of you isn't so quick to forgive. Inner turmoil manifests itself as an incessantly twitching left eye.

You can't Push Interpersonal Abilities. Counter by Taking Time to mentally regroup.

Problem #

How exactly you mentally regroup depends on how you choose to describe it. Your particular interpretation of Lauren paints her as a hard-charging type who releases her frustrations physically. You tell the GM she's headed to her all-woman sparring club to sock a punching bag into submission, imagining all the while that it's Sid Diamond's contemptuously grinning face. This gets rid of that twitch. You discard the card.

In a few cases, Taking Time may require a Quick Test or Challenge. More often the player simply describes a brief interlude scene. The text of certain Problem cards explicitly indicates what this scene might look like. The GM may decide that your alternate solution works better than the suggested one. Players can also suggest ways to Take Time to get rid of Problems whose text doesn't describe a Counter at all.

Unless specified in the card text, Taking Time never removes a Problem marked as a Continuity Card (p. XX).

Taking Time is not without cost. Some scenarios may find your character working against the clock to accomplish a particular end: getting the antidote before the client succumbs to poison, finding the bomb before it goes off, or rescuing the kidnap victim before the cultists ritually strangle him.

Without a deadline, Taking Time typically gives enemies, rivals, and nuisances time to make moves against you they otherwise couldn't. These incidents, called Antagonist Reactions, are described for GMs on p. XX.

Quick Tests

On occasion, your detective may face a very straightforward obstacle where you can only succeed or fail, with no particular ongoing advantages or disadvantages arising from the result. In this case, you undertake a Quick Test. If you hit the Advance number, you succeed. If not, you fail, but nothing especially bad happens. You don't gain Edge or Problem cards from the Outcome of a Quick Test. Although you can spend an Edge to gain an extra die on a Quick Test, the GM will warn you that it carries lower stakes than a full Challenge and therefore might not be worth it. Although ongoing Penalties from Problem cards apply to Quick Tests, you may not discard the Problem card.

GMs choose Quick Tests for situations where big positive or negative results are either hard to think of, or would take the story in an annoying or fruitless direction. Quick Test Difficulties should range from 3-4.

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

Let's say Lauren wants to sneak into a skyscraper's telephone room in hopes of overhearing any dish its operators might have on the building's resident

business tycoon, Eli Parnham. With Lauren's Disguise ability, it's entirely possible that some players will try to put it to use here, having her show up in an operator's uniform and pretend to be a new hire. Lauren could approach the operators in a less extravagant way and get the same information. But when you put Disguise on the character card, some players are gonna want to use it...

Preparing for this eventuality, the scenario's designer, Ruth, considers all the possible Setbacks that would result if Lauren gets caught. That would let Parnham know she's looking into him, but he's not the culprit anyway. Rival reporter Lawrence Ames might toss her some wisecracks about promoting her to the phone pool the next time she pops into the office. Any more serious consequences would pull Lauren away from the main plotline, toward petty annoyance. Rather than try to force this into the Challenge format, Ruth decides to use a Quick Test.

If you have trouble thinking of Problems, including Extra Problems, for a Challenge, that's a sign that you should probably replace it with a Quick Test.

Where the result lacks any whiff of danger or great import, skip even the Quick Test and allow the ability use to succeed automatically.

Sometimes you'll envision a possible Challenge for which you can think of only two Outcomes. As long as there's an Edge or Problem to arise from it, it's still a Challenge, not a Quick Test.

[[[[Begin Sidebar]]]

Challenge, Quick Test, or Neither?

Situation	Resolution method
Both success and failure lead to interesting story developments. Either could bring additional consequences, negative and positive, that might matter later.	Challenge
Both success and failure lead to interesting story developments. Neither inspires compelling additional consequences for later scenes.	Quick Test
Failure would be boring.	Automatic Success

[[[[Begin Sidebar]]]

No Secret Tests

On occasion, the GM may be tempted to make a secret Challenge roll on the player's behalf.

The classic example occurs with Sense Trouble, a General Ability allowing the character to react quickly to approaching danger. A GM might reason that the player should not be tipped off if the character fails to notice something wrong.

In practice, it is almost always more effective to tip the player off by requesting a test, but in the case of failure, to withhold knowledge of what exactly the character didn't spot. Think of this generalized idea that something has been missed as the roleplaying equivalent of ominous music playing on the soundtrack, or an eerily composed shot from overhead. Should the player attempt to have the character act on the sense of unease, all the GM has to do is ask her to justify why it makes sense to do so. If she can, well, it makes sense, so allow it. If not, she'll relent, no harm, no foul.

One-2-One requires this level of transparency, because the player usually has the option to make a sacrifice, either spending an Edge or taking on an extra Problem, to increase her chance of success.

You may have noted that the game is entirely player-facing, meaning that the player makes all rolls, and the GM never touches a die. Secret tests would break that principle.

In practice, you can frame most Challenges so that the bad results of a Hold or dire ones of a Setback become immediately apparent anyway: the mountain lion leaps from behind the bush, Langston grows woozy after drinking the boilermaker with the mickey in it, and so on.

Fights

Mystery stories featuring extended fight sequences are rare exceptions in film, TV and fiction. In multiplayer *GUMSHOE*, fights can nonetheless provide fun and excitement, without stopping the entire story dead when a player character bites the dust. The survivors mourn their loss and carry on the investigation as the player gets to work creating a new character.

In *One-2-One*, that won't do. The death of a sole protagonist takes a much greater toll on the story than the demise of one team member. When you set aside the possibility of death as a result, tactical choices lose their impact. So we omit these as well, providing a much more abstract combat system than multiplayer *GUMSHOE* — which compared to other RPGs is already plenty abstract.

A fight plays out like any other Challenge, using your Fighting ability. Describe yourself attacking in a way that fits your character as you perceive it: with guns, fists, hand-to-hand weapons, conveniently grabbed objects, or a combination thereof based on circumstances.

In some cases, facts you learn about opponents may help you when it comes time to fight them, granting you a Bonus on your Fighting test.

Fight Outcomes

The GM spells out fight results like those of any other Challenge. Each fight may have different consequences, as seen in its description:

[[[Begin Challenge BOX]]]

Aquatic Humanoid Fight

Fighting

Advance 7+: The Aquatic Humanoid flees, shrieking, and dives back into the sea cave. You gain access to the secret grotto, with half an hour before any of its fellow creatures show up. Gain Edge 8, "Fish-Cutting Blade."

Hold 4-6: You realize that the Aquatic Humanoid will slash you to bits if you persist in trying to enter the grotto. You can safely withdraw to your Packard. It does not pursue you.

Setback 3 or less: You wake up in the grotto, chained to a sacrificial altar. See the "Grotto Altar" scene.

Extra Problem: Problem 11, "Clawed by Aquatic Humanoids."

[[[END Challenge BOX]]

[[[Begin Edge Card]

Fish-Cutting Blade

Continuity

A weird knife made from an alloy of steel and jade. Is that even possible?

Spend for an extra die in a Fighting Challenge against Aquatic Humanoids, or to counter a Continuity Card.

[[[END Edge Card]

[[[Begin Problem Card]

Clawed by Aquatic Humanoids

You have been slashed by the frog-like claw of an Aquatic Humanoid. It hurts like hell and a weird liquid seeps from the wound. You'd better get that taken care of.

-2 on all General/Physical and -1 on all General/Manual tests until you Take Time to Counter this card.

Problem #]

[[[END Problem Card]

This way of portraying fights lets the GM frame Challenges to exclude results that disrupt the flow of a single-protagonist narrative. On a Setback, Lauren doesn't die hideously; she crawls away, shaken but still able to continue her investigation. On an Advance, she doesn't kill an antagonist whose premature exit from the story will preclude its most entertaining coming scenes, or render her ability to remain at large implausible. She gets something out of winning, but the bad guy still limps on, allowing the story to retain the satisfying shape and logic we expect from a mystery story.

Stability Tests

As hard as you might be boiled, when you witness acts of shattering violence, or confront unearthly horrors, the psychic trauma you undergo may lead to problems later. To see whether

this happens, and to what extent, test your Stability General Ability against a target to Advance pegged to the severity of the incident. These Challenges work like any other. On Setbacks you take on Problem cards describing the specifics of your deteriorating mood and grasp of reality. These might be Continuity Card cards, arising from incidents that awaken your mind to dread cosmic truths. They may or may not be Continuity cards, which carry over into later scenarios if not somehow Countered.

Car Wreck

@@@REWRITE EXAMPLE TO FIT YOUR SETTING@@@

You discover a roadster at the bottom of the ravine. Leona Farr, the starlet behind the wheel, has been decapitated. You nearly trip over her blond-tressed head.

Stability

Advance 8+: Aside from a momentary wince, the awful sight means nothing to you. Gain Edge 7, "Cool Customer."

Hold 5-7: Though visibly shaken throughout the ensuing scene, you are able to take the awful sight in stride. Leona's head might pop up in future nightmares from time to time, but most days you won't think about it at all.

Setback 4 or less: This sight will haunt you for a long time to come. Gain Problem "Decapitated Starlet."

Extra Problem: Problem 13, "Vengeful"

Cool Customer

Word gets around that you kept your composure when the going got gruesome.

Spend for a Push on any Interpersonal ability.

Edge #

Decapitated Starlet

The image of Leona's head at your feet burns itself to the inside of your retinas. Whenever your mind wanders, a vivid memory of it assails your consciousness.

-2 penalty on all General/Mental Challenges. Counter by Taking Time to submit to narcosynthesis under the care of a shrink.

Problem #

Vengeful

If you find out who killed Leona, you will be compelled to avenge her, risks be damned.

Problem #

Tagged Cards

[[You may decide that a certain class of cards, identified with a tag specific to your setting, is especially hard to shake, with lasting ill consequences that continue from one scenario to the next. You probably want to give them a snappy, setting-specific name.]]

When you still have Problem cards at the end of a scenario, Stability Problems arising from brushes with the Mythos take precedence over all others in the bleak fate your character faces. These are called [[Tag]] Cards.

[[Tag]] Cards can never be Countered for free, or by Taking Time. To get rid of them, you must spend Edges. Only Edges marked as spendable on [[Tag]] Cards can be used for this purpose. It might take more than one Edge to get rid of an especially awful [[Tag]] Card.

Unwrapping the Painting

Stability

Advance 9+: Sure, the picture is realistically rendered, but you don't let yourself believe that it was painted from an actual model. It's a work of fantasy. It has to be! Earn Edge 7. "Mighty Disbelief."

Hold 5-8: The painting unnerves you, but no more than a grisly crime scene photo.

Setback 4 or less: Problem 12, "Eros and Thanatos."

Spending Edges: Any Edge that counters a [[Tag]] card.

Extra Problem: Problem 13, "Censorious Urge."

Mighty Disbelief

You live in the here and now, with no patience for hocus-pocus. There's a rational explanation for everything.

Spend to counter a [[Tag]] card.

Eros and Thanatos

[[Tag]] Card: You can't shake the thought that the creature in this painting was real — and is somehow related to a woman you love, or loved once, or might hope to love.

Problem #

Censorious Urge

[[Tag]] Card: To maintain your sense that the painting hasn't affected you, you must take any measures, no matter how mad, to destroy it once its usefulness to the case has ended. It doesn't count as admitting anything if you set it on fire and never ever think about it ever again.

Problem #

Death

Your character never dies in mid-story, but can keel over at its the end: succumbing to wounds; shot by gangsters; knifed by cultists; or hauled into the sky to be torn to shreds by a bat-winged byakhee. This might happen when you fail Challenges in the final scene, or when un-Countered Problems call for ultimate doom.

Or, you may suffer an irrevocable nervous collapse, also ending your character's career. Either way, your next session will have to star a new character.

Improvements

Assuming your character survived with mind and body intact, at the end of each case, you can add one of the following:

- an Investigative Ability you lack
- a **tick** on a General Ability

A tick moves you incrementally toward a rating improvement in a General Ability. You gain no more than 1 tick per ability per case. Once you have 3 ticks in a General Ability, you cash them in to improve a rating from 1 to 2, or from 2 to 3.

General Abilities may never exceed 3.

Your total dice in Cool and Stability combined can never exceed 4.

You can take a tick in a General Ability you don't have. Once you hit three ticks you get the ability, at one die. Be sure to take actions in each adventure justifying your eventual acquisition of the new ability.

GMing One-2-One

This chapter, addressed to the GM, shows you how to run the game for the player.

Intensity Management

In our responses from playtesters to this game, one theme stood out above all others: the one player, one GM format makes for an intense, intimate experience. Tension increases without other players to fall back on. The sole player remains constantly in the spotlight, without opportunities to sit back while others take the lead. Responsibility for thinking of the right questions and looking for information in the right places rests with your one player, who has to solve the puzzle without bouncing ideas off others. Nor is there any emotional respite from the bursts of lighthearted out-of-character kibitzing, banter, and digression that often relieve tensions in multiplayer games.

In the story, the character walks the mean streets alone, much more vulnerable to danger than a gang of well-armed investigators ready to defend one another from enemies. Consistent with the physical realism expected from a hard-boiled detective tale, an outnumbered investigator fights to get away unscathed, and does not hope to beat up four or five goons like the hero of an action movie.

Because the format inherently keeps the pressure on your solo player, as the GM you may find yourself looking for ways to give the player hope and confidence. Where most games contrive situations to make sure that the player characters physically overcome any final threats, here the detective can call in the cops or other reinforcements to handle the apprehensions — after she figures out who needs apprehending. This is what happens in the source material; it does not by definition deprive the hero of agency.

(Are you adapting *One-2-One* to a more outlandishly stylized genre? Your samurai, *wuxia* or time agent detective might well lay waste to large teams of lowly henchmen in a single flurry of blows. Making that work requires only that you adjust the outcome descriptions as you write up Challenges. In these instances, you're relaxing tension by portraying a more forgiving universe, rather than easing up on the apparent difficulty of actions in an unforgiving one).

Guiding the Player

When the feeling of the solo format threatens to turn the tension of individual play into the pressure of an overwhelming problem, act as a partner and guide your player through the story.

How to Dislodge a Stuck Player Gently

Detectives in fiction — not to mention in real life — often reach a point where they hit a wall and can't think where to go next. There's nothing wrong with that happening to a game character. These moments of frustration intensify the feeling of triumph that comes from finally solving a puzzle. But they have to be moments, and not long stretches of frustrated stasis.

As the GM, you must expect to do more than you would in a multiplayer game to subtly point a stuck player toward the next fruitful lead. Before intervening, though, be sure that the player really has become stymied, and isn't just thinking things through.

You have the scenario in front of you, so you know what leads the character has yet to investigate, what has been learned but forgotten, and what might have been uncovered had a previous scene unfolded differently. Depending on the situation, it might be most helpful to:

- review with the player the list of leads that haven't yet been looked into
- review what the investigator knows so far
- mention lingering questions from previous scenes that cry out for follow-up

The balance between gesturing toward the right track and leading the player by the nose is easier to strike in practice than it is to talk about in theory. A quick verbal nudge is often all it takes to prompt the player toward the needed intuitive leap and choose a course of action.

Common Sticking Points

Players tend to get stuck for a few common reasons.

1. **Not wanting to talk to people**. Especially in the days of the internet, we'd rather get information from impersonal sources than engage with other people who might confuse, threaten, or embarrass us. Yet the detective genre depends on characters being willing to put themselves out there and engage in face-to-face questioning scenes; only by this means can they get the kinds of information that no one willingly commits to paper. Nudge the player toward actual conversations.

2. **Especially not wanting to talk to scary people**. Players sometimes unconsciously remove from their mental list of leads encounters with GMCs whom they have good reason to fear. This came up more than once in test runs of "The Fathomless Sleep", with players blanking on Mickey Cohen as a person to talk to. Remind the player that *Cthulhu Confidential*, which is noir as well as horror, expects investigators to be willing to talk to dangerous types.

3. **Not wanting to talk in person**. Your player may try to protect the character by conducting interviews over the phone instead of in person. Remind the player that that same distance protects the witnesses from giving themselves away. Key interpersonal abilities like Intimidation, Reassurance — and, perhaps most importantly, Assess Honesty — don't work with Ma Bell standing in the way. Sometimes you have to look a mug right in the kisser to see if he's on the up-and-up.

4. **Adopting too false a false persona**. To protect themselves from probable bad guys, players sometimes describe their detectives as approaching them under false pretenses. This happens in the source material, too, but it only works with a persona allowing the detective to ask the key questions. More than one "The Fathomless Sleep" player had Dex pretend to be an interested spiritual seeker when meeting Clara Nebel and/or William Pelley. After a certain point this made it hard to ask questions about Helen Deakin's disappearance. Address this by reminding the player, as she chooses her fake story, that it has to let her get at the key facts.

5. **Needing to re-interview.** Often the player has missed a key point and should go back to a witness or suspect for more information. Remind the player that there is no shame in this. Happens all the time, in both fictional and real-world investigation.

In the appendix, on p. XX, you'll find a handy player-nudging shortcut, a handout called "How to Solve a Case." Provide it to your player in advance. When your player gets stuck, getting him back on the right track may be as simple a matter as pointing to the relevant bullet point.

"As a Seasoned Detective…"

Some hints can be fed to the player by reminding them of that the character knows more about investigative technique than they do:

- "As a seasoned detective, Lauren would consider a stake-out here."
- "Lauren's journalistic instincts tell her she's going to have to go down into that basement."
- "Lauren has learned that sometimes you have to press witnesses like this a little harder, whatever the risks."

This framing shows the *character* behaving with confidence and competence, even when the player is a little unsure.

Sources: They're Here to Help

Some players go to a Source only as a last resort, while others go off to jaw with their Sources between every Core scene. If the second approach works for the player, make it work for you. Sources exist to provide a sense of comfort and solidarity in a lonely noir world. Let the player gain support from them.

The player may use them as a way for you to act as a sounding board, in-character. Embrace that.

When they ask questions of Sources that the scenario puts in the mouths of GMCs, by all means dole out any clues that might logically arise from their specialized knowledge, remembering that they can't duplicate the direct experiences of witnesses in the case. But if, say, the scenario expects Langston to learn from an Air Force contact that the film of a UFO sighting has no photographic defects and seems genuine, he could just as easily go consult Scout Moore, his usual Source for the Photography ability.

Giving Out Clues

As you begin your scenario, you and the player will quickly fall into a rhythm of information dispersal. Don't let any advice given here stop you from giving out clues in a way that feels natural to both of you.

Some players want to make frequent reference to their abilities. They want to call the shots by describing what their characters do to find clues.

Others prefer to have you supply lots of information without mentioning abilities by name.

Most fall in between, depending on the instance at hand.

Be alert to cues, and follow your player's lead. Every GM/player duo will do this a little differently.

Saying Yes to Interpretation

When a player wants to deviate from the backgrounds provided for the characters, and you can't see any specific reason why that would prevent part of the scenario from taking place, say yes. For that matter, if you can see how to change that scenario roadblock and still say yes, say yes. We present detective personality details as a starting point, not to force you to play according to some established canon. As soon as you start playing with them, Viv, Langston and Dex become yours. Dex in particular appears as a set of genre tropes, waiting for players to fill in the details.

Puncturing Excess Tension

When you see your player struggling with the pressure of being onstage all the time, look for ways to lighten the mood, to give her time to think, or both. Ease off the Antagonist Reactions (p. XX), for example, when the player needs clearly needs a drop in tension.

You might insert a low-stakes Source scene to give a player needed breathing room. Lt. Hartman might show up to ask Langston if he wants to go on a hike in Rock Creek Park. Louisa Reynolds could insist that Viv join her at the Cotton Club to see Cab Calloway perform.

One player implemented the awesome idea of having Dex pause for journaling breaks, in which she reminded herself of where he was in the case while supplying his hardboiled voice-over narration. This had the extra advantage of giving the GM time to think and regroup, too.

[[[Begin Sidebar]]]

How Long Are Sessions?

Though written with the expectation of a four-hour play session per scenario, playtesters reported widely varying results. In the case of "The Fathomless Sleep", they ranged from a ruthlessly efficient three hours to an epic nine hours.

Short or long, everyone enjoyed the lengths they wound up playing. In a solo game, pacing is about going at the speed the player dictates.

Plan for four hours, but prepare to be surprised.

[[[End Sidebar]]]

Why Scenarios Go Deep

GUMSHOE One-2-One twins simple rules with complex, layered scenarios. They aim to give the feeling of depth you get from the tangled conspiracies of a Raymond Chandler novel.

With the benefit of playtesting, we sure hope we have avoided creating anything like the famous story wherein William Faulker and Leigh Brackett, writing Howard Hawks' film adaptation of *The Big Sleep*, asked who killed a minor character, chauffeur Owen Taylor. Hawks' telegram to Chandler elicited the response: "Damned if I know."

This "probably-happened" fable highlights the challenge of writing complex mysteries.

The interactive nature of RPGs means that you can't depend on your leading characters not to examine the weak parts of your storyline. Players poke at plot holes. With a group game,

discussions between players can save your bacon by helping to cover these holes up. A group may float enough alternate theories of the case to throw a veil of useful confusion over any plot inconsistencies you may accidentally introduce. In solo play, the case becomes clearer — and falls apart if the player finds something that couldn't have happened the way you thought it did.

For this reason, the game focuses on preparation over improvisation. You can still improvise, but it's tough, even for an experienced GM. If you don't trust me on that, ask Owen Taylor.

Reacting to the Unexpected

That said, no amount of preparation allows you to anticipate every possible player move. Use the sample Challenges starting on p. XX and the sample Edges and Problems in the Appendix as baselines to adapt to any surprises. Don't be afraid to rely on Quick Tests until the storyline loops back into territory laid out in the written scenario.

Running Sources

The witnesses, suspects, and clients of the mystery at hand often create dramatic tension by peppering the protagonist with verbal barbs and jabs, or by getting under his skin in other ways. Sources provide a welcome contrast to the charged and antagonistic dialogue scenes that make up the bulk of a scenario. They invite the detective to take the load off, perhaps light up one of the period's ubiquitous cigarettes, and enjoy a belt of the hard stuff. Sources not only divulge clues, they also provide an emotional up-note. Always play these sequences as low-key, collegial moments.

In addition to information, the player might go to Sources to counter Problems.

Threatening Sources

If your player ventures the thought that your hard-boiled Mythos tales lack trauma and horror, then you might ratchet up the stakes by placing Sources directly in danger. Killing them off in mid-case might provide a tough shock. For deeply sustained suspense, use a Problem card to hang the threat of a Source's demise over the detective like the proverbial sword.

[[[Begin Problem Card]

Max Poisoned

You didn't get to Max before he drank the gin laced with the strange potion. If you don't get the antidote by the end of the case, he's doomed.

Problem #

[[[END Problem Card]

Replacing Sources

Allowing Sources to become potential victims raises the prospect of having to replace them. If a deceased Source leaves the detective without someone to consult on an area of expertise, you

can either:

- ask the player to describe someone else the character already knows who might be able to fill him in
- have the character seek out, and make a cold approach to, a suitable expert as part of the investigation at hand

Running Challenges

Challenges presented in published scenarios include text in the second person, addressed to the detective. Paraphrase it naturally rather than simply reading it aloud out of the book or from your screen. Better yet, briefly encapsulate what has happened and invite the player to describe the action.

Often you'll have to treat results text as a guideline only, adjusting details to fit the way you and the player have already described events in the scene.

Suicidal Choices and Other Ridiculousness

Most players have their detective make only those choices that arise credibly from the situations you describe. When confronted by a dozen goons and their baseball bats at a migrant worker camp, a sensible player doesn't say, "I leap in and attack them all at once." When stuck on top of a construction crane two hundred feet above the pavement they don't describe themselves leaping off and hoping for the best. They don't even consider such nonsensical options. They're buying into the basic premise of the exercise, in hopes of having the fun it promises.

A small number of roleplayers enjoy rejecting a game's premise and attempting to subvert it by exposing its alleged loopholes and logical errors. This is the RPG equivalent of having more fun dismantling toys than playing with them.

Players who fit this profile could, one imagines, react to *One-2-One*'s idea that death and other story-ending consequences only happen after the case wraps up by proposing the ridiculous or suicidal actions described above.

"If I don't die until the end, that means I'm immortal until then!"

That's definitely what Igor from John Kovalic's *Dork Tower* comic would conclude, and therefore it's definitely wrong.

Simply respond to such literalists by explaining that the character knows what would doom him, and is smarter than that, even if the player controlling his actions isn't. Ask the player if he really wants to end the story in the middle on a note of complete anticlimactic absurdity.

Better yet, if you know that someone takes this adversarial approach to GMs and rules sets, find someone else to play with. In *One-2-One*, you only need one player, and with virtual tabletops you have a whole world full of genuinely collaborative partners to choose from.

Sometimes a player will propose a seemingly absurd or suicidal action out of sincere confusion. Always check to make sure you haven't mis-described the situation in a way that makes an action that seems ludicrous to you look perfectly sensible to the player.

[[[Begin Sidebar]]]

Sudden Endings

In some rare cases the story may take you to a place where it feels appropriately conclusive for the character to fail fatally, even though the case has not yet been solved.

If, and *only* if, the player wants it, let it happen. Join together in describing the horrific glory of it all.

[[[End Sidebar]]]

Interpreting Edges

Treat listed benefits from Edges as a starting point, not a stricture. If you or your player see an entertaining equivalent benefit for an Edge, by all means exercise your creativity.

Some Edge cards list narrative possibilities without mechanics. Take license to apply these mechanically as feels apropos.

> *Capitol Colour's "Big Spender" card merely states that Langston doesn't have to worry about money. But if Langston's player proposes it, he might be able to discard the card to get a free Push on his Bargain ability. In the story, this might play out as Langston spending the whole haul on a massive but useful bribe.*

As you can see from the Edges given in this book, not all are created equal. For some to exert a strong impact on the player, others have to be a little less impressive than the norm. Storytelling is all about rhythm, pal.

Creating Investigators

If something terrible happens to the character at the end of a case, you may have to create a new detective to solve cases in your chosen city.

Character cards reflect the basic abilities required for mysteries in this genre. Ask the player if she cares whether the new investigator has the exact same list of optimal skills. If she says no, just change the character's name, pick a different defining Problem at the top of the next case, and you're off to the races.

Alternately, the player can choose to swap out any Investigative Abilities for others. Tread especially carefully when dropping Interpersonal Abilities, the reliable warhorses of any hardboiled mystery.

In the case of General Abilities, the player can swap out any ability for any one not listed on Dex's card, giving the new ability the same number of dice as the one she's dropping. To maintain some degree of emotional vulnerability essential to both horror and noir, the character can never start play with more than 3 dice total divided between Cool and Stability. Entirely dropping a frequently called-upon General Ability will lead to a lot of failures, so we advise caution there, too.

When creating a detective from scratch, a good starting point is to have 14 or so Investigative Abilities, and around 18 dice in General Abilities, with no single ability exceeding 2 dice. You can go up or down a few points in either case, as you're not worrying about maintaining a sense of equality between multiple players. Basically you're looking to strike a balance between too many

abilities to remember and not enough to feel competent. Stick to the above-mentioned Cool/Stability limit (p. XX), though.

Creating Scenarios

Start by creating and running mysteries that use [[Name of Your Intro scenario]]" as a model. Go read that now, if you haven't already.

As you become more experienced, you may decide that the formula used there bears infinite variation. Or you may experiment, branching out to other structures of your own devising.

Premise

Start by establishing the question the detective must answer, along with the answer to that question.

The Whos and the Whys

Now fill in the events that led to the answer, as driven by the characters who made them happened. Together these two elements fill in the scenario's **Cast**, and a cohesive summary of **What Happened**.

Double-crosses and gangland conspiracies make up the web which any noir detective must then untangle. These essential plot devices that fuel the genre.

Flesh out the Cast with additional witnesses, informants, and ancillary conspirators. Any good mystery requires likely alternate suspects whom the detective must rule out before settling on the true culprit. Give these characters secrets they wish to conceal, or other factors that make them look guilty. Actually *being* guilty of other offenses, connected to the main plot or not, always works splendidly.

A timeline of events will help you run the scenario. The process of assembling it may help reveal logical holes in your storyline. Better to fix them in advance than have to scramble when the player finds them, mid-game.

Creating Starting Problems

Now step back for a moment and see if your detective needs an introductory Problem, like the four given in the opener for "The Fathomless Sleep."

If you've already run at least one scenario for your player, the detective probably has some lingering Problems still in hand. In that case, write an introduction that connects the most salient of those Problems to the assignment given in the first scene.

New starting Problems become necessary only for introductory scenarios featuring a new detective character, or when the last adventure allowed the detective to dispense of all significant Problems. Always create three or four of them to give the player a sense of control over the character's story arc. Some players prefer to invent their own, and are good at it. Whenever you can offload narrative tasks onto the player, seize the opportunity. This works best when you have enough lead time to ensure that the player-created Problem can have an impact in one or more places in the scenario. A strong Problem can be plugged into any story in its genre without

significant work on your part. When you can't see a way to build consequences for a player-proposed Problem into your case, ask the player to propose a different one. Plenty of players would sooner pick from several options you supply than have to invent one from whole cloth.

Write Problems you create in a general manner, allowing the player to customize them with specific detail when you play the scene out.

In the case of a new installment of an ongoing series, when you run the scene, invite the player to explain how this new Problem came to bedevil the detective since last time.

Introductory Scene

Devise an introductory scene that references the detective's ongoing Problem, and then presents him with the case and its fundamental question. Set this in the standard starting location associated with this investigator — such as that classic opening, "a dame walked into my office" — or switch up the formula to place the meeting with the client somewhere else. The investigator might be summoned to the office or abode of a wealthy or powerful client; a furtive client might request a meeting on neutral ground, like a coffee shop, nightclub or athletic club. Otherwise, the introductory scene should contain the elements of any other, as detailed below.

Anatomy of a Scene

Scenes in published *GUMSHOE* scenarios start with header entries to help the GM quickly spot their purpose and place in the flow of the case.

Scene Types

The Scene Type header entry shows the GM the scene's purpose.

An **Introduction** scene starts the story. It kicks off the case, presents the detective with the question that must be answered, and probably introduces a client. It also contains the elements of a Core scene:

A **Core** scene provides enough information for the detective to move onto another scene, and deeper into the central mystery, so long as the detective asks the right questions and looks in the right place.

An **Alternate** scene presents a colorful, tense, diverting, or otherwise entertaining scene and perhaps some supplementary information, but need not be played out in order for the detective to solve the central mystery. Alternate scenes may allow the detective to skip some scenes designated as Core and still crack the case.

An **Antagonist Reaction** scene describes an event, usually bad, that unfolds in response to the investigator's actions. Its aftermath can provide information, but doesn't have to. Most often, as the name implies, a villainous or obstructive character is taking action against the hero. On occasion the detective might have to contend with impersonal or abstract forces, like a storm, or perhaps his own inner demons, as suggested by a Problem card. Fleshed-out Antagonist Reaction scenes occur whether or not the detective Takes Time. A list of Antagonist Reactions may be found in the quick table format seen on p XX. These can be used as needed, including when the character Takes Time.

A **Conclusion** scene reveals the answer to the central question.

The **Denouement** wraps up the story. It requires little or no prior writing from you, as its shape depends on events that happen during play. Usually it features the investigator reporting back to the client, and then a description of the case's grim coda, if any.

Lead-Ins

This header entry lists other scenes that might precede this one when you play out the case.

Lead-Outs

This entry lists other scenes its core clues might lead the detective to explore next.

Think of Lead-Ins and Lead-Outs as bookmarks. When running the game, they orient you in relationship to the other scenes. More crucially, when designing the scenario, they remind you to create options for the player. When every scene has only one Lead-In or Lead-Out, you've created a linear storyline that can only unfold in one way. When a scene can be reached, and followed up, in a number of ways, your player has meaningful choices to make.

A few scenes with only one Lead-Out are fine, as the multiple Lead-Outs in other scenes allow the detective to pick up another thread of the investigation.

Body Text

The body text of your adventure may consist of fully written material. For a scenario you're not planning to show anyone, point-form scrawlings will suffice. The more you write out, the less likely you are to miss a plot hole that might send you scrambling when you run the adventure. That said, the worst scenario is one you never run, because writing it all down feels too much like time-consuming homework.

Within a scene, deal with its basic elements in whatever order you prefer.

Find a quick, evocative way to evoke the setting of each scene. Conjure a mood with details of location and, where applicable, background characters.

Describe the character around whom the scene revolves. Notes on her agenda enable you to decide what she does in response to an unexpected choice by the player. When writing compelling details into a supporting character's backstory, see to it that the player has some way of discovering or somehow interacting with that material. When you are caught up in the flow of adventure creation, this need can be surprisingly easy to forget.

Sometimes, to convey motivation, you have to include facts the witness would never intentionally reveal. Do so sparingly.

Avoid scenes that require the detective to talk to more than one major character at a time. Portraying multiple supporting characters simultaneously as a GM will usually prove taxing for you and confusing for the player.

To include more than one GMC in a scene, break the scene up so that the investigator interacts with them in sequence, not simultaneously. For an example of this, see the scene "The Alegria", p. XX.

Populate the scene with all the background extras you want. Shoot not for an empty world,

but for a story where two-person dialogues predominate.

After setting out the context of the character and locale, segue into the **clues** the detective will seek in your scene. A bullet-point format for the clues, core and otherwise, enables you to find them quickly during play.

Clue Delivery

You may find it helpful to arrange clues according to what the character must do in order to discover them.

Some are apparent: the detective always notices them because they're out in the open, staring everyone in the face.

- Mr. Kettering sweats and appears patently jittery.

- The former contents of a wastebasket have been emptied on the desk.

- A body lies sprawled on the sofa, a smoking gun cradled in its lap.

A cooperative witness will volunteer certain facts after the investigator introduces himself and explains the basic nature of his inquiries. These may be honestly given, or they may be an effort to steer the investigator toward the witness' agenda.

Other clues are provided if asked: even a cooperative witness doesn't think of every relevant fact. To solve the case the investigator need merely ask the right question.

Resistant clues require the use of an Investigative Ability. In play you might ask the player to explicitly call them out, or you might just supply them when the player asks. You might also elect to provide them to a player who seems lost in the scene, on the grounds that the character is a more experienced detective than the player.

At any rate, whatever guidance you might find here becomes entirely provisional in the heat of play. The rhythm of information flow that the GM and player establish in the moment, as discussed on p. 267, will always trump how you think things will go as you prepare.

Clue Types

As previously mentioned, a core scene must include at least one *core clue* — a clue that leads to another scene. Multiple core clues leading to different scenes give players choices to make, so include them where possible.

A clue leading to an alternate scene is, unsurprisingly, an *alternate clue*.

An alternate scene might lead directly to no other scene. Or it might provide a secondary lead-in to a core scene.

Amid the clues, note possible Push benefits, if any. These non-informational benefits become available if the player assents to pay a Push (and has one to pay, natch).

Confine information available from Interpersonal Abilities to those abilities the character has. Investigators can't typically break off an interview to go and fetch a Source who can apply the right kind of persuasion.

A *pipe* clue becomes significant only when combined with another piece of information

gathered separately. (The name references screenwriting jargon, where the insertion of exposition that becomes relevant later in the narrative is referred to as "laying pipe." The term likens the careful arrangement of narrative information to the work performed by a plumber in building a house).

A *leveraged* clue prompts a witness to spill his guts after being presented with another clue that the detective uncovered earlier. It is usually accompanied by the use of an Interpersonal Ability, like Intimidation or Reassurance.

Exercise care when including core clues that require the investigator to seek out Sources. These must either allow the Source to discover the information in a subsequent scene, when the investigator goes to the Source for help, or they must allow the Source to appear in the scene without straining credibility or messing up the pacing.

Inserting Challenges

Along with clues, scenes may also include Challenges. Intersperse these among the clues in likely chronological order. Does Wilmer Whateley draw his heater on Langston and then confess to the 19th Street cat killings? Then list the Challenge before the clues. Does he spill the beans, then pull the rod? List the clues, then the Challenge.

Challenge creation requires some detailed attention.

Building Challenges

Challenges add suspense and uncertainty to your narrative. They give the player the feeling that their narrative is not predetermined, and therefore special. The version of "The Fathomless Sleep" you play out will be your own unique variant on the experience, one shared in absolute detail by no one else. The variations that make it yours arise from the player's choices, and also from the unpredictability of die results, which player choices can influence but not control.

Even when running published adventures, the GM should expect to improvise Challenges in response to player choices that were not anticipated by the scenario writer.

The Challenge format offers structure, but should not be seen as a straitjacket. Designing them is an art, in which you focus on achieving entertaining results for the player. Start with the structure, but feel free to tinker with it in order to achieve various effects.

When devising a Challenge, imagine the situation at hand and its range of possible outcomes.

In many cases you'll find that the standard framework serves you well. You can easily envision an Advance, propelling the character toward ultimate success; a Hold, in which he neither betters nor worsens his position; or a Setback, in which the story's antagonists, or plain bum luck, push back against him.

However, not all situations easily support this pattern.

If all the plausible negative outcomes you can envision lead the story away from a satisfying conclusion, or add a dull stretch of filler action, structure the Challenge so that *all* of the three outcome types — Advance, Hold, and Setback — allow the detective to succeed and move closer to the goal. Instead, it's the rewards and the cost of success that differs according to outcome. The Advance grants an Edge, the Hold simply lets the hero proceed, and the Setback saddles the

detective with a Problem.

In theory, you could have a situation where all outcomes take the hero in a terrifying direction, but with a countervailing advantage with the Advance and an even worse side-consequence on a Setback. For example, touching a non-Euclidean mirror could always plunge Langston into the Plateau of Leng, but he retains his weapon on an Advance or twists his ankle on a Setback. Use this sparingly, or not at all, with players who might perceive this as unfair. Note that "The Fathomless Sleep" never uses this technique, tempting as it might be in the case of the moment that gets Dex into the ghoul cage.

Where you see only two promising story directions, one a good result and the other bad, drop the Hold result, so that the hero can either Advance or suffer a Setback.

Though it has numbers in it, the process of assigning numbers to the three Outcome thresholds is an art rather than a science, involving more creative craft than formulaic arithmetic. Keep these guidelines in mind as you proceed.

Unlike most other roleplaying games, you know the character's abilities ahead of time and can calibrate accordingly. Challenges of 2-dice abilities can bear higher numbers than those with only 1.

Some Challenges lead more or less in the same story direction, or do not hugely alter the course of the story. Differences in Outcomes determine future consequences: whether the detective gains an Edge, a Problem, or neither. These can bear higher numbers, with Advances of 11+ (for 2 dice abilities) or 5+ (for 1 dice abilities) and Setback thresholds of 3 or 4 respectively.

For other Challenges, the threat of a bad result may be nearly as compelling as the realization of that threat. Results that throw the player's control over the character into doubt, for example when resisting vices and temptations, generally work best with lower thresholds: Advances of 5 or 6 and Setbacks at 2 or 3.

Climactic Challenges in the scenario's last few scenes call for higher numbers than those in early scenes, or in scenes that are tangential to the main plot.

Challenge Difficulty Table

Story Significance	Baseline (1 Die ability)	Baseline (2 Dice ability)
Determines direction of main plotline	Advance 5+ Hold 3-4 Setback 2 or less	Advance 9+ Hold 4-8 Setback 3 or less
Evokes the doom of noir and/or cosmic horror	Advance 5+ Hold 4 Setback 3 or less	Advance 9+ Hold 5-8 Setback 4 or less
Success certain, costs and gains uncertain	Advance 7+ Hold 4-6 Setback 3 or less	Advance 13+ Hold 5-12 Setback 4 or less
Determines if subplot comes into play	Advance 4+ Hold 2-3 Setback 1 or less	Advance 7+ Hold 3-6 Setback 2 or less
Threatens player control of character actions	Advance 4+ Hold 2-3 Setback 1 or less	Advance 8+ Hold 3-7 Setback 2 or less
Distressing turn (see sidebar for definition)	Advance 6+ Hold 4-5 Setback 3 or less	Advance 13+ Hold 6-12 Setback 5 or less
Climactic or pivotal story event (Extra Problem available)	Advance 6+ Hold 4-5 Setback 2 or less	Advance 10+ Hold 6-9 Setback 3 or less
Climactic or pivotal story event (Extra Problem unavailable)	Advance 4+ Hold 2-3 Setback 1 or less	Advance 8+ Hold 3-7 Setback 2 or less
Easy victory, made all the sweeter by the (slight) chance of failure	Advance 3+ Hold 2 Setback 1 or less	Advance 5+ Hold 2-4 Setback 1 or less

Easy victory with bad consequences if you miss	Advance 3+ Setback 2 or less	Advance 5+ Hold 4 Setback 3 or less
Victory will feel like a miracle	Advance 6+ Setback 5 or less	Advance 12+ Setback 11 or less

Distressing Turns

A distressing turn generally takes place near the end of the scenario but it is not the very last Challenge that establishes whether the hero succeeds or fails. It escalates the stakes into the realm of looming disaster.

Player attitudes toward distressing turns can be paradoxical. The player doesn't want to feel that they were forced into them or had no choice of success.

That same player, however, also doesn't want to feel that she missed the story's most gripping possible branches by staying out of trouble.

Accordingly, the difficulty numbers for a distressing turn walk the line between extra-daunting and foregone conclusion.

Check to see if an adjustment from the baseline feels appropriate. Do this by balancing two considerations. Any single moment worthy of a Challenge should feel to the player, before she rolls, like it could go either way. Yet all of the moments of your scenario, taken together, should feel like a well-wrought, naturally flowing story of its genre. Both the noir detective and horror traditions allow for more failure than is usual in aspirational, problem-solving fiction. Still, their heroes do not fail so often and so early that the hero is prevented from falling deeper into the action. Nor do their successes cluster together so much that we lose the sense of dread essential to taut suspense.

In some cases, you will find it more fitting to model a very tough situation by leaving the baseline numbers in place, but imposing a particularly nasty Problem on a Setback. This describes the typical situation where a gang of toughs beats the overly nosy private dick to a pulp.

Where both Hold and Advance move the hero toward his goals, bump up the Advance threshold where a particularly strong Edge is provided, or where the Advance provides both a strong plot advantage and an Edge. Challenges whose Advance results already represent solid story breakthroughs need not grant Edges.

All that being said, making Challenges is a matter of storytelling craft rather than rigid adherence to formula. When you run across a situation that calls out for a departure from the baseline, by all means depart.

Designing Edges

Edges give the player a jolt of positive accomplishment. Receiving one feels good; so does spending it, and so does hanging onto it. In the game design business we call this a win-win-win.

An Edge starts with descriptive text that indicates its relevance and encourages the player to feel an emotional up-note.

Just as all Challenges are not of equal intensity, not all Edges need provide the same degree of benefit. It is more fun to receive a number of Edges that grant similar but slightly variant benefits than many duplicates of the same one.

The least powerful Edges grant a one-time Bonus on a Challenge.

Better Edges grant a free die roll on a Challenge.

An Edge might grant a small bonus applicable to many Challenges, until spent.

Often an Edge grants a bonus to an entire category of General Abilities, or a free roll on a particular one of them, or on members of a related group (like Cool + Stability or Athletics + Fighting).

When stumped for yet another variant, try a variant on "Upper Hand at [[Location]]" (p. XX), whose benefit is general but tied to a particular scene. This saves the Edge from provoking disappointment if the player finds no use for it in the scene to which it ties in.

Edges can provide a story benefit without any impact on Challenges. Some might relate directly to the story, while others might require the player to think up a way to integrate them.

As with any other element of Challenge design, give yourself license to deviate from the general principles when presented with a compelling special case.

Designing Problems

Problems deliver emotional down-notes to our dogged detectives as they tread the mean streets in search of hidden horrors. Like Edges, they can and should vary in effect and intensity.

They might impose a penalty on a General Ability, but more often target one of the three classes of General Abilities (Mental, Physical, Manual).

In any scenario, you'll need about twice as many Problems as Edges. Most Challenges allow the player to take on an Extra Problem in exchange for an extra die roll.

Start with a few lines of flavor text. These not only convey an atmosphere of noir-ish dread, but suggest the sorts of story developments the player might try to introduce in order to Counter them.

Where possible, design relatively low-stakes Problems for those Challenges that are likely to occur early on. Overall, you'll want to save the truly nasty ones for the final sequences. Sometimes, though, you'll find it powerful to introduce a cloud of doom in the early part of the story. If the hero strains his heart in the first hour of a session, the player has to sweat the possibility of massive cardiac arrest from then on — unless she can credibly maneuver the character into a surgeon's operating room.

When they offer Extra Problems at all, Challenges that appear during the scenario's climax

shouldn't impose short-term penalties, because there are few upcoming Challenges remaining, and therefore few chances to apply the Extra Problems. Instead, they should either not be offered, or they should create a dire situation that might lead to a bleak, noir-ish ending.

A Problem card's text can specifically tell the player how to Counter it, or it can leave the matter open as an exercise in player creativity.

Continuity Cards

Where an Edge or Problem sets up a story situation that would break fictional credibility if it were ignored in future scenarios, mark it as a Continuity card by placing a sub-header to that effect under the title.

Unlike other Edges and Problems, the player does not discard Continuity cards at the end of a scenario.

If you are only running one scenario, you can safely ignore the Continuity tag.

[[START Edge Card]

Credit with the D.A.

Continuity

In their running feud with the Police Department, the D.A.'s office now recognizes you as an ally. Spend for a favor from them.

Edge #

[[[END Edge Card]]]

Designing Extra Problems

On occasion you'll spot a chance to give the detective an Extra Problem that hooks directly into the story at hand. For example:

- **Cool Challenge**: You stay calm when taunted by the big boss, but must take a swipe at the next low-ranking goon who gives you lip.

- **Driving Challenge**: You get away from the dimensional shambler, but hit a dog in front of the district attorney's house. That's right — the same D.A. you'll need a favor from later.

- **Devices Challenge**: If you fix the radio using this ability, it works, but you ignite a spark that burns the documents you need to prove McKenna's guilt to the cops.

Admit no shame in deploying the most obvious class of Extra Problems: those that impose a later penalty to a category of General Abilities. Typically, you'll choose the same category as the ability being tested.

Alternatively, an Extra Problem can strike an entire die from a later Challenge of an ability. Again, most often you'll make this the same ability used in the Challenge.

In some cases you can throw in a bit of variety by making the Extra Problem not a literal additional card, but an immediate extra negative consequence that occurs during the scene. See

"Escape the Shoggoth", p. XX.

Extra Problems might impede the character's expenditure or acquisition of a single Push type.

[[[Begin Problem Card]

Surly Demeanor

Pretending not to despise fools requires mental gasoline — and your fuel gauge is running low.

Lose a Push, then discard this card. If you don't have one, lose the next Push you get, then discard.

Problem #

[[[END Problem Card]

Another class of all-purpose Extra Problems is the block: a sort of nuisance Problem which must be Countered before the detective can Counter other, more serious Problems. As the word "nuisance" suggests, this is to be used sparingly, when you as scenario designer find yourself stumped and in need of variety.

[[[Begin Problem Card]

Throbbing Forehead Vein

The V-shaped vein in the center of your forehead won't stop twitching. It's driving you crazy.

Counter this before countering any other Problem that penalizes General/Mental Abilities or your ability to use Pushes.

Problem #

[[[END Problem Card]

Stability Challenge Guidelines

Like any other Challenge, Difficulties for events that threaten the detective's emotional and perceptual equilibrium arise from the dramatic situation, and use the Challenge Difficulty Table on p. XX. Like any suspenseful horror yarn, start with small disturbing events and work your way up to the truly soul-shattering. Early Stability Challenges fit in the "evokes the doom of noir" category; later ones might be cast as Distressing Turns or climactic/pivotal events.

The table below gives you a sense of the sorts of incidents that might threaten Stability. When they involve the Mythos, ensuing Problems bear the Mythos Shock notation. Especially severe incidents, whether mundane or Mythos-related, may prove harrowing enough to affect the detective even after the cast at hand resolves. Their ensuing Problems gain the Continuity notation.

Incident	Mythos	Continuity

	Shock?	**?**
You examine documentary evidence suggesting the existence of malign alien forces.	Y	N
You witness acts of torture.	N	Y
You see a particularly grisly murder or accident scene.	N	Y
You see a supernatural creature from a distance.	Y	N
You witness an obviously unnatural — but not necessarily threatening — omen or magical effect: a wall covered in horrible insects for example, or a talking cat, or a bleeding window.	N	N
You kill someone in self-defense.	N	N
You see dozens of corpses.	N	Y
You see a supernatural creature up close.	Y	N
You spend a week in solitary confinement.	N	N
You discover the corpse of a friend or loved one.	N	Y
You are attacked by one or more supernatural creatures.	Y	Y
You witness a clearly supernatural or impossible killing.	Y	Y
You experience a threatening magical effect.	N	N
You commit murder or torture.	N	Y
You see a friend or loved one killed.	N	Y
You are tortured for an hour or longer.	N	N
You discover that you have committed cannibalism.	N	Y
You are possessed by some outside force, remaining conscious while it operates your body unspeakably.	Y	Y
You speak with a loved one, friend, or close acquaintance whom you know to be dead.	N	Y
You watch helplessly as a friend or loved one dies in a spectacularly gruesome manner.	N	Y
You kill a friend or loved one.	N	Y

Designing Antagonist Reactions

Taking Time to counter Problems is not without cost, especially after the detective has raised hackles, aroused suspicions, and angered dangerous witnesses. It may trigger Antagonist Reactions, events driven by adversary figures you design into your scenario — or at least, it may make the player worry about that this might happen.

Often, a lurking threat proves as effective in building suspense, if not more so, than actually having the terrible consequence occur.

Published scenarios include tables listing possible Antagonist Reactions. Flip to page XX for an example. You can either fully craft equivalent tables in your scenarios, or trust yourself to improvise them on the fly.

An Antagonist Reaction table entry consists of the following elements:

Trigger: The precondition necessary for this reaction to take place;

Reaction: Describes what the adversary tries to do, listing the ability tested.

More often than not, the rest of the entry consists of a briefly sketched Challenge.

Instead, it sometimes merely describes an additional plot development that adds complexity to the investigation. In this case, do not cite an ability in the Reaction column.

Antagonist Reactions act as distractions which the investigator would rather not face, not as opportunities to gather new advantages while accomplishing side-missions. Although Setbacks during these sequences can saddle the detective with Problems, Advances do not typically provide Edges. They can, however, permit the use of Extra Problems.

Rather than use the compact table format, you may prefer to write up Antagonist Reactions in an extended format resembling a full scene, as you would find in a multiplayer *GUMSHOE* scenario. These scenes might or might not also serve as alternate sources of clues.

Cleverly evading an Antagonist Reaction scene counts as overcoming it. Give some thought when designing them to ways for the character to sidestep them. You might specify, for example, a Push that will work if the player proposes it. Frame these so that the player feels smart, and not cowardly, for using them.

Lucky Breaks

Real-life investigations often turn on a sudden lucky break. In fiction, reliance on coincidence to move key plot events brings scorn down on the head of the writer. Although you should never make the big moments of a case turn on good fortune, now and then you'll encounter minor story branch moments that feel like they ought to depend more on external luck than on the characters' abilities.

- Pursued by a crooked congressman's goons, Lauren runs to the edge of the Washington Channel. On a Lucky Break, she comes upon a boat tied to a pier.
- Hiding in a closet in the swank hotel room of a Hungarian sorceress after her target returned too early from the reception in the ballroom, Lauren catches a Lucky Break when room service knocks on the door.

To determine whether a character is lucky or unlucky in such a case, check to see if the player has at least one Push or Edge. If no, the lucky break does not occur.

If yes, ask the player if she wants to spend a Push or Edge to earn a lucky break. She chooses which one. Any Edge suffices; it need not relate thematically to the situation at hand.

Luck acts externally on the character, who is not consciously doing anything to bring it about. You need not explain why the stroke of fortune occurs. That's why they call it luck.

Lucky Breaks make minor coincidences feel earned, while also providing an emotional up-note. Don't depend on them as the only way of moving the story in a key direction, though: the player might not have resources to spend, or might decline to spend them.

Crafting the Emotional Coda

When the case has been solved and the loose ends of its denouement are tied up, encourage the player to portray the detective's emotional state in a coda scene.

Invite the player to examine the Problem cards still in hand. If the player has no Problem cards, she is free to describe the detective enjoying a conclusive moment of unsullied triumph.

More likely, though, the player still has several such cards. In that case, ask the player to select the one that suggests the strongest possible downbeat. You might find exceptions, but in general Mythos Shock Problems take priority over others. Have the player describe a closing moment invoking that Problem card.

Expect most players to get into the spirit of this, creating for themselves an ending more noir-ish than they'd be willing to have you impose on them. A few players might succumb to tactical instincts in this storytelling context, copping out and choosing to focus on one of the less striking Problems from the list at hand. In that case, nudge the player toward a more telling final consequence.

Some players may seek an extra jolt of creative accomplishment by coming up with an ending that incorporates as many Problems in hand as possible. Applaud their storytelling verve.

A few Problems take the choice away from the player by stating outright what happens when they remain in hand at the end of the scenario. These are often the ones players have the most incentive to get rid of. When the player has more than one such card, pick the worst one, or work with the player to have them all take place, in the order that makes the best sense.

Discarding Edges and Problems

At scenario's end, the player may choose to hold onto any Problem cards she finds interesting and wants to see incorporated into future scenarios. Players typically take this option to retain the character's starting Problem card, which suggests an ongoing personal flaw. The player must keep all Continuity Problems.

The player discards all Edge cards, except for those labeled as Continuity cards.

Using Online Tools

One-2-One removes one of the main challenges with online play: the need for the GM to divide attention between multiple players through a narrowed window of communication. It

works so well that we were able to run our in-house alpha playtest online.

Online tools change rapidly, so we won't devote much space to specific tools here in the print edition.

Basically you'll be looking for the following:

- Audio communication. Though not strictly essential, most people prefer to add webcam video.

- A die roller.

- A character map with elements that can be hidden from the player until needed. When the PC meets a key figure in the case for the first time, reveal the character's image and name. Where she sees someone but doesn't yet have a name, you could reveal the image of the character but not the name plate.

- Problem and Edge cards saved as image files in a photo album. Create a second photo album shared with the player. When the detective gains a card, go to your master album and then add it to the player's album. When the player spends or counters a card, remove it from the album. Roll20 also has a card-building capability, earning a thumbs-up from one of our playtesters as a convenient way of handling Problems and Edges.

Assuming both you and the both player have a tablet or laptop, you may find the last two elements useful even in face-to-face play. Presenting all the active cards in a single online image album may be neater to manage and easier to see than a pile of card-sized pieces of paper. A relationship map with revealable characters aids the player enormously in keeping all the moving parts of the case in mind.

Sample Problem Cards

[[Rewrite or adapt to fit your setting.]]

Starting Problems

What Killed the Cat

Continuity

Even when you shouldn't look, or have no reason to want to know something, you can't not look, can't stop probing. You worry problems like a terrier worries a rat.

Problem #

Lonely

Continuity

You should have gotten over her by now. She's gone, and gone for good. It's time you moved on, found someone new. Maybe someone who won't play you for a sap this time. Oh hell, who are you kidding?

Problem #

Broke

Continuity

Nobody could ever accuse you of loving money. You wouldn't be an honest private eye if that were the case. But a man needs to eat, and keep the lights on. And you're on the verge of being evicted from both your apartment and your office.

Problem #

Vice Hound

Continuity

Gambling, whores, the opium pipe. You've kicked all those vices before. So if you slip a bit and indulge one or more of your compulsions, you can straighten yourself up again, right? Right?

Problem #

Sucker for a Pretty Face

Continuity

You change lovers as frequently as clothes. Of course you *try* not to sleep with your story's subjects, but sometimes it's the best way to get new information, right?

Problem #

Hand-to-Mouth

Continuity

You got into this line of work to make a difference, not make dough. But even with the odd work you pick up around the office, you never know if you'll have next month's rent.

Problem #

Anything for the Story

Continuity

Every good reporter remembers the time their nose for a story put them in danger. You, on the other hand? You remember the time or two it *didn't*.

Problem #

Hot-Tempered

Continuity

You go from zero to boiling over in the blink of an eye. Whether it's for justice or personal dignity, it puts a strain on relationships and even employment.

Problem #

Love in All the Wrong Places

Continuity

You fell for the wrong dame again and got burned. You promised yourself *never again* but know

better. Chances are pretty good that the next pretty face will make you a sap... again.

Problem #

Short on Rent

Continuity

You never had money growing up, serving your country paid bupkes, and Lord knows the job doesn't make ends meet. You need a payday yesterday, or the landlord will toss you out on the street. You've already avoided him twice. Can you do it again?

Problem #

Eternal Outsider

Continuity

You are forever the odd man out. People don't know what to make of you — you enigma, you. That makes it harder to win their trust, or feel truly at ease anywhere.

Problem #

Boiling Point

Continuity

You're used to being looked down, and worse. People like you are supposed to keep your mouth shut and take what the Man dishes out. But when the kettle boils too hot, it's gonna explode at some point.

Problem #

Scenario Problems

Smitten with [[[GMC Name]]]

Uh-oh. Looks like you're in love again. You can feel your judgment getting interfered with already.

Problem #

Sourpuss

You tried to stay cool, but you overplayed your hand. Instead you made yourself out to look like a hostile chump. So much for your good mood.

Until you haul off and clock someone, you can't spend Pushes on Interpersonal abilities.

Problem #

Shiner

You took a sucker punch. You know what that makes you look like? A sucker.

Discard after two days elapse in Dex's fictional reality. Until then, you can't make Bargaining, Intimidation, or Reassurance Pushes.

Problem #

Pulled Muscle

You wrenched something.

Take a -2 penalty to your next General/Physical test and -1 to the one after that. Then discard this card.

Problem #

Paranoia

Once you realize that one person is really watching you, you can't shake the feeling that everyone is.

-2 on your next Stability test, then discard.

Problem #

Twisted Ankle

You wrongfooted the pavement.

-2 on next General/Physical test, then discard.

Problem #0

Smashed Headlight

Until countered, Driving Challenges undertaken at night automatically result in Setbacks. Counter by Taking Time with a trip to the garage.

Problem 11

White Knuckles

A little bit of rage can be motivating. But once out of the bottle, that genie might not go back in so easily.

When someone makes you sore, you must make a Cool test not to let fly with fists or an unwise quip. Take Time with a relaxing activity.

Problem #

You Committed Murder

Continuity

Sure, it was self-defense. But the people who don't like you will be happy to make it look like murder.

Counter by Bargaining with the authorities (requires a strong negotiating position and a Push) or by disposing of the corpse.

Problem #

Stabbed

You take a knife wound to the abdomen. It may attract unwanted cop attention.

-3 to your next General/Physical test; -2 to all subsequent General/Physical tests. Counter by Taking Time at a hospital or doctor's office. If you're still holding this at the end of the story, you die of internal bleeding.

Problem #

Not Your Best Day

You're having a bad day, and it's wearing your temper thin.

The next time someone tries to get under your skin, make a Difficulty 5 Cool Quick Test. On a failure, you get lippy with them, and they decide to make trouble for you.

Problem #

Murder for Hire

Continuity

You just murdered for money. Not only have you compromised your moral code, but this will hang over you for the rest of your life. If you haven't irrevocably hung the crime on someone else by scenario's end, you'll go up the river — or get the chair.

Problem #

Cold-Blooded

You maintain your sanity by cutting off your empathy for others.

When you spend a Push on Reassurance, roll a die. On an odd result, you do not gain the benefit of the Push, and you discard this card.

Problem #

Bad Memories

To prevent yourself from making a dumb mistake, you stirred up recollections of a similar blunder you made in the past. That opened up feelings you thought you'd buried long ago.

-2 penalty on your next Cool test, -1 on the one after that, then discard this card.

Problem #

Wrenched Back

You twisted a muscle and now it hurts to move.

-2 on your next General/Physical test, -1 on the test after that, then discard.

Problem #

Rattled

That thing you just saw (or learned) leaves you shaky and off your game.

Until you counter by Taking Time, take a -2 penalty on all Cool and Stability tests.

Problem #

Tempted

Resisting that old vice of yours took more out of you than you'd prefer to admit.

Until you Take Time to indulge this or another weakness, you take a -2 Penalty on all Cool and Stability tests.

Problem #

Gambling Debt

Continuity

You owe more than you can pay to someone who never forgives a debt. If you can't come up with the money, you'll have to find a big something else to counter this Problem card.

Problem #

Burned

-2 Penalty on all General/Physical tests and -1 on all other tests until you Take Time to get your burns treated.

Problem #

Obsessive Pursuit

You're pushing yourself to the point where your frayed nerves have frayed nerves.

-1 on General/Mental tests until you Take Time to calm yourself down.

Problem #

Beaten Black and Blue

You've been beaten within an inch of your life.

Until you Take Time to recuperate, all General tests result in automatic Setbacks. Even after that, all General/Physical tests take a -1 Penalty. Discard at end of scenario.

Problem #

Fight, Not Flight

To escape that scrape, you called on the terrified animal deep inside you. Desperation that stark isn't easy to forget.

-2 Penalty on Cool or Stability tests. Discard after your next Fighting test.

Problem #

Strain your Ticker

You made yourself do something every fiber of your being told you not to. You've flooded yourself with adrenaline and can't calm down.

Counter by accepting a -4 Penalty on any Challenge. If still in your hand at end of case, you suffer a heart attack.

Problem #

Indelible Image

You saw something you sure wish you hadn't. Now you can't get it out of your mind.

Until countered, -1 on all General/Mental tests.

Problem #

Mortal Wound

You just took an injury that cooked your goose for good. You have maybe an hour left to tie up loose ends. Then you're dead.

Problem #

Twitchy

Continuity

If you are still holding this card at the end of the case, you develop a permanent nervous tic.

If you have this card in hand at the beginning of a case, lose 1 Push.

Problem #

Tremor

You acquire a gross motor tremor that afflicts you in times of stress.

-2 Penalty on all General/Manual Challenges.

Problem #

Opium Habit

Continuity

You thought you'd left the poppy behind but it's caught up with you again.

When given a choice between moving forward on the case and hitting the gong around, make a quick Cool test, Difficulty 4, to avoid the latter. Counter by spending an Edge card granting a benefit to Cool or Stability.

Problem #

Object of Ridicule

Your awkward jump out of the way saved your skin, but tarnished your reputation for staying cool under pressure.

When you spend a Push on Intimidation, roll a die. On an odd result, you do not gain the benefit of the Push, and you discard this card.

Problem #

Haunted Imaginings

Continuity

You were supposed to find out what happened, but when you had the chance, fear stopped you cold. Now you keep imagining what you would have seen — each image more horrifying than the last. Your failure leaves you wondering what kind of detective you really are.

-2 Penalty on all Cool and Stability tests. Counter by taking a risk to confront a supernatural threat.

Problem #

Exploded Office

Your office has been gutted. You're going to have do some fancy explaining to get another landlord to rent to you. And there goes your reference library.

Lose a Push the next time you use an Academic ability to gain information, and discard this card. If you have no Push, you lose the next Push you gain, and discard this card.

Blown-up Car

Too bad you didn't spot that bomb. An L.A. private eye without a car is like fly without wings.

Lose a Push and discard this card the next time you move from one location to another. Explain who you talked into lending you a replacement vehicle. If you have no Push, keep this card until you do, then lose the Push and discard this card.

[[A Scary Gangster]] Doesn't Like You

Your last meeting with [[Name of Bad Guy]] ended with him looking at you like he wanted to kill you with his bare hands. Maybe you want to do something about that before he comes at you with a tire iron. No one wields a tire iron like he does.

[[Antagonist Name]] Becomes Suspicious

Once [[Antagonist Name]] notices the missing envelope, he puts two and two together (or, if he saw you take it, he starts to have second thoughts). He suspects you plan to target him in your next exposé. He requires Pushes when questioning him further.

Soft Spot

Whatever you're feeling for [[Love Interest Name]], it's not entirely professional.

Wrenched Ankle

You pulled something in your foot.

Take a –2 on your next Athletics, Fighting, or other General/Physical test or Take Time, then discard this problem.

Torn Clothing

Until you Take Time to regroup and change your outfit, lose the ability to make Pushes and take a –2 to Cool tests.

[[Name of Authority Figure]] Isn't Happy

 Continuity

You've done it this time. [[Name of an Authority Figure]] knows you don't always use the most orthodox means, but he's still angry you got caught. The strings he's had to pull for you…

Easier in Than Out

Getting in's the easy part. You make it home safely, but reports of a [[description of PC]] filter back to [[Antagonist Name]], who may put two and two together.

Problem #

Jaded

Continuity

Only someone with ice in her veins could hold her cool like that.

Your next Push for **Reassurance** or **Inspiration** costs double as the words taste like ash in your mouth. Then discard this card. If you don't have two Pushes, you can't Push.

Problem #

Stretched Thin

Difficulties with money come to a head in Antagonist Reactions or the episode's coda. You may Counter this card with Edge #, [[Name of Edge Card]].

Problem #

Jumpy

How long did he follow you before you noticed? Was he the man you saw walking away last night? You can't help looking over your shoulder for more.

–2 on your next Cool or Stability test, then discard this card.

Problem #

Sprained Wrist

 –2 on any Athletics test until you either Take Time to get it in a brace or wake up the next day.

Problem #

Cocky

You feel really good about how well you did. Too good.

Take a –2 to your next Sense Trouble test.

Problem #

All Shook Up

You are not coping well at all.

Until you Take Time to counter this card, take a –2 to Cool and Stability tests.

Problem #

Evicted

You have until the end of the month to leave your apartment.

Problem #

On Probation

Your boss is keeping an extra close eye on your comings and goings. Better not put a foot out of line.

Problem #

Worn Out

It's been a long week, and it finally caught up with you. Every bone in your body aches, and your knee is telling you it is going to rain tomorrow.

Take –2 to any Athletics test to discard.

Problem #

Favor Owed

Continuity

[[Name of GMC]] did you a favor, and no doubt will come calling soon. Either you help or burn that bridge.

Problem #

Shame

You sold out and now have to live with the sickly feeling.

-1 to Cool. Discard when you take a Setback on a Cool test.

Problem #

Head Over Heels

You can't stop thinking about her. What are you doing again? Oh. The case. That smile. Those eyes.

Your next General/Mental Challenge result is one step lower: Advance considered Hold. Hold considered a Setback. Then discard this Problem.

Beat Down

It's not the first fight you lost and probably won't be the last, but you'll never forget it. You look like you survived being on the wrong end of a charging bull.

Until you Take Time to lick your wounds, all General/Physical tests result in automatic Setbacks.

Problem #

Pinched

You got played, and the Man does what he does. You spent the night in jail next to a group of drunks. You lost some time and reek of vomit, sweat, and urine.

Until you Take Time for a shave and shower all spends require an extra Push.

Problem #

Steel Jawed

You landed a solid hit, but that mook's jaw nearly broke your fist. It's swollen, but not broken.

–1 to General/Manual Challenges. Discard after two such Challenges.

Problem #

Demoralized

They took you down a peg, and you're not sure how to rally after that beating. The cops want you dead, they want the dame, and you're caught in the middle. There is no promise that you will walk away from this case.

Take a –1 to all tests until you achieve an Advance on a Challenge.

Problem #

Snipered

Damn. He got you good in the shoulder, and your arm is burning.

–2 Penalty on all General/Physical tests until you Take Time. –1 thereafter until the end of the scenario.

Problem #

Bleeding Out

The bullet went clean through, but looks like it clipped something vital. A slow, steady stream of crimson is working its way out of you.

You need to Take Time at the doc's or hospital. If you have this Problem at the end of the game, you bleed out and die.

Problem #

Ringing in Your Ears

The bullet went wide, but the deafening sound reverberated in this small confined space. The ringing will pass... hopefully...

Take a –2 to the next General/Mental test and a –1 to the following General/Mental test. Then discard.

Problem #

Shot... Again...

You got what you got — a slug in your favorite arm.

You take –2 to all Physical tests until you Take Time at the doc. After that, you still suffer –1 to your next Athletics and Fighting tests, and then discard this Problem.

Problem #

Dropped Your Piece

Well, that could have gone better. You dropped your heater, and now you're getting shot at. Time to duck and roll.

–2 to next Fighting Challenge, then discard.

Problem #

Third Degree Burn

You have suffered massive burns and can barely move; your hands are smoking.

Take –2 to all General/Physical tests until you Take Time at the doc's or the hospital; then take –1 to General/Physical until the end of the case.

Problem #

Marked Man

Continuity

You've got three days to solve this case, or else it's curtains. You'll just be another unidentified black man killed by the cops. The press will say they are doing their job.

If you have this card in your hand in three days, you are gunned down by detectives.

Problem #

Tetanus Shot

Continuity

That mutt really bit into you, and the white bone can be seen through the jagged teeth marks.

Take Time at the doctor's to heal or suffer a –1 to Physical/Mental tests.

Problem #

What Comes Around

Sometimes your luck just runs out.

The next time you roll a 6, treat it as a 1, then discard this card.

Edge Cards

Self-Possessed

A show of self-control gives you the confidence you'll need if this case gets hairy.

Spend for an extra die on Cool or Stability, or for a +2 bonus to any other General/Mental test.

Edge #

Quick Reactions

Spend for an extra die on any Athletics, Driving or Fighting test.

[[A Famous Person]] Owes You

Continuity

A grateful [[Name of GMC]] appreciates your invaluable assistance.

[[A Scary Gangster]] Owes You

Continuity

[[GMC Name]]] might be a brutal thug, but never let it be said that he forgets when someone does him a solid.

Discard if you gain Problem 44, "[[A Scary Gangster]] Don't Like You."

Whew

You caught a lucky break just now. Maybe you're riding a hot streak for once.

Spend for a Push of any kind, or an extra die on any test.

Hard-boiled

You've inured yourself to shocking situations that would send civilians to the psychiatrist's couch.

Spend to Counter a Problem that penalizes any General/Mental ability, (Mythos Shocks excluded.)

State of Alarm

You keep a part of yourself on constant alert.

+1 to all Sense Trouble tests until you spend this Edge. If you made a Sense Trouble test in the current scene, spend this Edge for an extra die on an Athletics, Fighting or Fleeing test.

Upper Hand at [[Location]]

At any time in or around the [[[location]]], gain a free Push or an extra die on any test, then discard.

While in the [[[location]]],, you get Lucky Breaks at no cost, without discarding this card.

If you still have this card after leaving the warehouse, discard it and any non-Mythos Shock Problem.

Gallows Humor

What shocks and repulses others prompts you to crack wise.

Make a dark wisecrack appropriate to any scene, then discard this card to gain a free Push on any Interpersonal ability.

A Blow for Justice

In this town, justice is doled out in tiny increments. But today, at least one bad guy has been taken care of. By you.

Counter any Problem that penalizes General/Mental abilities or Interpersonal Pushes.

Tidied Up

Thanks to you, that nest of danger has been destroyed. No one else will stumble across it.

Spend to Counter one Problem acquired during the current scenario.

Emotional Armor

Continuity

People talk about repression like it's a bad thing.

Discard to Counter any Problem with text mentioning Interpersonal or General/Mental abilities.

Spare Bomb

Others might be disturbed by a failed bombing attempt. You think, "Hey, free bomb!"

When you want to have a bomb on hand, spend this Edge for a success on a Preparedness Quick test, or for an Advance on a Preparedness Challenge.

Ice Queen

You're getting better about prioritizing the things that matter.

Spend to refocus and get an extra die on Cool or Stability or a +2 on General/Mental tests, then discard.

Sure-Footed

You know exactly where to put your feet, even if that's in someone else's path.

Spend for an extra die on an Athletics test.

Pulled it Together

It didn't start pretty, but you finished with a flair.

Spend for +2 on any Athletics or Fighting test.

Cat Burglar

You're becoming an old hand at this.

Spend for an extra die on Stealth or Shadowing.

The World Must Know

You've stumbled into the middle of a massive cover-up. No ordinary man could have done this, and police must know it.

Spend to gain a Push.

Professional Ethics

You may end up sleeping on a friend's couch, but nobody can smear your sterling reputation.

Spend for an extra die on Cool or Stability or a +2 on a General/Mental test.

Sharp Reflexes

Spend for an extra die on any Athletics or Fighting test.

On Edge

You've pulled together the focus and control under pressure that make you an excellent investigator.

Spend to gain an extra die to Mental tests.

Unflappable

You've seen hell's gates open and still held it together.

Spend to Counter a [[tag]] Problem.

Good Citizen

Continuity

Doing what you can to make this world a better place.

Spend for a Push.

<div style="text-align: right">Edge #</div>

Still a Castle

It may not be much, but it's yours and you can protect it.

Spend for an extra die on any Athletics or Fighting test or a +2 on General/Physical tests.

<div style="text-align: right">Edge #</div>

This One Is Personal

Your past history with [[friendly GMC]] motivates you to go the extra mile.

Spend for an extra die on any General/Mental Challenge and discard.

<div style="text-align: right">Edge #</div>

Serenity

That moment of spiritual rest has infused you with fresh hope.

Spend within 24 hours (world time) to treat a Setback as an Advance.

<div style="text-align: right">Edge #</div>

Unbreakable

You are too focused to be distracted by anything.

Spend for an extra die on any test other than Stability.

<div style="text-align: right">Edge #</div>

This Is What I Do!

Adrenaline is your copilot and rarely fails you.

Gain a +1 on General/Physical tests for 24 hours.

<div style="text-align: right">Edge #</div>

Packing Heat

This new piece might come in handy.

Spend this card for an extra die on any Fighting Challenge, then discard.

<div style="text-align: right">Edge #</div>

Inside Track

Continuity

You got the inside scoop, and this could be useful later. You can use this knowledge to save your job once, and then discard.

Edge #

You've Seen Some Stuff

This isn't your first brush with danger.

Spend to Counter a Problem that targets General/Mental abilities, [tag] cards excluded.

Edge #

Whistling Past the Graveyard

You quip in the face of danger.

Make a witty one-liner and spend for an extra die on a Stability or Cool test.

Edge #

Born Lucky

Sometimes things just go your way.

Spend for an extra die on any Challenge. Then roll a die: on an odd result, gain the Problem "What Comes Around."

Edge #

The Invisible Man

You pull a move like the Shadow from all of those radio serials, and blend into the darkness, waiting for the right moment to strike.

Spend for an extra die on a Stealth test.

Edge #