



BLADES



IN THE

DARK

EARLY ACCESS

QUICK START KIT

VERSION 7

ONE SEVEN DESIGN

VERSION 7 | AUGUST 2016

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SPECIAL THANKS to Vincent Baker, Will Hindmarch, Harvey Smith, and Matt Snyder—my fellow "thiefy game" designers in arms.

CHANGELOG V7

- 1. NEW CHARACTER SHEET DESIGN:** I altered the sheets so they're a bit more printer friendly and also moved some elements around so they're easier to use. I re-wrote the format for the XP triggers so they're more clear and easier to use.
- 2. THE CUTTER:** I improved the *Resilient* special ability so it's more useful.
- 3. THE LEECH:** I slightly altered their default list of alchemicals. They no longer start with access to the weirder stuff—they have to make them as alchemist projects. To compensate a bit, the Leech now starts with a grenade and a smoke bomb, and may now craft bombs using the *Alchemist* special ability.
- 4. THE LURK:** I merged the *Fly on the Wall* special ability into *Infiltrator*. I added a new special ability, *The Devil's Footsteps*, which grants the Lurk spectacular athletic talent (aka "The Tony Jaa ability").
- 5. ALCHEMICALS:** Alchemy is a volatile arcane science. Use of an alchemical now inflicts a side-effect on the user. See page 70. The *Alchemist* special ability makes you more resistant to side effects.
- 6. CREWS:** I've redesigned the crew sheets a bit and tweaked lots of the claims and special abilities to better reflect how they're used in play. The xp triggers for crews have been updated, too, similar to the change to PC playbooks.
- 7. CREW: HUNTING GROUNDS:** I've changed the way a crew's hunting grounds work to make them a bit more flavorful and to fit into the landscape of the game systems in a better way. Basically, you get a free downtime action when you prepare for a score that suits your hunting grounds. See page 48.
- 8. ASSASSINS.** The final core crew type is finished!
- 9. THIEVES ARE SHADOWS.** I changed the Thieves crew somewhat and renamed it to Shadows. They're now a bit broader, covering thieves, spies, and saboteurs.
- 10. CRIMINAL FACTIONS:** All 16 criminal factions are complete. See page 58.
- 11. PRISON CLAIMS.** You can take claims for your crew when one of its members serves time in prison. See page 55.
- 12. EXTENDED ACTION EXAMPLES.** I've written longer, more detailed examples for each of the 12 actions in the game. See page 25.
- 13. FIXED THE CITY MAP.** I accidentally flipped the map at one point and didn't notice before. I've flipped it back to the proper orientation. Sorry about the confusion.
- 14. CITY DISTRICT HANDOUTS.** I've completed seven of the city district maps, illustrations, landmarks, descriptions, etc. and converted them into player handout sheets for this PDF.

ABOUT THIS EARLY ACCESS PDF

This document gives you the basics so you can start playing *Blades* before the final game is released. By definition, it's missing some pieces, particularly some instructional text and examples as well as the full guide to Doskvol city which will be in the final game. As such, it's a document that you'll have to interpret and bolster with your own understanding of roleplaying practices. If you're brand-new to RPGs, maybe ask a more experienced friend to run this for you.

I'm so excited to share the complete game with you (plus all the amazing add-ons you unlocked during the project). Until then, I hope you can have fun playing with this incomplete shard.

If you have questions or want to give feedback, head over to the G+ Community:

<https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/112767357581554417629>

The people there are helpful and friendly and I'm usually on hand to answer questions, too.

Please feel free to talk about the game online and share your experiences from actual play.

ATTENTION GAME HACKERS

If you're excited to use this game as the basis for a hack or your own game design, I'm glad to hear it! But be advised:

There will eventually be a CC-licensed, SRD kind of thing for *Blades*. **This is not it!** So hold your horses on doing any kind of full-on supplements or creating actual products or anything. That will come along once the full game is launched. I know you're hyped to make stuff. Which is great! But I'll have a more polished final version for you at launch. In the mean time, go ahead and toy around, just in moderation.

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OVERVIEW

"All the coin in the Empire is cold comfort when a blade comes for you in the dark."

—BAZSO BAZ

SUMMARY

- ◆ You play scoundrels on the streets of Doskvol, an industrial-fantasy city. There's primitive electrical technology, the printing press, strange alchemy, and simple gunpowder weapons.
- ◆ You and the other players create a fledgling criminal enterprise—your crew—and then take on illicit jobs to improve your assets and status.
- ◆ Game play focuses on the moments of daring action during a job (with occasional flashbacks) and the downtime between scores when you recover and pursue personal interests.

TOUCHSTONES

When you're pitching the game to players, here are some media touchstones you can use to relate the game to stuff with which they're already familiar.

BOOKS: The **Vlad Taltos** novels (*Jhereg*, etc.), by Steven Brust. The stories of **Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser**, by Fritz Leiber. *The Lies of Locke Lamora*, by Scott Lynch. *Best Served Cold*, by Joe Abercrombie.

VIDEO GAMES: *Thief: The Dark Project* and its sequels, by Looking Glass Studios. *Dishonored*, by Arkane Studios. *Dark Souls* and *Bloodborne* by Hidetaka Miyazaki and From Software.

TV: *The Wire*, by David Simon et al. *Spartacus* (particularly season two) by Steven S. DeKnight et al. *Peaky Blinders*, by Steven Knight et al.

THEME SONG

"Furnace Room Lullaby" by Neko Case.

THE GAME

Blades in the Dark is a game about a group of daring scoundrels building a criminal enterprise on the haunted streets of an industrial-fantasy city. There are heists, chases, escapes, dangerous bargains, bloody skirmishes, deceptions, betrayals, victories, and deaths.

We'll play to find out if the fledgling crew can thrive amidst the teeming threats of rival gangs, powerful noble families, vengeful ghosts, the Bluecoats of the City Watch, and the siren song of the scoundrel's own vices.

THE SETTING

It is the year 847 of the Imperium which united the shattered islands of the cataclysm under one rule—all glory to his majesty the Immortal Emperor.

The unquiet **spirits** of the dead—free to roam the world since the gates of death were shattered in the cataclysm—prey on every living thing in the blasted deadlands between cities.

The port of **Doskvol**, like every city-stronghold of the Imperium, is encircled by crackling **lightning-towers** which create an electrical barrier that spirits cannot pass. By law, all corpses are incinerated with **electroplasm** (to destroy the spirit essence within). However, wealthy citizens, heretics of the spirit cults, and the criminal element often arrange for a spirit to escape destruction at the crematorium. **Rogue spirits** and the illegal **spirit essences** derived from them are rich trade for the black market.

The docks of Doskvol, on the cold, windswept northern tip of Akoros, are home port for the titanic iron steamships of **leviathan** hunters. The blood of those massive demons is the catalyst which gives potency to the plasmic oils which power the city. The noble elite make their fortunes from the fleets of leviathan hunters they deploy on the ink-dark waters of the Void Sea.

THE CHARACTERS

The scoundrels attempt to develop their crew from a ragtag group of poor independents to a serious mid-level criminal organization



with established turf. They do this by taking illegal jobs from clients, planning their own devious missions, making alliances, destroying their enemies, and trying to stay one step ahead of the law.

THE PLAYERS

Each player creates a scoundrel character and works with the other players to create the crew to which their characters belong. Each player strives to bring their PC to life as an interesting, daring, conflicted fantasy adventure character who reaches boldly beyond their current safety and means. The players decide as a group on the tone and style of the game by making judgment calls about the dice and actions, along with oversight from the GM.

THE GAME MASTER

The GM establishes the dynamic world around the characters, especially the law-abiding civilian world and the shadowy criminal underworld. The GM plays all the non-player characters in the world by giving each one a concrete desire and preferred method of action. They present opportunities to the PCs. Then they follow the chain of action and consequences wherever it leads.

THE SITUATION

This page describes the situation for the Quick Start. Give the players this overview before going on to character and crew creation. See page 62 for more details.

WAR IN CROW'S FOOT

Your crew of thieves is caught up in a perilous (and possibly profitable) situation in the Crow's Foot district.

Roric, the ward boss who ran the criminal operations in Crow's Foot, has been killed. People say it was his second in command, **Lyssa**, who did it. She now controls Roric's impressive gang of cutthroats, who call themselves the Crows. *Can she establish dominance over the district the way Roric did?*

When Roric died, the peace he had brokered between two enemy gangs fell apart. The **Lampblacks** and the **Red Sashes** have once again exploded into open war on the streets. *Will their old feud finally be resolved with bloodshed?*

Your crew of thieves is poised to profit from all of this, or be swept up in the chaos and destroyed. Who will you side with? Do you have loyalties and friendships in the mix, or are you detached outsiders coldly exploiting the situation? We'll play to find out!

See **Starting the Game**, page 62.

THE CROWS

An old gang with new leadership. Known for running illegal games of chance and extortion rackets.

TURF: Claims all of Crow's Foot as their turf. Everyone in the district pays up the chain to them. HQ in an abandoned city watch tower. Operates many gambling rooms across the district.

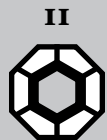
NPCs: **Lyssa** (leader, cold, calculating, killer)

NOTABLE ASSETS: A veteran gang of thugs and killers. A number of small boats. A fortified HQ.

ALLIES: The Bluecoats, Sailors, The Lost.

ENEMIES: The Hive, Inspectors, Dockers.

SITUATION: Lyssa murdered the former boss of the Crows, Roric. She is a fearsome killer, and few want to cross her, but her position as leader of the Crows is uncertain. Some were very loyal to Roric. As the power-play continues, the Crows' hold on the district just might slip away...



II
REESTABLISH
CONTROL
OF THE
DISTRICT

THE LAMPBLACKS

The former lamp-lighter guild, turned to crime when their services were replaced by electric lights.

TURF: HQ in the office of a coal warehouse. Operates a handful of brothels and cheap drug dens across the district.

NPCs: **Bazso Baz** (leader, charming, open, ruthless, whiskey connoisseur)

NOTABLE ASSETS: A fearsome gang of leg-breakers and mayhem-makers. A number of smugglers on the payroll who run their drugs.

ALLIES: The Fog Hounds, Gondoliers, Ironhook Prison.

ENEMIES: The Red Sashes, The Bluecoats, Cabbies.

SITUATION: The Lampblacks and the Red Sashes are at war over turf and vengeance for deaths on both sides. Bazso Baz is recruiting every free blade in the district for extra muscle and doesn't take no for an answer. You're either with them or against them.



II
DESTROY
THE RED
SASHES

THE RED SASHES

Originally an Iruvian school of swordsmanship, expanded into criminal endeavors.

TURF: HQ in their sword-fighting school / temple. Operates a handful of high-end drug dens across the district.

NPCs: **Mylera Klev** (leader, ruthless, aggressive, art collector).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Small contingent of master sword-fighters. Master alchemist; many potent potions and essences.

ALLIES: The Path of Echoes, Dockers, Cabbies, Inspectors.

ENEMIES: The Lampblacks, The Bluecoats, Gondoliers.

SITUATION: The Red Sashes and the Lampblacks are at war over turf and vengeance for deaths on both sides. Mylera is recruiting every free blade in the district for extra muscle and doesn't take no for an answer. You're either with them or against them.



II
DESTROY
THE
LAMPBLACKS



THE CORE SYSTEM

ROLLING THE DICE

Blades in the Dark uses six-sided dice. You roll several at once and read the **single highest result**.

- ◆ If the highest die is a **6**, it's a **full success**. Things go well. If you roll multiple 6s, it's a **critical success**.
- ◆ If the highest is a **4 or 5** that's a **partial success**. It's reduced performance or a mixed result — mostly good, but with trouble attached.
- ◆ If the highest is **1-3** it's a **bad outcome**. Things go poorly.

If you ever need to roll but you have zero (or negative) dice, roll 2d and take the lowest result.

That's the core dice mechanic for the game. You roll a pool of d6s, take the highest die, and judge the result. All the other systems in the game are expressions of this core. When you're first learning the game, you can always "collapse" back down to a simple roll, use the outcome to judge how things go, then move on, to keep the flow of the game going. Look up the full mechanic later when you have time to learn it.

To create a dice pool, you'll assess the **trait** being used as well as situational factors. You'll usually end up with one to four dice (even one die is pretty good in this game — a 50% chance of success.) The most common trait you'll use are the **action ratings** of the player characters. A player might roll dice for their **SKIRMISH** rating when they fight an enemy, for example.

You're also free to use abstract traits for some rolls. You might assess an NPC's *loyalty*, for example, to make a roll to see if they keep their mouth shut when questioned by the Bluecoats. Are they extremely loyal (5 dice) or hardly loyal at all (1 die)? By using abstract traits on the fly, you can roll for any kind of situation that crops up during play.

A dice pool is always created by assessing the details of the fictional situation in play. What is your character doing, specifically? This determines which action rating you use to create your dice pool. The other systems of the game depend on this "fiction first" approach. In order to judge **position**, **effects**, and **consequences**, we need to establish what's going on in the fiction—on the "movie screen" of our imaginations.

JUDGING POSITION & EFFECT

When a player character takes action that's blocked by an obstacle, you assess their position. This is something the group does together, but the GM is responsible for making the final call. There are three positions: Controlled, Risky, and Desperate. Each position represents a set of bad outcomes that the PC is risking when they attempt their action. The stronger the position, the less severe the consequences.

The GM also sets the likely effect level for the action. Is it limited, standard, or great? Can the PC accomplish a little, a lot, or something in between?

This combination of position and effect is something the GM assesses a lot. A player announces their action, and the GM responds with position and effect.

Player: "I sneak up and stab him in the back!"

GM: "He has no idea that you're there. Sounds like a controlled position and great effect. You can take him out with one blow."

Sometimes the players and GM negotiate a bit about the action, position, and effect, before settling on a final choice.

Player: "I prowl across the courtyard and vault over the hedge, hiding in the shadows there."

GM: "Sounds pretty risky to me! There are electric lamps in the courtyard. If any of the guards happen to glance in that direction, they'll spot you. Plus, I don't think you can make it across in one quick dash. The scale of the courtyard is a factor here, so your effect is limited. Let's say you can get halfway across with this roll, then you'll have to prowl through the other half of the space (and the guards there) to reach the other side."

Player: "Oh, I didn't realize it was that big. Hmmm. If I don't catch up with the Countess before she gets on the gondola, we're screwed. Okay, I'm going to just run as fast as I can, I don't care if I make some noise. Can I get all the way across if I make a desperate roll?"

GM: "Yep, sounds good to me!"

Position, effect, and consequences are judged by assessing the fictional details of the situation. Given the maneuvers and vulnerabilities at hand, how effective is this action? When things go badly, what are the consequences? Is there just one consequence, or several? Are they mild or severe?

The GM has a menu of options to choose from. By comparing the details of the fictional situation to the possible choices, the GM can make a quick judgment call and communicate their choice succinctly to the players, so they understand the stakes of the action.

THE CONVERSATION, BACK & FORTH

So this is the core of it: When the players have the initiative, they say what their characters do, using the details of the situation as established by the GM. The GM judges their actions and the reactions of the NPCs to determine position, effects, and consequences, then the dice are rolled and the outcome resolves the situation into something new.

When the NPCs have the initiative, the GM says what they do, using the details of the situation as established. The players say how their characters react, resisting consequences and responding with their own actions, as necessary. The GM judges consequences and effects, the dice are rolled, and the outcome resolves the situation into something new.

As you can see, the game is a conversation, back and forth between the GM and the players. The players determine the actions of the characters; the GM judges the details of the situation, which determines how the systems are engaged. The outcomes of the mechanics change the situation, leading into a new phase of conversation—new actions, new judgments, new rolls—changing the fiction and building "the story" of the game, organically, from a series of discrete moments.

No one is in charge of the story. The story is what happens as a result of all the actions and consequences. *The story emerges from the action*, in other words. You play to find out what the story of these scoundrels will be.

ACTIONS & ATTRIBUTES

ACTION RATINGS

There are twelve **ACTIONS** in the game system that the player characters use to overcome obstacles.

The actions are divided into three sets of four actions each, grouped by **ATTRIBUTE**. The **Finesse**, **Prowl**, **Skirmish** and **Wreck** actions are grouped under the **PROWESS** attribute, for example.

Each action has a rating (from zero to four) which tells you how many dice to roll when you perform that action. Action ratings don't just represent skill or training — you're free to describe *how* your character performs that action based on the type of person they are. Maybe your character is good at **Command**

because they have a scary stillness to them, while another character barks orders and intimidates people with their military bearing.

You choose which action to perform to overcome an obstacle, by describing what your character does. Actions that are poorly suited to the situation will put the character in a more challenging position, but they can still be attempted. If it's something you're really good at, maybe it's worth it. It's up to you which action your character performs to overcome a problem. See **How to Choose an Action**, page 23.

ACTION ROLL

You make an **action roll** when your character pursues a **goal** that's blocked by an **obstacle**.

The possible results of the roll depend on your character's **position**. There are three positions: **Desperate**, **Risky**, and **Controlled**. If you're in a **controlled** position, the possible consequences are less serious. If you're in a **desperate** position, the consequences can be severe. If you're somewhere in between, it's **risky**, and the risk and reward are more balanced.

For the details on **Action Rolls**, see page 9.

ATTUNE
COMMAND
CONSORT
FINESSE
HUNT
PROWL
SKIRMISH
STUDY
SURVEY
SWAY
TINKER
WRECK

ATTRIBUTE RATINGS

There are three **ATTRIBUTES** in the game system that the player characters use to resist danger. Each attribute has a rating (from zero to four) which tells you how many dice to roll when you use that attribute.

The rating for each attribute is equal to the number of dots in the **first column** under that attribute. The more well-rounded your character is with a particular set of actions, the better their attribute rating.

RESISTANCE ROLL

Each attribute resists a different type of danger. If you get stabbed, for example, you resist physical harm with your **PROWESS** rating. The better your roll, the less **STRESS** it costs to reduce or avoid the danger.

When the enemy has a big advantage, you'll need to make a resistance roll before you can attempt your own action. For example, when you duel the master sword-fighter, she disarms you before you can strike. You need to make a resistance roll to keep hold of your blade if you want to attack her. Or, perhaps you face a powerful ghost and attempt to attune with it to control its actions. But before you can make your own roll, you must resist possession from the spirit.

The GM judges the threat level of the enemies and uses these 'preemptive' resistance rolls as needed to reflect the capabilities of especially dangerous foes.

For the details on **Resistance Rolls**, see page 11.

INSIGHT
PROWESS
RESOLVE

EXAMPLE OF ACTION AND ATTRIBUTE RATINGS

This character has action ratings of Attune 2, Command 1, Consort 0, and Sway 1.

Their Resolve attribute rating is 3 (the first column of dots).

RESOLVE

● ● ● ● ATTUNE
● ● ● ● COMMAND
● ● ● ● CONSORT
● ● ● ● SWAY



STRESS & TRAUMA

STRESS

Player characters in *Blades in the Dark* have a special reserve of fortitude and luck called **STRESS**. When they suffer a consequence that they don't want to accept, they can take stress instead. The result of the **RESISTANCE ROLL** (see page 11) determines how much stress it costs to avoid a bad outcome.

*During a knife fight, Daniel's character, Cross, gets stabbed in the chest. Daniel rolls his **PROWESS** rating to resist, and gets a 2. It costs 6 stress, minus 2 (the result of the resistance roll) to resist the consequences. Daniel marks off 4 stress and describes how Cross survives the attack.*

The GM rules that the harm is reduced by the resistance roll, but not avoided entirely. Cross suffers level 2 harm ('Chest wound') instead of level 3 harm ('Punctured lung').

PUSHING YOURSELF

You can use stress to push yourself for greater performance. For each bonus you choose below, take **2 stress** (each can be chosen once for a given action):

- ◆ Add **+1d** to your roll. (See Action Rolls, p. 9.)
- ◆ Add **+1 level** to your effect. (See Effects, p. 10.)
- ◆ Take action despite severe harm (See Consequences, p. 11)

Pushing yourself for +1d means you effectively have at least 1d in every action as long as you have stress to burn. And even 1d gives you a 50/50 chance of success. This is the core "scoundrel's luck" in the game system. Even when you're in a bad spot, trying to do something for which you have no experience or training, you can dig deep and give yourself a chance. (*A much better chance than rolling 2d and taking the lowest when you have zero dots.*)

It's important to remember this! Some players tend to forget and dismiss actions for which they have zero dots. "Nah, I can't do that. I don't have Attune. I'd have to roll 2d and take the worst. Ugh." As long as you have stress to burn, you can get 1d and give it a decent shot.

TRAUMA

When a PC marks their final stress box, they suffer a level of **TRAUMA**. When you take trauma, circle one of your **trauma conditions** like *Cold*, *Reckless*, *Unstable*, etc. They're all described on this page.

When you suffer trauma, you're taken out of action. You're "left for dead" or otherwise dropped out of the current conflict, only to come back later, shaken and drained. When you return, **you have zero stress** and your vice has been satisfied for the next downtime (see **Vice** on page 19).

Trauma conditions are permanent. Your character acquires the new personality quirk indicated by the condition, and can earn xp by using it to cause trouble. **When you mark your fourth trauma condition**, your character cannot continue as a daring scoundrel. You must retire them to a different life or send them to prison to take the fall for the crew's wanted level (see **Incarceration**, page 18).

TRAUMA CONDITIONS

- ◆ **COLD:** You're not moved by emotional appeals or social bonds.
- ◆ **HAUNTED:** You're often lost in reverie, reliving past horrors, seeing things.
- ◆ **OBSESSED:** You're enthralled by one thing: an activity, a person, an ideology.
- ◆ **PARANOID:** You imagine danger everywhere; you can't trust others.
- ◆ **RECKLESS:** You have little regard for your own safety or best interests.
- ◆ **SOFT:** You lose your edge; you become sentimental, passive, gentle.
- ◆ **UNSTABLE:** Your emotional state is volatile. You can instantly rage, or fall into despair, act impulsively, or freeze up.
- ◆ **VICIOUS:** You seek out opportunities to inflict savage violence.

You can play your trauma conditions as much or as little as you like. They can totally transform your character's persona or have only a small impact—totally up to you. If you do play them strongly, though, allowing a trauma condition to complicate your character's life, you earn **xp** for it.

STRESS & THE SUPERNATURAL

A close encounter with a spirit or demon is a harrowing experience. By default, the standard effect is to either paralyze a person with fear or panic them into fleeing from its presence. A PC can choose to roll to resist the effect. Characters with lots of exposure to spirits, such as Whispers, Rail Jacks, and occult weirdos become less susceptible and only face fear or panic from exceptionally powerful entities.

Being possessed by a spirit inflicts a level of **TRAUMA** at the end of every week. Once the possessed body suffers its fourth level of trauma, it can no longer sustain its life. The possessing spirit must either bond with the corpse (becoming a vampire) or abandon it and seek out a new host.

Mind-bending horrors (such as the physical manifestation of a forgotten god) may **inflict stress directly**, starting at 10 stress (or more), reduced by a resistance roll.

PROGRESS CLOCKS

PROGRESS CLOCKS

Use a progress clock to track the effort made against a complex obstacle.

Sneaking into the Bluecoat watch tower? Make a clock to track the alert level of the patrolling guards. When the PCs suffer consequences from partial successes or missed rolls, fill segments on the clock until the alarm is raised.

Generally, the more complex the problem, the more segments in the progress clock.

A complex obstacle is a 4-segment clock. A more complicated obstacle is a 6-segment clock. A daunting obstacle is an 8-segment clock.

The **effect level** of an action or circumstance is used to tick segments on a clock (see **Effect Levels**, page 10). **It's the GM's job to tick a clock so it reflects the fictional situation.** If the PCs are making a lot of progress, the clock should be ticked a lot. This comes with practice, by properly judging effect levels. But you should always feel free to adjust a clock in play to better reflect the situation if you make a mistake.

You can't usually fill a clock with the effect of a single action. This is by design. If a situation is simple enough for one action, don't make a clock, just judge the outcome based on the effect level of the action.

When you create a clock, make it about the **obstacle**, not the method. The clocks for an infiltration should be "Interior Patrols" and "The Tower", not "sneak past the guards" or "climb the tower." The patrols and the tower are the obstacles — the PCs can attempt to overcome them in a variety of ways.

Complex enemy threats can be broken into several "layers", each with its own progress clock. For example, the Lampblack's HQ might have a "perimeter security" clock, an "interior guards" clock, and a "Bazzo's office security" clock. The crew would have to make their way through all three layers to reach Bazzo's personal safe and whiskey collection.

Remember, a clock tracks progress. It reflects the fictional situation, so the group can gauge how they're doing. A clock is like a speedometer in a car. It *shows* the speed of the vehicle—it doesn't determine the speed.

SIMPLE OBSTACLES

Not every situation and obstacle requires a clock. Use clocks when a situation is complex or layered and you need to track effort over time — otherwise, resolve the result of an action with a single roll.



CLOCK EXAMPLES

DANGER CLOCK

The GM can use clocks to represent progressive dangers like suspicion growing during a seduction, the proximity of pursuers in a chase, or the alert level of guards on patrol. In this case, when a complication occurs, the enemy ticks 1, 2, or 3 segments on the clock, depending on its intensity. When the clock is full, the danger comes to fruition — the guards hunt down the intruders, activate an alarm, release the hounds, etc. (See **Consequences & Resistance**, page 11.)

*The crew is infiltrating the Red Sash's headquarters. The GM makes a clock for the **Alert** level of the guards. Whenever a PC suffers a complication, the GM fills segments on the Alert clock. When the Alert clock fills, the guards are aware of the intruders and react appropriately.*

RACE CLOCKS

You can create two opposed clocks to represent a contest to see who can do something first. The PCs might have a progress clock called "Escape" while the Bluecoats have a clock called "Cornered." If the PCs finish their progress before the Bluecoats fill their clock, they get away. Otherwise, they're cornered and can't flee. If both complete at the same time, the PCs escape to their lair, but the streets are filled with hunting Bluecoats outside!

LINKED CLOCKS

You can make a clock that unlocks another clock once it's filled. In the Red Sashes example, above, the GM might make a linked clock called "Trapped" after the "Alert" clocks fill up. When you fight a veteran warrior, she might have a clock for her "Defense" and then a linked clock for "Vulnerable". Once you overcome the Defense clock, then you can attempt to overcome the Vulnerable clock and defeat her. You might affect the Defense clock with violence in a knife-fight, or you lower her defense with deception if you have the opportunity. As always, the method of action is up to the players and the details of the fiction at hand.

MISSION CLOCKS

The GM can make a clock for a time-sensitive mission, to represent the window of opportunity you have to complete it. If the countdown runs out, the mission is scrubbed or changes—the target escapes, the household wakes up for the day, etc.

LONG-TERM PROJECT CLOCKS

Some projects will take a long time. A basic long-term project (like tinkering up a new feature for a device) is 8-segments. Truly long-term projects (like creating a new designer drug) can be two, three, or even four clocks, representing all the phases of development, testing, and final completion. Add or subtract clocks depending on the details of the situation and complexity of the project.

A long-term project is a good catch-all for dealing with any unusual player goal, including things that circumvent or change elements of the mechanics or the setting. For example, by default in the game, Trauma is permanent. But maybe a player wants to work on a project where they create a device to draw traumatic spirit-energies into the ghost field, thus reducing a character's Trauma and unleashing a storm of enraged ghosts in the area. It will be a long and dangerous process to set up everything needed to begin and work on a project like this, but almost anything can be attempted as long as the group is interested and it seems feasible to everyone.

TUG-OF-WAR CLOCK

You can set up a clock that can be filled *and* emptied by events, to represent a back-and-forth situation. For example, you might make a "Revolution!" clock that indicates when the refugee Skovlanders in the city start to riot over the annexation of their homeland. Some events will tick the clock up and some will tick it down. Once it fills, the revolution begins. A tug-of-war clock is also perfect for an ongoing turf war between two crews or factions.

FACTION CLOCKS

Each faction has a long-term goal. When the PCs take **DOWNTIME** (page 20) the GM ticks forward the faction clocks that they're interested in. In this way, the world around the PCs is dynamic and things happen that they're not directly connected to, changing the overall situation in the city and creating new opportunities and challenges.

The PCs may also directly affect NPC faction clocks, based on the missions and scores they pull off. Discuss known faction projects that they might aid or interfere with, and also consider how a PC operation might affect the NPC clocks, whether the players intended it or not.

THE ACTION ROLL

When your PC pursues a goal that's blocked by an obstacle you make an action roll. This is the mechanic the players use to solve problems and get what they want. Along with **resistance rolls** (see page 35), action rolls determine how things go when the crew is on the job, tangling with enemies, and pulling off daring scoundrel moves.

DESCRIBE YOUR GOAL AND ASSESS THE OBSTACLE

Your goal is the concrete outcome you'll achieve when you overcome the obstacle. Your goal might be "get into the manor house" or it might be "see who comes and goes at the house"—in both cases the obstacle might be "the guard patrol". The guards are the problem you have to deal with in order to get what you want.

CHOOSE YOUR ACTION

Tell the group which **action** your character performs to overcome the obstacle. It's usually obvious, but make it explicit anyway. There's some overlap among actions, meaning several of them might apply, depending on the specific approach you take. The choice is yours, as long as your character actually performs the action in question. You can't roll **SWAY** unless you manipulate by interacting with someone.

DETERMINE YOUR POSITION & EFFECT LEVEL

Assess the character's **position** to perform this action. There are three positions: **Controlled**, **Risky**, and **Desperate**. Read the profiles for each position. Which of the various phrases best matches the intersection of the character's goal, obstacle, and action?

If there's a position you're angling for, ask the GM how you might make that roll.

Assess the character's likely **effect**. How effective will this action be? In general, a player can try to push for a greater effect by accepting a worse position, and vice versa. "Sounds like a risky position, and you can probably get halfway across." "What if I run, instead?" "Yeah, okay, we can call that desperate, and you'll make it all the way if you succeed." See page 10 for details on effect.

THE DEVIL'S BARGAIN

PCs in *Blades* are reckless scoundrels addicted to destructive vices—they don't always act in their own best interests. To reflect this, the GM or any other player can offer you a bonus die if you accept a devil's bargain. Common devil's bargains include:

- ◆ Reveal a valuable secret.
- ◆ Sacrifice coin or an item.
- ◆ Betray a friend or loved one.
- ◆ Anger a powerful enemy.
- ◆ Make a dangerous promise.
- ◆ Add heat to the crew from evidence or witnesses.
- ◆ Suffer harm.

The devil's bargain occurs regardless of the outcome of the roll. You make the deal, pay the price, and get the bonus die. There might not be an interesting devil's bargain in every situation. If one doesn't occur to anyone right away, that's fine.

Since NPCs don't roll dice, an action roll often does double duty: it resolves the action of the PC as well as any NPCs that are involved. The single roll tells us how those actions interact and which consequences result.

ACTION ROLL

1d for each ACTION dot.

+1d if you **PUSH** yourself (you take 2 stress) -OR- if you accept a **DEVIL'S BARGAIN**.

Note: You may either push yourself or accept a devil's bargain to get one bonus die. You can't do both.

Actions which call for a die roll are usually risky, so you can think of this as the default position (thus the name). When the situation is better, move up to Controlled. When it's worse, go down to Desperate.

Each time you roll a desperate action, mark a tick of XP on your character sheet. See page 18.

CONTROLLED

You act on your terms. You exploit a dominant advantage.

CRITICAL: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You hesitate. Withdraw and try a different approach, or else do it with a minor consequence: a minor **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you suffer **lesser harm**, you end up in a **risky** position.

1-3: You're blocked or you falter. Press on by seizing a **risky** opportunity, or withdraw and try a different approach.

RISKY

You go head to head. You act under fire. You take a chance.

CRITICAL: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You do it, but there's a consequence: you suffer **harm**, a **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you end up in a **desperate** position.

1-3: Things go badly. You suffer **harm**, a **complication** occurs, you end up in a **desperate** position, you **lose this opportunity** for action.

DESPERATE

You overreach your capabilities. You're in serious trouble.

CRITICAL: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You do it, but there's a consequence: you suffer **severe harm**, a **serious complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**.

1-3: It's the worst outcome. You suffer **severe harm**, a **serious complication** occurs, you **lose this opportunity** for action.

*The GM sets the **consequences** according to the situation. You may suffer one, some, or all of the listed consequences. You may attempt to **avoid or reduce a consequence with a resistance roll**.*

EFFECT

In *Blades in the Dark*, you achieve goals by taking actions and facing consequences. But how many actions does it take to achieve a particular goal? That depends on the **effect level** of your actions. The GM judges the effect level using the profiles at right. Which one best matches the action at hand—**Limited**, **Standard**, or **Great**? Each effect level indicates the questions that should be answered for that effect, as well as how many segments to tick if you're using a **progress clock** for this obstacle.

When assessing the effect level, consider three factors: **Quality**, **Scale**, and **Potency**. If the PC has an advantage in a given factor, consider a higher effect level for their action. If they have a disadvantage, consider a reduced effect level.

When considering factors, an effect might be reduced below limited, resulting in **zero effect** (no effect at all) — or increased beyond great, resulting in an **extreme effect**.

EFFECTS IN THE FICTION

Effects aren't simply a matter of ticking clock segments. To bring an effect to life in the game, answer the effect questions and describe what happens "on screen." The answers to the questions will tell the group what remains to be done, creating a natural bridge to the next actions and risks at hand.

For **simple actions**, judge what the effect level means based on the situation. Do you achieve your goal partially, fully, or with great effect? If it's a simple, direct action, even a limited effect may be enough to get by if the player is willing to accept the poor results.

For a **complex obstacle**, the GM creates a progress clock to track the effort made to overcome it. You tick a number of segments on the clock depending on the effect level of your action and the factors involved. When you fill the clock, the obstacle may be overcome. See **Progress Clocks**, page 8.

For example, if the player's goal is "I shove him and run away," that might be a simple action. The shove will have limited, standard, or great effect on the enemy, resulting in a new situation. The enemy thug might be briefly slowed down (limited), knocked off his feet and delayed in the chase (standard), or even injured by a powerful throw (great)—depending on the assessment of the thug's prowess compared to the PC and the **factors** involved.

If the player says, "I engage this guy in a knife fight to the death," that might be a more complex obstacle, requiring a clock based on the thug's level of threat.

Tell the players what you're thinking about the scope of the obstacle and talk about their goal so everyone's on the same page and can

EFFECT LEVELS

| | |
|--------------|---------|
| GREAT | 3 TICKS |
|--------------|---------|

How is the effect increased? What extra benefit manifests?

| | |
|-----------------|---------|
| STANDARD | 2 TICKS |
|-----------------|---------|

How does the expected effect manifest? What's left to do, if anything?

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| LIMITED | 1 TICKS |
|----------------|---------|

How is the effect diminished? What significant obstacle remains?

revise as needed. There's no hard and fast rule for what's "simple" or "complex." Go with your gut and use simple or complex obstacles as you like, moment to moment in play.

EFFECT FACTORS

To assess effect level, first start with your gut feeling, given this situation. If needed, consider each factor and determine if the PC has an advantage or disadvantage there. If the PC has the advantage, consider raising their effect level by one. If they have the disadvantage, consider reducing their effect level by one. Every factor won't always apply to every situation.

QUALITY / TIER

Quality considers the effectiveness of assets, tools, weapons, or other resources, usually summarized by **Tier**. A higher tier faction has better quality stuff. **Fine items** count as +1 Tier in quality.

*Arlyn is picking the lock to a safehouse run by the Unseen. Arlyn has **fine** lockpicks and her crew is Tier I. The Unseen are Tier IV. Arlyn is outclassed in quality, so her effect will be **limited** on the lock. It's gonna take a few tries to get it open.*

*Arlyn can improve her effect by finding a weakness to gain **potency**, or get lucky with a critical on her action roll.*

SCALE

The scale factor considers the number of opponents, magnitude of force, size of an area covered, amount of influence, etc. Larger scale can be an advantage or disadvantage depending on the situation. When trying to secure an area, more people are better. When trying to move unseen, more people are a hindrance.

POTENCY

The potency factor considers particular weaknesses, taking extra time or a bigger risk, enhanced effort from **pushing yourself** (p. 7), or the influence of arcane powers. A spirit is weak to the electrical discharge of a lightning hook. A human is vulnerable to the possessing powers of a ghost. An infiltrator is more potent if the lights are extinguished and they move about in the dark.

FACTORS

| | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| - | QUALITY / TIER | + |
|---|-----------------------|---|

Do you have superior or inferior abilities, tools, or assets?

| | | |
|---|--------------|---|
| - | SCALE | + |
|---|--------------|---|

Do you have an advantage or disadvantage due to numbers or size?

| | | |
|---|----------------|---|
| - | POTENCY | + |
|---|----------------|---|

Can a weakness, extra time, or enhanced effort be exploited here?

DOMINANT FACTORS

If one factor overshadows the others, the side with that advantage dominates the situation. It doesn't matter if you have a fine sword and extra effort if you try to fight 20 people at once. Their **scale** dominates the situation and you're left with very limited effect, or no effect at all.

THE TOWER AND THE DEMON

Una wants to tear down a stone guard tower that the Silver Nails are using as a lair. She says, "I take my sledgehammer over there and I **wreck** the thing, smashing it down stone by stone. Ha! I rolled a crit! Great effect!" Um. What? Obviously, this isn't possible. A person can't smash down a stone tower with a sledgehammer. We know it's inherently silly, like jumping over the moon. But this is also codified in the effect factors. The tower has major advantages in quality, scale, and potency. Una's effect level is zero before she starts. No matter what she rolls for her action, she'll have no effect.

This concept is useful when tough—but achievable—situations arise.

Let's imagine instead that Una is facing a demon. She wants to **skirmish** with it, by hitting it with her sword. This is similar to knocking down the tower with the sledgehammer. Even on a crit, the GM says, "You manage to land a solid blow against the creature's skull, but there's no wound and your hand throbs with the impact of steel against its scaly hide." In other words, zero effect! (On a 1-3, the GM might say, "The creature swats your sword aside, clutches you in its hideous grip, and breaks your spine in two." Seriously. Don't mess with demons.)

But this situation isn't entirely hopeless, right? There must be *some* way to battle a demon. This is where effect factors can help make sense of the situation. If the demon has advantages in quality, scale, and potency, then the PCs can try to understand the factors, and take actions to address them. What's the demon vulnerable to? They can use that to remove its potency (and seize that advantage for themselves). What scale is it? They need to bring more troops. Etc.

Effect factors are a way to codify fictional positioning into a few key factors so it's easier to talk about what needs to change in order to have the desired effect.

CONSEQUENCES, HARM, & RESISTANCE

Enemy actions, bad circumstances, or the outcome of an action roll can result in **consequences** for the PC. There are six types of consequences:

- ◆ It takes **extra time**.
- ◆ You have **reduced effect**.
- ◆ You end up in a **worse position**.
- ◆ You **lose your opportunity** for this action.
- ◆ You suffer a **complication**.
- ◆ You suffer **harm**.

A given circumstance might result in one, two, or even three consequences, depending on the situation. The consequences and the method to resist them are detailed below.

EXTRA TIME

This consequence represents slow performance. The action takes longer to complete than you'd prefer. If there's a countdown clock for time during an operation, add ticks when the extra time complication occurs. If there's no clock, the PC might miss an opportunity due to taking extra time, or be late for a time sensitive event, like meeting up with a contact, or getting back to the lair before the Bluecoat's nightly sweep for scoundrels on the streets.

REDUCED EFFECT

This consequence represents impaired performance. The action isn't as effective as you'd prefer. Reduce the final effect level by one (after accounting for any factors).

WORSE POSITION

This consequence represents losing control of the situation. The action carries you into an inferior position for future actions. Perhaps you make the leap across to the next rooftop, only to end up dangling by your fingertips. Or you manage to get past the swordsman's defense and cut her, only to be disarmed by her counter-move.

LOSE YOUR OPPORTUNITY

This consequence represents shifting circumstance. You had an opportunity to achieve your goal with this action, but it slips away. To try again, you'll have to try a new approach.

COMPLICATION

This consequence represents trouble, mounting danger, or a new threat. When a complication manifests, the GM might tick a countdown clock (like the Alert level of a guard patrol), start a new countdown clock and tick it, introduce a new obstacle or threat, add +1 heat as evidence is left at the scene of the crime,

or any other troublesome circumstance you can imagine. A **serious complication** is the same, but with more ticks on the clock (2 or 3) or a more dangerous obstacle or threat.

SUFFER HARM

This consequence represents a long-lasting debility (or death). When you suffer harm, record the specific injury on your character sheet equal to the level of harm you suffer. If you suffer lesser harm, record it in the bottom row. If you suffer moderate harm, write it in the middle row. If you suffer severe harm, record it in the top row. *See an example of severe harm, below:*

| HARM | | |
|------|----------------------------|----------------|
| 3 | <i>Shattered Right Leg</i> | NEED HELP |
| 2 | | -1D |
| 1 | | REDUCED EFFECT |

Your character suffers the penalty indicated at the end of the row if any harm recorded in that row applies to the situation at hand. So, if you have *Twisted Ankle* harm in the bottom row, you'll suffer reduced effect when you try to run away from the Bluecoats. When you're impaired by harm in the top row (severe harm, level 3), your character can only take action if you have help from someone else or if you take **2 stress** to perform the action (i.e. you *push yourself*).

If you need to mark a harm level, but the row is already filled, the harm moves up to the next row above. So, if you suffered standard harm (level 2) but had no empty spaces in the second row, you'd have to record severe harm (level 3), instead. If you run out of spaces on the top row and need to mark harm there, your character suffers a **catastrophic, permanent consequence** (loss of a limb, sudden death, etc. depending on the circumstances).

HARM EXAMPLES

Lesser: *Strained, Tired, Nervous, Confused, Slowed, Battered.*

Moderate: *Exhausted, Knife Wound to Arm, Concussion, Seduced.*

Severe: *Impaled, Broken Leg, Shot in Chest, Badly Burned.*

Fatal: *Electrocuted, Bleeding Out, Drowned, Torn Apart.*

RESISTANCE

When a PC suffers a consequence, the player may choose to resist it. Describe how the character resists, then roll using one of the PC's attributes. **The character suffers 6 stress minus the highest die result** to resist a consequence.

The attribute you roll depends on the consequence:

- ◆ **INSIGHT:** Consequences from deception or understanding.
- ◆ **PROWESS:** Consequences from physical strain or injury.
- ◆ **RESOLVE:** Consequences from mental strain or willpower.

When you roll a **critical** on resistance, **clear 1 stress**.

If you suffer more than one consequence at once, you may make separate resistance rolls against each one, if you wish.

Usually, a resistance roll will **reduce the severity** of a consequence. If you're going to suffer fatal harm, for example, a resistance roll would reduce the harm to severe, instead. The GM also has the option to rule that a given resistance roll allows a character to **completely avoid** a consequence. *For example, the consequence is a worse position for the character (things will become desperate). The player rolls to resist the consequence and the GM says that the consequence is avoided entirely.*

By adjusting which consequences are reduced vs. which are avoided, you establish the overall tone of your game (from gritty and deadly to free-wheeling and cinematic).

The GM may also threaten several consequences at once, then the player may eliminate one with a resistance roll.

"She stabs you and then leaps off the balcony. Level 2 harm and you lose the opportunity to catch her with fighting."

"I'll resist that by grappling her as she attacks. She can stab me, but she doesn't get away."

Once you decide to resist a consequence and roll the dice, you must suffer the stress indicated. You can't roll first and see how much stress you'll take, then decide whether or not to resist.

ARMOR

If you have a type of **armor** that applies to the situation, you can mark an armor box to reduce or avoid a consequence, instead of rolling to resist. (All of your armor is restored during **downtime**.)

THE FORTUNE ROLL

The fortune roll is a tool the GM can use to disclaim decision making. You use a fortune roll in two different ways:

- ◆ **When you need to make a determination about a situation the PCs aren't directly involved in** and don't want to simply decide the outcome.

The Lampblacks attack the Red Sashes. How does that turn out? The GM makes a fortune roll for the Lampblacks and another for the Red Sashes. The Lampblacks get a good outcome but the Red Sashes get limited effect. The GM decides that the Red Sashes lose their hold on a drug den in the district, but the Lampblacks suffer some injuries in the skirmish.

- ◆ **When an outcome is uncertain**, but no other roll applies to the situation at hand.

While pilfering the workshop of an alchemist, Nails is possessed by a vengeful ghost. As his control of his body slips away, Nails desperately grabs a bottle of quicksilver and drinks it down. Will the arcane concoction have an effect on the spirit? Will it poison Nails to death? Who knows? This is uncharted territory and anything might happen. The GM makes a fortune roll to see how it turns out.

When you make a fortune roll you may assess **any trait rating** to determine the dice pool of the roll.

- ◆ When a faction takes an action with uncertain outcome, you might use their **Tier** rating to make a fortune roll.
- ◆ When a gang operates independently, you might use their **Quality** rating for a fortune roll.
- ◆ When a supernatural power manifests with uncertain results, you might use its **Magnitude** for a fortune roll.

If no trait applies, roll 1d for sheer luck or create a dice pool (from 1 to 4) based on the situation at hand.

If two parties are directly opposed, make a fortune roll for each side to see how they do, then assess the outcome of the situation by comparing their performance levels.

The fortune roll is a tool to help the GM manage all the various moving parts of the living city of Doskvol. Sometimes a quick roll is enough to answer a question or inspire an idea for what might happen next. The fortune roll is the GM's resource. It should not be used to replace the players' rolls in the game.

FORTUNE ROLL

1d for each **TRAIT** rating.

+1d for a **MAJOR ADVANTAGE**.

-1d for a **MAJOR DISADVANTAGE**.

CRITICAL: Exceptional outcome / Great effect.

6: Good outcome / Standard effect.

4/5: Mixed outcome / Limited effect.

1-3: Bad outcome / Poor effect.

Other examples of fortune rolls:

- ◆ The PCs instigate a war between two factions, then sit back and watch the fireworks. How does it turn out? Does either side dominate? Are they both made vulnerable by the conflict? Make a few fortune rolls to find out.
- ◆ A strange sickness, the Cold Slumber, is sweeping the city. How badly is Crow's Foot hit by the outbreak? The GM assigns a magnitude to the arcane plague, and makes a fortune roll to judge the extent of its contamination.
- ◆ Since the Cold Slumber is causing widespread death across the city, can the Spirit Wardens keep up with the massive increase in cremations needed? Does the sickness cause a secondary outbreak of rogue spirits across the city?
- ◆ Inspectors are putting a case together against the PC crew. How quickly will their evidence result in arrests? The crew's wanted level counts as a major advantage for the inspectors.
- ◆ The PCs decide to sell raw leviathan blood as a new street drug. What does it do to the users? Are they okay, or are there horrible demonic side effects? The GM uses the Quality rating of the raw substance (which is 0, since it hasn't been processed) as the relevant trait to see how it goes. She rolls 2d6 and takes the lowest, which is a 2: Bad outcome. The users are getting sick and starting to show signs of demonic corruption!



FACTIONS, TIER, & REP

Doskvol is a city of crime, from top to bottom. Every faction preys on every other. Alliances are fleeting, vendettas are bloody. Into this swirling chaos of corruption and violence your fledgling crew of scoundrels has set its course. Will you be crushed under the heels of those above you, or will you rise up?

TIER

Take a look at the **faction ladders** on page 56. Each notable faction of the city is ranked by **TIER**—a measure of wealth, influence, and scale. At the highest level are the **TIER V** factions, the true powers of the city. Your crew begins at the absolute bottom—technically not even on the ladder—at **TIER ZERO**.

You'll use your tier rating to roll dice when you acquire an asset and when you try to reduce heat on the crew, as well as for any fortune roll for which your crew's overall power level and influence is the primary trait.

GANG SCALE BY TIER

Tier level determines the **scale** of that faction's gangs.

- ◆ **TIER IV.** Massive gangs. ◆ **TIER II.** Large gangs (20 (80 people per gang) ◆ **TIER I.** Medium gangs (10).
- ◆ **TIER III.** Huge gangs. (40) ◆ **TIER 0.** Small gangs (5).

HOLD

On the faction ladders next to the tier numbers is a letter indicating the strength of each faction's **HOLD** on their tier. **HOLD** represents how well a faction can maintain their current position on the ladder. W indicates **weak** hold. F indicates **firm** hold. S indicates **strong** hold. Your crew begins with weak hold.

ADVANCEMENT

To advance up the ladder, your crew needs **REP**. **REP** is a measure of clout and renown. When you accrue enough rep, the other factions take you more seriously and you attract the support needed to advance.

To gain **REP**, accomplish criminal scores. For each successful score, your crew earns rep equal to the tier of the faction you've preyed on. The bigger the victim, the more rep it's worth.

By default, your crew needs **9 REP** to advance.

When you advance, you can choose to improve your crew's **TIER** or their **HOLD** by one step. When you improve your tier, your **hold drops by one level** and you must also pay a measure of **COIN** equal to your **new tier x 4** (which represents the acquisition of better assets).

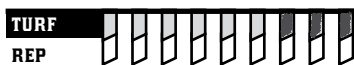
After you advance, you **reset your rep to zero**.

TURF

Another way to assist in the crew's advancement is by acquiring **TURF**. When you seize and hold territory, you establish a more stable basis for your rep. Each piece of **TURF** that you claim represents abstracted support and assets for the crew (usually acquired via extortion or "protection taxes" from the citizens on that turf).

Each piece of turf you hold is marked on your rep tracker. The marks on your tracker from turf reduce the amount of rep you need to advance. **When you advance and reset your rep, you keep the marks from all the turf you hold.**

So, if your crew holds 3 pieces of turf, you need only 6 rep to advance, instead of 9. When you advance, you'll clear the 6 rep marks, but keep the 3 turf marks (as long as you hold those pieces of turf).



3 turf. 6 rep needed to advance. I like to mark turf on the right side, to indicate a "cap" on how much rep the crew needs.

You acquire turf by accomplishing a criminal operation to seize it. You might get it by force, by negotiation or intimidation, by deceit or skullduggery—however your crew prefers to operate given the opportunities at hand.

The rep, hold, and tier tracker. When you fill your rep meter, you can choose to improve either your crew's hold or their tier.



REDUCING A FACTION'S HOLD

You may perform an operation specifically to reduce the hold of another faction, if you know of a way they're vulnerable. If the operation succeeds, the target faction loses 1 level of hold (strong drops to firm, firm drops to weak, and if weak drops, the faction loses 1 tier and stays weak.)

Also, when a faction goes to war, it temporarily loses 1 level of hold while the war persists, to represent the distraction of dealing with an enemy in open conflict.

Your crew can lose hold, too, following the same rules above.

FACTION STATUS

In addition to tracking rep, hold, and tier, you also track your **status** with each faction on the ladder, using the upward and downward pointing blades on the faction sheet. Status is rated from -3 to +3, with 0 (neutral) being the default starting status.

When you create your crew, you assign positive and negative status ratings to reflect your recent history with factions in the city. Through play, the ratings will change based on your actions.

STATUS CHANGES

When you execute an operation, you gain -1 or -2 status with any factions that are hurt by your actions. You may also gain +1 status with a faction that your operation helps. If you keep your operation completely quiet (no one knows it was you) then your status doesn't change.

If you take on a mission given by a faction, you might gain +1 status with them when you complete it, and -1 or -2 status with their enemies if the operation isn't quiet.

STATUS LEVELS

+3: Allies. This faction will help you even if it's not in their best interest to do so. They expect you to do the same for them.

+2: Friendly. This faction will help you if it doesn't create serious problems for them. They expect you to do the same.

+1: Helpful. This faction will help you if it causes no problems or significant cost for them. They expect the same from you.

0: Neutral.

-1: Interfering. This faction will look for opportunities to cause trouble for you (or profit from your misfortune) as long as it causes no problems or significant cost for them. They expect the same from you.

-2: Hostile. This faction will look for opportunities to hurt you as long as it doesn't create serious problems for them. They expect you to do the same, and take precautions against you.

-3: War. This faction will go out of its way to hurt you even if it's not in their best interest to do so. They expect you to do the same, and take precautions against you. When you're at war with any number of factions, your crew suffers +1 heat from scores, temporarily loses 1 hold, and PCs get only one downtime action rather than two. You can end a war by eliminating your enemy or by negotiating a mutual agreement to establish a new status rating.

CLAIMS

Each crew sheet has a map of claims available to be seized (see the example for Thieves, below). The claim map displays a default roadmap for your crew type. Claims should be seized in order, by following the paths from the central square, the crew's lair.

You may attempt to seize any claim on your map, ignoring the paths (or even seek out a special claim not on your map) but these operations will always be especially difficult and require exceptional efforts to discover and achieve. The claim roadmap shows typical paths for advancement, not an absolute restriction on your operations.

SEIZING A CLAIM

Every claim in Doskvol is already controlled by a faction. To acquire one for yourself, you have to take it from someone

else. To seize a claim, tell the GM which claim on your map your crew intends to capture. The GM will detail the claim with a location and a description and will tell you which faction currently controls that claim. Or the GM might offer you a choice of a few options if they're available.

If you choose to ignore the roadmap paths when seizing a claim, the GM might tell you that you'll need to investigate and gather information in order to discover a claim of that type before you can attempt to seize it.

Plan the operation like any other score, and if you succeed, you seize the claim and the targeted faction loses the claim.

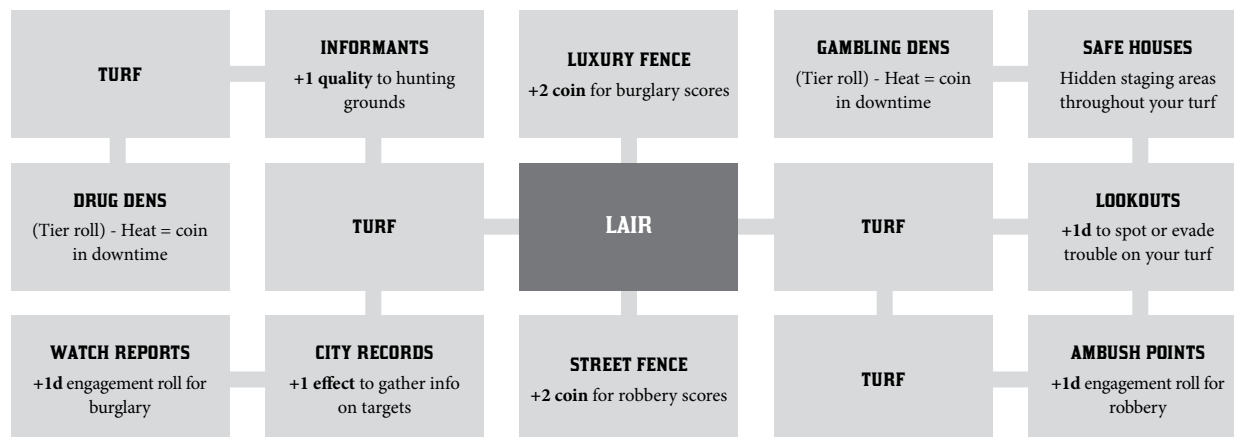
Seizing a claim is a serious attack on a faction, usually resulting in -2 faction status with the target, and potentially +1 status with its enemies.

As soon as you seize a claim, you enjoy the listed benefit for as long as your hold the claim. Some claims count as **TURF** (see page 13). Others provide special benefits to the crew, such as bonus dice in certain circumstances, extra coin generated for the crew's treasury, or new opportunities for action.

LOSING A CLAIM

If you lose a claim, you lose all the benefits of that claim. If your lair is lost, you lose the benefits of all of your claims until you can restore your lair.

CLAIMS: THIEVES





GATHERING INFORMATION

The flow of information from the GM to the players about the fictional world is very important in a roleplaying game. By default, the GM tells the players what their characters perceive, suspect, and intuit. But there's just too much going on to say *everything* — it would take forever and be boring, too. So, the players have a tool at their disposal to more fully investigate the fictional world.

When you want to know something specific about the fictional world, your character can **gather information**. The GM will ask you **how** your character gathers the info (or how they learned it in the past).

If it's common knowledge, the GM will simply answer your questions. If there's an obstacle to the discovery of the answer, an action roll is called for. If there's no obstacle (or you do it at your leisure during downtime) a simple fortune roll determines the quality of the information you gather.

When a gather info roll is made during downtime, the player gets a +1d bonus when a friend or contact is involved, and may spend coin to boost the result level of their roll.

When your character gathers information, you ask the GM questions about the fictional world, based on what the character is doing to discover the details. For instance, if you decide to beat up Avrick the powder dealer and **COMMAND** him to talk, you could ask questions about where Avrick gets his supply, if he's lying, what he intends to do later, etc. Or maybe you decide to **SURVEY** the Night Market and find out who's carrying the heaviest purses home.

Some example questions are on the bottom of the character sheet. The GM always answers honestly, but with a level of detail according to the level of effect or quality of the roll.

- ◆ **LIMITED:** Incomplete information. More information gathering will be needed to get all the answers.
- ◆ **STANDARD:** Good details. The information is clear. Clarifying and follow-up questions are possible.
- ◆ **GREAT:** Exceptional details. The information is complete and follow-up questions may expand into related areas.

Some investigations are complex and require a longer process of information gathering. In this case, the GM makes a clock (or several) to track the progress of the investigation. As each instance of information gathering occurs and the clock is ticked, the GM summarizes the progress, without going into too much detail. The PC should understand that they're making progress, but they know that there's more to be discovered. When the clock is full, the information is complete, and the player can ask questions.

GM, remember this: *Blades in the Dark* is, at heart, a crime drama, not a mystery. Secrets are there to be ferreted out. What's fun is to discover what the PCs do as a result of what they learn, not to present a confusing puzzle to be solved. Don't be afraid to **actually answer the question** when they gather info.

EXAMPLES & QUESTIONS

A PC might **CONSORT** with a knowledgeable friend to learn secrets about an enemy or rival:

- ◆ *What do they intend to do?*
- ◆ *What might I suspect about their motives?*
- ◆ *How can I find leverage to manipulate them?*

A PC might **SURVEY** a manor house to case it for a heist:

- ◆ *What's a good point of infiltration?*
- ◆ *What's the danger here?*

or **SURVEY** a charged situation when they meet another gang:

- ◆ *What's really going on here? Are they about to ambush us?*

A PC might **STUDY** information from obscure books to discover an arcane secret:

- ◆ *What incantation disables the runes of warding?*
- ◆ *Will anyone sense it when they're disabled?*

or **STUDY** a person to read their intentions and feelings:

- ◆ *What are they really feeling right now?*
- ◆ *How could I get them to trust me?*

Any action can potentially be used to gather info, depending on the circumstances.

PLANNING & ENGAGEMENT

Your crew spends time planning each score. They huddle around a flickering lantern in their lair, looking at scrawled maps, whispering plots and schemes, bickering about the best approach, lamenting the dangers ahead, and lusting after stacks of coin.

But you, the players, don't have to do the nitty-gritty planning. The characters take care of that, off-screen. All you have to do is choose what **type of plan** the characters *have already made*. That's right; the planning phase is over as soon as you start it.

There's no need to sweat all the little details and try to cover every eventuality ahead of time, because the **engagement roll** (detailed at right) ultimately determines what troubles appear when the plan is put in motion. No plan is ever perfect. You can't account for everything. This system assumes that there's always some unknown factors and trouble—major or minor—in every operation; you just have to make the best of it.

There are six different plans, each with a missing **detail** you need to provide. To "plan an operation," simply choose the plan and supply the detail. Then the GM will **cut to the action** as the first moments of the operation unfold.

ASSAULT

Do violence to a target.
Detail: The point of attack.

DECEPTION

Lure, trick, or manipulate.
Detail: The method of deception.

STEALTH

Trespass unseen where you're not wanted.
Detail: The entry point of infiltration.

OCCULT

Confront or exploit a supernatural power.
Detail: The arcane power you will employ.

SOCIAL

Negotiate, bargain, or persuade.
Detail: The social connection you're using

TRANSPORT

Move something from place to place.
Detail: Pickup / drop-off locations & route.

THE DETAIL

When you choose a plan, you provide a missing **detail**, like the point of attack, social connection, etc. If you don't know the detail, you can scout it out or gather information in some other way.

ITEM LOADOUTS

After the plan and detail are in place, each player chooses their character's **load**. This indicates how much stuff they're carrying on the operation. They don't have to select individual items—just the maximum number they'll have access to during the action.

ENGAGEMENT ROLL

To determine the starting situation for the score, make an **engagement roll**. Are the PCs smoothly in control? Or have things not started well? If the situation is already well established, you can go without an engagement roll. Use it when you need to.

The engagement roll is a **fortune roll**, using the **vulnerability of the target** as the trait for the roll. The more vulnerable the target, the more dice you roll.

Judge the vulnerability of the target by comparing the **detail** of the PC's plan against the awareness and readiness of the target versus that type of plan. Also, consider the difference in **Tiers**. A lower-tier target should yield +1 or +2d. A higher-tier target should yield -1 or -2d. If the operation takes place on the PC's **turf**, give +1 or +2d.

♦ **0d Strong**: The target is especially resistant.

♦ **1d Ready**: The target is well prepared.

♦ **2d Average**: The target has standard preparations.

♦ **4d Weak**: The target is ill prepared.

♦ **6d Exposed**: The target is especially vulnerable.

The GM uses the outcome of this roll to describe the situation when we cut to the action of the operation, already in progress. Use the examples below as a guide.

Bad Outcome (1-3): The opposition turns the tables! They seize the initiative and launch their own counter-action. For example, a plan to *assault* a gambling den is challenged by a *deception* plan by the enemy—the crew arrives at the site and finds only a meek shopkeeper, confused about why the crew has kicked down their door. Or, a plan to *infiltrate* might be thwarted by an *assault*—the guards at the site intercept and attack the crew before they can break in.

As you sneak up to the servant's entrance, the electric lamps near the door suddenly flare to life. "Open fire!" a voice cries out. You see the barrels of several rifles appear at the windows above you. What do you do?

"No plan extends with certainty beyond the first encounter with the enemy."

—MOLTKE THE ELDER

Mixed Outcome (4/5): The PCs initiate their chosen plan, but an unexpected complication arises. Here are some options:

♦ **Rotten luck**. A third party interferes.

You're assaulting the Red Sash's treasury, but wait... a Bluecoat squad is here, launching their own raid at the same time!

You begin the arcane ritual to bind the demon, but wait... another occultist in the city has already bound her to service and now your power clashes with theirs!

♦ **Tougher than it seemed**. The target has resistance to this plan that you didn't expect.

You attempt to make an arrangement with Bazso Baz, but wait... that's a shrine to the Forgotten Gods in the corner of his office... and now he's insisting that you swear to a deal by spilling your blood on the idol.

Good Outcome (6): The PCs exploit the opportunity established by the detail. There are no sudden surprises as the action begins.

Critical: The PCs seize a definite advantage. For example: they've already slipped past the first obstacle with minimal effort.

LINKED PLANS

A common scenario is a team that wants to attempt a two-pronged approach. "You create a diversion at the tavern, and when they send their thugs over there, we'll break in to their house." There are two ways to handle this.

1. The diversion is a **setup or assist maneuver** that a team member performs as part of the Infiltration plan. (See **Teamwork**, page 17, for details.) If it makes sense, the team member who performed the setup or assist action will drift back in to the main operation and join the team again so they don't have to sit out and wait.

2. The diversion is its own plan, linked to a future infiltration plan. You play it out as a full series of actions, with the end goal being, "There are no guards at the house when we infiltrate it later." It's totally fine for a single operation to consist of several linked plans like this.

Either approach is fine. It's a question of interest. Is the diversion interesting enough on its own to play out moment by moment? If so, make it a separate plan. If not, use a setup action.

TEAMWORK & FLASHBACKS

TEAMWORK

When the team of PCs engages in an operation together, the characters have access to special **teamwork maneuvers**.

- ◆ **Assist** another PC who's rolling an action.
- ◆ **Lead a group action**.
- ◆ **Protect** a teammate.
- ◆ **Set up** a character who will follow through on your action.

The special maneuvers are detailed below.

ASSIST

When you assist another player who's rolling, describe what your character does to help. Take 1 stress and give them +1d to their roll. You might also suffer consequences from the roll, depending on the circumstances. Only one character may assist a given roll.

A character may assist a group action, but only if they aren't taking part in it directly.

LEAD A GROUP ACTION

When you lead a group action, you coordinate multiple members of the team to tackle a problem together. Describe how your character leads the team in a coordinated effort. Do you bark orders, give subtle hand signals, or provide charismatic inspiration?

Each PC who's involved rolls for the action and **the team counts the single best result** as the overall effort for everyone who rolled. However, the character leading the group action takes 1 stress for each PC that rolled 1-3 as their best result.

*This is how you do the "everyone sneaks into the manor" maneuver. Everyone who wants to sneak in rolls their **PROWL** action, and the best result counts for the whole team. But the leader suffers stress for everyone who does poorly. It's tough covering for the stragglers.*

The group action result covers everyone who rolled in the attempt. If you don't roll, your character doesn't get the effects of the action.

Your character doesn't have to be especially skilled at the action at hand in order to lead a group action. This maneuver is about leadership, not necessarily about ability.

PROTECT

You step in to face a consequence that one of your teammates would otherwise face. **You suffer it or roll to resist the consequence** instead of them. Describe how you intervene.

SET UP

When you perform a setup action, you have an indirect effect on an obstacle. If your action has its intended result, any member of the team who follows through on your maneuver gets +1 **effect level** or **improved position** for their roll. You choose the benefit, based on the nature of your set up action.

*This is how you do the "I'll create a distraction" maneuver. You roll **SWAY** to distract a Bluecoat with your charms, then any teammate who follows through with a **PROWL** action to sneak past him gets improved position. It's less risky since you're drawing the guard's attention.*

This is a good way to contribute to an operation when you don't have a good rating in the action at hand. A clever setup action lets you help the team indirectly. Multiple follow-up actions may take advantage of your setup (including someone **leading** a group action) as long as it makes sense in the fiction.

Since a setup action can increase the effect of follow-up actions, it's also useful when the team is facing tough opposition that has advantages in quality, scale, and/or potency. Even if the PCs are reduced to zero effect due to disadvantages in a situation, the setup action provides a bonus that allows for limited effect.

*The PCs are facing a heavily armored carriage that is immune to their weapons. Arcy the Cutter uses **Wreck** as a setup action to pry some of the armor loose with her crowbar, giving follow up actions +1 effect—going from zero effect to limited effect.*

Do We Have to Use Teamwork?

Teamwork maneuvers are options, not requirements. Each character can still perform solo actions during an operation. If your character can't communicate or somehow coordinate with the rest of the team, you can't use or benefit from any teamwork maneuvers.

FLASHBACKS

The rules don't distinguish between actions performed in the present moment and those performed in the past. When an operation is underway, you can invoke a **flashback** to roll for an action in the past which impacts your current situation. Maybe you convinced the district watch sergeant to cancel the Bluecoat patrol tonight, so you make a **SWAY** roll to see how that went.

The GM sets a **stress cost** when you activate a flashback action:

- ◆ **0 STRESS** for a normal action for which you had easy opportunity. *The Cutter **CONSORTED** with his friend Chael to agree to arrive at the dice game ahead of time, to suddenly spring up as a surprise ally.*
- ◆ **1 STRESS** for a complex action or unlikely opportunity. *The Hound arranged to **FINESSE** her pistols under the table ahead of time so she could retrieve them after the pat-down at the door.*
- ◆ **2 (OR MORE) STRESS** for an elaborate action which involved several special opportunities or contingencies. *The Whisper has already **ATTUNED** to the ghost of the former proprietor to divine the secret of the hidden safe.*

After the stress cost is paid, a flashback action is handled just like any other action—calling for an action roll or fortune roll or simply accomplished, depending on the circumstances.

ADVANCEMENT, HEAT, & WANTED LEVEL

PC ADVANCEMENT

Each player keeps track of the experience points (xp) that their character earns. During the game session, you mark xp each time:

- ◆ You make a **desperate action roll**. Mark the xp in the attribute for the action you rolled. When you roll in a group action that's desperate, you also mark XP.
- ◆ Your character performs an action that matches your **playbook xp trigger**. For example, the Cutter's xp trigger is "When you address a tough challenge with violence or threats." To 'address a challenge', your character should take a significant action to attempt to overcome a tough obstacle or threat. It doesn't matter if the action is successful or not. You get xp either way. Mark the xp in your playbook advancement.

At the end of each session, you may earn bonus xp. For each bonus below, mark 1 xp if it was triggered at all, or mark 2 xp if it was triggered a lot during the session. You may mark end-of-session xp on any xp tracks you want (an attribute or playbook).

- ◆ You've expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background.
- ◆ You struggled with issues from your vice or traumas during the session.

Finally, you can earn xp by **training** during downtime. When you train, mark xp in one of your attributes or in your playbook. A given xp track can be trained only once per downtime phase.

Marking xp on the playbook advancement track.



When you fill an xp track, you clear all the marks and your character earns an **advance**. When you earn an advance in your playbook track, you may choose an additional **special ability**. When you earn an advance in an attribute track, you may add an **additional action dot** to one of the actions under that attribute.

This character has filled their Insight attribute track, so the player chooses to take an additional action dot in the Tinker action.



CREW ADVANCEMENT

At the end of each session:

- ◆ Review the crew advancement items, and mark 1 xp for each item that you did during the previous session. If you've done an item multiple times, mark 2 xp for it.

When you mark 8 crew advancement ticks, clear the ticks and get **2 crew upgrades** or a new **special ability**.

In addition, each PC gets 1 COIN (+2 per crew TIER) as a bonus payment, which they may keep as spendable currency on hand or **STASH** away for retirement (see page 20).

HEAT

Doskvol is a city of prying eyes and informants (both living and ghostly). Anything you do might be witnessed, and there's always evidence left behind. To reflect this, your crew acquires **HEAT** as they commit crimes. After a score or conflict with an opponent, your crew takes heat according to the nature of the operation:

- ◆ **1 HEAT**: Smooth & quiet; low exposure.
- ◆ **2 HEAT**: Contained; standard exposure.
- ◆ **4 HEAT**: Loud & chaotic; high exposure.
- ◆ **6 HEAT**: Wild; devastating exposure.

Add **+1 HEAT** for a high-profile or well-connected target. Add **+1 HEAT** if the situation happened on hostile turf. Add **+1 HEAT** if you're at war with another faction. Add **+2 HEAT** if killing was involved.

You mark heat levels on the heat tracker on the crew sheet.



When your heat level reaches 9, you gain a **WANTED LEVEL** and clear your heat (any excess heat "rolls over," so if your heat was 7 and you took 4 heat, you'd reset with 2 heat marked).

The higher your wanted level, the more serious the response when law enforcement takes action against you.

Also, the combined level of your heat and wanted level determines the severity of the **entanglements** that your crew faces after a score. See page 34 for details.

INCARCERATION: REDUCING WANTED LEVEL

The only way to reduce your crew's **WANTED LEVEL** is through incarceration. When one of your crew members, friends, contacts — or a framed enemy — is convicted and incarcerated for crimes associated with your crew, your **WANTED LEVEL is reduced by 1** and you clear your **HEAT**.

Incarceration may result from investigation and arrest by the Bluecoats, or because someone turns themselves in and takes the fall for the crew's crimes.

The severity of the prison sentence depends on your wanted level when the conviction occurs:

- ◆ **WANTED LEVEL 4**: Many years, a life sentence, or execution.
- ◆ **WANTED LEVEL 3**: A year or two.
- ◆ **WANTED LEVEL 2**: Several months.
- ◆ **WANTED LEVEL 1**: A month or two.

Incarceration at Ironhook Prison is demoralizing and brutal. The renown of your crew is your only real defense inside. Roll your crew's Tier. On a 1-3, you suffer a level of **TRAUMA** from the experience. On a 4/5, you keep your head down and do your time without serious incident. On a 6+, you make a name for yourself inside. Your crew gains a **prison claim** and **+1 faction status** with a faction that you assisted while in prison.

(Prison claims will be detailed in the full game.)

VICE

"It would be a terrible shame if Madame Tesslyn's lotus supply went up in flames, wouldn't it? Such a waste of quality product. Of course, if such a tragedy were to happen, I would be only too happy to accommodate her clientele while she got back on her feet. And the arsonist would warrant some measure of my gratitude as well."

—ROLAN VOLARIS

STRESS & RELIEF

The scoundrels of Duskvol are a special lot. They defy the powers that be and dare to prey on those who are considered to be their betters. They push themselves farther than ordinary people are willing to go. But this comes at a cost. A scoundrel's life is one of constant stress. Inevitably, each turns to the seduction of a **vice** in order cope.

A scoundrel's vice is their obsession, their burden, and their relief. Every free coin and free moment that can be spent in pursuit of their vice is spent. But with this indulgence comes relief from stress and the ability to once again face the impossible challenge of the scoundrel's life.

INDULGING YOUR VICE

When you indulge your vice, you clear stress from your character's stress track. Say how your character indulges their vice, including which **purveyor of vice** they use to satisfy their needs (see page 66). This indulgence takes time, so it can only be done when the crew has **downtime**. Alternately, you may choose to release your character to be "lost in their vice" for a session, allowing them to indulge off-camera while you play a different PC. An expert, gang member, friend, or contact of the crew might be created as an alternate character to play, thus fleshing out the landscape of PCs.

Roll to find out how much stress relief your character receives. A vice roll is like a resistance roll in reverse—rather than gaining stress levels, you clear stress levels. The effectiveness of your indulgence depends upon your character's worst attribute rating. The idea being, your vice is an expression of your character's weakness. It's their weakest quality (insight, prowess, or resolve) that is most in thrall to the obsession of vice. **Make an attribute roll using your character's lowest attribute rating** (if there's a tie, that's fine—simply use that rating). **Clear an amount of stress equal to the highest die result.**

OVERINDULGENCE

If the result of your vice roll means you clear more stress levels than you had marked, you **overindulge**. A vice is not a reliable, controllable habit. It's a risk—and one that can drive your character to act against their own best interests.

When you overindulge, you make a bad call because of your vice—in acquiring it or while under its influence. To bring the effect of this bad decision into the game, select an overindulgence from the list:

- ◆ **ATTRACT TROUBLE.** Select or roll an additional **entanglement** (see page 34).
- ◆ **BIG TALK.** Brag about your exploits. **+2 heat.**
- ◆ **LOST.** You disappear for a few weeks or more. Play a different character until this one returns from their bender. When you return, you've also healed any harm you had.
- ◆ **TAPPED.** Your current purveyor cuts you off. Find a new source for your vice.

IGNORING YOUR VICE

If you do not or cannot indulge your vice during a downtime phase, you take stress equal to your **TRAUMA**. If you don't have any trauma, you're free to ignore your vice. It doesn't have a hold over you (yet).

ROLEPLAYING & XP

Along with your character's heritage and background, their vice tells us what kind of person they are. This obsession impacts their motivations, goals, and behavior. When you ponder what your character might do or say next, you can always consider their vice to help you think of something. As an added benefit, by playing to the nature of your character's vice, you earn an xp tick at the end of the session.

COIN, ENTANGLEMENTS, & DOWNTIME

COIN

COIN is an abstract measure of cash and liquid assets. The term is slang from the days of the old Imperial treasury, which used coins of solid gold. "Flashing a coin" was considered an ostentatious display of wealth. These days, everyone uses small silver pieces for currency, commonly called "slugs" or "eels".

The few silver pieces the PCs use in their daily lives are not tracked. If a scoundrel wants to toss a few silver around to achieve a small goal (bribe a doorman), roll the PC's **lifestyle quality** (see **Stash**, at right) to see how it turns out.

COIN VALUES

- ◆ **1 COIN:** A full purse of silver pieces. A month's wages.
- ◆ **2 COIN:** A fine weapon. A weekly income for a small business. A fine piece of art. A set of luxury clothes.
- ◆ **4 COIN:** An exquisite jewel. A heavy burden of silver pieces.
- ◆ **6 COIN:** An good monthly take for a small business. A small safe full of coins and valuables. A rare artifact or valuable.
- ◆ **8 COIN:** Liquidating a significant asset—a carriage and goats, a horse, a deed to a small property.
- ◆ **10 COIN:** A treasure trove.

More than **4 COIN** is an impractical amount to keep lying around. You must expend the excess or put it in your **STASH** (see below). A crew can also store **4 COIN** in their lair, by default. If they have a **vault**, they can store up to **8 COIN**. Any coin beyond their limit must be spent as soon as possible, or distributed among the crew members.

1 unit of **COIN** in silver pieces or other bulk currency takes up 1 item slot for your **load** when carried.

STASH & RETIREMENT

When you mark your last Trauma and retire, the amount of **COIN** you've managed to stash away determines the fate of your character. Your stash tracker is on your character sheet.

- ◆ **Stash 0-10: Poor soul.** You end up in a reeking flophouse, awash in vice and misery.
- ◆ **Stash 11-20: Meager.** A tiny hovel that you can call your own.
- ◆ **Stash 21-39: Modest.** A simple home or apartment, with some small comforts. You might operate a tavern or small business.
- ◆ **Stash 40: Fine.** A well-appointed home or apartment, claiming a few luxuries. You might operate a medium business.

In addition, each full row of stash (10 coins) indicates the **Quality level of the scoundrel's lifestyle**, from zero (street life) to four (luxury).

If you want to pull coin out of your stash, you may do so, at a cost. Your character sells off some of their assets and investments in order to get some quick cash. **For every two stash removed, you get one coin in cash.**

PAYOFF & ENTANGLEMENTS

After a score, the PCs take stock of their payoff from the operation and deal with any outstanding entanglements that the crew is involved in.

PAYOFF

A score yields **1 REP** per **TIER** of the target and a **COIN** reward based on the nature of the operation.

- ◆ **2 COIN:** Minor job; several full purses.
- ◆ **4 COIN:** Small job; a strongbox.
- ◆ **6 COIN:** Standard score; decent loot.
- ◆ **8 COIN:** Major score; serious loot.
- ◆ **10+ COIN:** A treasure trove.

Subtract 1 coin per crew Tier if you pay a tithe to a ward boss or larger organization.

ENTANGLEMENTS

Your scoundrels and crew didn't just spring into existence tonight. You have a complex history of favors, commitments, debts, and promises that got you where you are today. To reflect this, after each score, you roll dice to find out which entanglement comes calling. An entanglement might be a rival crew looking to throw their weight around (and demand some coin), an Investigator of the City Watch making a case against them (but ready for a bribe), or even the attention of a vengeful ghost. See page 37 for a partial list of entanglements (more entanglements will be included in the full game).

CREW DOWNTIME

Between scores, your crew spends time at liberty, attending to personal things. This is called **downtime**. During a downtime phase, each PC has time to pursue **two downtime actions**. (When you're at war, you have time for only one action.)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ◆ Acquire Asset | ◆ Train |
| ◆ Gather Info | ◆ Vice |
| ◆ Recover | ◆ Work on a Long Term Project |
| ◆ Reduce Heat | |

You can choose from the list, or come up with some other downtime action of your own if none of those apply. You may choose the same action more than once. As always, you can only pursue actions that you're in a position to accomplish. If a downtime action is contingent on another action, resolve that action first before resolving the downtime action.

A PC can take more actions, but **each additional downtime action costs 1 COIN or 1 REP**. This reflects the extra time or effort spent to squeeze in more opportunities before the next operation. When you complete a new score, you reset and get a "free" downtime phase again.

See page 34 for the rules for all the downtime actions.

GM: If a player can't decide which downtime move to pick, offer them a long-term project idea. You know what the player is interested in and what they like. Suggest a project that will head in a fun direction for them.

You got that weird vision at the altar to the Forgotten Gods... want to get to the bottom of that? Okay, start a project—8 segments—called... "Weird God Vibes." What do you do to work on that?

NPC DOWNTIME

The NPC crews and factions also do things when you take downtime. The GM **advances their project clocks** and chooses a downtime action or two for each faction that they're interested in at the moment. Choose any action that makes sense for that faction to pursue. For example:

- ◆ Seize a claim or increase hold, make an enemy vulnerable, or reduce the hold of a vulnerable enemy.
- ◆ Gather information on the PCs (may be opposed by a PC roll) or another subject.
- ◆ Achieve a short-term goal they're in position to accomplish.
- ◆ Acquire a new asset.
- ◆ Call in a favor from another faction.
- ◆ Employ political pressure or threats to force someone's hand.

GM: Take downtime actions and advance clocks for the factions you're interested in right now. Don't worry about the rest. Later, when you turn your attention to a faction you've ignored for a while, go ahead and give them several downtime actions and project clock ticks to "catch up" to current events.

When factions do things that are known in the criminal underworld, **tell the players about it** through one of their **friends** or **contacts** or **vice purveyors**. These rumors and bits of gossip can lead to future scores and opportunities for the PCs.

HEALING

"The bone must be reset, I'm afraid. Here, breathe this black lotus vapor while I consult Edvard's treatise on anatomy."

—MELVIR KEPP

TREATMENT IN DOWNTIME

To get rid of harm, a PC must first receive treatment to stabilize their injuries or ailments so the healing process can begin. To do this, the player chooses the **Recover** action during **downtime**. When you recover, you seek out treatment for your harm. You might visit a physicker who can mend your wounds and soothe your mind with anatomical science or a witch who specializes in healing charms and restorative alchemy. If you don't have a contact or fellow PC who can provide treatment, you can use the **acquire asset** downtime action to gain access to a healer, who can provide service for the whole crew.

If you're treated by a professional with access to their tools, their efforts are always effective. If you're treated under poor circumstances or by someone who isn't well versed, the GM will ask for a roll to see how the treatment goes, usually using the **Quality** rating of the NPC doing the work, or an **Action** rating if it's a PC. A result of 1-3 means that the treatment fails and you're unable to start the healing process. You'll have to try again with another recover action.

When you're at war with another crew or faction, it's considered as poor circumstances for getting treatment.

HEALING PROJECT CLOCK

When you've received treatment from the **recover** action, your **healing clock** becomes available. (The healing clock is on your character sheet, just below your harm tracker.) To tick segments on the clock, choose the **long-term project** downtime action. Healing works like any other long-term project. You spend time and effort on it, make a roll, then tick segments on the clock according to the outcome.

Any appropriate trait can be used for the roll, as usual. You might ask the Leech to **TINKER** with your broken leg to help it heal. Or an NPC physicker could roll their **Quality**. You may also simply tough it out and heal on your own without assistance by rolling your **lowest attribute**.

If another PC rolls for your healing, it counts as only one downtime action, either yours or theirs.

When your healing clock is filled, remove all of your harm.

If you suffer further harm before you finish healing, you must once again **recover** before you can continue healing. You don't lose the progress you already have on your healing clock.

*Cross has suffered a knife wound to the chest (level 2) as well as a broken hand (level 2). He was able to receive treatment (recover action) from Melvir, a physicker who served with Cross in the Skovlan marines. He spends the rest of his downtime holed up in his quarters at the Rat's Nest, relying on his impressive constitution to see his body mended. Cross's player rolls his lowest attribute — which is an impressive 2d — and gets a 4. Cross marks two ticks on his healing clock. In addition, he has the special ability **Resilient**, which means he gets +2 ticks on his healing clock during downtime, for a total of 4 ticks. Cross is halfway to being fully recovered.*

TEMPORARY TREATMENT

The Leech has a special ability called **Physicker**, which allows them to **TINKER** with a body to temporarily relieve the effects of harm. With a successful action, the targeted PC ignores penalties from their harm for the rest of the day. (**Physicker** may also be used for normal treatment and healing rolls during downtime.)

HEALING OFF-SCREEN

If your character becomes **lost** when they overindulge their vice (page 19), they leave play for a while (a few weeks of in game time, or more). When they return, they have healed any harm they had. You may also voluntarily choose for your character to become lost — maybe you want to play a different PC, or maybe you're going to miss a few sessions of the game, so it's a good time for your character to disappear for a while.

GRITTY HEALING

If you want to include troublesome elements like infections, bleeding, shock, etcetera, you might introduce them as complications when treatment or healing rolls don't go well. Create an infection or bleeding clock which has to be dealt with before healing can begin. A word of caution, though — the lives of the PCs are already very tough due to their stress, enemies, and circumstances. It's usually best to gloss over these kinds of gritty healing problems unless everyone in the group is really interested in dealing with them.

COHORT HARM & HEALING

Cohorts suffer harm similarly to PCs. A cohort can suffer four levels of harm (**1: WEAKENED — 2: IMPAIRED — 3: BROKEN — 4: DEAD**). They also heal during downtime. If circumstances are amenable for recovery, a cohort removes 1 level of harm during downtime. If a PC spends a downtime action on a long-term project, they can make a roll to further heal a cohort (heal 1 level per tick).

The exceptions to this rule are vehicles. A vehicle does not heal on its own, and requires a downtime action dedicated to making repairs as a long-term project.

The GM may also use the cohort harm rules for important NPCs.

HOW TO USE THE SYSTEM

FICTION-FIRST GAMING

Fiction-first is a bit of jargon to describe the process of a roleplaying game, as opposed to other sorts of games you might be used to.

In a standard board game, for example, when you take your turn, you choose a move from one of the mechanics of the game, and then use that game system to resolve what happens. You might say, "I'm going to pay two wood to build a second fort on my home tile." We could call this process "mechanic-first". What you do on your turn is pick a mechanic to engage, then resolve that mechanic. Your choices are constrained by the mechanics of the game. You might color it in with some fictional trappings, like, "The brave citizens of Baronía heed the call to war and build a stout wooden fort!" but the fiction is secondary; it's flavor added on. In other words, the fiction is brought in after the mechanics, to describe what happened.

In a roleplaying game, it's different. When it's your turn, you say what your character does within the ongoing fictional narrative. You don't pick a mechanic first, you say something about the fiction first. Your choices in a roleplaying game aren't immediately constrained by the mechanics, they're constrained by the established fictional situation. In other words, the mechanics are brought in after the fictional action, which determines *which* mechanics we need to use.

For example, in *Blades in the Dark*, there are several different mechanics that might be used if a character tries to pick the lock on a safe. It's essentially meaningless to play mechanics-first. "I pick a lock" isn't a mechanical choice in the game. To understand *which* mechanic to use, we have to first establish the fiction.

If your character is at their liberty back at the crew's lair, with plenty of time to dedicate to opening the lock on the safe, then we would use one of the **downtime** mechanics—namely "Work on a long-term project." You might do very well and open it quickly, or it might prove more challenging, requiring several attempts over a longer period of time.

If your character is in a burning building, trying desperately to open the safe while flaming roof-beams are raining down around them, then the **action** mechanic would come in to play. You might do very well and avoid harm from the fire and debris while you work on the lock or you might have to abandon your

work to keep from being crushed and burned.

If your character knows nothing about safe-cracking, you might pay someone to open it for you. In which case, we'd use the mechanic to **acquire an asset**—a master locksmith in this case. You might arrange a good deal and get a skilled worker, or you might have to pay more to get the quality you need.

And so on and so forth. There are an infinite number of approaches you might take, constrained by the fictional circumstances.

The important concept here is that you first choose what your character does in the fiction, then the group picks a mechanic that suits the situation to resolve what happens. Once you establish the fictional action, selecting a mechanic from the options at hand is pretty easy. If you try to do it the other way 'round, though—picking the mechanic and then trying to "color-in" the fiction after—you'll find that the game can become confusing and muddled. "Wait, if you're using downtime, do the rest of us all have downtime now? I thought we were in the middle of making a deal with Bazso..."

When something seems weird, or a situation resolves in a bizarre way, back out to the level of the fictional narrative. What's going on? What are you trying to do? Which mechanic is suited for this? Don't try to force a particular mechanic onto the fiction. Take the fiction first (ah, see that? "fiction-first") and then use the mechanics to support it.

Think of the mechanics of the game as tools in a toolbox. There's no point saying, "I hammer it" or "I saw it" until you know what you're building. Also, there's no constraint that says you must always use a hammer and nail every time you need to attach two pieces of wood. You use the tools that suit what you're trying to do. The same goes for mechanics in a roleplaying game. First establish the fiction, then select a mechanical tool from the toolbox that suits the situation you need to resolve. Which tools you pick will often be pragmatic, but it can also be a stylistic choice. There's no one right way to choose a tool, after all. The tools are there for you to use as you see fit; developing a style of use and set of precedents as you go along.

The text of the game gives you both the set of tools and a guide to their usage; which is essentially the best practices developed by the author and the playtesters. These best practices will start you on your way toward successful game play—but ultimately they are just a guide. It's up to you and your group to put them

into practice and learn the use and feel of the tools in play.

This is one of the most fun aspects of roleplaying games. Because there's no one right way to use the tools, the act of play is constantly creative—at the level of the fictional narrative, of course, but also at the level of the application of the game systems. I'll explain the tools and teach you some good ways to apply them, but when it's all said and done, your experience with *Blades in the Dark* will be one that you and your group make for yourselves.

TRIGGERING THE ACTION ROLL

The game is a conversation between the people at the table. You're talking, narrating actions, speaking in character, making jokes, sketching maps, speculating about what might happen, all that good stuff. But it's *just talking*, right? There's a thing that happens in a roleplaying game where the conversation shifts. Where you go from *just talking* to *using a mechanic*. What's that like?

This shift in the conversation is the GM's responsibility (they should always be on the lookout), but anyone can call for it. So, when do you call for it? You call for an action roll when any of these happen:

- ♦ A **player character faces an obstacle** that blocks or complicates the achievement of their goal.
- ♦ A **player character responds to an NPC action** and you need to resolve how both actions turn out.
- ♦ A **player character leads or gives orders to an NPC or NPC group**, which faces an obstacle or danger.

So, then, what do you actually say? I like to first ask the player how they're accomplishing their action. Which of their **actions** will they use? Then, I suggest the **position** the character is in and the likely **effect level** they'll have. It's like:

Player: "So he has the amulet? Okay, I'm forcing him to hand it over, right now."

GM: "Okay then. How are you gonna do that?"

Player: "I look him square in the eye and I **Command** him to hand it over."

GM: "Cool. Sounds pretty **risky** to me. He's no push-over and his goons are standing right there. Probably a **limited** effect since you're outnumbered, unless you have a particularly potent threat to make here."

And then the other players chime in and suggest an alternative position or effect level, or the player revises their statement to something more or less daring, or everyone just nods and we've shifted into using the mechanic.

WHY WE DO THIS

What's the point of this shift into a mechanic, anyway? Why not just talk it out? The main reason is this: when we just talk things out, we tend to build consensus. This is usually a good thing. It helps the group bond, get on the same page, set expectations, all that stuff. But when it comes to action-adventure stories like *Blades in the Dark*, we don't want consensus when the characters go into danger. We want to be surprised, or thwarted, or driven to bigger risks, or inspired to create a twist or complication. We want to raise our hands over our heads and ride the roller coaster over the drop.

When the mechanic is triggered, the group first dips into being authors for a moment as they suss out the position, the danger, and the details of the action. Then, author mode switches off and everyone becomes the audience. What will happen next? We hold our breath, lean forward in our seats, and let the dice fall.

INITIATIVE

Usually, a player's roll will resolve both the action of the PC and the action of the NPC, simultaneously. Like this:

"The Red Sash swings her sword at your face. What do you do?"

"I parry her blade aside and smash her in the teeth with the pommel of my sword."

The player rolls Skirmish, which resolves what happens here. On a 6, the PC succeeds without a consequence, so you could say that they acted first. On a 1-3, you could say that the Red Sash was too quick to avoid. Initiative is part of the action resolution.

Sometimes, the NPC will clearly have the advantage and will beat the PC to the punch (or vice versa):

"As you open your coat to draw out our pistols, Bazzo's bodyguard tackles you to the floor."

"Oh no, I want to avoid that! Can I roll Finesse or Skirmish or something to dodge him?"

"I don't think so. He's ready for you to make a move, and you don't have easy access to your guns since they're concealed. You can resist him with a resistance roll, though. Then carry on with your own action. Or Skirmish with him after he tackles you. Up to you."

THE PURPOSE OF DANGERS & STRESS

Some GMs get frustrated when they feel like the enemy NPCs or threats "aren't doing anything." They *almost* inflict harm on the PCs, but then the PCs take stress (or even trauma) and avoid the harm. This is by design!

The PCs in the game start out as huge underdogs. The stress system gives them a special ability to survive when they otherwise wouldn't, so they have some hope of achieving their long-term goals.

The purpose of threatening harm is not always to *inflict* it, it's to *describe* it. The threats become manifest in the minds of everyone playing, even if they're avoided.

"The ghost is entangled with your soul."

"You hear the bone snap as you hit the cobblestones."

"You can tell that she'll never trust you again."

The bad outcomes are spoken aloud. They hang there in the room as horrible potential. They're scary. Then the player gets to roll their resistance, look you in the eye and say, "No. It's not that bad. I take the stress instead." **It's empowering.** They look danger in the face and laugh. That's the nature of a scoundrel.

Describing the harmful outcomes with gusto is your job, not inflicting them. The purpose of the consequence and stress mechanics is to add interesting fictional details to the game when it comes to harm and trouble. Instead of simply saying, "You take 3 damage," you describe how the blade catches under their armor and digs a bloody furrow across their ribs. It becomes real in the ongoing fiction of the game. Then the player can "rewind" by resisting it, "No, I take the 2 stress instead. It's just a scratch." But the only way they can know whether it's worth it to risk the stress cost is if you describe the potential harm. Each cycle of threat and stress requires this input of new fiction. And that, after all, is what we're here to do.

NPC THREAT LEVELS

The severity of the **consequences** that you describe (and the **position** for the action roll) determines the threat level of the opposition. If they're facing an NPC that you've described as a standard thug, then the consequences will be things like wrestling the PC to the ground, or punching them in the face, or maybe cracking a rib with her blackjack if the thug has the upper hand.

If they're facing an NPC that you've described as a master assassin, then the consequence might be a lightning-fast move

that puts a dagger in the PC's heart.

Since NPCs don't have stats and action ratings, it's by the **severity of their dangers and harm** (and the **position** of the PC's action roll) that their capabilities are manifest in the game.

Also, a dangerous NPC can take the initiative. **If the NPC is skilled**, tell the players what the NPC is about to accomplish, then ask them what they do.

"She corners you at the top of the stairs and tries to wrestle you into the manacles. What do you do?"

The PC's next move—and the action roll that results—will tell us how effective the NPC's maneuver was. Remember, an action roll usually serves double duty, resolving both PC and NPC action at the same time.

If the NPC is a master, tell the players what the NPC has already done, then ask if they want to **resist** it.

"She's just way too fast for you to deal with. Before you realize what's happening, the manacles are on your wrists. Yeah? Or do you want to resist that?"

This is something that will grow and evolve over time as you play the game. Talk to the group about it as you go. Do you want a more deadly, high-stakes, kind of game? Then PCs and NPCs should threaten lethal harm all the time, and resistance rolls should only reduce consequences. Do you want a more cinematic, adventurous kind of game? Then describe dangers with less dire consequences. People are "left for dead." Explosions make you look cool when you dive out of the way.

You don't have to decide on one approach and stick to it. Be flexible and let it change over time according to what the group is most excited about.

HOW TO CHOOSE AN ACTION

When an action roll is called for, the character is usually already in motion, doing something in the fiction. This thing they're doing will almost always determine which specific action rating to roll. However, a player is free to revise their character's action in order to use a different action rating, as long as the character performs the new action in the fiction.

*For example, Nox wants to sneak in to the secret meeting room of the Circle of Flame. The GM asks her how she does that and Nox's player says she'll climb the outside of the tower and slip in through a window. Climbing is a **Prowl** action, so that's what she'll roll.*

Nox's player can change her mind at this point, and say, "Hmmm... I'm not good at Prowl. I want to climb in using Finesse, instead. It's like I'm finessing my way in, right?" No. Nox can certainly try to use **Finesse** to sneak in — through misdirection or subtle action — but Nox cannot "use Finesse" to climb the tower. The action of climbing is... well, climbing. Athletic moves like that are the Prowl action. If Nox wants to Finesse, instead, that's fine, but that means she is not climbing the tower.

In other words, a player is free to choose the action they use to overcome an obstacle, but their character must perform that action. And also, **Don't Be A Weasel** (see page 31).

Sometimes, several actions will reasonably apply to a situation. This is fine. The player may choose the action they want to perform, and the GM sets the position of the roll accordingly.

Arlyn is hanging from a rope in the darkness outside the quarters of Mylera Klev, leader of the Red Sashes. As Mylera enters the room, Arlyn's player says she wants to shoot Mylera in the back. What action should she roll? Prowl covers an "ambush with close violence" and Hunt covers "shooting from a distance"—they both seem to apply here. The GM says that Hunting will be a Controlled roll (this is an ideal hunting shot, after all) and a Prowl attack will be Risky: to "ambush with close violence" Arlyn will have to first go through the window and then follow up with a point blank shot, exposing her to more danger.

NO WHIFFING

Every time you roll the dice in *Blades*, the situation changes. There's no such thing as a "nothing happens" result from a roll. How does this work?

The "failure" results for action rolls (1-3) are not simply "misses." The character's action has a tangible outcome. Something happens which changes the situation. On a **controlled** failure, the character spots a flaw in their approach, and can decide to withdraw or push their luck with a risky move. On a **risky** failure, the character suffers a consequence that presents some kind of trouble. Things get worse. On a **desperate** failure, the threat dominates and makes the situation much worse.

FAILING GRACEFULLY

The system of *Blades in the Dark* is designed to fail gracefully. That is, if you just use the core rolls and forget extra details or special cases, it will be okay. The game will sail along just fine. The game is better when you use all the details, but the whole thing doesn't come crashing down if you don't.

If you want to ease-in to the mechanics, **just start with risky action rolls and standard effect** (don't worry about factors).

When something bad happens to a PC and they want to resist it, explain resistance rolls. When the group starts asking about teamwork and helping each other, bring in the teamwork maneuvers. When they go up against high Tier or large scale opponents who are meant to be very dangerous, bring in effect factors. Don't feel like you have to explain everything up front.

The same goes for the fiction. Don't feel like you have to get everything perfectly right every time. If you say something and then realize later that it was wrong, just revise it. No big deal.

"I told you that Trayga was seen at the docks, but that was all wrong. I It was supposed to be Arlo."

"Oh! Well that changes things. Okay, got it."

If you're not sure what to do, keep it simple. Go with what's obvious to you. Add mechanics when you're comfortable. Forgive each other's mistakes. Fly casual.

SETTING PRECEDENTS

What's true for the PCs is true for the NPCs, and vice versa. If you establish that the Whisper PC is the only one who can talk to the ghost they summoned (due to a special "summoning language" that binds them together), then that fact becomes true for NPC-summoned ghosts, as well.

If you establish that a skilled NPC can instantly kill an unsuspecting victim, then the PCs can try it, too.

Each time you make a judgment call or establish new details about the game world, they become available to everyone as a new tool in play.

ABSTRACTION VS. DETAILS

Blades in the Dark usually depends on specific fictional details in order to work. For example, it might be important to understand exactly how a spirit bottle is constructed—because a character decides to suddenly smash one to surprise an enemy who has them at gunpoint. Is the bottle fragile enough for a swift blow to shatter? It's a small detail, but the description of the bottle contributes directly to understanding which **position** to roll for the action, the factors that go into **effects**, and the **consequences** at risk. In a case like this, details matter a lot. Fleshing out the little details of the world makes the game system function better.

There are other times when abstraction is preferable, though. For example, the players wonder how the Circle of Flame have fared

during the recent outbreak of the Cold Slumber plague. Are they weak and vulnerable to attack now? The GM *could* create or try to remember all the details about the Circle of Flame that might affect their situation during the outbreak, or she could simply use the abstraction of the faction's **Tier** rating to make a quick fortune roll and see how it went for them. If no specific details have been established in play to indicate the Circle's resistance to an arcane sickness, then the abstraction of Tier covers it just fine.

A problem can arise when you try to use an abstraction when details are already present. For example, we may know for a fact that the Circle was one of the groups who created the Cold Slumber plague, and they took special precautions against it (including moving important assets and leadership out of the area). In this case, it might be weird to simply use the abstract Tier rating of the faction for a fortune roll. We already know specific details, so the catch-all of "Tier rating" isn't very useful here. Perhaps it's obvious that the Circle has fared very well against the plague, so the GM says so. Or perhaps there's still some risk, so the GM rolls a 6d trait for "plague preparedness" rather than their Tier.

The same goes for the quality of items, assets, and defensive measures. Since The Hive is Tier III, does that mean that every single lock on every single door in every part of Hive turf is a "Tier III lock"? No. The Hive's tier rating is an abstract indication of the quality of stuff they're *likely* to have, *usually*. A lock on a minor storeroom door is probably just a cheap lock (low quality, not an important factor). The lock to their secret documents room is probably *fine* or even *exceptional* (making it even higher quality than Tier III). When we think about the overall quality, clout, and means of the Hive, it's "Tier III." That abstract tier rating can be used for lots of things. But when there are specific details in play, those details establish what's actually true. They don't have to perfectly conform to the abstraction in every single case.

The abstracted parts of the game—Tier, Coin, Stash, Quality—are abstract so that the game play can **focus on what's most important: the choices, actions, and consequences of the player characters**. Action rolls are where the meat of the game happens. Don't feel beholden to the abstractions when you have specific fictional details to work with.

ACTIONS IN PLAY

On the following pages, each of the 12 actions are detailed and fleshed out with examples of maneuvers and consequences.

ATTUNE

When you **ATTUNE**, you open your mind to the ghost field or channel nearby electropasmic energy through your body.

You might communicate with a ghost or understand aspects of spectrology. You could try to perceive beyond sight in order to better understand your situation (but Surveying might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ How do you open your mind to the ghost field? What does that look like?
- ◆ What energy are you attuning to? How are you channeling that energy? What do you hope the energy will do?

The “ghost field” is somewhat ambiguous, by design. It’s the energy contained within the lightning barrier of the city, the echoes of events in the recent past, and the medium in which spirits exist. It’s a dangerous and strange element that should never feel safe or tame. To attune is to connect to a crackling source of power that can easily snap out of control. Bring your ideas of strange arcane energy into play and ask the other players what they think about it, too.

When you attune to the ghost field you can see echoes of recent events or sense things beyond sight (the Whisper’s *fine spirit mask* allows them to see even more detail). *Surveying* is usually the action you’d use to get a sense of a location or to spot hidden things, but Attuning can work—often with a worse position since you’re risking danger from the ghost field.

Any PC can attune. It’s not a supernatural power in and of itself. The ghost field is always there, just at the edge of the mind, ready for a connection. Whispers and other occultists can use attunement as the basis for supernatural powers, such as **TEMPEST** or **POSSESSION**. Without the ghost field and electropasmic energy, these powers can’t manifest.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I attune to the ghost field to see if there are any magical wards on the door.

4/5 Reduced Effect: You sense a buzzing ward in the ghost field, but you can’t quite tell how far it extends—to the windows and roof, too? Maybe so.

4/5 Lesser Harm: There’s a sharp electrical pop, and a spark burns across your cheek. Level 1 harm, “Scorched.”

RISKY

I reach into the ghost field for the death echoes of Trennet. He died on this very spot, so I’ll try to catch a vision of it.

4/5 Reduced Effect: You see the faint glimmer of Trennet’s ghost echo, thrashing on the floor with a large figure atop him, bearing down as if choking him. It sort of looks like Ulf Ironborn, but you can’t be sure.

4/5 Harm: Trennet’s death agony washes over you. You see Ulf Ironborn’s face and feel his vice-like grip on your throat, crushing the life out of you. Take level-2 harm, “Choked.”

DESPERATE

As the ghost tries to possess me, I smash my hand through the glass over the electric light. I’ll attune the electricity through myself to fry the ghost!

4/5 Serious Complication: The electricity surges overloads the spirit. As it’s driven off, crackling bolts of energy lash out from your hands and eyes, setting the room ablaze.

1-3 Severe Harm: The ghost rides the energy directly into your mind. You suffer two types of harm: level-2 “Burned” from the energy, and also level-3 “Possessed.” Which would you like to resist first?

COMMAND

When you **COMMAND**, you compel swift obedience.

You might intimidate or threaten to get what you want. You might lead a gang in a group action. You could try to order people around to persuade them (but Consorting might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ Who do you command? How do you do it—what’s your leverage here?
- ◆ What do you hope they’ll do?

When you command someone, you don’t care about what they want. You tell them what to do and expect them to do it—out of fear, respect, or some other motivating factor (this is your leverage over them). *Consorting* can be better if you’re trying to get along with someone and work together. When you Command a friend or contact, they can feel disrespected, so your position will probably be worse.

Command is almost always the right action for leading a cohort or sending an NPC group to do something according to your instructions. Handle it as a “group action” teamwork maneuver with you rolling Command and the cohort rolling Quality.

You might be able to Command another PC. Ask the player if their character has reason to follow your orders—fear, trust, respect, etc. If they do, then your action can force them to comply. If they don’t, then your action can only disrupt them somehow. You might frighten them with intimidation (inflicting harm), cause them to hesitate at a crucial moment, make them look weak in front of others, etc. Command isn’t mind-control but it is an intense interaction. The other player will judge if their character can be ordered around or not.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

“You’re on our turf, asshole. There are at least four guns on you right now. Give me the case and piss off.”

4/5 Reduced Effect: He sets the case down and takes a step back. “I’m supposed to get coin for this,” he says.

1-3 Risky Opportunity: He snaps a small lighter open and holds the flame near the documents jutting from the valise. “Not until I see some coin!” he says.

RISKY

So we’ve got each other by the collars of our coats, sort of half-wrestling against the wall. I snarl at him, “Just take your crew and walk away. One death is enough for tonight.”

4/5 Harm: He twists an arm free and belts you across the jaw, ringing your ears. “Now it’s enough,” he says. “Let’s go, boys.” Take level-2 harm, “Concussed.”

DESPERATE

“No, I don’t think so, Bazso. You’ll pay six coin, up front, or we go to the Sashes for a better offer.”

4/5 Serious Complication: You do it! But Bazso looks you up and down with a steely eye. “You’ve got fire, girl!” he says, counting out six-coin worth of silver slugs into a purse and tossing it to you. Start a new clock—let’s call it “Bazso is fed up with your shit.” 4-segments, and, how about you fill three of those in? You might become the next object lesson for young punks who challenge his dominance.

1-3 Serious Complication: You don’t do it. Bazso glares at you. “You’ll do it for three and say ‘Thank you Bazso Baz, sir.’ Start a new clock—let’s call it ‘Bazso makes an example of you.’ 4-segments, and fill three of those in.

CONSORT

When you **CONSORT**, you socialize with friends and contacts.

You might gain access to resources, information, people, or places. You might make a good impression or win someone over with your charm and style. You might make new friends or connect with your heritage or background. You could try to direct your friends in a joint endeavor (but Commanding might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ Who do you consort with? Where do you meet? What do you talk about?
- ◆ What do you hope to achieve?

When you consort with someone, you care about what the other person thinks and feels and in turn they care about what you want (at least a tiny bit). You're being a charming, open, socially adroit person. You can consort with people you already know, or try to "fit in" in a new situation so you make a good impression.

To consort, you need an environment that isn't totally hostile. You might consort with the chain gang when you're thrown into Ironhook (a desperate situation, to be sure) but it's usually hopeless to consort with the assassin sent to murder you. When you consort with people related to your background or heritage, you can expect a better position and/or increased effect.

You might be forced to consort in an unfamiliar situation in order to create an opportunity for another action. For instance, if you want to talk to Lord Scurlock at a party, you'll have to at least try to consort with the other guests to make your way his table. *Commanding* or *Swaying* are options, sure, but expect a rather sudden escalation of trouble if things go badly.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

Nyrix has been working the Gondoliers for weeks now. I hope she has a good target she can share with me.

4/5 Reduced Effect: She has someone in mind, yeah. A real peach of a target. But she doesn't know where he lives. You'll have to follow him home after his shift.

4/5 Risky Position: She actually lured a target to the Red Lamp with her. She plops down next to you with this thick-necked Gondolier on her arm, already a bit drunk. She seems to sort of recognize you, or she's working it out. Nyrix gives you a look like, "Go ahead then!" and closes the curtain to the booth so you all have some privacy.

RISKY

I pull out my bottle of fine whiskey and give the room a broad smile. "Who wants the good stuff?" I hope I can keep them occupied while Breen works on the safe.

4/5 Harm: You pull it off, but you have to get wasted with them. Take level-2 harm, "Trashed." Your head is killing you and the room is spinning.

DESPERATE

I know they're, like, a 'secret' society, but can I sort of shmooze around the party and figure out who's a member of the Circle of Flame?

4/5 Serious Complication: You blend in long enough to spot some subtle hand gestures being used by a few guests. You recognize Arter Clavish, a wealthy nobleman, as one of them. Everything is going great until you realize that all the 'normal' guests are gone, and the party has quietly become a Circle of Flame gathering. The time for introductions and bona fides is coming up any moment now. What do you do?

FINESSE

When you **FINESSE**, you employ dextrous manipulation or subtle misdirection.

You might pick someone's pocket. You might handle the controls of a vehicle or direct a mount. You might formally duel an opponent with graceful fighting arts. You could try to employ those arts in a chaotic melee (but Skirmishing might be better). You could try to pick a lock (but Tinkering might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ What do you finesse? What's graceful or subtle about this?
- ◆ What do you hope to achieve?

When you employ finesse, you're graceful, stylish, and subtle. You might think of it as the polar opposite of **WRECK**. To use finesse, you'd prefer some time and space to do things 'just so' rather than rushing into something and getting sloppy. If you have to hurry up, or act on someone else's terms, finesse becomes challenging pretty quickly. It's all well and good to *want* to duel an opponent with your fancy sword arts, but if they insist on kicking the table over and throwing fire bombs at you, you'll have to get desperate. *Skirmishing* is the best option when the fight becomes a savage melee, but one-on-one, in a fight that you're ready for, Finesse can be just as good.

In a way, the reverse is true for sleight-of-hand and inconspicuous Finesse. Picking a pocket or slipping away unnoticed is less perilous when the situation is chaotic, crowded, or otherwise distracting for the target in question. (Contrast this with *Prowl*, which is best done in darkness, avoiding people). When the Bluecoats wrestle you to the ground to manacle you, that's a great opportunity to lift the keys off of one of them.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I shut down the steam engine and guide the ship with its residual momentum, silently slipping into the ancient waterway beneath the Academy.

4/5 Reduced Effect: As your lamp casts its light ahead you see that the way is not as clear as you hoped it would be. Sections of the canal walls and ceiling have fallen in. You'll have to keep maneuvering carefully to get all the way to the landing further in. Start a clock: "Navigate the canal," 4-segments, and tick one. Do you press on?

1-3 Blocked; Risky Position: You approach the subterranean canal, and the water surges as the sinuous body of a great sea eel circles near the entrance, feeding at the scraps of refuse that collect around the entrance. You have a final moment to adjust course and turn away—or else go ahead with your maneuver from a risky position. What do you do?

RISKY

I embrace the magistrate warmly, "Lady Bowmore, how charming to see you!" while I slip the spirit lure into her pocket.

4/5 Complication: She doesn't notice you place the lure. During dinner, one of the other guests—a striking and gaunt woman in a crimson dress—stares intently at Lady Dunvil's side of the table. After dinner, she moves to investigate the strange disturbance she feels in the ghost field. What do you do?

DESPERATE

As the thug rushes in to tackle me, I deftly sidestep, draw my rapier, and cut their hamstring to send them tumbling down the staircase behind me.

4/5 Severe Harm: You do it, sidestepping and slashing, but the thug's momentum is too great, and the collision sends you both down the stairs. Suffer level-3 harm, "Broken collar bone."

HUNT

When you **HUNT**, you carefully track a target.

You might follow a person or discover their location. You might arrange an ambush. You might attack with precision shooting from a distance. You could try to bring your guns to bear in a melee (but Skirmishing might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ How do you hunt them down? What methods do you use?
- ◆ What do you hope to achieve?

When you hunt a target, it's all about precise and skillful execution—your talent brought to bear against the target, your victim. Like *Finesse*, hunting is about performing on your own terms—you stalk the target to their lair, you select the ambush point, you line up the target in your sights and take the shot. Hunting is all about the maneuvers before the fight. When you try to hunt after the chaos begins, you'll probably find yourself in a desperate spot. Time and distance are your allies. Contrast with *Skirmishing*, which is desperate and least effective when the enemy is far away and disengaged.

There's no "shooting" action in *Blades*, by design. The action roll system is designed for players to choose the action they perform in any given situation, which the GM then judges for position and effectiveness. When the fight is on, do you Hunt? (Or *Skirmish*, or *Finesse*, or something else?) It's up to the player to decide their approach. Hunting is usually the most effective action when taking an aimed shot at a distance. But if you're in the middle of a brawl and blast someone with your pistol, *Skirmish* works, too.

The Hunt action is broader in scope than mere marksmanship. It's the ideal action for tracking, stalking, and discovering the location of anything or anyone.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I wait until Bazso passes in front of his office window, then I hold my breath, and squeeze the trigger.

4/5 Reduced Effect: The shot clips Bazso along the side of his head, ripping open his scalp. He crumples down out of sight, seriously wounded at least. What do you do?

4/5 Risky Position: You hit Bazso through the neck, spraying blood everywhere. (Let's make a fortune roll later to see if he's too tough to die or not, yeah?) Anyway, you hear shouts — "The roof, over there!" and bullets start cracking into the bricks all around you. What do you do?

RISKY

The Dimmer Sisters get their supply of electroplasm somehow. I'm going to locate the source and track how it's delivered.

4/5 Complication: You track down the source and delivery method (I'll explain in a minute), but as you're headed back to the lair, your breath comes out as fog and you hear the wail of a ghost echoing from the shadows: "Now now now, who's this this this, hunting hunting hunting..." Do you freeze up, try to escape, or resist and do something else?

DESPERATE

I want to run from the Bluecoat, duck into the alley, and lead him into an impromptu ambush!

4/5 Reduced Effect: You find a blind angle to attack from, but it's awkward and cramped in the alley. Your blade strikes sparks off a steam-pipe and then crashes off the Bluecoat's helmet. He grunts and staggers for a moment, swatting back with his truncheon and groping for his whistle. What do you do?

PROWL

When you **PROWL**, you traverse skillfully and quietly.

You might sneak past a guard or hide in the shadows. You might run and leap across the rooftops. You might attack someone from hiding with a back-stab or blackjack. You could try to waylay a victim in the midst of battle (but Skirmishing might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ How do you Prowl? How do you use the environment around you?
- ◆ What do you hope to achieve?

When you prowl, you use the features of your environment to move around skillfully. The more conducive the environment, the better your position when you Prowl. Prowling is more than just "stealth"—it's all of the related physical skills of movement as well as an instinctual awareness of where to go and the right timing to employ. You can think of Prowling as general athletic ability (running, climbing, jumping, swimming, etc.) tuned for quiet, efficient movement.

You might use this movement to hide out of sight and backstab an enemy. Waylaying someone this way is similar to *Hunting* a target from an ambush point—this is one area where the actions overlap. Prowl is often used as a setup action or to create an opportunity (or both at once). You might Prowl to a good hiding spot so you can take your time *Surveying* a location without being noticed.

When a Prowl roll goes badly, it doesn't have to be "all or nothing." A common mistake is to say that the character is discovered as a consequence. Instead, you can start a clock like "Discovered" and tick a segment or two. Think of the clock like "stealth harm levels." The PC can take a few hits before they're knocked out of the hide-and-seek fight.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I slip up behind him and kosh him over the head with my blackjack.

4/5 Reduced Effect: His knees buckle for a moment, but he doesn't go down. He curses and staggers sideways and reaches out to support himself against the wall. What do you do?

4/5 Risky Position: You knock him out and drag him out of sight under the stairs. Another guard bursts into the room holding a small keg under his arm. "I got some!" he says. He peers around. "Markus?" He's blocking the only way out of here. What do you do?

RISKY

I dash across the courtyard, using the petrified trees for cover, and climb the drain pipe up to the second floor window.

4/5 Complication + Reduced Effect: You make it halfway across, behind the second tree here, when one of the guards says, "Hey, did you hear that?" and then heads over to check out the noise. Make a "Discovered" clock, 4-segments, and tick two—these guys are pretty sharp. What do you do?

DESPERATE

I back up to the balcony rail as they encircle me. "It's been fun, fellas..." I jump off and throw my grappling hook, swinging to safety.

4/5 Severe Harm: You jump and swing but a few of them manage to rush forward and fire. A bullet smashes into your shoulder blade. Your hands go numb, you slip from the rope and crash onto the cobblestones below. Take level-3 harm, "Broken leg," and level-2 harm, "Bullet wound."

1-3 Severe Harm: Just not fast enough. You get one foot up on the railing, and they all open fire. Take level-4 harm as you're shot to pieces.

SKIRMISH

When you **SKIRMISH**, you entangle a target in close combat so they can't easily escape.

You might brawl or wrestle with them. You might hack and slash. You might seize or hold a position in battle. You could try to fight in a formal duel (but Finesse might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ How do you Skirmish with them? What combat methods do you use?
- ◆ What do you hope to achieve?

When you skirmish with someone, it's a fight. You're attacking and defending, back and forth. You can skirmish to start a fight, to survive a fight, and to end a fight—but it's always a fight. If you step up behind someone and stab them in the spine, that's *Prowling*. If you tackle them to the ground, wrestle them into submission, and cut their throat, that's a Skirmish. If you address them with a formal challenge and step back into a dueling stance, maybe you'll get to try out your *Finesse*. (In a duel, Skirmishing is often desperate. In a brawl, Finesse is desperate.)

Generally, the consequences you suffer in a Skirmish come from the opponent. The more dangerous the enemy, the worse your position, and the more dire those consequences will be.

If you find yourself in a skirmish and you want to do something besides fighting, you'll probably face a consequence first—which you can accept or resist (or maybe get a teammate to face for you). Just because you really want to *Sway* someone that doesn't mean they stop punching you so you can talk to them. Another approach is to Skirmish (or *Prowl*) with the goal to win free of the melee—probably a better position than direct combat—then perform your other action after that.

When you fight alongside your cohorts in battle, you Skirmish. If you direct them while you're not directly threatened, you *Command* them.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

Now that I have him pinned down on the ground, I grapple around to his back and choke him out. I want to get some answers from this asshole later.

1-3 Withdraw: GM: "As you wrestle with him, he suddenly gets his knife free and starts stabbing wildly. Want to keep going with a risky action?"

Player: "No, I'll withdraw and try a different way. I break free as he starts to stab, stand over him and blast him with my pistol. That's still controlled, yeah?"

GM: "Yeah, but it's a *different* way, right? You'll Hunt instead of Skirmish now."

Player: "Ah, okay, gotcha. That's fine."

RISKY

When he stabs at me, I parry his knife arm to the inside with my off hand, pass to his right side and attack him with an icepick stab to the neck.

4/5 Reduced Effect: He adjusts as you move in, grappling you close, but he loses his balance and you trip him backwards into a nasty throw, knocking the wind out of him as you pin him down. What do you do?

DESPERATE

He may have ambushed me, but I'm still gonna fight back! Also I'm gonna grab that icepick off the bar to use an impromptu weapon. Screw this guy.

4/5 Suffer Harm: You avoid his sudden stab to your throat, but catch a nasty cut along your arm as you defend yourself. Take level-2 harm, "Knife cut to arm." And you do manage to grab the icepick! What do you do?

STUDY

When you **STUDY**, you scrutinize details and interpret evidence.

You might gather information from documents, newspapers, and books. You might do research on an esoteric topic. You might closely analyze a person to detect lies or true feelings. You could try to examine events to understand a pressing situation (but Surveying might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ What do you Study? What details or evidence do you scrutinize?
- ◆ What do you hope to understand?

When you study something, you concentrate on small details—micro expressions, tone of voice, cryptic writing, subtle innuendo, tiny clues—to find what's hidden, determine facts, corroborate evidence, and guide your decisions.

Like all actions, Study requires an appropriate opportunity, but unlike some other actions, the opportunity to carefully study something can be tricky to come by. You might try to be explicit with the GM, saying things like, "The only reason I'm sharing this drink with her is so I can study her up close while we talk about the turf war." Often, your target will want to study you in return, which makes for good complication or harm consequences.

If you want to get a feel for the current situation or scout out a location, that's *Surveying*. A survey glosses over details in favor of big-picture stuff. Study does the opposite—it's about precise facts and details. Are they lying about that? Is the safe hidden behind a wall in this room?

Studying is also the action for research of all kinds (often a long-term project). Want to find out which Noble has the best art collection with the worst security? Want to know how many rioting prisoners it would take to overwhelm the guards at Ironhook? Virtually any fact can be discovered through study.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I go over every inch of this place, looking for the secret entrance.

4/5 Reduced Effect: After a few moments, you find a hairline seam around what must be the door. You can't tell how to open it, though. Want to keep studying and figure it out, or do something else?

4/5 Minor Complication: While you're searching, you hear the sound of heavy boots in the hallway as one of the house staff goes about their duties. Mark 1 tick on the "Discovered" clock. You find the door and mechanism, opening it with a deft flick of a hidden switch.

RISKY

While Arcy and Bazso talk, I study Bazso for any signs of deception, especially when we talk about forming an alliance with the Lamplacks.

4/5 Complication: You can tell that he's telling the truth, but he notices your scrutiny and gives you a close look, as well. Start a new clock: "Bazso figures out our plans", 6-segments, and tick 2.

4/5 Desperate Position: You get a solid read on Bazso—he's telling the truth—, but after the meeting, his second in command, Vera, corners you and gets in your face. "What are you doin', giving everyone the stink eye, eh? Gettin' any funny ideas?" What do you do?

DESPERATE

As the demon lunges for Arlyn, I start grabbing books and journals off the shelves. There must be one here that details the Count's investigations into this devil!

4/5 Severe Harm + Reduced Effect: You find the correct volume, but as you begin to open it, the demon suddenly roars, changes direction, and swats you across the room. The book lands a few feet away. The rune on its cover glows faintly. Your ribs are broken (level-3 harm). What do you do?

SURVEY

When you **SURVEY**, you observe the situation and anticipate outcomes.

You might spot telltale signs of trouble before it happens. You might uncover opportunities or weaknesses. You might detect a person's motivations or intentions. You could try to spot a good ambush point (but Hunting might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ How do you Survey the situation? Is there anything special you're looking out for?
- ◆ What do you hope to understand?

When you survey, you get a broad sense of what's going on and what's likely to happen next. You can sense the mood of a place and its overall features: entrances and exits, strong points and weak points, what's normal and what's unusual there, etc. Or you might Survey a person or group: their intentions, strengths, weaknesses, mood, etc. A good survey will keep you from being surprised and will help you spot opportunities and danger.

To survey, you usually need access to good vantage points. If you want to survey the Billhooks HQ for a good assault point, for example, you'll need to walk around and give it a good look, maybe watch the gang members coming and going, notice their security measures, etc. You might use *Prowl* or *Consort* to setup a Survey action, so you can observe things with greater effect or from a safer position.

Survey is generally a quick read. It glosses over details that *Studying* might provide, but gives a broader reach. It's holistic and shallow, where *Studying* is tightly focused and deep.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I nestle in to my hiding spot and watch the The Hive HQ. I want to know who comes and goes, and how they get in and out.

4/5 Reduced Effect: You get a good feel for the various entrances and their security measures, but it looks like there's some kind of entrance challenge that people are subject to. Are they saying a code-phrase, or showing a pass or something? You can't quite tell.

RISKY

Okay, so, they're chasing me along the rooftops, right? There must be a good spot where I can dive into a canal and disappear yeah? I want to do a setup roll for my Prowl action next.

4/5 Reduced Effect: "Hmm, reduced effect doesn't make sense for a setup roll, really. Let's pick a different consequence."

4/5 Desperate Position: "Yeah, this doesn't fit either. I'm setting myself up for a better position, so..."

4/5 Complication: "This is good. How about I take +2 heat during the chase? Everyone sees me leading the stupid Blues on a merry chase."

DESPERATE

Wait, they're attacking us here? Oh, no no no... I want a flashback to a few seconds ago to get a bad feeling about this before it kicks off.

4/5 Reduced Effect: You sense the ambush, but it's down to split-seconds before everything happens. You can take one half-measure first. Do you drop to the ground for cover, push someone else down, something like that?

1-3: Severe Harm: You're fixated on one of the enemies, certain that they're gonna do something bad, and you get blindsided by someone else. Take level-3 harm, "Stabbed in the back."

SWAY

When you **SWAY**, you influence someone with guile, charm, or argument.

You might lie convincingly. You might persuade someone to do what you want. You might argue a compelling case that leaves no clear rebuttal. You could try to trick people into affection or obedience (but Consorting or Commanding might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ Who do you Sway? What kind of leverage do you have here?
- ◆ What do you hope they'll do?

When you sway someone, you don't care about what they think or feel. You're manipulating them—either with charm, lies, or with well-reasoned arguments that they can't easily dismiss. You're trying to get them to do what *you* want, not what they want or need. You can Sway a friend or contact—they're probably vulnerable to you—but the risks are higher if they figure out what you're doing to them; it's probably a desperate thing to try.

Swaying someone isn't mind-control. You need some kind of leverage to make it work. It might be the leverage of being a very charming or desirable person that they target wants to please. It might be the leverage of having good reasons, evidence, and/or moving rhetoric that all seems so convincing they're inclined to agree with you. Leverage is situational: what works with one target may not work with another. If you have leverage, you can try to Sway them. Without it, you can fall back on fear or intimidation (*Commanding* them) or even simple physical force to get your way.

You might be able to Sway another PC. Ask the player if you have any leverage over their character. If you do, then your action can force them to see it your way. If you don't, then your action can only disrupt them somehow—an intense distraction, but not a convincing one.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

Maybe he doesn't want anything to do with the Grinders, but we both know that he owes me. I lay it out in black and white. It's time to make good.

4/5 Minor Complication: "Yeah, yeah, okay, you made your point. But look... you have to promise that know one will know I helped you, okay?"

1-3 Risky Position: He shakes his head the whole time you're talking, making a face. "You're right, I know! But I can't do anything! You have to tell Vale to let me back in to her crew. Then I'll be safe, and I can do this for you."

RISKY

Listen, Vale... I respect you. I'm not trying to run your crew. But you need a tinker, and Holtz wants back in. It's good for both of you.

4/5 Reduced Effect: "Fine, but he's on probation. If I catch him on the spark even once, he's out on his ass again."

4/5 Complication: "You just want Holtz to help you with that Grinder thing, don't you? Okay, fine... but I get a piece of the action."

1-3: Complication: You come into my place and tell me my business? Over that slaggin' spark-head? Get out of here." She's really pissed. Take -1 faction status with the Fog Hounds.

DESPERATE

I swear, I had nothing to do with it. I've never even been on a train! Been in The Dusk my whole life. Never left.

1-3: Serious Complication: "Yeah, yeah. Suuure you haven't. We'll just let the magistrate decide, won't we? Take her away."

TINKER

When you **TINKER**, you fiddle with devices and mechanisms.

You might create a new gadget or alter an existing item. You might pick a lock or crack a safe. You might disable an alarm or trap. You might turn the clockwork and electroplasmic devices around the city to your advantage. You could try to use your technical expertise to control a vehicle (but Finessing might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ What do you tinker with?
- ◆ What do you hope to accomplish?

When you Tinker, you take stuff apart, put things back together, bend, solder, twist, and modify. Tinkering covers a fairly broad range of activities, having to do with mechanisms and engineering as well as chemistry and biological sciences. The adept tinker knows how things work—all sorts of things.

Tinkering is most often used during a long-term project in downtime. It's one of the most versatile downtime actions, in fact (along with study). If you have a plan and are willing to acquire the necessary components and take the time, almost anything can be tinkered into existence.

Tinkering can also be useful in the moment, too. Duskwall is covered in strange technological components of all sorts, from clockwork doors, locks, and elevators, to electroplasmic conduits, wires, and lights. You can tinker with stuff on the fly to create a booby-trap or disable a security measure. Tinkering in this way can be a great setup action for *Wrecking* something later.

You can tinker with a device in order to break it, which is similar to *Wrecking* it. Usually, breaking a device by tinkering is slower, more precise, and less apparent than when you *Wreck* it. You might tinker with a door mechanism so it jams after the third use. If you *Wreck* it, it just breaks into pieces and that's it.

EXAMPLES

WRECK

When you **WRECK**, you unleash savage force.

You might smash down a door or wall with a sledgehammer, or use an explosive to do the same. You might employ chaos or sabotage to create a distraction or overcome an obstacle. You could try to overwhelm an enemy with sheer force in battle (but Skirmishing might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ What do you Wreck?
- ◆ What do you hope to accomplish?

When you **WRECK**, you take stuff apart, put things back together, bend, solder, twist, and modify. Tinkering covers a fairly broad range of activities, having to do with mechanisms and engineering as well as chemistry and biological sciences. The adept tinker knows how things work—all sorts of things. There's some overlap between Wrecking a something and Tinkering with it, so it no longer functions. In general, wrecking is faster and more thorough. You smash the thing, it's totally smashed. Tinkering is precise, allowing very specific results (like a clock that chimes at the wrong time) but it generally takes more time and is easier to fix. Also, wrecking applies to pretty much anything: doors, walls, floors, whatever. Tinkering is limited to devices and chemicals and stuff like that.

EXAMPLES

PLAYERS: BEST PRACTICES

When other players start debating with planning questions like, "but what if this happens?" a good answer is "Then we'll flashback to our plan to deal with it."

EMBRACE SCOUNDREL LIFE

You are a daring criminal on the mean streets of a haunted city. You're not a risk-averse, ordinary citizen. If you were, you'd indenture yourself to a work-house and scrape out a meager living inside the status quo. You are daring, bold, ambitious, and ready to take big chances to live a bigger life.

Don't shoot down risky ideas. If something sounds fun and dangerous, well, that's great! The game system is designed to make risky actions very achievable for the PCs. Objections like "they might catch you," or "you could mess it up" are meaningless. There will always be risk in everything you do. You're scoundrels at the bottom of the pile, daring to challenge the powers-that-be. Embrace this idea! Aim the action of the game toward what's cool and fun and don't feel like you have to manage every little risk. The system will take care of that for you. The way the game works, there will always be trouble and consequences of some kind. You'll drive yourself batty if you try to avoid it all. **Embrace the daring scoundrel life!**

Consequences are not failures. Most actions will result in consequences—harm, stress, heat, new enemies, etc. But, in turn, most actions will succeed. Even with just two dice, you have a 75% chance of success. Success with complications, sure, but success nonetheless. This means that you can take risks to achieve your character's goals—goals that a person with your character's lot in life would otherwise never achieve—they'll just have to suffer the consequences to get there. Is it painful for your character? Sure. Pursuing the scoundrel's life will grind them down and hurt them in many different ways. But it doesn't have to be painful for you! Consequences drive the action of the game. **Consequences give you more chances to do cool scoundrel-y things**—which is the whole point of playing the game! Don't let consequences frustrate you. Enjoy the rare 6 that lets you do it scott-free, but also learn to love those 4s and 5s. That's the meat of the scoundrel life.

ACT NOW. PLAN LATER.

In roleplaying gaming, spending a bunch of time planning can be really boring and pointless. You have a long talk about a dozen "what if" scenarios which never come to pass in play. All the points and counter-points about hypothetical situations turn out to be wasted time. Instead, move on to the action—and then "plan" using flashbacks or downtime actions instead.

Plan with a flashback when the **engagement roll** goes wrong. You're about to break into the museum of antiquities but the engagement roll comes up 2—your crew is suddenly accosted by the patrol of moonlighting Bluecoats who are working as security. Oh no! We should have planned for this! Nah, just call for a flashback.

*"Let's have a flashback to the night before, where we see Silver **CONSORTING** with our Bluecoat contact, Laroze. Maybe she was able to get some dirt on the local Bluecoat officers that she can use for leverage now — so we can sway him to look the other way..."*

See how this is a much more badass form of planning? You could have discussed the merits of consorting with Laroze ahead of time, just in case, in an endless debate of risk and reward. Or, **you can wait to see the trouble you're in**, then flashback to a preparation that exactly applies to the situation at hand—making your character look terribly clever and cool. Much better, yeah? One of the reasons why the PCs have all those stress boxes is so you can do sly retro-planning maneuvers like this. Sure, this business with Laroze is a little far-fetched, but that's okay. That's what the stress cost is for. Pay the stress for the flashback and you have a perfect plan ready to go.

Your flashback doesn't un-do the result of the engagement roll—it isn't time travel. Instead, you attempt to address the current bad outcome by making a roll as normal, except in this case the action takes place in the past. The bad engagement

roll still matters—you're in a bad spot—but by using a flashback for your action you can show how your earlier planning helps you deal with it now.

As long as you have stress to burn and a fun idea for a flashback, you can deflect or block some of the trouble from bad engagements after you see what they are, rather than trying to anticipate everything beforehand.

You can also **plan by working on a project in downtime**. The engagement roll for a score depends on how prepared the target is for your operation. So, during downtime you can propose a long-term project like this: "I want to work on making the Red Sashes vulnerable to an assault." The GM will ask you how you want to work on that, and you'll make a roll, and when the clock is finished, whaddya know? The Red Sashes are now more vulnerable to an assault, and your engagement roll will have more dice. Since this preparation happens during downtime, you don't need to debate its merits as a "plan" with the whole group. It's simply something your character spends some of their time on, and it benefits everyone, so there's no debate needed. And, if you can knock out the project in two actions, even better! The Red Sashes will be vulnerable right away.

DON'T BE A WEASEL

As a player, you have the privilege of choosing which action to roll. But with this privilege comes a responsibility—**choose the action that matches what your character is doing**—not simply the dice pool you would like to roll.

For example, when you roll **TINKER**, it's because *you tinker with something*. When you roll **SWAY**, it's because *you sway someone's opinion*. If your crafty Leech shows off a cool gadget they made in order to sway a potential client, then the Leech is **swaying** them. They're **not** "using tinker" to impress the person. That's not how actions work.

Of course, you can do a **setup** action with **TINKER** to build a gadget that might impress someone so they're more easily swayed (thereby increasing the effect or position of a follow-up action). But when you actually go to sway them, you roll your **SWAY** dice. That's why they're called actions, not skills. They're about what you're doing, not what you know.

If you're the type of player that really needs to use their best dice pool all the time, take the Slide's special ability *Rook's Gambit*. It will cost you stress, sure—but at least you won't be a weasel.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

You are a co-author of the game. If you want the world of Doskvol to be deadly, accept deadly harm. If you want shortcomings and flaws to be part of the ongoing story, show your own character's failure to make good decisions. In *Blades*, every participant is responsible for the tone, style, and themes of the game—not just the GM. As a player, you have an *expressive* role to play at the table, not just a tactical one. Think about what you have to say as a co-author of the ongoing fiction and then use your character to say it.

USE YOUR STRESS BOXES

The ability to take stress is what separates your scoundrel from all the other people in Doskvol. Your stress represents a pool of potential that can make you and your crew much more effective if you're willing to use it.

Take 2 stress to push yourself and get an assist from a teammate (they take 1 stress) and your odds of success greatly increase. The game is balanced so things are pretty tough for characters by default—that's the nature of Doskvol, after all. But by burning your stress, you can "break the rules" and perform beyond what you normally could achieve. If you hoard your stress, you might find that things are very tough for you.

GM: GOALS, PRINCIPLES, & ACTIONS

GM GOALS

This is what you're trying to accomplish when you run the game.

Play to find out what happens. Don't steer the game toward certain outcomes or events. Be curious!

Bring Daskvol to life. Give each location a specific aspect (crowded, cold, wet, dim, etc.). Give each NPC a name, detail and a preferred method of problem solving (threats, bargaining, violence, charm, etc.). Give each action context — the knife fight is on rickety wooden stairs; the informant huddles among the wreckage of the statue of the Weeping Lady; the Lampblacks' lair stinks of coal dust.

Convey the fictional world honestly. Spirits are terrifying. Friends are really friends — they'll help when they can — but it cuts both ways. If someone is reasonable, they'll listen to reason. Don't keep pointless secrets so you can "reveal" them later. Let it come out when it comes out. Find reasons to share the cool things in your head.

GM PRINCIPLES

Be a fan of the PCs. Present the world honestly — things really are stacked against them — but don't make yourself the enemy of the PCs. They have enemies enough. Be interested in the characters and excited about their victories.

Let everything flow from the fiction. The game's starting situations and your opening scene will put things in motion. Ask how the characters react and see what happens next. NPCs react according to their goals and methods. Events snowball. You don't need to "manage" the game. Action, reaction, and consequences will drive everything.

Hold on lightly. Rewind, revise, and reconsider events as needed to accommodate the action of the game.

Address the characters. "Silver, where do you go to look for the Red Sashes?" not "Sara, where does Silver go?" This puts Silver front and center—his preferences, desires, and style. Silver comes to life as a character.

Address the players. "Sara, how do you want to handle this? Should we do a whole scene or just make a roll real quick?" This puts Sara front and center — her preferences, desires, and style. Sara can consider what she wants, rather than what the character wants.

Paint the world with a haunted brush. There are ghosts and hollows, weird echoes, arcane energies, and strange cults everywhere. How does the haunted city manifest here?

Surround them with industrial sprawl. Daskvol is crowded with factories and their choking soot clouds, buzzing electric lights, ironworks, hissing and clanking machines. How do the industrialized systems manifest here?

Consider the risk. Think about the risks and dangers inherent in most things the scoundrels do. A **risky** move is the default action almost all the time. When they've taken great care and are building on successes, they might make controlled moves. When they have to improvise off the cuff or when they're in over their heads, they're probably making desperate moves. Go with your gut. Call the positions as you see them, but be open to revision.

GM ACTIONS

The player characters have sixteen actions they use. You have actions, too. When it's your turn to contribute to the game, and you're not sure what to do, look at your list of actions and pick one.

First and foremost, **ask questions.**

When things are getting started:

- ♦ **What plan did you make?**
- ♦ **Who scouted it out?** (fill in the plan detail)
- ♦ **How does it start?** (make an engagement roll, cut to the action)

And when things are underway:

- ♦ **How do you do that?** (which action do you use?)
- ♦ **What's your goal?** (what outcome do you want?)
- ♦ **Cut to the moment of crisis.** When they say, "We should break in to the Dimmer Sisters' house," say "Okay, sounds like a plan. Infiltration? Okay, what's the point of entry?" Then, when they answer, "All right, so you're on the rooftop of the fabric store across the alley from their house. It's quiet and dark in there. What do you do?"
- ♦ **Telegraph trouble before it strikes.** Show them a threat that's about to hit, then ask them what they do. Then it's easy to know what's at stake when they roll.
- ♦ **Follow through and hit them hard.** You've telegraphed the threat, so go ahead and follow through when it hits. Players

have several tools at their disposal to deal with adversity. If they can react in time, they can make an action roll. If they're hit with trouble, they can roll to resist it. Go ahead and say, "The Unseen told you what would happen if you interfered. They firebomb your lair while you're sleeping." The players will interrupt, flashback, scramble and deal with it! It'll be fun.

- ♦ **Initiate action with an NPC.** This is just a restating of the previous GM action, but it's worth highlighting. You don't always have to wait for the PCs to do something. Your NPCs can initiate the action, too! The more dangerous an NPC is, the more they should seize the initiative. The PCs can resist with their attributes. "She's very smooth and sly. She tells you a lie about why she was late to the meeting, and it seems totally legit!" "Oh, no way..." "Okay, resist with your Insight — let's see if she can fool you..."
- ♦ **Tell them the consequences and ask.** "Yeah, you can run the whole way but you'll be *exhausted* when you arrive. Want to resist that consequence or just take it?" "The spirit strikes terror in your heart. You can flee or be *paralyzed* with fear. Which is it? Or do you want to resist?"
- ♦ **Offer a devil's bargain.** Think of a fun complication or reckless decision. Offer them the bonus die in exchange. If you don't have a good idea, you can offer the devil's die in exchange for **HEAT**. There are always unseen witnesses lurking about. The city is alive with informants and gossips.
- ♦ **Make a progress clock or tick one down.** Keep a stack of index cards handy. Make clocks like crazy! Keep them out where everyone can see.
- ♦ **Ask the players.** Ask them if this seems desperate. Ask them where their character eats their meals. Ask them who their character slept with last. Ask them questions they can answer from within their character's POV — things they know, suspect, experienced, or hope for.
- ♦ **Actions ripple through the network.** Every event has consequences, good and bad. What one faction loves, another hates. How is a certain faction connected to this? How might they know about it?
- ♦ **Think off-screen.** What's happening elsewhere? Put it on screen. Show something only the audience sees.

After every GM action, ask "What do you do?"

GM: BEST PRACTICES

Convey the ongoing fictional space as accurately as is desirable for this group. Be concise. Use small details when they help to convey a bigger picture.

Lead an interesting conversation. The game is nothing but a conversation between you and the players. The goal of the conversation is to answer the question "*What happens now?*" in the most engaging way possible. The most interesting conversations are those that are **curious**—asking questions and prompting ideas—rather than dogmatic or one-sided. Be curious about what the other players have to say.

Create an atmosphere of inquiry at the table. This means you *play to find out what happens*, not to make sure something specific happens. Will they go to war with the Fog Hounds? Is Nyla badass enough to take out the thugs by herself? Can they avoid or predict Casta's betrayal? **Play to find out.** Don't contrive events ahead of time or manipulate play to bring them about.

Ask questions to lead the assessment of the fictional space when engaging the mechanics. "Which of the position profiles matches your situation here? Taking a calculated risk, or is it a reckless move?"

Help the players use the game system to pursue the goals of the characters. Don't let them flounder. When they have a goal, ask them about any opportunities they have to pursue it. Present two possible approaches from that opportunity and ask if they want to choose one or invent a third way.

Don't block. It's not your job to say "you can't do that." You're not the sole authority on what the characters can and cannot do. Instead, ask them: "You need to create an opportunity to attempt that, right?" Ask them *how* they might create an opportunity they need. Don't block. Show them that there's a path to their goal, even if it might be a long or dangerous one.

Earn the trust of the group by being a supportive and fair advocate of the integrity of the fiction. It's your job to portray a fictional world with integrity, not one that's contrived and "set up" for particular outcomes. When you advocate for something, the players know that you do so on behalf of this integrity, not to get your way or to arrange situations to your liking.

Keep the meta channel open. When you portray an NPC, tell the players things that are going unsaid. Invite them to ask their **GATHER INFORMATION** questions to dig deeper. The characters have a broad spectrum of senses and intuitions to bring to bear in the fiction; the

players have only the narrow channel of your few words. Help them out by sharing what they might suspect, intuit, feel, and predict.

Be a curious explorer of the game in play. Ask the players questions to feed your own interest in the ongoing fiction in which the PCs are the protagonists. Your game series is a cool TV show and you're its biggest fan. When you're curious about something that a PC says or does, ask them about it! "I'm curious, though, when you tell him you'd do *anything* to help, do you really mean that? Anything? Are you that kind of person? Or are you just manipulating him?" These questions will often lead to goals, approaches, and rolls.

Make the scoundrels awesome even in failure. Blame the circumstances—not the characters—when creating consequences or complications. Even a PC with zero rating in an action isn't a bumbling fool. Here's a trick for this: start your description of the failure with a cool move by the PC, followed by "but," and the troublesome circumstance. *You aim a fierce right hook at his chin, but he's quicker than he looked! He ducks under the blow and wrestles you up against the wall.*

On failure, talk about what went wrong. "Ah, maybe you missed something while you're climbing through the jeweller's broken window?" "Yeah, they probably have tripwires or something huh?" "Yep! You feel the wire snap against your arm." You can also lean on features the player has already portrayed about the character. How are their vice or traumas a problem? What is it about their heritage or background that gives them trouble or gets in the way?

Advocate for the interests and capabilities of the NPCs. Your job is to convey the fictional world accurately, remember? Believable NPCs with interests and capabilities make for a more compelling fictional world. Don't be a push over. When the PCs take action against an NPC, remind the players of their interests and capabilities. "But Quellyn won't just go along with all this, right? They're a witch, wanted by the spirit wardens. How are you going to contend with that?" When the PCs act in alignment with the interests of NPCs, remind the players of their support and friendship.

Bring the elements of the game system to life on screen. When an NPC is influenced, what does that look like? When a PC is hunted by the guards, what fictional details convey that change in their situation? Ask the other players for ideas if you want to. "Do they come rushing over with lantern lights trained on you?" "Oh, no, maybe they have electric lights here, and they all come on with a massive crackle of energy."



GM: TECHNIQUES & BAD HABITS

PLAY GOAL-FORWARD.

Poll the group about what **GOAL** they're pursuing, either in the bigger picture of the game (best used at the beginning of a session) or in this microcosm of the present moment (best used when things are underway and the situation is snowballing). Once you know the goal, have a conversation about opportunities, actions, and effects. The pursuit of opportunities and positions to enable certain approaches, the acquisition of information and resources, and the nested conflicts and that result will drive the action of the game. **What are you trying to accomplish? Do you have an opportunity to do that? How do you want to go about it?** Follow this chain of events as actions and consequences play out. Ask the players to lead where the game goes next.

CUT TO THE ACTION

Solicit a goal and plan, then cut to the action and use dice rolls to move the situation forward. Don't be afraid to resolve something! They want to eliminate Ulf Ironborn and then they plan it and do it, despite the odds and dangers? It's *done*. Don't string things out.

PUT IT IN CONTEXT

The game is a conversation between the real people at the table, but the action happens in the fictional space. Always place actions and effects in the fictional context. Where is it happening? Who's there? What's the vibe? What interesting details distinguish this context as the haunted industrial-fantasy world of Doskvol?

PUT IT ON SCREEN

The game is a conversation, but roleplaying can still be a visual medium in the imagination. Take every opportunity you can to bring the game to life in the minds of the players. Describe the action as if it's on screen in a TV show. What does that look like on screen?

PUT IT ON A CARD.

Use index cards for NPCs, locations, job offers, leads, etc. It's easy to lose track of things if you don't have a record of it. By putting important things on index cards, everyone can see them spread out on the table and incorporate them into the game.

BAD HABITS. AVOID THESE!

- ♦ **Calling for a specific action roll.** This bad habit usually happens if you've GM'd other games where this is kinda your job. You might say, "Give me a Finesse roll," or "That's a Consort check" or whatever. Try to get out of this habit. Get used to saying this, instead: "**How do you do that?**" *Ask them which action they use.* Then tell them the position and effect level that you see in this situation, using that action—as well as *why* you think that.
- ♦ **Letting planning get out of hand.** Some players will plan an operation forever if no one stops them—even if they hate doing it! They think it's worth the trouble if they can cover every potential issue or avoid some bad outcome. This is not how *Blades in the Dark* works. Everything is resolved by action and effect rolls, so get to them! If someone has a cool maneuver or idea, that's great, but it's probably still a controlled action roll. They can't plan and discuss their way out of making the rolls. **An idea is not execution.**
- ♦ **Not giving them what they earn.** If they get into position, make the roll, and have their effect, *they get what they earned.* Don't weasel out of it! Things are hard enough on them already. Don't be a skinflint about victories; defeats will come without your thumb on the scales. The scoundrels are at the bottom of the faction ladder, but that doesn't mean they're ineffective. It means they need lots and lots of victories to make it. They're good at the game, they just started out with negative points on the board.

The same goes for secrets. If they make the discovery, tell them all about it. Don't hold on to your precious secrets. It's more fun to find out what they do about it once they know.
- ♦ **Saying no.** There's always a better answer than "no" or "you can't do that." Offer a **devil's bargain!** "So... you want to *seduce* the most experienced madame in the city. Uh huh. Okay then. That's desperate, with limited effect probably. But here's a devil's bargain: regardless of how this goes, you fall in love with her." Or tell them to start the first phase of a **long-term project clock.** That's what they're there for. "You want to trace every contraband route into Doskvol? Okay, start a long-term clock. The first phase is: 'Assemble the list of all the contraband dealers.'" Simply saying no is boring.

DON'T ROLL TWICE FOR THE SAME THING

When a PC faces danger, they make an Action roll. Also, they can roll Resistance to avoid a bad outcome. However, don't roll twice for the exact same thing.

For example, Arlyn is dueling a Red Sash on the roof. The Red Sash drives her back with a flurry of feints and slashes, and there's a danger that Arlyn will be forced over the edge during the skirmish. Arlyn's player makes an Action roll to see how her counter-attack goes. She rolls badly! Arlyn is forced over the edge and falls off the roof.

But she can roll to resist, right? Yes. She can resist the *harm* that results from the fall. But she can't "undo" being forced over the edge. That's already been determined by her Action roll. The resistance roll answers "how bad is the fall?" Does she simply take some stress and catch herself on a railing on the way down, or does she end up with lasting harm as she breaks her leg when she hits the street?

Here's another example: Cross is sneaking into the Red Sash's temple, trying to elude the notice of their guards. He gets a mixed result and a guard is alerted. But how much? Cross's player can roll to resist the effect. If he pays the resulting stress cost, then the guard hasn't raised the alarm or seen Cross's face, but the danger did manifest as a result of the Action roll. So what happens? This is the classic case where the guard and his partner say, "*Hey, did you see that?*" "*What?*" "*Something over there by the pillar.*" "*Probably nothing.*" "*Yeah, I'm gonna check, though.*"

If Cross's own effect is enough to overcome the obstacle, then he hears that conversation in the distance behind him as he slips inside the temple. If he hasn't overcome the obstacle yet, then he's hidden behind the pillar as the guard strolls over to investigate.

In other words, the Action roll determines whether a consequence manifests or not. The Resistance roll determines **how much** of that danger manifests or how bad it is. Action and Resistance don't determine the same thing. Each roll has a concrete result that affects the situation.

GM REFERENCE

GM GOALS

Play to find out what happens.
Bring Doskvol to Life.
Convey the world honestly.

GM PRINCIPLES

Be a fan of the PCs.
Let everything flow from the fiction.
Hold on lightly.
Address the characters.
Address the players.
Paint the world w/ a haunted brush.
Surround them w/ industrial sprawl.
Consider the risk.

GM ACTIONS

When things are getting started:

- ◆ **What's your goal?**
- ◆ **What plan did you make?** (and what's the detail?)

And when things are underway:

- ◆ **How do you do that?** (which action do you use?)
- ◆ **What's your goal?** (what's the effect?)

Cut to the moment of crisis.
Telegraph trouble before it strikes.
Tell them the consequences and ask.
Offer a devil's bargain.
Make a progress clock or tick one.
Ask the players.
Actions ripple through the network.
Think off-screen.

What do you do?

NAMES: Adric, Aldo, Amison, Andrel, Arcy, Arden, Arilyn, Arquo, Arvus, Ashlyn, Branon, Brace, Brance, Brena, Bricks, Candra, Canter, Carissa, Carro, Casslyn, Cavelle, Clave, Corille, Cross, Crawl, Cyrene, Daphnia, Drav, Edlun, Emeline, Grell, Helles, Hix, Holtz, Kamelin, Kelyr, Kobb, Kristov, Laudius, Lauria, Lenia, Lizete, Lorette, Lucella, Lynthia, Mara, Milos, Morlan, Myre, Narcus, Naria, Noggs, Odrienne, Orlan, Phin, Polonia, Quess, Remira, Ring, Roethe, Seseereth, Sethla, Skannon, Stavrul, Stev, Syra, Talitha, Tesslyn, Thena, Timothy, Tocker, Una, Vaurin, Veleris, Veretta, Vestine, Vey, Volette, Vond, Weaver, Wester, Zamira.

FAMILY NAMES: Arran, Athanoch, Basran, Boden, Booker. Ankhayat, Bowman, Breakiron, Brogan, Clelland, Clermont, Coleburn, Comber, Daava, Dalmore, Danfield, Dunvil, Edrad, Farros, Grine, Haig, Helker, Helles, Hellyers, Jayan, Jeduin, Kardera, Karstas, Keel, Kessarín, Kinclath, Lomond, Maroden, Michter, Morriston, Penderyn, Prichard, Rowan, Salkara, Sevoy, Skelkallan, Slane, Strangford, Strathmill, Templeton, Tyrconnell, Vale, Vedat, Walund.

ALIASES: Bell, Birch, Bird, Bliss, Bricks, Bug, Chime, Coil, Cricket, Cross, Crow, Echo, Flint, Frog, Frost, Grip, Hook, Ink, Junker, Mist, Moon, Nail, Needle, Ogre, Pool, Ring, Ruby, Silver, Skinner, Song, Spur, Tackle, Thistle, Thorn, Tick Tock, Trick, Vixen, Whip, Wicker.

LOOKS

Man, Woman, Ambiguous, Concealed.

| | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|
| Affable | Athletic | Plump |
| Brooding | Stout | Squat |
| Bright | Scarred | Weathered |
| Dark | Rough | Cold |
| Fair | Striking | Sad |
| Worn | Lovely | Stern |
| Lean | Handsome | Open |
| Wiry | Slim | Languid |
| Huge | Delicate | Calm |
| Chiseled | Bony | Fierce |

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Tricorn Hat</i> | <i>Fitted Dress</i> |
| <i>Long Coat</i> | <i>Heavy Cloak</i> |
| <i>Hood & Veil</i> | <i>Thick Greatcoat</i> |
| <i>Short Cloak</i> | <i>Soft Boots</i> |
| <i>Knit Cap</i> | <i>Loose Silks</i> |
| <i>Slim Jacket</i> | <i>Sharp Trousers</i> |
| <i>Hooded Coat</i> | <i>Waxed Coat</i> |
| <i>Tall Boots</i> | <i>Long Scarf</i> |
| <i>Work Boots</i> | <i>Leathers</i> |
| <i>Mask & Robes</i> | <i>Eel-skin Bodysuit</i> |
| <i>Suit & Vest</i> | <i>Hide & Furs</i> |
| <i>Collared Shirt</i> | <i>Scavenged Uniform</i> |
| <i>Suspenders</i> | <i>Threadbare Tatters</i> |
| <i>Skirt & Blouse</i> | <i>Fitted Leggings</i> |

CITY DESCRIPTORS

soot-choked, cobblestones, dim, ink-dark, cooking-smells, oily puddles, silver moonlight, fog-shrouded, damp, chill, wind-swept, shadowy, brick walls, echoes, chimneys, gas-lights, electro-lights, carriages, clocktowers, lanterns, pipe-smoke, canals, gondolas, rain-slick, gargoyles, ruins, steeples, bridges, walkways, scaffolds, alleys, cisterns, sewers, clanking machinery, ironwork.

FORTUNE ROLL

1d for each **TRAIT** rating.

+1d for a **MAJOR ADVANTAGE**.

-1d for a **MAJOR DRAWBACK**.

CRITICAL: Exceptional outcome / Great effect.

6: Good outcome / Standard effect.

4/5: Mixed outcome / Limited effect.

1-3: Bad outcome / Poor effect.

DOSKVOL NOTABLES

Lyssa, a crime boss. Cold and calculating. Killed her former boss, **Roric**.

The Dimmer Sisters. People say they're witches who drink blood. Never seen outside their home.

Ulf Ironborn, a brutal Skovlander; craves power.

Mylera Klev, leader of the *Red Sash* gang. Art collector.

Baszo Baz, leader of the *Lampblacks*. Loves whisky.

Merrul Brime, secrets broker; owns the Hooded Fox.

Lady Drake, a magistrate on the payroll of criminals.

The Tower, anonymous leader of *The Unseen*. **The Star**, chief lieutenant. **Grull**, a mid-level thug with ambitions.

Mordis, a merchant of the night market. A fence. Hides his true appearance under a robe and hood.

Taffer, a merchant of the night market. A cultist.

Jira, a merchant of the night market. A smuggler.

Elstera Avrathi, resident diplomat of Iruvia.

Brynna Skyrkallan, resident diplomat of Skovlan.

Tyrsin Nol, resident diplomat of Severos.

Andris, a spy and informant with flexible loyalties.

Krop, a constable of the watch. Refuses bribes.

Lewit, Jol, Cinda, Reyf, bluecoats of the watch.

Rolan Wot, a judge-inspector. Rooting out corruption.

Casslyn Mora, a judge with family ties to criminals.

Belindra, a jailor of Ironhook Prison.

Ereth Skane, an advocate with unseemly vices.

Denkirk Sol, an advocate with surprising scruples.

Polix, attache to the Lord Governor of Doskvol. A secret spiritualist and rune-binder.

Nyryx and **Hoxan**, rogue spirits possessing the bodies of streetwalkers, looking for a whisper to serve.

Levyra, a spirit medium.

Kember, a distiller of essences and potions, proprietor of the Devil's Tooth.

Raffello, a master painter obsessed w/ the unnatural.

Lannic, an expert art forger.

CITY WARDS (richest to poorest)

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| Whitecrown | Coalridge |
| Brightstone | The Docks |
| Six Towers | Crow's Foot |
| Charterhall | Dunsloough |
| Nightmarket | Barrowcleft |
| Silkshore | Charhollow |

LOCATIONS

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Undercross | The Hooded Fox |
| Echo Gardens | The Hook & Line |
| The Night Market | The Leaky Bucket |
| The Canals | The Devil's Tooth |
| Chalk Street Bridge | The Black Tree |
| Candle Street Bridge | The Cat & Candle |
| Gaddoc Rail Station | The Broken Anchor |
| Heartbreak Square | The Red Lamp |
| The Anvilworks | The Nail & Bottle |
| The Black Circle | The Six Arms |
| Bellweather | The Old Rasp |
| Crematorium | The Moon's |
| Ironhook Prison | Daughter |
| The Blood Pits | The Sexton |
| The Lost Ward | Hazlewood |
| Razor Hill | Quinn's |

PUBLIC HOUSES

FLASHBACK STRESS COSTS

- ◆ **0 STRESS** for a normal action for which you had easy opportunity.
- ◆ **1 STRESS** for a complex action or unlikely opportunity.
- ◆ **2+ STRESS** for an elaborate action which involved several special opportunities or contingencies.

CONSEQUENCES

You suffer **harm** (1-3).

You have **reduced effect**.

You end up in a **worse position**.

It takes extra **time**.

You **lose your opportunity**.

Complication (Tick a clock, 1-3 segments. Or a new **obstacle** or **threat** appears.)

EFFECT

How does the effect manifest?

If there's a clock for your obstacle, tick segments equal to the effect level.

- LIMITED:** *How is the effect diminished? What significant obstacle remains?*
- STANDARD:** *How does the expected effect manifest? What's left to do, if anything?*
- GREAT:** *How is the effect increased? What extra benefit manifests?*

EFFECT FACTORS

| | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| - | QUALITY / TIER | + |
| - | SCALE | + |
| - | POTENCY | + |

RULES REFERENCE 1

ACTION ROLL

1d for each **ACTION** dot.

+1d if you **PUSH** yourself (you take 2 stress) -OR- if you accept a **DEVIL'S BARGAIN**.

Note: You may either push yourself or accept a devil's bargain to get one bonus die. You can't do both.

Each time you roll a desperate action, mark a tick of xp for that attribute. See page 18.

The GM sets the consequences according to the situation. You may suffer one, some, or all of the listed consequences. You may attempt to avoid or reduce a consequence with a resistance roll.

RESISTANCE ROLL

1d for each **ATTRIBUTE** dot.

CONTROLLED

You act on your terms. You exploit a dominant advantage.

CRITICAL: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You hesitate. Withdraw and try a different approach, or else do it with a minor consequence: a minor **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you suffer **lesser harm**, you end up in a **risky** position.

1-3: You're blocked or you falter. Press on by seizing a **risky** opportunity, or withdraw and try a different approach.

RISKY

You go head to head. You act under fire. You take a chance.

CRITICAL: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You do it, but there's a consequence: you suffer **harm**, a **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you end up in a **desperate** position.

1-3: Things go badly. You suffer **harm**, a **complication** occurs, you end up in a **desperate** position, you **lose this opportunity**.

DESPERATE

You overreach your capabilities. You're in serious trouble.

CRITICAL: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You do it, but there's a consequence: you suffer **severe harm**, a **serious complication** occurs.

1-3: It's the worst outcome. You suffer **severe harm**, a **serious complication** occurs, you **lose this opportunity** for action.

You reduce or avoid the consequence and take **6 STRESS** minus your **highest die result**.

When you roll a critical on resistance, clear 1 stress.

TEAMWORK

ASSIST

Take 1 stress to give another player +1d. You might also suffer consequences from the roll. Only one person may assist a roll.

LEAD A GROUP

Lead a **group action**. Roll for each character who participates in the group action. The best single roll counts as the action result, which applies to every character that rolled.

PROTECT

Face danger for a teammate. Step in to suffer a consequence in their place. You may roll to resist as normal, if you wish.

SET UP

Set up another character with your action. If you achieve it, any team members who follow up get +1 **effect** or **improved position**.

ACTIONS

- ◆ **ATTUNE** to spirits and the ghost field; channel electroplasmic energy; perceive and communicate with ghosts; understand spectrology.
- ◆ **COMMAND** obedience with your force of personality; intimidate or threaten; lead an action with one of the crew's **GANGS**.
- ◆ **CONSORT** with connections from your heritage, background, friends, or rivals to gain access to resources, information, people, or places.
- ◆ **FINESSE** an item from someone's pocket; employ subtle misdirection or sleight-of-hand; handle a vehicle or a mount.
- ◆ **HUNT** a target; gather information about its location and movements; attack with precision shooting from a distance.
- ◆ **PROWL** about unseen and traverse obstacles; climb, swim, run, jump, and tumble. Ambush with close violence—a backstab, throat cutting, black-jack, etc.
- ◆ **SKIRMISH** with an opponent in close combat; assault or hold a position; brawl and wrestle.
- ◆ **STUDY** a person, document, or item with close scrutiny to gather information and apply knowledge; gain a deeper understanding; do research.
- ◆ **SURVEY** a location or situation to understand what's going on; sense trouble before it happens; gather information about opportunities or exploits.
- ◆ **SWAY** someone with charm, logic, deception, disguise, or bluff; change attitudes or behavior with manipulation or seduction.
- ◆ **TINKER** with mechanisms to create, modify, disable, or repair; disable a trap, pick a lock, or crack a safe. Use the ubiquitous clockwork and electroplasmic devices around the city to your advantage.
- ◆ **WRECK** a place, item, or obstacle with savage force or carefully applied sabotage; breach defenses with force; create distractions and chaos.

RULES REFERENCE 2

PAYOFF (1ST)

A score yields **1 REP** per **TIER** of the target and a **COIN** reward based on the nature of the operation (see list at right).

If you've seized a **CLAIM**, you gain its benefits (**HOLD** and/or other bonuses).

ENTANGLEMENTS (3RD)

After a payoff, roll an entanglement according to your level of **HEAT** plus your **WANTED LEVEL**:

| LEVEL: 0-3 | LEVEL: 4, 5 | LEVEL: 6+ |
|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1: GANG TROUBLE | 1: GANG TROUBLE | 1: FLIPPED |
| 2: UNQUIET DEAD | 2: UNQUIET DEAD | 2: DEMONIC NOTICE |
| 3: RIVALS | 3: REPRISALS | 3: SHOW OF FORCE |
| 4, 5: THE USUAL SUSPECTS | 4, 5: QUESTIONING | 4, 5: INTERROGATION |
| 6: COOPERATION | 6: SHOW OF FORCE | 6: ARREST |

ARREST. An Inspector presents a case file of evidence to a magistrate, to begin prosecution of your crew. The Bluecoats send a detail to arrest you. Pay them off with **COIN** (Wanted Level +3), hand someone over for arrest (this clears your heat), or try to evade capture.

COOPERATION. A +3 status faction asks you for a favor. Agree to do it or forfeit **1 REP** per **TIER** of the friendly faction. If you don't have a +3 faction status, you avoid entanglements right now.

DEMONIC NOTICE. A demon approaches the crew with a dark offer. Accept, hide until it loses interest (forfeit **3 REP**), or deal with it another way.

FLIPPED. One of your contacts, patrons, clients, or a group of your customers switches allegiances due to the heat on you. They're loyal to another faction now.

GANG TROUBLE. One of your gangs (or other cohorts) causes trouble due to their flaw(s). Lose face (forfeit **REP** equal to your **TIER**+1), make an example of one of the gang members, or face reprisals from the wronged party. If you lack a gang or other cohort with a flaw, there's no entanglement.

INTERROGATION. The Bluecoats round up one of the PCs, to question them about the crew's crimes. Tell them what they want to know or resist with your **Resolve** to avoid jail time and exposing the crew to warrants for their arrest, or pay them off with **3 COIN**.

- ◆ **2 COIN:** Minor job; several full purses.
- ◆ **4 COIN:** Small job; a strongbox.
- ◆ **6 COIN:** Standard score; decent loot.
- ◆ **8 COIN:** Major score; serious loot.
- ◆ **10+ COIN:** A treasure trove.

Subtract 1 coin per crew Tier if you pay a tithe to a ward boss or larger organization.

QUESTIONING. The Bluecoats grab an NPC member of your crew or one of the crew's Contacts, to question them about your crimes. Make a **fortune roll** to find out how well they resist spilling some info that they shouldn't, or pay the Bluecoats off with **2 COIN**.

REPRISALS. An enemy faction makes a move against you (or a friend, contact, or vice purveyor). Pay them (**1 REP** and **1 COIN**) per **TIER** of the enemy as an apology, allow them to mess with you or yours, or fight back and show them who's boss.

RIVALS. A neutral faction throws their weight around. They threaten you, a friend or contact, or one of your vice purveyors. Forfeit (**1 REP** or **1 COIN**) per **TIER** of the rival, or stand up to them and lose **1 STATUS** with them.

SHOW OF FORCE. A faction with whom you have a negative status makes a play against your holdings. Give them **1 CLAIM** or go to war (drop to -3 status).

UNQUIET DEAD. A rogue spirit is drawn to you (perhaps it's a past victim?). Acquire the services of a Whisper or Rail Jack to attempt to destroy or banish it, or deal with it yourself.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS. The Bluecoats grab someone in the periphery of your crew. One player volunteers a friend or vice purveyor as the person most likely to be taken. Make a **fortune roll** to find out how well they resist questioning, or pay the Bluecoats off with **2 COIN**.

After the score, resolve Payoff, Heat, Entanglements, then Downtime—in that order

HEAT (2ND)

After a score or conflict with an opponent, the crew takes **HEAT**. Add **+1 HEAT** for a high-profile or well-connected target. Add **+1 HEAT** if the situation happened on hostile turf. Add **+1 HEAT** if you're at war. Add **+2 HEAT** if killing was involved.

- ◆ **1 HEAT:** Smooth & quiet; low exposure.
- ◆ **2 HEAT:** Contained; standard exposure.
- ◆ **4 HEAT:** Loud & chaotic; high exposure.
- ◆ **6 HEAT:** Wild; devastating exposure.

Plus any additional heat from complications or devil's bargains during the session.

DOWNTIME (4TH)

When you're at liberty between scores and find some respite from peril, **you may pursue two downtime actions**. You also recover all of your **armor** uses. During downtime, you may take **additional actions** by spending **1 COIN** or **1 REP** for each extra action.

For any downtime roll, add **+1d** to the roll if you get help from a **friend** or **contact**. After the roll, you may **increase the result level** by one for each **COIN** spent, by hiring assistance, paying a bribe, etc. (so, a 1-3 result becomes a 4/5, 4/5 becomes 6, 6 becomes **CRITICAL**).

VICE

Visit a purveyor of your vice and roll dice equal to your **lowest attribute**. Clear stress equal to your highest die result. If you clear more stress levels than you had marked, you **overindulge** (see below). *If you do not or cannot indulge your vice during downtime, you take stress equal to your TRAUMA.*

OVERINDULGE.

You make a bad call because of your vice—in acquiring it or while under its influence. What did yo do?

- ◆ **ATTRACT TROUBLE:** Select or roll an additional **entanglement**.
- ◆ **BIG TALK:** Brag about your exploits. **+2 HEAT**.
- ◆ **LOST:** Play a different character until this one returns from their bender.
- ◆ **TAPPED.** Your current purveyor cuts you off. Find a new source for your vice.

RECOVER

Get **treatment** to unlock your **healing clock**. Remove all level 1 harm. *Perform a long-term project activity to advance your healing clock once you've received treatment in recovery.*

LONG TERM PROJECT

Work on a **Long Term Project**, if you have the means. Roll a trait and mark 1 segment on the project clock per level (**1-3:** one, **4/5:** two, **6:** three, **CRIT:** five).

ACQUIRE ASSET

Acquire temporary use of an **asset**. Roll the crew's **TIER**. The result indicates the **quality** of the asset (**1-3:** Poor, **4/5:** Standard, **6:** Fine, **CRIT:** Exceptional).

TRAIN

Mark **1 XP** for an attribute or your playbook (**+1 XP** if you have the appropriate crew training upgrade). *You can train a given xp track only once per downtime.*

GATHER INFO

Spend extra time to **gather information**. You get **+1 effect**. Take **+1d** if a friend or contact helps you.

REDUCE HEAT

Say how you reduce **Heat** on the crew and roll your **ACTION**. Reduce heat according to the result level (**1-3:** one, **4/5:** two, **6:** three, **CRIT:** five).

CHARACTER CREATION

1. CHOOSE PLAYBOOK

Your playbook represents the nature of your character, their special abilities, and how they advance. Playbooks aren't unique — multiple players can choose the same one.

2. CHOOSE ONE SPECIAL ABILITY

If you can't decide, choose the first ability on the list. It's placed there as a good first option.

3. CHOOSE A HERITAGE & ASSIGN 1 ACTION DOT

...and detail it with a note about your family life. *For example, Skovlan: Ore Miners.* **Assign an action dot** based on your Heritage choice (max starting action rating is 2).

4. CHOOSE A BACKGROUND & ASSIGN 1 ACTION DOT

...and detail it with your specific history. *For example, Labor: Leviathan Hunter.* **Assign an action dot** based on your Background choice (max starting action rating is 2).

5. ASSIGN 2 MORE ACTION DOTS

Assign **2 additional action dots**. No action may begin with a rating higher than 2 during character creation. *(After creation, action ratings may advance up to 3. When you unlock the Mastery advance for your crew, you can advance actions up to rating 4.)*

6. ITEMS CARRIED

You have access to all of the **items** on your character sheet. For each operation, decide what your character's **load** will be. During the operation, you may say that your character has an item by checking the box for the item you want to use — up to a number of items equal to your chosen load. Your load determines your movement speed and conspicuousness:

- ♦ **Light** (you're faster, less conspicuous, you can blend in with citizens).
- ♦ **Normal** (you look like a scoundrel, ready for trouble).
- ♦ **Heavy** (you're slower, you look like an operative on a mission).

Some items count as two items for load (they have two connected boxes). *Items in italics don't count toward your load.*

7. CHOOSE A CLOSE FRIEND AND A RIVAL

Mark the one who is a close friend, long-time ally, family relation, or lover (the upward-pointing triangle). Mark one who is a *former* friend turned rival, enemy, scorned lover, betrayed partner etc. (the downward-pointing triangle).

8. CHOOSE YOUR VICE

Pick your preferred type of vice, detail it with a short description and indicate the name and location of your vice purveyor. *For example, Stupor: Trance powder addict. Madame Tesslyn, The Red Lamp, Silkshore.*

VICES

- **FAITH:** You're dedicated to an unseen power, forgotten god, ancestor, etc.
- **GAMBLING:** You crave games of chance, betting on sporting events, etc.
- **LUXURY:** Expensive and/or ostentatious displays of opulence.
- **OBLIGATION:** You're devoted to a family, a cause, a charity, etc.
- **PLEASURE:** Gratification from lovers, food, drink, drugs, art, theater, etc.
- **STUPOR:** You seek oblivion in the abuse of drugs, drink to excess, getting beaten to a pulp in the fighting pits, etc.
- **WEIRD:** You experiment with strange essences, consort with rogue spirits, observe bizarre rituals or taboos, etc.

ACTIONS

- ♦ **ATTUNE** to spirits and the ghost field; channel electroplasmic energy; perceive and communicate with ghosts; understand spectrology.
- ♦ **COMMAND** obedience with your force of personality; intimidate or threaten; lead an action with one of the crew's **GANGS**.
- ♦ **CONSORT** with connections from your heritage, background, friends, or rivals to gain access to resources, information, people, or places.
- ♦ **FINESSE** an item from someone's pocket; employ subtle misdirection or sleight-of-hand; handle a vehicle or a mount.
- ♦ **HUNT** a target; gather information about its location and movements; attack with precision shooting from a distance.
- ♦ **PROWL** about unseen and traverse obstacles; climb, swim, run, jump, and tumble. Ambush with close violence—a backstab, throat cutting, black-jack, etc.
- ♦ **SKIRMISH** with an opponent in close combat; assault or hold a position; brawl and wrestle.
- ♦ **STUDY** a person, document, or item with close scrutiny to gather information and apply knowledge; gain a deeper understanding; do research.
- ♦ **SURVEY** a location or situation to understand what's going on; sense trouble before it happens; gather information about opportunities or exploits.
- ♦ **SWAY** someone with charm, logic, deception, disguise, or bluff; change attitudes or behavior with manipulation or seduction.
- ♦ **TINKER** with mechanisms to create, modify, disable, or repair; disable a trap, pick a lock, or crack a safe. Use the ubiquitous clockwork and electroplasmic devices around the city to your advantage.
- ♦ **WRECK** a place, item, or obstacle with savage force or carefully applied sabotage; breach defenses with force; create distractions and chaos.

NAMES: Adric, Aldo, Amosen, Andrel, Arcy, Arden, Arilyn, Arquo, Arvus, Ashlyn, Branon, Brace, Brance, Brena, Bricks, Candra, Canter, Carissa, Carro, Casslyn, Cavelle, Clave, Corille, Cross, Crowl, Cyrene, Daphnia, Drav, Edlun, Emeline, Grell, Helles, Hix, Holtz, Kamelin, Kelyr, Kobb, Kristov, Laudius, Lauria, Lenia, Lizete, Lorette, Lucella, Lynthia, Mara, Milos, Morlan, Myre, Narcus, Naria, Noggs, Odrienne, Orlan, Phin, Polonia, Quess, Remira, Ring, Roethe, Sesereth, Sethla, Skannon, Stavrul, Stev, Syra, Talitha, Tesslyn, Thena, Timoth, Tocker, Una, Vaurin, Veleris, Veretta, Vestine, Vey, Volette, Vond, Weaver, Wester, Zamira.

FAMILY NAMES: Arran, Athanoch, Basran, Boden, Booker, Ankhayat, Bowman, Breakiron, Brogan, Clelland, Clermont, Coleburn, Comber, Daava, Dalmore, Danfield, Dunvil, Edrad, Farros, Grine, Haig, Helker, Helles, Hellyers, Jayan, Jeduin, Kardera, Karstas, Keel, Kessarin, Kinclaith, Lomond, Maroden, Michter, Morriston, Penderyn, Prichard, Rowan, Salkara, Sevoy, Skelkallan, Slane, Strangford, Strathmill, Templeton, Tyrconnell, Vale, Vedat, Walund.

ALIASES: Bell, Birch, Bird, Bliss, Bricks, Bug, Chime, Coil, Cricket, Cross, Crow, Echo, Flint, Frog, Frost, Grip, Hook, Ink, Junker, Mist, Moon, Nail, Needle, Ogre, Pool, Ring, Ruby, Silver, Skinner, Song, Spur, Tackle, Thistle, Thorn, Tick Tock, Trick, Vixen, Whip, Wicker.

LOOKS: Man, Woman, Ambiguous, Concealed.

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Affable | Huge | Lovely | Weathered |
| Brooding | Chiseled | Handsome | Cold |
| Bright | Athletic | Slim | Sad |
| Dark | Stout | Delicate | Stern |
| Fair | Scarred | Bony | Open |
| Worn | Rough | Plump | Calm |
| Wiry | Striking | Squat | Fierce |

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Tricorn Hat | Suit & Vest | Loose Silks |
| Long Coat | Collared Shirt | Sharp Trousers |
| Hood & Veil | Suspenders | Waxed Coat |
| Short Cloak | Rough Tunic | Long Scarf |
| Knit Cap | Skirt & Blouse | Leathers |
| Slim Jacket | Wide Belt | Eel-skin Bodysuit |
| Hooded Coat | Fitted Dress | Hide & Furs |
| Tall Boots | Heavy Cloak | Scavenged Uniform |
| Work Boots | Thick Greatcoat | Threadbare Tatters |
| Mask & Robes | Soft Boots | Fitted Leggings |

BLADES IN THE DARK

CREW

NAME

ALIAS

LOOK

HERITAGE: AKOROS—THE DAGGER ISLES

BACKGROUND: ACADEMIC—LABOR—LAW

IRUVIA—SEVEROS—SKOVLAN—TYCHEROS

TRADE—MILITARY—NOBLE—UNDERWORLD

VICE / PURVEYOR: FAITH—GAMBLING—LUXURY—OBLIGATION—PLEASURE—STUPOR—WEIRD

STRESS

TRAUMA

COLD—HAUNTED—OBSESSED—PARANOID

RECKLESS—SOFT—UNSTABLE—VICIOUS

HARM

3

NEED HELP

2

-1D

1

LESS EFFECT

ARMOR

+HEAVY

BATTLEBORN

other special armor

HEALING

project clock

NOTES

CUTTER

A DANGEROUS & INTIMIDATING FIGHTER

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **BRUTAL:** Your attacks are more powerful; you hit as if wielding a heavier weapon. You gain +1 effect when you harm physical targets.
- **RESILIENT:** When you have **downtime**, mark +3 segments on your healing clock. When you **push yourself** to ignore a harm penalty, you take only 1 stress instead of 2.
- **TOUGH AS NAILS:** When you roll **Prowess**, you get +1d.
- **SAVAGE:** When you unleash physical violence, it's especially frightening. When you **Command** a frightened target, take +1d.
- **GHOST FIGHTER:** You may imbue your hands, melee weapons, or tools with spirit energy. You gain **potency** in combat vs. the supernatural.
- **NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH:** In close combat, you are equal in **scale** to a small gang.
- **BATTLEBORN:** You get **special armor** against physical attacks. When you roll a **critical** in combat, **clear 1 stress**.
- **LEADER:** When you **Command** a **cohort** in combat, they continue to fight when they would otherwise **break** (they're not taken out when they suffer level 3 harm). They gain **potency** and **1 armor**.
- **VETERAN:** Choose a special ability from another source.

STRANGE FRIENDS

- △▽ Marlane, a pugilist
- △▽ Chael, a vicious thug
- △▽ Mercy, a cold killer
- △▽ Grace, an extortionist
- △▽ Stras, a clever blade

ITEMS

- ☐ Fine hand weapon
- ☐☐ Fine heavy weapon
- ☐ Fine scary weapon or tool
- ☐ *Manacles & chain*
- ☐ *Rage essence vial*
- ☐ *Spiritbane charm*

XP

- ◆ Every time you roll a desperate action, mark xp in that action's attribute. At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (in your playbook or an attribute) or 2xp if that item occurred multiple times.
- ◆ You addressed a challenge with threats or violence.
- ◆ You expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background.
- ◆ You struggled with issues from your vice or traumas during the session.

TEAMWORK

Assist a teammate

Lead a group action

Protect a teammate

Set up a teammate

PLANNING & LOAD

Choose a plan, provide the **detail**. Choose your **load** limit for the operation.

Assault: Point of attack

Occult: Arcane power

Deception: Method

Social: Connection

Stealth: Entry point

Transport: Route

STASH

COIN

PLAYBOOK

INSIGHT

- HUNT
- STUDY
- SURVEY
- TINKER

PROWESS

- FINESSE
- PROWL
- SKIRMISH
- WRECK

RESOLVE

- ATTUNE
- COMMAND
- CONSORT
- SWAY

BONUS DIE

PUSH YOURSELF (take 2 stress) -OR- accept a **DEVIL'S BARGAIN**.

LOAD 3 light 5 normal 6 heavy

- ☐ A Blade or Two
- ☐ Throwing Knives
- ☐ A Pistol ☐ A 2nd Pistol
- ☐☐ A Large Weapon
- ☐ An Unusual Weapon
- ☐ Armor ☐☐ +Heavy
- ☐ Burglary Gear
- ☐☐ Climbing Gear
- ☐ Arcane Implements
- ☐ Documents
- ☐ Subterfuge Supplies
- ☐☐ Demolition Tools
- ☐ Tinkering Tools
- ☐☐

GATHER INFORMATION

- ◆ What do they intend to do?
- ◆ How can I get them to [X]?
- ◆ What are they really feeling?
- ◆ What should I lookout for?
- ◆ Where's the weakness here?
- ◆ How can I find [X]?
- ◆ What's really going on here?

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STRESS  **TRAUMA**  COLD—HAUNTED—OBSESSED—PARANOID
RECKLESS—SOFT—UNSTABLE—VICIOUS

| HARM | | | ARMOR  | +HEAVY  |
|------|--|-------------|---|--|
| 3 | | NEED HELP | FOCUSED  | |
| 2 | | -1D |  | other special armor |
| 1 | | LESS EFFECT |  | HEALING project clock |

NOTES

A DEADLY SHARPSHOOTER AND TRACKER

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **SHARPSHOOTER:** You can perform precision shooting from extreme long range. You can quickly draw and reload your weapons. Your ranged attacks gain **potency**.
- **TENACIOUS:** Penalties from harm are one level less severe (though level 4 harm is still fatal).
- **GHOST HUNTER:** Your hunting pet is imbued with spirit energy. It gains **potency** when tracking or fighting the supernatural, and gains an arcane ability: *ghost-form*, *mind-link*, or *arrow-swift*. Take this ability again to choose an additional arcane ability for your pet.
- **SHARP:** When you roll resistance with **Insight**, you get +1d.
- **MARKED TARGET:** When you **hunt** a target that you've previously tracked or wounded, you get +1 **effect** level.
- **FOCUSED:** You get **special armor** vs. mental effects (fear, confusion, etc.). When you roll a **critical** while engaging a target, **clear 1 stress**.
- **VENGEFUL:** After you face a consequence from an enemy (suffered or resisted), you get +1d to your next roll against that enemy.
- **VETERAN:** Choose a special ability from another source.

STRANGE FRIENDS

- △▽ Steiner, an assassin
- △▽ Celene, a sentinel
- △▽ Melvir, a physicker
- △▽ Veleris, a spy
- △▽ Casta, a bounty hunter

ITEMS

- ☐ Fine pair of pistols
- ☐ ☐ Fine long rifle
- ☐ Electropasmic ammunition
- ☐ *A fine trained hunting pet*
- ☐ Spyglass
- ☐ *Spiritbane charm*

XP

- ◆ *Every time you roll a desperate action, mark xp in that action's attribute.*
- At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (in your playbook or an attribute) or 2xp if that item occurred multiple times.
- ◆ *You addressed a challenge with tracking or violence.*
 - ◆ *You expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background.*
 - ◆ *You struggled with issues from your vice or traumas during the session.*

TEAMWORK

Assist a teammate

Lead a group action

Protect a teammate

Set up a teammate

PLANNING & LOAD

Choose a plan, provide the **detail**. Choose your **load** limit for the operation.

Assault: *Point of attack*

Deception: Method

Stealth: Entry point

Occult: *Arcane power*

Social: Connection

Transport: *Route*

LOAD  **3** *light*  **5** *normal*  **6** *heavy*

- ☐ A Blade or Two
- ☐ Throwing Knives
- ☐ A Pistol ☐ A 2nd Pistol
- ☐ ☐ A Large Weapon
- ☐ An Unusual Weapon
- ☐ Armor ☐ ☐ +Heavy
- ☐ Burglary Gear
- ☐ ☐ Climbing Gear
- ☐ Arcane Implements
- ☐ Documents
- ☐ Subterfuge Supplies
- ☐ ☐ Demolition Tools
- ☐ Tinkering Tools
- ☐ ☐

GATHER INFORMATION

- ◆ What do they intend to do?
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HARM

ARMOR

NEED HELP

3

2

1

LESS EFFECT

HEALING

project clock

NOTES

ALCHEMICALS

Bandolier

Bandolier

When you use a bandolier slot, choose an alchemical:

◆ Alcahest

◆ Binding Oil

◆ Drift Oil

◆ Eyeblind Poison

◆ Fire Oil / Frost Oil

◆ Grenade

◆ Quicksilver

◆ Skullfire Poison

◆ Smoke Bomb

◆ Spark (drug)

◆ Standstill Poison

◆ Drown Powder

◆ Trance Powder

LEECH

A SABOTEUR
AND TINKERER

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- ALCHEMIST: You can **tinker** with chemicals and arcane substances to design and produce alchemicals. When you use an alchemical, you get +1d to resist any side effects.
- ARTIFICER: When you **tinker** with a device, tool, vehicle, or weapon, you may include advanced alchemical or clockwork features.
- ANALYST: When you take extra time and care to **gather information** during downtime, you get **potency**.
- SABOTEUR: When you **wreck**, the work is much quieter than it should be and the damage is hidden from casual inspection.
- GHOST WARD: You know how to **wreck** an area with arcane substances and methods so it is either anathema or enticing to spirits (your choice).
- VENOMOUS: Choose a drug or poison (from your bandolier stock) to which you have become immune. Take 1 stress to secrete it through your skin or saliva or exhale it as a vapor.
- FORTITUDE: You get **special armor** vs. fatigue, weakness, and chemical effects. When you roll a **crit** while tinkering, **clear 1 stress**.
- PHYSICKER: You can **tinker** with bones, blood, and bodily humours to treat wounds, stabilize the dying, or **study** a malady or corpse. Also, your crew gets +1d to **long-term project healing** rolls.
- VETERAN: Choose a special ability from another source.

STRANGE FRIENDS

- △▽ Stazia, an apothecary
- △▽ Veldren, a psychonaut
- △▽ Eckerd, a corpse thief
- △▽ Jul, a blood dealer
- △▽ Malista, a priestess

XP

- Every time you roll a desperate action, mark xp in that action's attribute.
- At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (in your playbook or an attribute) or 2xp if that item occurred multiple times.
- You addressed a challenge with technical skill or destruction.
- You expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background.
- You struggled with issues from your vice or traumas during the session.

TEAMWORK

Assist a teammate

Lead a group action

Protect a teammate

Set up a teammate

PLANNING & LOAD

Choose a plan, provide the **detail**. Choose your **load** limit for the operation.

Assault: Point of attack

Deception: Method

Stealth: Entry point

Occult: Arcane power

Social: Connection

Transport: Route

STASH

COIN

PLAYBOOK

INSIGHT

- HUNT
- STUDY
- SURVEY
- TINKER

PROWESS

- FINESSE
- PROWL
- SKIRMISH
- WRECK

RESOLVE

- ATTUNE
- COMMAND
- CONSORT
- SWAY

BONUS DIE

PUSH YOURSELF (take 2 stress) -OR- accept a DEVIL'S BARGAIN.

LOAD 3 light 5 normal 6 heavy

- A Blade or Two
- Throwing Knives
- A Pistol A 2nd Pistol
- A Large Weapon
- An Unusual Weapon
- Armor +Heavy
- Burglary Gear
- Climbing Gear
- Arcane Implements
- Documents
- Subterfuge Supplies
- Demolition Tools
- Tinkering Tools

GATHER INFORMATION

- What do they intend to do?
- How can I get them to [X]?
- What are they really feeling?
- What should I lookout for?
- Where's the weakness here?
- How can I find [X]?
- What's really going on here?

BLADES IN THE DARK

CREW

NAME

ALIAS

LOOK

HERITAGE: AKOROS—THE DAGGER ISLES
IRUVIA—SEVEROS—SKOVLAN—TYCHEROS

BACKGROUND: ACADEMIC—LABOR—LAW
TRADE—MILITARY—NOBLE—UNDERWORLD

VICE / PURVEYOR: FAITH—GAMBLING—LUXURY—OBLIGATION—PLEASURE—STUPOR—WEIRD

STRESS

TRAUMA

COLD—HAUNTED—OBSESSED—PARANOID
RECKLESS—SOFT—UNSTABLE—VICIOUS

HARM

ARMOR

+HEAVY

NEED HELP

SHADOW

-1D

LESS EFFECT

HEALING

project clock

NOTES

LURK

A STEALTHY
INFILTRATOR
AND BURGLAR

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **INFILTRATOR:** When you **gather info** through clandestine observation or when you bypass security measures, you get **+1 effect** level.
- **AMBUSH:** When you attack from hiding or spring a trap, you get **+1d**.
- **EXPERTISE:** When you lead a **group action** using your best action-rating, you can suffer only 1 stress at most from any failed rolls.
- **THE DEVIL'S FOOTSTEPS:** Take 1 stress to perform an athletic feat (running, tumbling, balance, climbing, etc.) that verges on the superhuman. *You may still have to make an action roll, but you can attempt things a human normally couldn't.*
- **GHOST VEIL:** You may shift partially into the ghost field, becoming shadowy and insubstantial for a moment. Take 1 stress when you shift, plus 1 stress for each extra feature: *It lasts for a few minutes rather than a moment—you are invisible rather than shadowy—you may float through the air like a ghost—you may pass through solid objects.*
- **SHADOW:** You get **special armor** vs. consequences from detection or security. When you roll a **critical** on a feat of athletics or stealth, **clear 1 stress**.
- **DAREDEVIL:** When you make a **desperate** roll, you get **+1d**.
- **REFLEXES:** When there's a question about who acts first, the answer is you (two characters with Reflexes act simultaneously).
- ○ ○ **VETERAN:** Choose a special ability from another source.

STRANGE FRIENDS

- △▽ Telda, a beggar
- △▽ Darmot, a bluecoat
- △▽ Frake, a locksmith
- △▽ Roslyn Kellis, a noble
- △▽ Petra, a city clerk

ITEMS

- ☐ Fine lockpicks
- ☐ Fine shadow cloak
- ☐ Light climbing gear
- ☐ Silence potion vial
- ☐ Dark-sight mask
- ☐ Spiritbane charm

XP

- ◆ Every time you roll a desperate action, mark xp in that action's attribute.
- At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (in your playbook or an attribute) or 2xp if that item occurred multiple times.
- ◆ You addressed a challenge with stealth or evasion.
- ◆ You expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background.
- ◆ You struggled with issues from your vice or traumas during the session.

TEAMWORK

Assist a teammate

Lead a **group action**

Protect a teammate

Set up a teammate

PLANNING & LOAD

Choose a plan, provide the **detail**. Choose your **load** limit for the operation.

Assault: Point of attack

Occult: Arcane power

Deception: Method

Social: Connection

Stealth: Entry point

Transport: Route

STASH

COIN

PLAYBOOK

INSIGHT

- ● ● ● HUNT
- ● ● ● STUDY
- ● ● ● SURVEY
- ● ● ● TINKER

PROWESS

- ● ● ● FINESSE
- ● ● ● PROWL
- ● ● ● SKIRMISH
- ● ● ● WRECK

RESOLVE

- ● ● ● ATTUNE
- ● ● ● COMMAND
- ● ● ● CONSORT
- ● ● ● SWAY

BONUS DIE

PUSH YOURSELF (take 2 stress) -OR- accept a **DEVIL'S BARGAIN**.

LOAD ◆ 3 light ◆ 5 normal ◆ 6 heavy

- ☐ A Blade or Two
- ☐ Throwing Knives
- ☐ A Pistol ☐ A 2nd Pistol
- ☐ ☐ A Large Weapon
- ☐ An Unusual Weapon
- ☐ Armor ☐ ☐ +Heavy
- ☐ Burglary Gear
- ☐ ☐ Climbing Gear
- ☐ Arcane Implements
- ☐ Documents
- ☐ Subterfuge Supplies
- ☐ ☐ Demolition Tools
- ☐ Tinkering Tools
- ☐ ☐

GATHER INFORMATION

- ◆ What do they intend to do?
- ◆ How can I get them to [X]?
- ◆ What are they really feeling?
- ◆ What should I lookout for?
- ◆ Where's the weakness here?
- ◆ How can I find [X]?
- ◆ What's really going on here?

BLADES IN THE DARK

CREW

NAME

ALIAS

LOOK

HERITAGE: AKOROS—THE DAGGER ISLES

BACKGROUND: ACADEMIC—LABOR—LAW

IRUVIA—SEVEROS—SKOVLAN—TYCHEROS

TRADE—MILITARY—NOBLE—UNDERWORLD

VICE / PURVEYOR: FAITH—GAMBLING—LUXURY—OBLIGATION—PLEASURE—STUPOR—WEIRD

STRESS

TRAUMA

COLD—HAUNTED—OBSESSED—PARANOID

RECKLESS—SOFT—UNSTABLE—VICIOUS

HARM

ARMOR

+HEAVY

NEED HELP

MASTERMIND

-1D

LESS EFFECT

HEALING

project clock

NOTES

SPIDER

A DEVIOUS
MASTERMIND

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- WEAVING THE WEB: You gain +1d to the engagement roll if you've gathered info on the target or location.
- FORESIGHT: Three times per score you can assist another rogue without paying stress. Tell us how you prepared them for the situation.
- FUNCTIONING VICE: When you indulge your vice, you may adjust the outcome by +/- 1. An ally who joins in your vice may do the same.
- CALCULATING: Due to your careful planning, during downtime, you may give yourself or another crew member +1 downtime action.
- GHOST CONTRACT: When you shake on a deal, you and your partner—human or otherwise—both bear a mark of your oath. If either breaks the contract, they take level 3 harm (Cursed).
- CONNECTED: During downtime, you get +1 result level when you make acquire asset, gather info, or reduce heat rolls.
- MASTERMIND: You get special armor when protecting a teammate. How did you plan for this? If a crit is rolled when you command a gang or lead a group action, clear 1 stress.
- JAIL BIRD: When incarcerated, your wanted level counts as 1 less, your Tier as 1 more, and you gain +1 faction status in addition to your roll.
- VETERAN: Choose a special ability from another source.

STRANGE FRIENDS

- Salia, an information broker
- Augus, a master architect
- Jennah, a servant
- Riven, a chemist
- Jeren, a bluecoat archivist

ITEMS

- Fine cover identity
- Fine bottle of whiskey
- Blueprints
- Vial of slumber essence
- Concealed palm pistol
- Spiritbane charm

XP

- Every time you roll a desperate action, mark xp in that action's attribute.
- At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (in your playbook or an attribute) or 2xp if that item occurred multiple times.
- You addressed a challenge with preparation or calculation.
- You expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background.
- You struggled with issues from your vice or traumas during the session.

TEAMWORK

Assist a teammate

Lead a group action

Protect a teammate

Set up a teammate

PLANNING & LOAD

Choose a plan, provide the detail. Choose your load limit for the operation.

Assault: Point of attack

Occult: Arcane power

Deception: Method

Social: Connection

Stealth: Entry point

Transport: Route

STASH

COIN

PLAYBOOK

INSIGHT

- HUNT
- STUDY
- SURVEY
- TINKER

PROWESS

- FINESSE
- PROWL
- SKIRMISH
- WRECK

RESOLVE

- ATTUNE
- COMMAND
- CONSORT
- SWAY

BONUS DIE

PUSH YOURSELF (take 2 stress) -OR- accept a DEVIL'S BARGAIN.

LOAD 3 light 5 normal 6 heavy

- A Blade or Two
- Throwing Knives
- A Pistol A 2nd Pistol
- A Large Weapon
- An Unusual Weapon
- Armor +Heavy
- Burglary Gear
- Climbing Gear
- Arcane Implements
- Documents
- Subterfuge Supplies
- Demolition Tools
- Tinkering Tools

GATHER INFORMATION

- What do they intend to do?
- How can I get them to [X]?
- What are they really feeling?
- What should I lookout for?
- Where's the weakness here?
- How can I find [X]?
- What's really going on here?

BLADES IN THE DARK

CREW

NAME

ALIAS

LOOK

HERITAGE: AKOROS—THE DAGGER ISLES IRUVIA—SEVEROS—SKOVLAN—TYCHEROS

BACKGROUND: ACADEMIC—LABOR—LAW TRADE—MILITARY—NOBLE—UNDERWORLD

VICE / PURVEYOR: FAITH—GAMBLING—LUXURY—OBLIGATION—PLEASURE—STUPOR—WEIRD

STRESS

TRAUMA

COLD—HAUNTED—OBSESSED—PARANOID RECKLESS—SOFT—UNSTABLE—VICIOUS

| HARM | | | ARMOR | +HEAVY |
|------|--|-------------|-------|-----------------------|
| 3 | | NEED HELP | WARD | |
| 2 | | -1D | | other special armor |
| 1 | | LESS EFFECT | | HEALING project clock |

NOTES

WHISPER

AN ARCAN
ADEPT AND
CHANNELER

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **COMPEL**: You can **attune** to the ghost field to force a nearby spirit to appear before you and obey a command you give it.
- **TEMPEST**: Channel energy to produce storm effects (fog, frost, wind, rain, lightning). Costs **stress** equal to the magnitude of the results (0-6).
- **OCCULTIST**: You may **consort** with ancient powers, forgotten gods or demons. If you have control over the entity, take +1d.
- **RITUAL**: You can **study** an occult ritual to summon a supernatural effect or being. Costs stress based on the magnitude of the results. Answer the GM's questions to create the ritual (page 69).
- **IRON WILL**: When you roll resistance with **Resolve**, you get +1d.
- **STRANGE METHODS**: When you **tinker** with a device, tool, or weapon, you may include electropasmic or arcane features.
- **WARD**: You get **special armor** vs. supernatural effects. When you roll a **critical** while dealing with arcane powers, **clear 1 stress**.
- **GHOST MIND**: You know how to find the weakness in each ghost, demon, or arcane force. You gain +1 **effect** when you **study** the supernatural.
- ○ ○ **VETERAN**: Choose a special ability from another source.

STRANGE FRIENDS

- △▽ Nyryx, a possessor ghost
- △▽ Scurlock, a vampire
- △▽ Setarra, a demon
- △▽ Quellyn, a witch
- △▽ Flint, a spirit trafficker

ITEMS

- ☐ ☐ Fine lightning hook
- ☐ Fine spirit mask
- ☐ Electropasm vials
- ☐ Spirit bottles (2)
- ☐ Ghost key
- ☐ Demonbane charm

XP

- ◆ Every time you roll a desperate action, mark xp in that action's attribute. At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (in your playbook or an attribute) or 2xp if that item occurred multiple times.
- ◆ You addressed a challenge with knowledge or arcane power.
- ◆ You expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background.
- ◆ You struggled with issues from your vice or traumas during the session.

TEAMWORK

Assist a teammate

Lead a group action

Protect a teammate

Set up a teammate

PLANNING & LOAD

Choose a plan, provide the **detail**. Choose your **load** limit for the operation.

Assault: Point of attack

Occult: Arcane power

Deception: Method

Social: Connection

Stealth: Entry point

Transport: Route

STASH

COIN

PLAYBOOK

INSIGHT

- ● ● ● HUNT
- ● ● ● STUDY
- ● ● ● SURVEY
- ● ● ● TINKER

PROWESS

- ● ● ● FINESSE
- ● ● ● PROWL
- ● ● ● SKIRMISH
- ● ● ● WRECK

RESOLVE

- ● ● ● ATTUNE
- ● ● ● COMMAND
- ● ● ● CONSORT
- ● ● ● SWAY

BONUS DIE

PUSH YOURSELF (take 2 stress) -OR- accept a **DEVIL'S BARGAIN**.

LOAD

3 light 5 normal 6 heavy

- ☐ A Blade or Two
- ☐ Throwing Knives
- ☐ A Pistol ☐ A 2nd Pistol
- ☐ ☐ A Large Weapon
- ☐ An Unusual Weapon
- ☐ Armor ☐ ☐ +Heavy
- ☐ Burglary Gear
- ☐ ☐ Climbing Gear
- ☐ Arcane Implements
- ☐ Documents
- ☐ Subterfuge Supplies
- ☐ ☐ Demolition Tools
- ☐ Tinkering Tools
- ☐ ☐

GATHER INFORMATION

- ◆ What do they intend to do?
- ◆ How can I get them to [X]?
- ◆ What are they really feeling?
- ◆ What should I lookout for?
- ◆ Where's the weakness here?
- ◆ How can I find [X]?
- ◆ What's really going on here?

BLADES IN THE DARK

CREW

NAME _____

ALIAS

LOOK

| | |
|---|--|
| HERITAGE: AKOROS—THE DAGGER ISLES IRUVIA—SEVEROS—SKOVLAN—TYCHEROS | BACKGROUND: ACADEMIC—LABOR—LAW TRADE—MILITARY—NOBLE—UNDERWORLD |
|---|--|

BACKGROUND: ACADEMIC—LABOR—LAW
TRADE—MILITARY—NOBLE—UNDERWORLD

VICE / PURVEYOR: FAITH—GAMBLING—LUXURY—OBLIGATION—PLEASURE—STUPOR—WEIRD

STRESS  **TRAUMA** 

COLD—HAUNTED—OBSESSED—PARANOID
RECKLESS—SOFT—UNSTABLE—VICIOUS

| HARM | | ARMOR | +HEAVY |
|------|--|-------------|---|
| 3 | | NEED HELP | <div></div> |
| 2 | | -1D | <div></div> other special armor |
| 1 | | LESS EFFECT | <div></div> HEALING project clock |

NOTES

[illegible]

PLAYBOOK

SPECIAL ABILITIES

[illegible]

| FRIENDS | ITEMS | LOAD |
|-----------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| △ ▽ _____ | □ □ _____ | ◇ 3 light ◇ 5 normal ◇ 6 heavy _____ |
| △ ▽ _____ | □ □ _____ | □ □ _____ |
| △ ▽ _____ | □ □ _____ | □ □ _____ |
| △ ▽ _____ | □ □ _____ | □ □ _____ |
| △ ▽ _____ | □ □ _____ | □ □ _____ |
| △ ▽ _____ | □ □ _____ | □ □ _____ |

XP

- ◆ *Every time you roll a desperate action, mark xp in that action's attribute.*

At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (in your playbook or an attribute) or 2xp if that item occurred multiple times.

- ◆ *You addressed a challenge with _____*
- ◆ *You expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background.*
- ◆ *You struggled with issues from your vice or traumas during the session.*

TEAMWORK

Assist a teammate

Lead a group action

Protect a teammate

Set up a teammate

PLANNING & LOAD

Choose a plan, provide the **detail**. Choose your **load** limit for the operation.

Assault: *Point of attack*

Deception: Method

Stealth: *Entry point*

Occult: *Arcane power*

Social: Connection

Transport: *Route*

STASH

COIN

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

PLAYBOOK INSIGHT

● ● ● ● HUNT
● ● ● ● STUDY
● ● ● ● SURVEY
● ● ● ● TINKER

PROWESS

● ● ● ● FINESSE
● ● ● ● PROWL
● ● ● ● SKIRMISH
● ● ● ● WRECK

RESOLVE

● ● ● ● ATTUNE
● ● ● ● COMMAND
● ● ● ● CONSORT
● ● ● ● SWAY

BONUS DIE

+ PUSH YOURSELF (take 2 stress) -OR- accept a **DEVIL'S BARGAIN.**

3 light 5 normal 6 heavy

[illegible]

GATHER INFORMATION

- ◆ *What do they intend to do?*
- ◆ *How can I get them to [X]?*
- ◆ *What are they really feeling?*
- ◆ *What should I lookout for?*
- ◆ *Where's the weakness here?*
- ◆ *How can I find [X]?*
- ◆ *What's really going on here?*

STANDARD ITEMS

A Blade or Two: Perhaps you carry a simple fighting knife. Or two curved swords. Or a rapier and stiletto. Or A heavy butcher's cleaver. Up to you.

Throwing Knives: Six light blades.

A Pistol: A heavy, single-shot, breech-loading firearm. Devastating at 20 paces, slow to reload.

A Large Weapon: A weapon meant for two hands. A weapon of war, like a battle-axe, greatsword, war-hammer, or pole-arm. A lightning hook. A hunting rifle. A blunderbuss. A bow or crossbow.

An Unusual Weapon: A curiosity or tool turned into a weapon. A whip, a flail, a hatchet, a shovel, a length of chain, a razor-edged fan, steel-toed boots.

Armor: A thick leather tunic w/ a high collar, reinforced gloves and boots. **+Heavy:** The addition of chain mail or metal plates, a metal helm. *The load for heavy armor is **in addition** to normal armor—3 load total.*

Burglary Gear: A set of lockpicks. A small pry-bar. Vials of oil to silence squeaky hinges. A coil of wire and fishing hooks. A small pouch of fine sand.

Climbing Gear: A large coil of rope. A small coil of rope. Grappling hooks. A small pouch of chalk dust. A climbing harness with loops and metal rings. A set of iron pitons and a small mallet.

Documents: A small collection of slim volumes on a variety of topics, including a registry of the nobility, city watch commanders, and other notable citizens. Blank pages, a vial of ink, a pen. A number of interesting maps.

Arcane Implements: A vial of quicksilver. A pouch of black salt. A spirit anchor in the form of a small stone. A spirit bottle. A vial of electroplasm, designed to break and splatter on impact.

Subterfuge supplies: A theatrical make-up kit. A selection of blank documents, ready for the forger's hand. Costume jewelry. A reversible cloak and distinctive hat. A forged badge of office.

Demolition tools: A sledgehammer and iron spikes. Heavy drill. Crowbar.

Tinkering Tools: An assortment for detailed mechanist work: jeweler's loup, tweezers, a small hammer, pliers, screwdriver, etc.

Spiritbane Charm: A small arcane trinket which ghosts prefer to avoid.

CUTTER ITEMS

Fine hand weapon: A finely crafted one-handed melee weapon of your choice.

Fine heavy weapon: A finely crafted two-handed melee weapon of your choice.

Fine scary weapon or tool: An item best suited for intimidation tactics.

Manacles and chain: A set of heavy manacles and chain, suitable for restraining a prisoner.

Rage Essence Vial: A single dose of Rage Essence, which greatly enhances the user's strength, resistance to pain, and irrational aggression for the span of several minutes.

HOUND ITEMS

Fine pair of pistols: A pair of finely crafted pistols, made for greater accuracy, with a clever revolving chamber that allows for two shots before reloading.

Fine long rifle: A finely crafted hunting rifle, deadly at long range, unwieldy in close quarters.

Electroplasmic ammunition: A bandolier of electroplasmic-charged shot, especially potent against spirits.

A fine trained hunting pet: An animal companion that obeys your commands and anticipates your actions.

Spyglass: A sturdy, collapsible version.

LEECH ITEMS

Fine tinkering tools: A finely crafted set of tools for detailed mechanist work. A jeweler's loup. Measuring devices.

Fine wrecker tools: A finely crafted set of tools for sabotage and destruction. A small, powerful drill. A mallet and steel spikes. A prybar. Electroplasmic battery, clamps, wire. Vials of acid. Spark-torch cutter and small fuel tank.

Blowgun & darts, syringes: A small tube and darts that can be filled from alchemy vials. Empty syringes.

Bandolier of alchemy vials: A strap worn across the body, fitted with pouches which hold 4 vials of alchemical agents.

Gadgets: When you tinker up gadgets, mark the load here.

LURK ITEMS

Fine lockpicks: A finely crafted set of lockpicks.

Fine shadow cloak: A hooded cloak made of rare Iruvian shadow-silk that blends into the darkness around it.

Light climbing gear: A well-crafted set of climbing gear which is less bulky and heavy than a standard set.

Silence potion vial: A vial of golden liquid that negates all sound within 10 paces of the drinker for a span of several minutes.

Dark-sight goggles: A mechanist device that allows the wearer to see in pitch darkness as if it were day.

SLIDE ITEMS

Fine clothes and jewelry: An outfit of such fine make as to pass as a wealthy noble.

Fine disguise kit: A theatrical make-up kit equipped with an impressive array of expert appliances to fool the eye.

Fine loaded dice, trick cards: Gambling accoutrements subtly altered to favor particular outcomes.

Trance powder: A dose of the popular drug, which induces a catatonic state.

A cane-sword: A slim sword and its sheath, disguised as a noble's cane.

SPIDER ITEMS

Fine cover identity: Paperwork, planted stories and rumors, and false relationships sufficient to pass as a different person.

Fine bottle of whiskey: A rare distillation from your personal collection, potent both in its alcohol and its ability to impress.

Blueprints: A folio of useful architectural drawings.

Vial of slumber: A dose of slumber essence sufficient to put someone to sleep for an hour or two.

Concealed palm pistol: A small firearm with a weaker charge, easily concealed in a sleeve or waistcoat.

WHISPER ITEMS

Fine lightning-hook: A long, two-handed pole with a loop of heavy wire at the end, connected to an electroplasmic capacitor. Suitable for grappling a spirit and dragging it into a spirit bottle.

Fine spirit mask: An arcane item which allows the trained user to see supernatural energies in great detail. Also affords some measure of protection against ghostly possession.

Spirit bottles (2): An arcane device used to trap a spirit. A metal and crystalline cylinder, the size of a loaf of bread.

Ghost key: An arcane device which can open ghost doors.

Demonbane charm: An arcane trinket which demons prefer to avoid.

ITEM DETAILS

If you want to include advantages from specific details of your items—reach, speed, adaptability, etc.—consider a **devil's bargain** that relates to a detail.

"You can take +1d here with your pole-arm if you keep falling back to keep him at your range, but you'll have to move out of the alley and into the street where people can see what's going on."

"You can take +1d with your dagger, in close, to shank him repeatedly, but you'll be absolutely covered in blood."

CREW CREATION

1. CHOOSE CREW TYPE

Your crew type represents the purpose of your crew, its special abilities, and how they advance. In the full game, there are several to choose from. In this quick start, you're **Thieves**.

2. CHOOSE A SPECIAL ABILITY

Choose 1 starting **special ability** for the crew.

3. CHOOSE REPUTATION

Ambitious, brutal, daring, honorable, professional, savvy, subtle, or strange. You earn crew XP when you bolster your crew's reputation.

4. ASSIGN CREW UPGRADES

Mark 2 **upgrade boxes**. If you choose a cohort, create it using the procedure at right.

5. CHOOSE A FAVORITE CONTACT

You begin with all of your **CONTACTS**. Mark the one who is a close friend, long-time ally, or partner in crime.

6. CREW NAME, LAIR DETAILS

Thinking of a name for your crew can be tricky at first. It's okay to start out without a name and later acquire one based on what the crew is like. Describe the location of your lair and what it looks like.

7. TIER, HOLD, REP & CASH

You begin at **Tier 0**, with weak **HOLD** and **0 REP**. You start with **2 COIN**.

8. ASSIGN FACTION STATUS TICKS

Each player assigns a positive tick and a negative tick with any Tier 1 or Tier 2 faction (to represent past interactions). Then, as a group, assign one positive and one negative tick at Tier 3. Say why you have good or bad status with these factions.

CREATING A COHORT

Adding a new cohort costs two crew advances. A cohort can be a **gang** or an **expert**. When you create an expert, record their type—a doctor, investigator, occultist, assassin, etc. When you create a gang, choose the gang type from the list below:

- ◆ **ADEPTS:** Scholars, tinkers, occultists, and chemists.
- ◆ **KILLERS:** Assassins and corpse handlers.
- ◆ **ROOKS:** Con artists, spies, and socialites.
- ◆ **ROVERS:** Sailors, carriage drivers, and death-lands scavengers.
- ◆ **BANDITS:** Scouts, infiltrators, and sneak-thieves.
- ◆ **THUGS:** Toughs, brawlers, and roustabouts.

(Add an additional type to a cohort by spending a crew advance. When a cohort performs actions for which its types apply, it uses its full quality rating. Otherwise, its quality is zero.)

Your cohort begins with a Quality of 1. (You can increase its quality by 1 by spending two crew advances.)

Choose one or two edges:

- ◆ **FEARSOME:** The cohort is terrifying in aspect and reputation.
- ◆ **INDEPENDENT:** The cohort can be trusted to make good decisions in the absence of orders and act on their own initiative.
- ◆ **LOYAL:** The cohort can't be bribed or turned against you.
- ◆ **TENACIOUS:** The cohort won't be deterred from a task.

Choose a number of flaws equal to edges:

- ◆ **PRINCIPLED:** The cohort has an ethic or values that it won't betray.
- ◆ **SAVAGE:** The cohort is excessively violent and cruel.
- ◆ **UNRELIABLE:** The cohort isn't always available, due to other obligations, stupefaction from their vices, etc.
- ◆ **WILD:** The cohort is drunken, debauched, and loud-mouthed.

(Add an edge or remove a flaw by spending a crew advance.)

Record the expert's name or the names of the notable NPCs in the gang.

When you send a gang to achieve a goal, roll their Quality to see how it goes. Or, a PC can oversee the gang operation by leading a **group action** (the PC rolls **Command**, the gang rolls Quality). The quality of any opposition relative to the gang's quality affects the **position** and **effect** of the action.

CREW UPGRADES

- ◆ **QUALITY:** Each upgrade improves the quality rating of all the crew's **items** of that type—beyond the quality established by the crew's Tier and fine items. *So, if you are Tier 0, with fine lockpicks and +1 quality tools upgrade, your picks could contend equally with the lock on a Tier 2 faction's door.* By upgrading your items, you can better compete with higher-Tier opponents.
- ◆ **CARRIAGE HOUSE:** You have a carriage, goats to pull it, and a stable. A second upgrade improves the carriage with armor and larger, swifter goats.
- ◆ **BOAT HOUSE:** You have a boat, a dock on a waterway, and a small house to store boating supplies. A second upgrade improves the boat with armor and more cargo capacity.
- ◆ **HIDDEN LAIR:** Your lair has a secret location and is disguised to hide it from view. *If your lair is discovered, you may simply use a downtime activity to pay coin equal to your tier to relocate it and hide it once again.*
- ◆ **INSIGHT, PROWESS, RESOLVE, OR PERSONAL TRAINING:** If you have the appropriate training upgrade, you earn +1xp (2 total) when you train that attribute (or your playbook, with **Personal** training) during downtime.
- ◆ **QUARTERS:** Your lair includes living quarters for the crew. Without this upgrade, each PC sleeps elsewhere, and is vulnerable when they do so.
- ◆ **SECURE LAIR:** Your lair has locks, alarms, and traps to thwart intruders. A second upgrade improves the defenses to include arcane measures.
- ◆ **VAULT:** Your lair has a secure vault. You can store +4 coin for each upgrade. A separate part of your vault can be used as a holding cell.
- ◆ **WORKSHOP:** Your lair has a workshop appointed with tools for tinkering and alchemy, as well as a library of books, documents, and maps. You may accomplish long term projects with these assets without leaving your lair.
- ◆ **MASTERY:** Your crew has access to master level training. You may advance your PC action ratings to 4 (until you unlock this upgrade, PC action ratings are capped at 3). This upgrade costs 2 advances to unlock.

INITIAL HUNTING GROUNDS: "THE DROP"

Your crew uses a section of the district as their hunting grounds for crime. The area is small, consisting of three blocks along Ash Way, between Rye street and Cinder street—referred to as "**The Drop**" due to its precipitous terrain and ramshackle scaffolds and elevated walkways.

Choose a starting feature for your hunting grounds that describes your preferred type of crime: **BURGLARY** (theft from a place), **ESPIONAGE** (spying, blackmail), **ROBBERY** (theft from a person), or **SABOTAGE** (destruction, disruption).

When you attempt a score on your hunting grounds that matches one of its feature types, you get a **free downtime activity** to prep for the operation (gather info, acquire an asset, etc.—whatever makes sense). When your crew advances in Tier (or when you negotiate it with a larger faction) you can add a feature or re-write the description of your hunting ground to encompass a larger area.

- [illegible]

□-□ Mastery Remove Flaw: 1

BLADES IN THE DARK CREW SHEET

NAME REPUTATION

LAIR

HEAT WANTED LEVEL COIN VAULTS

CLAIMS

CLOISTER +1 scale for your adept cohorts

VICE DENS (Tier roll) - Heat = coin in downtime

OFFERTORY +2 coin for occult operations

ANCIENT OBELISK -1 stress cost for all arcane powers and rituals

ANCIENT TOWER +1d to Consort w/ occult beings on site

TURF

TURF

LAIR

TURF

TURF

SPIRIT WELL +1d to Attune on site.

ANCIENT GATE Safe passage in the Deathlands

SANCTUARY +1d to Command and Sway on site

SACRED NEXUS +1d to treatment & healing project rolls

ANCIENT ALTAR +1d engagement for occult plans

TURF REP HOLD WEAK FIRM STRONG TIER

CHOOSE 2 FEATURES: ALLURING—CRUEL—FEROCIOUS—MONSTROUS RADIANT—SINISTER—SERENE—TRANSCENDENT

DEITY

CULT

ACOLYTES OF A DEITY

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- CHOSEN: Each PC may add +1 action rating to Attune, Study, or Sway (up to a max rating of 3).
- ANOINTED: When you contend with supernatural threats, you gain potency and +1d to resistance rolls.
- BOUND IN DARKNESS: You may use teamwork with any cult member, regardless of the distance separating you. By taking 1 stress, your whispered message is heard by every cultist.
- ZEALOTRY: Your cohorts have abandoned their reason in service to the cult. They will undertake any service, no matter how dangerous or strange. They gain +1 quality against enemies of the faith.
- CONVICTION: Spend a downtime action in worship at one of your sacred sites to clear half of your stress and carry a bonus die forward toward an action for which you have supplicated your god.
- SEALED IN BLOOD: Each human sacrifice yields -3 stress cost for any ritual you perform.
- GLORY INCARNATE: Your deity sometimes manifests in the physical world. This can be a great boon, but the priorities and values of a god are not those of mortals. You have been warned.
- VETERAN: Choose a special ability from another crew.

CREW XP

At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (or instead mark 2xp if that item occurred multiple times).

- Advance the agenda of your deity or embody its precepts in action.
- Contend with challenges above your current station.
- Bolster your crew's reputation or develop a new one.
- Express the goals, drives, inner conflict, or essential nature of the crew.

CONTACTS

- Gagan, an academic
- Adkin, an occultist
- Hutchins, an antiquarian
- Moriya, a spirit trafficker
- Mateas Kline, a noble
- Bennett, an astronomer

CREW UPGRADES

- Cult rigging (2 free load of documents or implements)
- Ritual sanctum in lair
- Elite Adepts (+1 Quality)
- Elite Killers (+1 Quality)
- Ordained (+1 trauma box)

SACRED SITES: ACQUISITION—AUGURY—DESTRUCTION—SACRIFICE

COHORT QUALITY WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR

Adepts

COHORT QUALITY WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR

COHORT QUALITY WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR

COHORT QUALITY WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR

LAIR QUALITY

Carriage Documents

Boat Gear

Hidden Implements

Quarters Pet/Special

Secure Supplies

Vault Tools

Workshop Weapons

TRAINING COHORTS

Insight UPGRADE COSTS

Prowess New Cohort: 2

Resolve +1 Quality: 2

Personal Add Type: 1

Mastery Add Edge: 1

Remove Flaw: 1

BLADES IN THE DARK CREW SHEET

NAME _____ REPUTATION _____

LAIR

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| HEAT | | WANTED LEVEL | | COIN | VAULTS | |
| <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> | | <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> | | <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> | <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> | |
| CLAIMS | | | | | | |
| <div></div> <div>TURF</div> | <div></div> <div>PERSONAL CLOTHIER</div> <div>+1d engagement roll for social plans</div> | <div></div> <div>LOCAL GRAFT</div> <div>+2 coin for show of force or socialize</div> | <div></div> <div>LOOKOUTS</div> <div>+1d to Survey or Hunt on your turf</div> | <div></div> <div>INFORMANTS</div> <div>+1d gather info for scores</div> | | |
| <div></div> <div>TURF</div> | <div></div> <div>TURF</div> | <div></div> <div>LAIR</div> | <div></div> <div>TURF</div> | <div></div> <div>LUXURY VENUE</div> <div>+1d to Consort and Sway on site</div> | | |
| <div></div> <div>FOREIGN MARKET</div> <div>(Tier roll) - Heat = coin in downtime</div> | <div></div> <div>VICE DENS</div> <div>(Tier roll) - Heat = coin in downtime</div> | <div></div> <div>SURPLUS CACHES</div> <div>+2 coin for covert sale or product supply</div> | <div></div> <div>COVER OPERATION</div> <div>-2 heat per score</div> | <div></div> <div>COVER IDENTITIES</div> <div>+1d engagement for deception or transport plans</div> | | |
| TURF | | HOLD | WEAK | FIRM | STRONG | TIER |
| REP | | <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> | <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> | <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> | <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> | <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> |

HAWKERS

VICE DEALERS

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- ☐ **SILVER TONGUES:** Each PC may add +1 action rating to **Command**, **Consort**, or **Sway** (up to a max rating of 3).
- ☐ **ACCORD:** Sometimes friends are as good as territory. You may count up to three +3 **faction statuses** you hold as if they are **turf**.
- ☐ **THE GOOD STUFF:** Your merchandise is especially appealing. Your products get +1 **quality**. When you deal with a crew or faction, the GM will tell you who among them is hooked on your product (one, a few, many, or all).
- ☐ **GHOST MARKET:** Through arcane ritual or hard-won experience, you have discovered how to prepare your product for sale to ghosts and/or demons. *They do not pay in coin. What do they pay with?*
- ☐ **PATRON:** When you advance your **Tier**, it costs **half the coin** it normally would. *Who is your patron? Why do they help you?*
- ☐ **HIGH SOCIETY:** It's all about who you know. Take -1 **heat** during downtime and +1d to **gather info** about the city's elite.
- ☐ **HOKED:** Your gang members use your product. Add the *savage*, *unreliable*, or *wild* flaw to your gangs to give them +1 **quality**.
- ☐ **VETERAN:** Choose a special ability from another crew.

CREW XP

At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (or instead mark 2xp if that item occurred multiple times).

- ◆ *Execute a successful product acquisition, big sale or territory control operation.*
- ◆ *Contend with challenges above your current station.*
- ◆ *Bolster your crew's reputation or develop a new one.*
- ◆ *Express the goals, drives, inner conflict, or essential nature of the crew.*

CONTACTS

- ▷ Rolan Wott, a magistrate
- ▷ Laroze, a bluecoat
- ▷ Lydra, a deal broker
- ▷ Hoxley, a smuggler
- ▷ Anya, a dilllettante
- ▷ Marlo, a gang boss

CREW UPGRADES

- ☐ Hawker's rigging (1 carried item is concealed and has no load)
- ☐ Ironhook Contacts (+1 Tier in prison)
- ☐ Elite Rooks (+1 Quality)
- ☐ Elite Thugs (+1 Quality)
- ☐ ☐ ☐ Composed (+1 stress box)

TERRITORY: COVERT SALE—PRODUCT SUPPLY—SHOW OF FORCE—SOCIALIZE

COHORT WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR QUALITY

COHORT WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR QUALITY

COHORT WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR QUALITY

COHORT WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR QUALITY

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| LAIR | QUALITY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Carriage | <input type="checkbox"/> Documents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Boat | <input type="checkbox"/> Gear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hidden | <input type="checkbox"/> Implements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quarters | <input type="checkbox"/> Pet/Special |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Secure | <input type="checkbox"/> Supplies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Vault | <input type="checkbox"/> Tools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop | <input type="checkbox"/> Weapons |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| TRAINING | COHORTS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insight | UPGRADE COSTS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prowess | New Cohort: 2 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resolve | +1 Quality: 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal | Add Type: 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Mastery | Add Edge: 1 |
| | Remove Flaw: 1 |

BLADES IN THE DARK CREW SHEET

NAME REPUTATION

LAIR

HEAT WANTED LEVEL COIN VAULTS CLAIMS

TURF SIDE BUSINESS LUXURY FENCE GAMBLING DENS TAVERN

ANCIENT GATE TURF LAIR TURF TURF

SECRET ROUTES INFORMANTS FLEET COVER OPERATION WAREHOUSES

TURF REP HOLD WEAK FIRM STRONG TIER

VEHICLE EDGES

Nimble: The vehicle handles easily. Consider this an assist for tricky maneuvers.

Simple: The vehicle is easy to repair. Remove all of its harm during downtime.

Sturdy: The vehicle keeps operating even when broken.

VEHICLE FLAWS

Costly: The vehicle costs 1 coin per downtime to keep in operation.

Distinct: The vehicle has memorable features. Take +1 heat when you use it on a score.

Finicky: The vehicle has quirks that only one person understands. When operated without them, the vehicle has -1 quality.

SMUGGLERS

SUPPLIERS OF ILLICIT GOODS

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- LIKE PART OF THE FAMILY: Create one of your vehicles as a cohort. If the vehicle is upgraded (two boxes), its quality starts at 2. The vehicle can use teamwork actions (using quality for rolls). A vehicle can't lead a group action, but may participate.
- RENEGADES: Each PC may add +1 action rating to Finesse, Prowl, or Skirmish (up to a max rating of 3).
- REAVERS: When you go into conflict aboard a vehicle, you gain potency in damage and speed. Your vehicle gains armor.
- JUST PASSING THROUGH: During downtime, take -1 heat. When your heat is 4 or less, you get +1d to deceive people when you pass yourselves off as ordinary citizens.
- ALL HANDS: During downtime, one of your cohorts may take a downtime action for the crew to acquire an asset, reduce heat, or work on a long-term project.
- GHOST PASSAGE: From harsh experience or occult ritual, all crew members become immune to possession by spirits, but may choose to "carry" a second ghost as a passenger within their body.
- LEVERAGE: Your crew supplies contraband for other factions. Your success is good for them. Whenever you gain rep, gain +1 rep.
- VETERAN: Choose a special ability from another crew.

CREW XP

At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (or instead mark 2xp if that item occurred multiple times).

- Execute a successful smuggling or territory control operation.
- Contend with challenges above your current station.
- Bolster your crew's reputation or develop a new one.
- Express the goals, drives, inner conflict, or essential nature of the crew.

CONTACTS

- Elynn, a dock worker
- Rolan, a drug dealer
- Sera, an arms dealer
- Nyelle, a spirit trafficker
- Decker, an anarchist
- Esme, a tavern owner

CREW UPGRADES

- Smuggler's rigging (2 items carried are perfectly concealed)
- Camouflage (vehicles are perfectly concealed at rest)
- Elite Rovers (+1 Quality)
- Barge (+mobility for lair)
- Steady (+1 stress box)

SUPPLY LINES: ARCANE/WEIRD—ARMS—CONTRABAND—PASSENGERS

VEHICLE QUALITY WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR TYPE: BOAT—CARRIAGE—OTHER

COHORT QUALITY WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR

COHORT QUALITY WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR

COHORT QUALITY WEAK IMPAIRED BROKEN ARMOR

LAIR QUALITY

Vehicle Documents

Vehicle Gear

Hidden Implements

Quarters Pet/Special

Secure Supplies

Vault Tools

Workshop Weapons

TRAINING COHORTS

Insight UPGRADE COSTS

Prowess New Cohort: 2

Resolve +1 Quality: 2

Personal Add Type: 1

Mastery Add Edge: 1

Remove Flaw: 1

BLADES IN THE DARK

CREW:

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| <div></div> | <div></div> | LAIR | <div></div> | <div></div> |
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PRISON CLAIMS

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| <div>PAROLE INFLUENCE Your prison terms are one level shorter</div> | <div>SMUGGLING +2 load while incarcerated</div> | <div>ALLIED CLAIM Take a non-turf claim from a different crew type</div> | <div>CELL BLOCK CONTROL You don't take trauma from incarceration</div> |
| <div>GUARD PAYOFF Take +1d to incarceration rolls</div> | PRISON | <div>GUARD PAYOFF Take +1d to incarceration rolls</div> | <div>ALLIED CLAIM Take a non-turf claim from a different crew type</div> |
| <div>HARDCASE -2 coin cost to advance Tier</div> | <div>SMUGGLING +2 load while incarcerated</div> | <div>ALLIED CLAIM Take a non-turf claim from a different crew type</div> | <div>ALLIED CLAIM Take a non-turf claim from a different crew type</div> |

Every time a member of your crew goes to prison, you have a chance to gain a prison claim. See **Incarceration**, page 18.

ALLIED CLAIM
One of your allies on the inside arranges for their faction to grant you a boon. Take a claim for your crew from a different crew type. You can't take turf with this claim.

CELL BLOCK CONTROL
Your crew has a cell block under their total control—guards and all. You never take trauma from incarceration.

GUARD PAYOFF
You claim several Ironhook prison guards on your payroll. Take +1d to your Tier roll when a member of your crew is incarcerated.

HARDCASE
Your reputation as a tough inmate bolsters your crew's image in Duskwall. When your crew advances Tier, it costs 2 fewer coins than it normally would.

PAROLE INFLUENCE
Political pressures of various sorts can be applied to the magistrates and warden who oversee sentences for crimes. With this claim, you're always able to arrange for a shorter prison stay—as if your **wanted level** was 1 lower. So, if your wanted level was 3 when you went in, you'd spend only several months behind bars (equivalent to level 2) instead of a full year.

SMUGGLING
You arrange smuggling channels inside. You have +2 load while incarcerated, (starting from zero as a prisoner). If you take this claim twice, you'll have 4 load while you're serving time in Ironhook. Also, you may choose to have 1 coin in place of a load item for purposes of bribes or acquiring assets while in prison. You may reset your prison load whenever your crew has downtime.

FACTIONS OF DOSKVOL

| CRIMINAL UNDERWORLD | | | |
|---------------------|------|------|--------|
| | TIER | HOLD | STATUS |
| The Unseen | IV | S | |
| The Silver Nails | III | S | |
| Lord Scurlock | III | S | |
| The Hive | III | S | |
| The Circle of Flame | III | F | |
| The Crows | II | W | |
| The Lampblacks | II | W | |
| The Red Sashes | II | W | |
| The Dimmer Sisters | II | S | |
| The Grinders | II | F | |
| The Billhooks | II | S | |
| The Wraiths | II | S | |
| The Gray Cloaks | II | F | |
| Ulf Ironborn | I | F | |
| The Fog Hounds | I | F | |
| The Lost | I | W | |
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| CITY INSTITUTIONS | | | |
|------------------------|------|------|--------|
| | TIER | HOLD | STATUS |
| City Council | V | S | |
| Ironhook Prison | V | S | |
| Bluecoats | IV | S | |
| Spirit Wardens | III | S | |
| Skovlan Consulate | III | S | |
| Sparkwrights | III | F | |
| Inspectors | III | S | |
| Ink Rakes | II | F | |
| The Brigade | II | F | |
| Iruvian Consulate | I | F | |
| Severosan Consulate | I | W | |
| Dagger Isles Consulate | I | W | |

| CITIZENRY | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|---|--|
| Citizens of Whitecrown | V | S | |
| Citizens of Brightstone | IV | S | |
| Citizens of Charterhall | IV | S | |
| Citizens of Six Towers | III | F | |
| Citizens of Silkshore | II | F | |
| Citizens of Nightmarket | II | F | |
| Citizens of Crow's Foot | II | F | |
| Citizens of The Docks | II | F | |
| Citizens of Barrowcleft | II | F | |
| Citizens of Coalridge | II | W | |
| Citizens of Charhollow | I | F | |
| Citizens of Dunslough | I | W | |

| LABOR & TRADE | | | |
|----------------------------|------|------|--------|
| | TIER | HOLD | STATUS |
| The Ministry of Transport | V | S | |
| Leviathan Hunters | IV | S | |
| The Ministry of Provisions | IV | S | |
| The Ministry of Trade | IV | S | |
| The Foundation | IV | S | |
| Sailors | III | S | |
| Seaside Dockers | III | F | |
| Gondoliers | III | F | |
| Workhouse Laborers | III | F | |
| Stockyards | III | F | |
| Servants | II | S | |
| Canal Dockers | II | S | |
| Cabbies | II | S | |
| Rail Jacks | II | F | |
| Cyphers | II | F | |
| Deathlands Scavengers | II | F | |
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| FAITH & WEIRDNESS | | | |
|------------------------------------|------|------|--------|
| | TIER | HOLD | STATUS |
| Church of the Ecstasy of the Flesh | IV | S | |
| The Horde | III | S | |
| The Weeping Lady | III | F | |
| The Reconciled | III | F | |
| The Path of Echoes | III | F | |
| The Forgotten Gods | II | F | |
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| OTHERS | | | |
|-------------------------|------|------|--------|
| | TIER | HOLD | STATUS |
| Imperial Military | VI | S | |
| Skovlander War Refugees | IV | W | |
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WAR

- When you're at war with any number of factions (status -3), the following penalties apply:
- ◆ Lose 1 hold (temporarily, while the war persists). This may knock you down a Tier.
 - ◆ PCs get only one free downtime action instead of two.
 - ◆ Take +1 heat from each score.
 - ◆ Your claims which generate coin (vice dens, fighting pits, fences, etc.) produce only half their normal income (round down).

FACTIONS OF DOSKVOL

THE BILLHOOKS: A tough gang of thugs who prefer hatchets, meat hooks, and pole arms.

THE BRIGADE: The fire-fighters of the city. Sometimes beloved for their life-saving heroism, sometimes reviled for their looting and extortion rackets. Also known as “Sallies” (from “salamanders” their ancient name).

BLUECOATS: The street patrol of the City Watch. Known as the meanest gang in The Dusk. Corrupt, violent, and cruel.

CABBIES: The public coach operators of the city. They also breed the large Akorosian goats used to pull the carriages. An impressive gossip network.

CYPHERS: The messenger guild of the city. Cyphers swear sacred oaths of secrecy—never revealing the contents of their messages or the identities of their clients—or so they claim.

THE CHURCH OF THE ECSTASY OF THE FLESH: The "state religion", if there is such a thing. They honor the sensual life of the body and abhor the corrupted spirit world. Structured as a secret society with various orders and grades.

THE CIRCLE OF FLAME: A refined secret society of antiquarians and scholars; cover for extortion, graft, vice, and murder.

THE CROWS: An old gang with new leadership. Known for running illegal games of chance and extortion rackets.

DEATHLANDS SCAVENGERS: Convicts from Ironhook given the choice of execution or work as scavengers outside the lightning barrier. The shortest of life spans.

THE DIMMER SISTERS: House-bound recluses with an occult reputation.

DOCKERS: The hard-bitten laborers who work the docks.

CITY COUNCIL: The rulers of city government, lead by the Lord Governor.

THE FOG HOUNDS: A crew of rough smugglers looking for a patron.

THE FORGOTTEN GODS: A jumble of cults and mysteries which attempt to follow the old ways from before the cataclysm, doing the bidding of demons and darker things. There are many cults, each one is Tier II (or lower).

THE FOUNDATION: The powerful ancient order of architects and builders. Many of their enemies have been disappeared behind the brick and mortar of Doskvol.

GONDOLIERS: The guild of canal boat operators. Venerated by ancient tradition. Said to know occult secrets (many things are submerged in The Dusk.)

THE GRAY CLOAKS: An honorable crew of daring bravos.

THE GRINDERS: A vicious gang of former dockers and leviathan blood refinery workers from Skovlan.

THE HIVE: A guild of legitimate merchants who secretly trade in contraband. Named for their symbol, a golden bee.

THE HORDE: A mass of hollows, all united in some fell purpose, controlled by an unknown power.

IMPERIAL MILITARY: The armed forces of the Imperium. A small garrison is posted at Gaddoc Rail station and aboard the naval destroyer *Paragon* (about 100 troops in total). The faction tier and hold represents the might of the greater military force if they're ever brought to bear in Doskvol.

INK RAKES: The journalists, muck-rakers, and newspaper publishers of Doskvol.

INSPECTORS: The investigators of the City Watch. They have a reputation for ethics and integrity (no one likes them). They present evidence for prosecutions to the city magistrates.

IRONHOOK PRISON: Where many scoundrels spend the bulk of their lives. Several criminal organizations are run by convicts inside its walls.

THE LAMPBLACKS: The former lamp-lighter guild, turned to crime when their services were replaced by electric lights.

LEVIATHAN HUNTERS: The daring captains and crews that grapple with titanic demons of the Void Sea to drain their blood for processing into electropasm.

LORD SCURLOCK: An ancient noble, said to be immortal, like the Emperor. Possibly a vampire. Obsessed with the occult.

THE LOST: A group of street-toughs and ex-soldiers dedicated to protecting the downtrodden and the hopeless.

THE PATH OF ECHOES: A popular mystery cult which borders on open rebellion against spirit laws. They revere the ancients, and seek to gain knowledge from the past—including consorting with ghosts.

RAIL JACKS: The men and women who protect the electro-trains of the imperium from the savage spirits of the Deathlands. A job for the desperate. Have recently been making noises about forming a union.

THE RECONCILED: An association of spirits who have not gone feral with the passage of time.

THE RED SASHES: Originally an Iruvian school of swordsmanship, expanded into criminal endeavors.

SAILORS: The captains and crews for merchant and Imperial Navy ships.

THE SILVER NAILS: A company of Severosi mercenaries turned to crime when the war for Skovlan Unity ended. Renowned ghost killers.

SKOVLANDER REFUGEES: Desperate refugees from the Unity War, turned to criminal opportunities when denied all others.

SPARKWRIGHTS: The engineers who maintain the lightning barriers. Also pioneers of new technology, often indulging in dangerous research.

SPIRIT WARDENS: The bronze-masked hunters who capture and destroy rogue spirits. Also run Bellweather Crematorium and research artifacts scavenged in the deathlands. Membership is secret.

ULF IRONBORN: A brutal Skovlander, newly arrived in Doskvol, fighting everyone for turf.

THE UNSEEN: An insidious criminal enterprise with secret membership. Thought to pull the strings of the entire underworld.

THE WEeping LADy: A charity and pseudo-religion, honoring the first Lord Governor of Doskvol, Lady Devera, said to be a champion of the poor.

WRAITHS: A mysterious crew of masked thieves and spies.

OTHER FACTIONS

IV

INFILTRATE
THE SPIRIT
WARDENS

III

CONTROL THE LOST DISTRICT

III

FULFILL DEBT TO SETARRA

III



**DOMINATE
THE
CONTRABAND
MARKET**

SITUATION: Djera Maha, the leader of the Hive, grew up as an urchin in the Dagger Isles. She learned all the secrets of the vice and smuggling trades as she worked her way up the ranks of every gang along the trade routes to Doskvol. Having built up her acquisition and distribution network in the city (as well as within the Ministry of Transport) she is poised to take over all of the contraband markets. Maha had a close relationship (some say romantic) with the leader of The Crows, Roric, who was recently murdered by his second in command.

2 OF 4

III

**ACQUIRE
FULL SET
OF KOTAR
ARTIFACTS**



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boundary sorcerer

and Heart

II

REESTABLISH CONTROL OF CROW'S FOOT

His vengefu

is a fearsome

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II



DESTROY THE RED SASHES



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against them.

II



DESTROY THE LAMPBLACK

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nd vengean

strict for ext
ainst them.

CRIMINAL UNDERWORLD

3 OF 4

THE DIMMER SISTERS

House-bound recluses with an occult reputation.

TURF: Fine old manor house and grounds (HQ), as well as the ancient temple ruin and subterranean canal beneath. Apothecaries and witches in their service.

NPCs: There is no single leader of the sisters. Their true names are not known. **Roslyn** (servant, *patient, loyal, arcane*). **Irelen** (sparkwright, *loyal, enigmatic, obsessive*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A private electropasmic generator, lightning barriers, and spirit containment vessels. Many spirits bound to service.

QUIRKS: The precise number of sisters is unknown. Some say they are an ancient family of possessing spirits. Others say they are vampires. Everyone knows that if you go into their house, you never come out again.

ALLIES: The Forgotten Gods, The Foundation.

ENEMIES: The Spirit Wardens, The Reconciled.

SITUATION: The Sisters have been slowly and secretly consolidating the trade of captured spirits and spirit essences in Doskvol for several decades. Only a few remaining rivals stand between them and domination of the market. Do they have an ulterior motive for acquiring so many spirits and essences, or is this purely a matter of wealth and power?

II



DOMINATE
THE SPIRIT
TRADE

NOTES / ADDITIONAL CLOCKS

THE WRAITHS

A mysterious crew of masked thieves and spies.

TURF: Silkshore and Nightmarket are their primary hunting grounds. They specialize in the theft of luxury items and intelligence gathering for clients to use as blackmail.

NPCs: **Slate** (leader, *sophisticated, daring, secretive*). **Loop** (appraisal expert, *obsessive, moody, secretive*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A scattered collection of secret rooftop shelters. A secret lair in a tower in Silkshore. All manner of thieves gear for burglary.

QUIRKS: Each member wears a mask and conceals their true identity with an alias. They communicate with a private sign language.

ALLIES: Cabbies.

ENEMIES: Bluecoats, Inspectors, The Hive.

SITUATION: The Wraiths recently completed a heist at a luxury brothel in Nightmarket and happened to grab the private map book of a Leviathan Hunter in the process. The map book shows the secret hunting grounds of augured leviathan sites which will be used by the ship *Storm Palace* during the next season. Such a map is useless to the Wraiths, but is worth a small fortune to another Leviathan Hunter. The Wraiths are currently reaching out to contacts in the underworld to quietly arrange a sale.

II



FIND A
BUYER FOR
LEVIATHAN
HUNTER'S
MAPS

THE BILLHOOKS

A tough gang of thugs who prefer hatchets, meat hooks, and pole arms.

TURF: A butcher shop (HQ), stockyard, and slaughterhouse. Animal fighting pits and gambling dens. Several terrified merchants and businesses which they extort.

NPCs: **Tarvul** (leader, serving life in prison, *savage, arrogant, family man*). **Brynn** (captain, Tarvul's sister, *confident, deadly, ambitious*). **Derret** (thug, Tarvul's son, *fierce, ruthless, quiet*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A large, savage gang of bloodthirsty butchers. A pack of trained death-dogs.

QUIRKS: The Billhooks have a bloody reputation, often leaving the butchered corpses of their victims strewn about in a grisly display. Many wonder why the Bluecoats turn a blind eye to their savagery.

ALLIES: The Bluecoats, Ministry of Provisions.

ENEMIES: Ulf Ironborn, The Lost. Citizens of Crow's Foot, Charhollow and The Docks.

SITUATION: Brynn and Derret both want to take control of the Billhooks gang, either when Tarvul gets too old (which will be soon) or by taking the position by force. There is no love lost between Brynn and Derret and they'll have no qualms about fighting a family member for leadership. Meanwhile, the rest of the gang wants to continue their reign of terror to pressure a local magistrate to pardon Tarvul and other gang members and release them from Ironhook.

II



TERRORIZE
MAGISTRATE
TO PARDON
MEMBERS IN
PRISON

THE GRAY CLOAKS

An crew of former Bluecoats turned bravos.

TURF: The basement of a burned-down city watch station (HQ). Several apartments above a tobacconist in Six Towers. A pit-fighting arena and gambling den.

NPCs: **Nessa** (leader, *scrupulous, daring*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: The Gray Cloaks have attracted other former Bluecoats to their crew, amassing a sizeable gang of trained enforcers. They have their bluecoat uniforms and badges and often use them to pass as the city watch.

QUIRKS: ...

ALLIES: The Inspectors.

ENEMIES: The Bluecoats, Lord Strangford (Leviathan Hunters).

SITUATION: The Gray Cloaks are all former Bluecoats who were framed for a crime committed by their Watch station commander. Sure, they were skimming from the city coffers and taking bribes like everyone else, but they didn't burn down the watch station and destroy the evidence in the case against Lord Strangford (of the Leviathan Hunters). Several inspectors who were working the case know the truth but can't prove anything, yet. Lord Strangford would pay well to have these loose ends removed permanently.

II



SECURE SIX
TOWERS AS
THEIR TURF

II

RAISE A
CREW AND
STEAL A
WARSHIP

NOTABLE ASSETS: A few small canal boats. Wrecking tools and explosives.

QUIRKS: Many Grinders have been mutated and disfigured by the toxic rain that plagues Lockport.

ALLIES: Ulf Ironborn, Dockers.

ENEMIES: The Bluecoats, Imperial Military, Leviathan Hunters, Sailors.

SITUATION: The city of Lockport, to the North in Skovlan, processes 90% of the demon blood siphoned by the leviathan hunter ships of Doskvol (the hunters drop their raw cargo at Lockport before filling their holds with refined blood and returning to Doskvol for repairs and replacement crew for those lost to the Void Sea). The huge, churning refineries in Lockport have poisoned the city under a stinking cloud of toxic fumes and acid rain. A group of dockers and refinery workers from Lockport have come to Doskvol to attempt to raise an army and secure a warship with which to seize control of Lockport and destroy the Empire's refineries. They call themselves The Grinders. To raise funds for their mission, the Grinders have turned to criminal endeavors, especially smash-and-grab looting and hijacking of cargo barges across the city.

I

TURF: Rooms, workshop, and stable at The Old Forge tavern (HQ). A gambling den.

NPCs: Ulf Ironborn (leader, *ruthless, savage, bold*). Havid (second, *ruthless, volatile, shrewd*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A small but powerfully savage gang of thugs.

QUIRKS: As a refugee of the Unity War, Ulf does not trust the local Akorosi, or anyone who proclaims a strong allegiance to the Imperial government. Those of Skovlander blood find it easy to win his trust, however.

ALLIES: The Grinders.

ENEMIES: Citizens of Coalridge. The Billhooks.

SITUATION: Ulf is newly arrived in Døskvøl, seeking his fortune on the streets. His gang has had recent success with savage smash & grab operations, leading into a potential "protection" racket. As more Skovlander war refugees swell the city population, the bigotry of some locals is starting to surface, with 'NO SKOV' signs appearing at public houses and shops. Ulf's blind rage will be sparked off when he encounters this, surely leading his gang into war with any "True Duskers" brave enough to stand up to him.

I



TURF: Underground canal dock (HQ). North and East city canal routes. Northern void sea routes. Old North Port supply caches.

NPCs: **Margette Vale** (leader, *quiet, cold, fearless*). **Bear** (second, *fierce, moody, brash*). **Goldie** (navigator, *calculating, patient, confident*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Medium steamship, *Fog Hound*. A crew of hard-bitten, tough, expert sailors—all former void sea transport haulers (put out of work by the new cargo rail lines), well-worn from years of harrowing work. A wide array of Imperial transport and cargo documents, some forged, some legit.

QUIRKS: As veterans of many cruises on the void sea, Vale and her crew can be insular and clannish, and have a low initial opinion of anyone who hasn't proven themselves in a similar way. Once won, however, their loyalty is rock solid and fierce.

ALLIES: Canal Dockers.

ENEMIES: Bluecoats (canal patrol). The Vultures (rival smuggling outfit, Tier I).

SITUATION: Vale and her crew have mastered the Northern smuggling routes in and out of Duskwall. They're currently attempting to absorb or eliminate the few remaining rivals on their territory and then establish reliable, regular work with a patron who needs a steady stream of contraband.

I

A group of street-toughs and ex-soldiers dedicated to protecting the downtrodden and the hopeless.

TURF: Converted rail car (HQ). The poverty-stricken streets of Coalridge and Dunslough.

NPCs: Cortland (leader, *idealist, candid, cavalier*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A very experience gang of formerly vicious thugs, killers, and Imperial soldiers.

QUIRKS: The Lost have all done horrible things in their former lives and they believe they must atone for these 'sins'. Each member keeps a pile of stones under their bed—one for each sin they balance with a just deed.

ALLIES: Workhouse Laborers. Citizens of Coalridge and Dunslough.

ENEMIES: Workhouse Foremen. Bluecoats. The Billhooks.

SITUATION: The Lost are currently focusing their efforts in Coalridge, running a campaign of sabotage, terror, and savage beatings against the most notoriously cruel workhouse foremen. The already-brewing union organizing efforts in that district are emboldened by the Lost's attacks, and the local Bluecoat patrols are starting to complain to their commanders for support of extra Watch guards from other districts. Meanwhile, the Coalridge foremen are making it known that they'll pay top dollar to anyone who will take The Lost out of the picture.

STARTING THE GAME

EXPLAIN THE SITUATION

Read or summarize the info on page 4.

MAKE CHARACTERS AND THE CREW

Follow the procedures on page 38 and page 48. Ask some of these questions while they do it:

- ◆ *Have you ever been locked up? For what crime? Are any of your friends still behind bars?*
- ◆ *Why did you become a scoundrel?*
- ◆ *How did you join this crew? Did another member vouch for you? Were you a founding member?*
- ◆ *What's your vice? What is it, specifically? (what kind of drug, etc.) Why does that thing consume you?*
- ◆ *When was the last time you used your blade? Why?*
- ◆ *Who do you trust the most on the crew? Who do you trust the least? What's that about? Or will we find out in play?*
- ◆ *Has [faction] ever tried to recruit you? What happened? You, uh, don't secretly work for them, do you?*

For a one-shot or faster start, you can forego crew creation. The PCs are a gang of thieves, but have not yet acquired their lair and crew status.

THE FIRST SCENE

After they make characters and the crew, tell them this:

You're in the cramped office of the Lampblack's leader, Bazso Baz, overlooking the coal warehouse floor below. Several of his bravos hang about, sizing you up. Bazso wants your answer. Are you with them, or against them? What do you say? Will you side with the Lampblacks? Will you just pretend to? (Good luck, Bazso is very sharp). Will you tell him to fuck off?

Are you actually here to kill him for the Red Sashes? (If so, do a flashback and pick a plan for the assassination.)

Play Bazso. React to their answer how he'd react. If they're with him, he has the perfect assignment for thiefy types like them: **go steal the Red Sashes war treasury from their vault.** Without their backup funds, the Red Sashes won't be able to afford a war.

If the PCs are against him, he says he's very sorry to hear that. They better get off his turf and stay out of the war, or they're all dead. He threatens them with an easy confidence. What are they gonna do?

THE NEXT SCENES

Play the NPCs. Mylera, Bazso, and Lyssa all have thiefy things that need doing, so they'll offer the PCs jobs (until the PCs make an enemy of them, of course). Use the **scores tables** on page 63 for ideas. Also, each faction is vulnerable to thievery in some way. How can the players use their crew's strengths to profit from this situation? Ask them how they want to gather information, which leads to a plan (or vice versa).

Don't waste time waffling around. Give them straightforward avenues to pursue at first. "Do you want to rob the Crow's card game on Cinder street? It's probably not defended much right now."

There are three sample starting scores, at right. Offer those, ask them which they want to pursue. Ask them to pick a plan and provide the detail, and get to it.

THE CAMPAIGN

This quick start isn't really meant for a campaign, but, you can easily play out the consequences of the starting situation over several sessions. Who ends up running the ward? Do the PCs use the situation to rise up in the faction ranks? Do they manage to play for all three sides, or do they have to take a stand? Plenty of material to work with there.

Keep some index cards on the table with pressing questions written on them. Sandbox campaigns can get complicated—a few guiding questions can help keep the action focused.

Will Lyssa seize control of the criminal world of Crow's Foot?

What ever became of Roric's ghost?

How will the feud between the Lampblacks and the Red Sashes come to an end?

It's natural for question cards to eventually collect a clock or two, tracking the status of some developing circumstances. When a question is answered, remove it and add a new one. They don't have to last forever.

SCORE I

One of the gang leaders (Bazso Baz or Mylera) offers you a score: Burgle the war treasury of their rival.

- ◆ Where is it? Maybe it's a secret.
- ◆ What's the plan? Provide the detail.
- ◆ Engagement roll. Cut to the action.

SCORE II

One of the gang leaders (Bazso Baz or Mylera) offers you a score: Plant this strange artifact somewhere in their rival's HQ.

- ◆ What does it do? It's covered in weird runes and makes your head go swimmy when you hold it in your hand. Want to bother to find out what it is?
- ◆ What's the plan? Provide the detail.
- ◆ Engagement roll. Cut to the action.

SCORE III

Lyssa is vulnerable. She needs assistance if she's gonna seize control of the ward.

- ◆ Steal some loot and bring it to her to help her pay for bribes and thugs to seize the ward. Profit and status both, for you.
- ◆ What's the plan? Provide the detail.
- ◆ Engagement roll. Cut to the action.

SCORES

Roll a handful of dice and use the results as you please to help guide your choices from the lists.

CLIENT / TARGET

CIVILIAN

- 1 Academic or Scholar
- 2 Laborer or Tradesman
- 3 Courier or Sailor
- 4 Merchant or Shopkeeper
- 5 Artist or Writer
- 6 Doctor or Alchemist

CRIMINAL

- 1 Drug Dealer or Supplier
- 2 Mercenary or Thug
- 3 Fence or Gambler
- 4 Spy or Informant
- 5 Smuggler or Thief
- 6 Crime Boss

POLITICAL

- 1 Noble or Official
- 2 Banker or Captain
- 3 Revolutionary or Refugee
- 4 Clergy or Cultist
- 5 Constable or Inspector
- 6 Magistrate or Ward Boss

STRANGE

- 1 Ghost of (roll again)
- 2 Occult Collector
- 3 Vampire or Other Undead
- 4 Demon (disguised)
- 5 Possessed or Hollow
- 6 Whisper or Cultist

WORK

SKULLDUGGERY

- 1 Stalking or Surveillance
- 2 Sabotage or Arson
- 3 Lift or Plant
- 4 Poison or Arrange Accident
- 5 Burglary or Heist
- 6 Impersonate or Misdirect

VIOLENCE

- 1 Assassinate
- 2 Disappear or Ransom
- 3 Terrorize or Extort
- 4 Destroy or Deface
- 5 Raid or Defend
- 6 Rob or Strong-arm

UNDERWORLD

- 1 Escort or Security
- 2 Smuggle or Courier
- 3 Blackmail or Discredit
- 4 Con or Espionage
- 5 Locate or Hide
- 6 Negotiate or Threaten

UNNATURAL

- 1 Curse or Sanctify
- 2 Banish or Summon
- 3 Extract Essence
- 4 Place or Remove Runes
- 5 Perform / Stop Ritual
- 6 Hollow or Revivify

TWIST OR COMPLICATION

- 1 An element is a cover for heretic spirit cult practices.
- 2 An occultist has foreseen this job and warned the parties involved
- 3 Rogue spirits possess some/most/all of the people involved
- 4 Rogue spirits haunt the location
- 5 The job furthers a demon's secret agenda
- 6 The job furthers a vampire's secret agenda

...

- 1 An element is a front for a criminal enterprise
- 2 A dangerous gang uses the location
- 3 The job is a trap laid by your enemies
- 4 The job is a test for another job
- 5 The job furthers a merchant lord's secret agenda
- 6 The job furthers a crime boss's secret agenda

...

- 1 Job requires travel by electro-rail
- 2 Must visit the death-lands to do the job (perhaps to the Lost District, outside the lightning barrier)
- 3 Job requires sea travel
- 4 The location moves around (site changes, it's on a vehicle, etc.)
- 5 The job furthers a revolutionary's secret agenda
- 6 The job furthers a city official's secret agenda

CONNECTED TO A PERSON...

- | | | |
|---|-------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | PC | Friend |
| 2 | PC | Rival |
| 3 | PC | Vice purveyor |
| 4 | CREW | Contact |
| 5 | CITY | Doskvol notable |
| 6 | WEIRD | Ghost, Demon, Forgotten God |

When a score is generated outside the crew's hunting grounds (or from their products, artifacts, or other resource) it's usually connected to at least two factions: one that the score hurts in some way, and another faction which is helped by the score in some way.

... AND FACTIONS

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| 11 | The Unseen | 41 | The Silver Nails |
| 12 | Lord Scurlock | 42 | The Hive |
| 13 | The Circle of Flame | 43 | The Crows |
| 14 | The Lampblacks | 44 | The Red Sashes |
| 15 | The Dimmer Sisters | 45 | The Grinders |
| 16 | The Billhooks | 46 | The Wraiths |
| 21 | The Gray Cloaks | 51 | Ulf Ironborn |
| 22 | The Fog Hounds | 52 | The Lost |
| 23 | Council or Foundation | 53 | Ironhook Prison |
| 24 | Spirit Wardens | 54 | Bluecoats / Inspectors |
| 25 | Imperial Military | 55 | Ink Rakes |
| 26 | Sparkwrights | 56 | Cyphers |
| 31 | A Consulate | 61 | Ministry (Transport, Provisions) |
| 32 | Leviathan Hunters | 62 | Sailors or Dockers |
| 33 | Gondoliers or Cabbies | 63 | Rail Jacks or Brigade |
| 34 | Ecstasy of the Flesh | 64 | The Weeping Lady |
| 35 | Forgotten Gods | 65 | Path of Echoes or Reconciled |
| 36 | Skovlander Refugees | 66 | Deathlands Scavengers |

LOCATIONS & CLAIMS DETAILS

Roll a handful of dice and use the results as you please to help guide your choices from the lists.

| Faction in Control | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | The Unseen | The Fog Hounds | Leviathan Hunters | The Hive | Ulf Ironborn | Sailors or Dockers |
| 2 | Lord Scurlock | City Council or The Foundation | Gondoliers or Cabbies | Cyphers | The Lost | Rail Jacks or Brigade |
| 3 | The Circle of Flame | Spirit Wardens | Ecstasy of the Flesh | The Crows | Ironhook Prison | Path of Echoes or Reconciled |
| 4 | The Lampblacks | Imperial Military | Forgotten Gods | The Red Sashes | Bluecoats or Inspectors | Deathlands Scavengers |
| 5 | The Dimmer Sisters | Sparkwrights | Skovlander Refugees | The Grinders | Ink Rakes | The Weeping Lady |
| 6 | The Gray Cloaks | A Consulate | The Silver Nails | The Wraiths | Ministry (Transport, Provisions) | Ink Rakes |

| TURF CLAIMS | | For each, answer the question: What kind of operation would result in this claim? | |
|-------------|---|---|--|
| EXTORTION | | CONTROL | |
| 1 | A Bluecoat officer looks the other way around here... | 1 | Loyal informants keep watch around here... |
| 2 | A merchant or shopkeep provides assistance or cover... | 2 | The locals love you and wouldn't have it otherwise... |
| 3 | A real estate mogul 'loses' a few deeds... | 3 | The ward boss throws their weight around for you... |
| 4 | An influential noble sees things your way... | 4 | You've locked down access around here... |
| 5 | Citizens fear you and fall into line... | 5 | |
| 6 | Solo criminals shift their loyalties around here... | 6 | |
| RENOWN | | STRANGE | |
| 1 | No one dares to cross you around here... | 1 | Rivals get a bad feeling when they hang around here... |
| 2 | Your claim is secret; people assume it's still run by the original holder and they don't rock the boat... | 2 | Not turf, exactly, but: The favorable attention of a demon and its attendant powers are a boon to you... |
| 3 | Everyone knows that good things follow when you're running things around here... | 3 | Control of an occult altar grants beneficial coincidences when certain rituals are observed... |
| 4 | Everyone knows that bad things happen around here... | 4 | The spirits around here harass everyone but you... |
| 5 | | 5 | |
| 6 | | 6 | |

| LOCATION | | PROPRIETOR | |
|----------|---------------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| MOOD | | CIVILIAN | |
| 1 | Dark or Cold | 1 | Academic or Scholar |
| 2 | Bright or Lively | 2 | Laborer or Tradesman |
| 3 | Quiet or Refined | 3 | Courier or Sailor |
| 4 | Abandoned or Decrepit | 4 | Merchant or Shopkeeper |
| 5 | Cramped or Noisy | 5 | Artist or Writer |
| 6 | Cozy or Warm | 6 | Doctor or Alchemist |
| DISTRICT | | CRIMINAL | |
| 1 | Whitecrown or Brightstone | 1 | Drug Dealer or Supplier |
| 2 | Six Towers or Charterhall | 2 | Mercenary or Thug |
| 3 | Nightmarket or Silkshore | 3 | Fence or Gambler |
| 4 | Coalridge or The Docks | 4 | Spy or Informant |
| 5 | Crow's Foot or Dunslough | 5 | Smuggler or Thief |
| 6 | Barrowcleft or Charhollow | 6 | Crime Boss |
| TYPE | | POLITICAL | |
| 1 | Ship or Dockside | 1 | Noble or Official |
| 2 | Canals or Grotto | 2 | Banker or Captain |
| 3 | Town House or Apartment | 3 | Revolutionary or Refugee |
| 4 | Tavern or Restaurant | 4 | Clergy or Cultist |
| 5 | Shop or Marketplace | 5 | Constable or Inspector |
| 6 | Tower or Keep | 6 | Magistrate or Ward Boss |
| TYPE | | STRANGE | |
| 1 | Manor or Villa | 1 | Ghost of (roll again) |
| 2 | Sewer or Slaughterhouse | 2 | Occult Collector |
| 3 | Shrine or Ruin | 3 | Vampire or Other Undead |
| 4 | Workshop or Factory | 4 | Demon (disguised) |
| 5 | Barracks or Bunkhouse | 5 | Possessed or Hollow |
| 6 | Library or School | 6 | Whisper or Cultist |

BLADES THE DARK

CAMPAIGN TRACKER

SHEET NUMBER ____

SCORE TYPE

TARGET

LOCATION

PAYOFF: COIN / REP

HEAT

ENTANGLEMENTS, FACTION STATUS CHANGES

NOTES, EVENTS, AND CLOCKS ADVANCED

SCORE TYPE

TARGET

LOCATION

PAYOFF: COIN / REP

HEAT

ENTANGLEMENTS, FACTION STATUS CHANGES

NOTES, EVENTS, AND CLOCKS ADVANCED

SCORE TYPE

TARGET

LOCATION

PAYOFF: COIN / REP

HEAT

ENTANGLEMENTS, FACTION STATUS CHANGES

NOTES, EVENTS, AND CLOCKS ADVANCED

PURVEYORS OF VICE

DRINK & DRUGS (STUPOR, PLEASURE)

Mardin Gull, The Leaky Bucket, Crow's Foot.
Pux Bolin, the Harping Monkey, Nightmarket.
Helene, Silver Stag casino, Silkshore.
Harvale Brogan, The Centurialia, Six Towers.
Freylla, The Emperor's Cask, Whitecrown.
Avrick, powder dealer, Barrowcleft.
Rolan Volaris, The Veil, Nightmarket.
Madame Tesslyn, The Red Lamp, Silkshore.
Traven's smoke shop, Coalridge.
Eldrin Prichard, The Silver Swan pleasure barge, Brightstone canals.

FAITH

Mother Narya of the Weeping Lady.
Ilacille, the ruins of the Temple to Forgotten Gods, Coalridge.
Nelisanne, Church of the Ecstasy of the Flesh, Silkshore.
Lord Penderyn, The Archive of Echoes, Brightstone.

GAMBLING

Spogg's dice game, Dunsloough.
Grist, boxing, the Docks.
Helene, Silver Stag casino, Silkshore.
Master Vreen, hound racing, Nightmarket.
Lady Dusk, The Dusk Manor Club, Whitecrown.

LOVERS

Jewel, Bird, and Shine, Catcrawl alley, the Docks.
Madame Tesslyn, The Red Lamp, Silkshore.
Rolan Volaris, The Veil, Nightmarket.
Eldrin Prichard, The Silver Swan pleasure barge, Brightstone canals.

LUXURIES, PLEASURES

Singer, bath house, Crow's Foot.
Traven's smoke shop, Coalridge.
Dunridge & Sons fine fabrics and tailoring, Nightmarket.
Chef Roselle, The Golden Plum, Six Towers.
Maestro Hellenen, Spiregarden theater, Whitecrown.

OBLIGATION

Family members (heritage) or **former co-workers** (background)
Mother Narya of the Weeping Lady (a charity).
Hutton, Skovlander Refugees/Revolutionaries, Charhollow.
The Silver Nails, a mercenary company.
The Circle of Flame, a secret society.

WEIRD

The hooded proprietor of a half-flooded grotto tavern near the docks. Strange passageways lead to stranger chambers beyond.

Father Yorren: a member of a heretical branch of the Cult of the Weeping Lady, he helps move certain artifacts and forbidden mystic supplies around by using the seal of the Cult. Sells from the Weeping Lady charitable house in Six Towers.

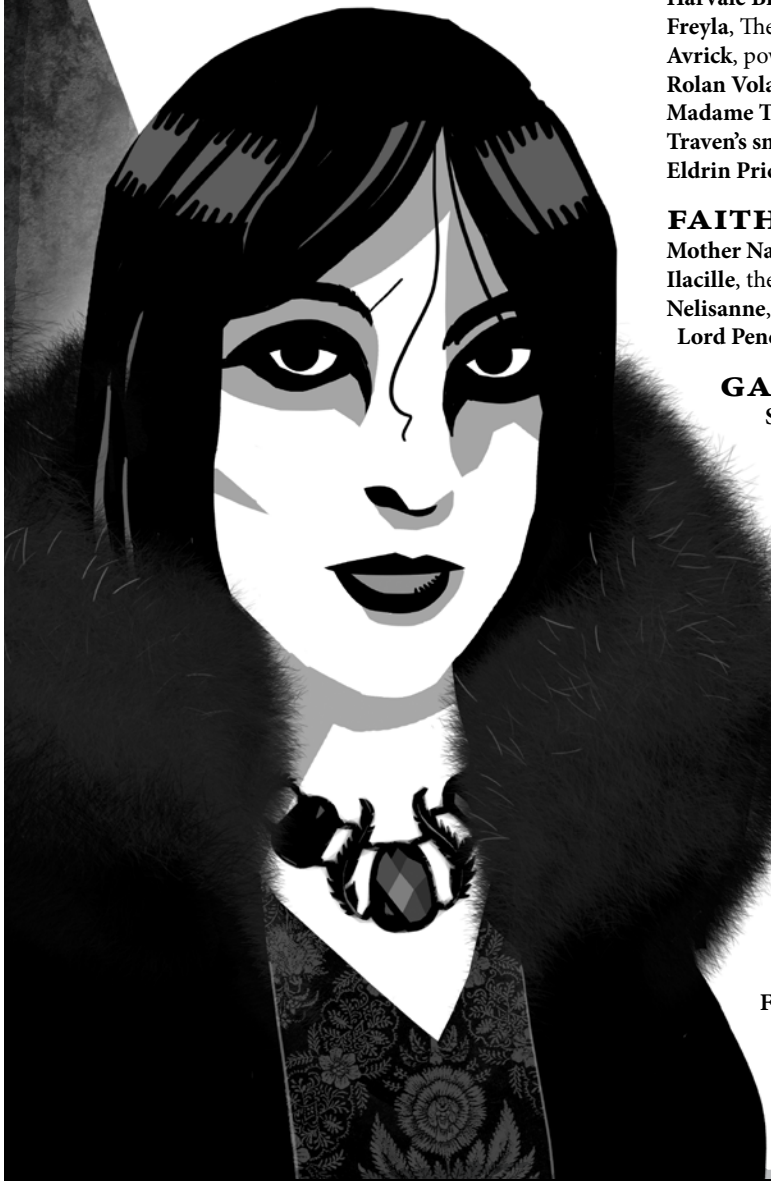
Salia: One of the Reconciled, this ghost meets with clients often in different bodies. Recognizing her is part of the test in getting what you need (Charhollow)

Sister Thorn: The leader of a gang of Deathlands scavengers, known for bringing lost mystic pieces, and the most quality essences from made cannibal ghosts from outside the city. Usually wears her Rail Jack suit and gas-mask at all times. Met near the Train station in Dunsloough.

Ojak: This shadow-skinned Tycherosi organizes the Rooftop Market (Silkshore) once a thirty-day where all manner of folks can cater to weird and unusual vices. Only select clientele are invited.

Aranna the Blessed: A member of an underground cult, Aranna is a servant of a Forgotten God. She has powerful resources through the members of her cult in both this city and beyond (A barge often moored in Nightmarket).

(Weird purveyors by Stras Acimovic)



THE UNQUIET DEAD

"They say anything can be sold on the streets of The Dusk. But have you ever tried to unload a cursed spirit bottle? Yeah, all of a sudden the market dries up."

—FLINT

DETAILS

- ◆ A spirit rises from its corpse roughly three days after death (it may be faster or slower), unless the body is dissolved in electroplasm before then.
- ◆ Bellweather Crematorium (operated by the bronze-masked Spirit Wardens) handles most of the corpse disposal in Doskvol. But some rogue spirits still haunt the city.
- ◆ Ghosts are not the only undead. A variety of strange beings stalk the darkest shadows.

SPIRIT CHARACTERS

- ◆ When your character becomes a spirit (Ghost, Hull, Vampire), change to the appropriate playbook (pages 64-69).
- ◆ Add all of your current action ratings to the ratings on the new playbook. Your action ratings are capped at 4 (unless you are a Vampire with the Dark Talent special ability).
- ◆ You keep any **ghost** special abilities from your human playbook. *Ghost Mind*, *Ghost Voice*, etc. You start with the first trait on your spirit playbook (already filled in). You may also choose one more trait. (Ghosts **may not** choose Possess as a starting trait.) *Note: The traits on spirit playbooks are not special abilities, and cannot be taken with the veteran advance.*
- ◆ Your vice is replaced with a new need on your playbook. Ghosts need to possess people (which they can't do at first — you have to advance to earn that ability). Hulls need to recharge their electroplasmic batteries. Vampires need to feed on life essence.

SPECTROLOGY

It's said that the cataclysm which shattered the earth, banished the sun, and turned the seas to black ink was caused by a sorcerer who consorted with demons and tore down the Gates of Death. But who believes such ancient tales? Whatever the truth of it, one thing is certain: once a body dies, its spirit does not disperse as they once did long ago. It becomes a ghost: a spectral entity composed of electroplasmic vapors.

It takes roughly three days for a ghost to become free of the corpse. It is then free to wander the world, consumed by darker and darker urges until it goes entirely mad and monstrous. If the corpse is dissolved in electroplasm before then, the spirit, too, is destroyed.

But there are other ways for body and spirit to relate...

- ◆ **SOUL.** A living body with its own spirit. The normal state of affairs.
- ◆ **GHOST.** A spirit without a body. Craves life essence and vengeance on its earthly enemies. Composed of semi-solid electroplasmic vapor. Suffers only little harm from physical attacks, but is vulnerable to electricity and arcane powers.
- ◆ **POSSESSED.** A living body containing two (or more) spirits.
- ◆ **HOLLOW.** A living body without a spirit. Usually dim-witted and easily controlled.
- ◆ **HULL.** A clockwork body animated by a bound spirit.
- ◆ **VAMPIRE.** A dead body animated and sustained by a spirit.
- ◆ **SPIRIT-WELL:** A rift in the veil of reality where ghosts and other supernatural beings congregate to draw energy. In ancient myth, a spawning ground for demons.
- ◆ **ELECTROPLASM:** The energetic residue distilled from spirits and leviathan blood.
- ◆ **WHISPER:** A person sensitive to spirits. May be able to summon and communicate with ghosts.

THE SPIRIT BELLS

A set of arcane bells at Bellweather Crematorium that ring when someone dies in the city. A deathseeker crow leaves the belfry and flies to the district where the dead may be found, circling ever closer to the corpse every minute.



STRANGE FORCES

DEVILS

In Daskvol, common parlance calls anything supernatural or disturbing a "devil." Ghosts, demons, witches, sorcerers, and the summoned horrors of ancient rituals are all devils. "Take the devil's bargain," people say, when they refer to an opportunity that involves high risk and high reward.

DEMONS

Demons are the first beings, brought into existence at the origin of reality, as the primal forces of the universe coalesced into the elements of nature. Each demon strain is thus connected to an element. There are demons of the earth, demons of flame and smoke, demons of the sea, demons of the sky and stars, etc.

Demons are immortal, corporeal creatures. Most appear as bestial humanoids with physical features related to their element. A sea demon is covered in dark scales and has black shark eyes. An earth demon has flesh of stone with molten fires burning within. And so on. Most demons can assume the form of their corresponding element and some few can disguise themselves with a convincing human illusion.

The exceptions are the massive Leviathans. No one knows the true shape of these horrors which dwarf the largest iron ships. Only parts may be glimpsed when they crest the surface of the ink-dark sea, drawn by electroplasmic lures.

Unlike humans, demons are not animated by the ghost field. Their blood contains the electroplasmic essence that gives them immortal life.

Before the events that caused the cataclysm, it's said that the Immortal Emperor bound most of the demons and imprisoned them in the dark, hidden places of the world. Only a few escaped this subjugation, and scholars believe that it was these few that broke the Gates of Death in their rebellion and freed the greatest of their kind—the Leviathans—to shatter the world.

DEMONIC POWERS

Every demon has supernatural abilities:

HIDEOUS STRENGTH & SPEED: Demons possess titanic strength—able to rend metal with their bare hands, shatter stone, etc. They are also extremely quick, able to outpace the swiftest steed.

ARCANE SPEECH: Demons speak the ancient tongue of sorcery, which every human ear can discern. They may also speak arcane effects into existence according to the elemental affinity and power level of the demon (the Whisper's *Tempest* ability is a lesser form of this power).

STRANGE TRAVEL: A demon may teleport from one site of their elemental affinity to another. For example, a sea demon could teleport from the water in a fountain to a canal under a manor house across town. The greater the distance, the more powerful the demon must be. A demon may bring others with them when they travel. A demon may also be summoned in this way, by forcing it to travel to the summoner's ritual presentation of their element.

REMOTE VIEWING: A demon may use their elemental affinity to achieve clairvoyance. For example, a fire demon could gaze into a fireplace and see out of the cook-stove at the Bluecoat tower down the lane. The greater the distance, the more powerful the demon must be.

SUMMONED HORRORS

Some ancient rituals of the Forgotten Gods can rend the veil between worlds and usher in an alien creature which serves the deity. Horrors such as these rarely resemble any normal living thing—they may appear as a drifting toxic cloud, a twisting mass of pulsing viscera, floating crystalline shards, or other bizarre configurations.

Horrors are intensely powerful and highly resistant to harm. They may only persist in this world for a short time, however. Their alien forms cannot sustain life for long outside their native realm and they inevitably crumble to dust in the span of a few hours or days.

WHISPERS

A human who consorts with devils or investigates the arcane is known as a **Whisper**. Whispers are made, not born—anyone can develop advanced arcane abilities with enough study and practice; it's not a matter of bloodline or being "chosen."

Any PC can roll their ATTUNE rating to attempt simple interactions with the ghost field or spirits. The special abilities of the Whisper are needed for more advanced arcane activities.

ARCANE MAGNITUDE

Whispers measure the intensity and danger of supernatural forces on a scale of **magnitude**. The greater the magnitude, the more energetic the force, and the more difficult to channel and command. See the list below for a description of each magnitude rating along with an example of a similar force.

- o. **Weak**, cursory, or inconsequential force. A *gentle breeze, a light mist, a candle flame, a firm shove.*
- 1. **Minor**, brief, or subtle force. A *steady wind, a torch flame, a thick fog, a solid punch, a mild electric shock.*
- 2. **Moderate** force. A *stiff wind, a hot stove top, a hefty punch or kick, a stunning electric shock.*
- 3. **Serious** force. A *staggering wind, a white-hot brand, a roaring fire, a shattering hammer blow, a burning electrical surge.*
- 4. **Powerful** force. A *crashing whirlwind, a burning forge, a blast-powder grenade, direct electrocution.*
- 5. **Severe** force. A *raging thunderstorm, a massive bonfire, a ship's cannon, a lightning strike.*
- 6. **Devastating** force. A *hurricane wind, white-hot molten steel, a sapper's bomb, an electrical maelstrom.*

BASELINES & MODIFIERS

By default, arcane effects may not extend beyond the direct line of sight of the user, within close range (about 10 paces). Effects are short lived (lasting for a moment), and affect a small area.

For each +1 added to magnitude, the Whisper may increase one of the factors below by one step (these increases do not contribute to the force of the effect).

- ♦ **Range.** Increase range by one step: *close < near < far < beyond sight (about 300 paces).*
- ♦ **Duration.** Increase duration by one step: *moment < minute < hour < day < week.*
- ♦ **Area.** Increase area of effect by one step. *tiny (one person) < small (a room) < medium (several rooms) < large (a building).*

DETERMINING MAGNITUDE

When assessing magnitude to determine the stress cost for Whisper abilities such as **TEMPEST** or **RITUAL**, you can calculate exact figures using the values and modifiers provided (if everyone wants to pause the game and look them up) or just go with your gut feeling for what seems right in the moment, using 2, 4, and 6 stress as your benchmarks. 2 stress for a moderate force like a strong punch or kick. 4 stress for a powerful force like a small explosion. 6 stress for a massive force like hurricane wind or lightning strikes. Add +1 or +2 if the Whisper wants to extend the range or coverage of the ability beyond the immediate area.

Precise numbers are provided for people that want to use them, for consistency. But if you prefer to wing it and estimate the stress cost each time, that's fine, too. No one said that Whispering was an exact science.

Arcane magnitude can also be used to measure the power of ghosts, demons, hells, and other supernatural forces.

RITUALS

A ritual is a lost art of sorcery from before the cataclysm which shattered the world and blotted out the sun. Unlike modern arcane techniques which utilize the scientific application of electroplasmic energies, rituals depend on strange occult powers and entities to realize their effects. To enact a ritual is to come into contact with these abyssal forces and entreat them to do your will. It is a practice not without considerable risk.

FINDING A RITUAL SOURCE

A PC with the **RITUAL** special ability begins with one known ritual, already learned (answer the questions below to create it). To learn a new ritual, a PC must first find a **source**. A source may be secured as part of the payoff from a score—perhaps you are able to steal a ritual book when your crew robs the Museum of Antiquities. You might also secure a source as the goal of a long-term project—by consorting with cultist friends, studying records about the provenance of ancient texts, or some other method you devise.

LEARNING A RITUAL

Once the source of a ritual is found, you may undertake a long-term project to learn the ritual. Most rituals will require a standard 8-segment progress clock to learn. Over the course of the long-term project, the player and the GM will answer questions about it. (Answer one question every time you fill 2-segments of the clock.) The player records these answers in their notes to define what the ritual will do in play.

RITUAL QUESTIONS

1. GM asks: **"What effect does the ritual create and how is it weird?"** Player answers.
2. Player asks: **"What must I do to perform the ritual?"** GM answers.
3. Player asks: **"What is the price and to whom do I pay it?"** GM answers.
4. GM asks: **"What new belief, drive, instinct, or fear does knowledge of this ritual and its attendant occult forces instill in you?"** Player answers.

EXAMPLE RITUAL ANSWERS

"What effect does the ritual create and how is it weird?" *Player: I want to consecrate an area so visions of past violence or bloodshed play out for all to see. It's weird because everyone who sees the visions bleeds black blood from their eyes during the event and for days afterward.*

"What must I do to perform the ritual?" *GM: You must prepare a mixture of tobacco, dream smoke, and human crematory ash which all the viewers then smoke in order to slip past the black mirror and see into the vale of spirits.*

"What is the price and to whom do I pay it?" *GM: The door swings both ways, right? You borrow some death; the spirit-world borrows some life. You suffer level 2 harm: arcane leeching (you can't resist it).*

"What new belief, drive, instinct, or fear does knowledge of this ritual and its attendant occult forces instill in you?" *Player: Oh, that's easy! I become afraid of what will happen when the spirits develop a taste for my life essence.*

PERFORMING A RITUAL

To perform a ritual, follow the method outlined by the answers to the ritual questions. Most rituals will take **one downtime action** to complete, though the GM may call for two (or more) downtime actions for very powerful or far-reaching rituals. Some rituals may be performed during downtime and then manifested later as a regular action during a score or other operation. In this case, simply make a note that the ritual has been "primed" and may be unleashed at a later time.

Each performance of a ritual is a unique event, and may not always work the same way each time. The GM or the player may call for a round of questions to establish a ritual anew.

Rituals are a way to bring in a wide variety of arcane effects into the game. Use with caution! If you ever go overboard, address the questions again to establish new weirdness and costs if things have gotten out of hand. The abyssal forces are not playthings and cannot be considered a reliable or safe source of power.

HULLS

A hull is a rare and advanced form of arcane technology which uses a captured spirit to animate a clockwork frame. Some wealthy citizens employ hulls as bodyguards or servants. The Spirit Wardens have been known to use specialized hulls to assist in tracking and capturing rogue spirits in the city.

Hulls come in three general frame sizes. Small frames are about the size of a house cat. Medium frames are the size of a human. Large frames are the size of a wagon.

As cutting-edge technology, hulls are often fitted with a variety of wondrous features dreamed up by visionary tinkers. A sampling is below:

HULL FEATURES

- ♦ **Interior Chamber:** The Hull has an internal compartment that can hold a passenger (or operator) of normal human size.
- ♦ **Life-Like Appearance:** The Hull is masterfully crafted to pass for a living being (unless it is closely scrutinized).
- ♦ **Levitation:** The Hull can move in three dimensions by floating inside a volatile electroplasmic bubble.
- ♦ **Phonograph:** The Hull is equipped with a wax-cylinder recording and playback device.
- ♦ **Plating:** Thick metal armor plates (special armor).
- ♦ **Reflexes:** The Hull has lightning-fast reaction time. (Works as the **LURK** ability)
- ♦ **Sensors:** The Hull's sensorium includes sonar which can "see" shapes and movement through walls and hear heartbeats.
- ♦ **Smoke Projectors:** Internal chemical system which can exude a dark, acrid cloud of smoke—enough to fill a large room.
- ♦ **Spider Climb:** Miniature barbs and hooks built in to the Hull's frame allow it to walk and climb effortlessly on walls and ceilings.
- ♦ **Spring-Leap Pistons:** Powerful spring-loaded pistons in the Hull's legs allow it to jump to extreme heights (several stories) and survive falls without damage.

For more details, see the hull playbook, page 68.

VAMPIRES

When a possessing spirit bonds with a living body, it becomes a vampire. This can happen if a ghost possesses a victim for too long, thereby destroying its original spirit, or when a hollow is specially prepared for the purpose by ancient ritual.

Scholars of the arcane say that vampirism breaks the chain of being. Over time, a vampire's spirit essence diffuses fully into the body, giving it physical immortality while at the same time destroying its echo in the spirit realm 'beyond the black mirror.' Some have argued that this is the only way to escape the damnation of madness that otherwise inflicts all the ghosts denied passage through the gates of death. (A vampirism movement in the 6th century of the Imperium achieved significant popularity before it was eradicated by the Spirit Wardens.)

Vampires are exceedingly rare today. Most people consider them to be legendary or mythical. When the Spirit Wardens do discover one, they take great pains to destroy it in secret so as not to disturb the peace. In legend, vampires were destroyed by the rays of the sun. Since the sun was shattered and dimmed by the cataclysm, this is no longer possible. Spirit Wardens must capture the vampire and disintegrate it in electroplasm according to a specific arcane method in order to destroy it.

A vampire sustains its energy by feeding on life essence from a living being. In fables, vampires drank blood to accomplish this, but this is not typical. Each vampire feeds on essence in its own way—leaving a distinct telltale sign on its victim afterwards. A vampire can easily detect these signs in order to locate their victims again for feeding, or to take care to avoid feeding on the chosen prey of another vampire.

For more details, see the vampire playbook, page 69.

ALCHEMY

Alchemy is an arcane practice which combines scientific methods with the sympathetic magic of strange materials to produce bombs, drugs, poisons, oils, essences, and potions.

- ♦ **Arcane:** Magical essences and tinctures which produce supernatural abilities.
- ♦ **Bombs:** Explosives of various sorts.
- ♦ **Drugs:** Alter the sensations or humours within the body. **Poisons** are similar, but have deleterious or toxic effects.
- ♦ **Oils:** Alter the properties of matter.

CREATING A NEW FORMULA

A character with the **ALCHEMIST** special ability may undertake a long-term project to create a new formula. Most formulas will require a standard 8-segment progress clock to create. Over the course of the long-term project, the player and the GM will answer questions about the formula (answer one question every time you fill 2-segments of the clock). The player records these answers in their notes to define what the alchemical will do in play.

ALCHEMICAL FORMULA QUESTIONS

1. GM asks: "What effect does the alchemical produce and by what delivery method?" Player answers. (Injected, smoked, etc.)
2. GM asks: "How long does it last?" Player answers. A moment, a few minutes, hours, days, permanently, etc.
3. Player asks: "How is it harmful to consume or dangerous to handle? Does it require any rare materials?" GM answers. *Rare materials should be reserved for very strange and/or powerful concoctions.*
4. Player asks: "How long does it take to create a dose?" GM answers by choosing the size of the project clock and the number of doses produced. 8-clock/1-dose, 6-clock/2-doses, etc.
5. GM asks: "What rare, strange, or adverse aspect of this formula has kept it in obscurity, out of common usage?" Player answers.

CHANGING THE FORMULA

Alchemy is far from an exact science. Sudden changes in efficacy, duration, and side-effects are known to occur. To reflect this, the GM or the player may call for a redress of the formula creation questions to establish the effect and costs of the alchemical anew.

ACQUIRING INGREDIENTS

The acquisition of standard alchemy ingredients is assumed in the time it takes to create a concoction, so long as the alchemist has reasonable access to what they need. If supplies are cut off or otherwise unavailable, a separate long-term project (or score) must be accomplished to secure the materials before crafting can begin.

If the formula calls for rare materials, then they must be acquired as a separate action—by getting an *exquisite* asset via the **acquire asset** downtime action, by securing the material via a score, by completing a long-term project, or by other means specified by the GM.

CRAFTING AN ALCHEMICAL

To craft an alchemical, follow the method outlined by the answers to the formula questions, or use an example formula at right. Crafting is a long-term project undertaken during downtime.

Some alchemicals can be purchased during downtime using the **acquire asset** activity. Any alchemical with a 4-clock to create counts as an *exquisite* item. Add an additional coin cost for larger clock sizes (+1 for 6-clock, +2 for 8-clock, +4 for 12-clock).

THE LEECH'S SUPPLY

The Leech playbook has special access to a stock of common alchemicals. During downtime, they automatically refill their bandoliers, so long as they have reasonable access to a supplier or workshop. Upon use of a bandolier slot, the Leech can specify which type of alchemical they deploy from the list on their playbook.

Example alchemicals follow. Each example indicates how long the project clock is for manufacture, and how many doses are produced. *4/1 means a 4-segment clock to produce 1 dose, for example.*

SIDE EFFECTS: Alchemicals are volatile and dangerous, requiring precise handling. When you use an alchemical, you suffer a **side effect** based on its type (see examples below). You may resist this consequence with a resistance roll, as usual. *PCs with the **ALCHEMIST** special ability get +1d to resist a side effect.*

ARCANE

Side Effect: Complication (4-Clock: "Accosted by Spirit Wardens", 1 tick per use)

Death Essence (8/1): A distillation of a spirit's moment of death. Swirling red vapor.

Dream Essence (4/1): A distillation of a vivid, lucid dream, perfectly recreated for the user. Swirling iridescent vapor.

Life Essence (12/1): The essential life force, in vaporous form. May delay death for a short time, or (rarely) revive the recently deceased.

Rage Essence (4/2): A distillation of raw fury. Greatly enhances strength, resistance to pain, and irrational aggression.

Shadow Essence (4/1): A distillation of the void. Creates a cloud of unnatural pitch darkness.

Sight Potion (6/1): Gives the user the ability to see the invisible and sense danger before it happens. Lasts several hours.

Thought Essence (12/1): A distillation of a spirit's memories, such that they become your own. Can have severe side effects.

Viper Potion (4/1): The user's saliva and blood become highly toxic to others for several days.

Vitality Potion (6/3): Accelerates the healing process. Automatic **recovery** without a downtime action, + 2 ticks on healing clock.

OILS

Side Effect: Harm ("Chemical burn" level 1+)

Alcahest (4/1): A clear fluid which stops or reverses the effects of any other alchemical.

Binding Oil (4/2): Permanently fuses two surfaces until dissolved by alcahest or ghost oil.

Drift Oil (4/3): Creates neutral buoyancy when poured on an object, causing it to float in the air for an hour.

Fire / Frost Oil (4/1): Erupts in white-hot flame or freezing mist upon contact with air.

Ghost Oil (8/1): A colorless fluid which causes affected material to slip into the ghost field. Very dangerous when applied to living beings.

DRUGS & POISONS

Side Effect: Harm ("Poisoned" level 1+)

Black Lotus (DRUG | 8/2): A tar-like resin made from the powdered leaves of the plant. Smoked in a pipe. Induces coma-like stupor & visions.

Bloodneedle (DRUG | 4/2): Induces sweating fever, euphoric mania, rampant energy.

Drown Powder (POISON | 4/2): A fine dust which catches the breath and gives a sensation of drowning. Incapacitating, but fatal only in very high doses.

Devilroot (POISON | 8/1): Refined sap of the devilroot plant. Instantly lethal when consumed.

Dream Smoke (DRUG | 4/3): A milder formulation of black lotus. Induces a pleasant intoxication.

Eyeblind (POISON | 4/2): A fine powder which causes temporary partial blindness upon contact.

Heartcalm (POISON | 6/1): Slows the heartbeat over several days, eventually resulting in death.

Quicksilver (DRUG, POISON | 4/2): A toxic metallic fluid. The user's mind opens further to the ghost field. Take +1d to **ATTUNE** roll upon use, suffer level 2 harm (poisoned).

Skullfire (POISON | 4/1): Toxic fumes from overly heated or refined leviathan blood. Causes incapacitating migraines.

Spark (DRUG | 4/3): A measure of raw electroplasm blended with seawater. The user feels empowered and emits mild electrical energy.

Standstill (POISON | 8/2): A fine powder which seizes the nerves, causing temporary paralysis.

Trance Powder (DRUG | 4/2): A glittering black powder. Induces a pleasant trance when inhaled.

BOMBS

Side Effect: Collateral Damage and/or Heat

Grenade (4/1): A small explosive charge with a short fuse that detonates into metal shrapnel.

Smoke Bomb (4/3): Creates a cloud of acrid smoke that's difficult to breathe and stings the eyes.

CREW

NAME / IDENTIFYING DESIGNATION

MASTER

LOOK






**HERITAGE: AKOROS—THE DAGGER ISLES
IRUVIA—SEVEROS—SKOVLAN—TYCHEROS**

**BACKGROUND: ACADEMIC—LABOR—LAW
TRADE—MILITARY—NOBLE—UNDERWORLD**

MY FUNCTIONS ARE: TO GUARD—TO DESTROY—TO DISCOVER—TO ACQUIRE—TO LABOR AT ...that which my **master** commands.

*Your clockwork body runs on **ELECTROPLASM**. Recharge your capacitors by connecting to an industrial-grade generator (downtime action). When you do this, clear half your **drain** (round down).*

DRAIN  **WEAR**  CLANKING—LEAKING—FIXATED—
SMOKING—SPARKING—UNSTABLE

| HARM | | | ARMOR  | +HEAVY  |
|------|--|-------------|---|--|
| 3 | | NEED HELP | PLATING  | |
| 2 | | -1D |  other special armor | |
| 1 | | LESS EFFECT |  REPAIR project clock | |

Ghost Special Abilities (Transferred from Original Playbook)

FRAME FEATURES

- LEVITATION
- REFLEXES
- LIFE-LIKE APPEARANCE
- SPIDER CLIMB
- INTERIOR CHAMBER
- PLATING
- PHONOGRAPH
- SENSORS
- SMOKE PROJECTORS
- SPRING-LEAP PISTONS

You may swap out your features with a downtime activity.

HULL

A spirit animating a clockwork frame
ADVANCED PLAYBOOK

HULL TRAITS

- **CLOCKWORK:** You are a spirit animating a clockwork body. You have human-like strength and senses, by default. Your hull has natural **armor** (this doesn't count for your **load**). Your former human feelings, interests, and connections are only dim memories. You now exist to fulfill your **functions**. Choose three (at left). You may be rebuilt if damaged or destroyed. If your soul vessel is shattered, you are freed from servitude and become a Ghost. *Whenever you would take stress, take **drain** instead.*
- **OVERCHARGE:** Take **1 drain** to perform a feat of extreme strength or speed (run faster than a horse, rend metal with bare hands, etc.). *This factors into effect.*
- **COMPARTMENTS:** Your **items** are built-in to your frame and may recess beneath panels out of sight. Your frame can now carry +2 load.
- **ELECTROPLASMIC PROJECTORS:** You may release some of your plasmic energy as an electrical shock around you or as a directed beam. You may also use this ability to create a lightning barrier to repel or trap a spirit. Take **1 drain** for each level of **magnitude**.
- **INTERFACE:** You may **attune** to the local electroplasmic power field to control it or something connected to it (including another hull).
- **SECONDARY HULL:** Choose an additional frame and its starting feature. You may transfer your consciousness between your frames at will.
- ○ ○ ○ **FRAME UPGRADE:** Choose an additional frame *feature*.

FRAME & ITEMS Choose your **frame** & look (or create one). Choose a starting *feature*. **LOAD** 3 *small* 5 *medium* 7 *heavy*

- ❑ **SMALL** (cat size, **-1 scale**): A metal orb, a mechanical doll, a clockwork spider. *Levitation—Reflexes*
- ❑ **MEDIUM** (human size): A metal mannequin, a clockwork animal. *Life-Like Appearance—Spider Climb*
- ❑ **HEAVY** (wagon size, **+1 scale**): A hulking metal giant, a self-driving vehicle. *Interior Chamber—Plating (special armor)*

Feature options for any frame: *Phonograph (Record & Playback)—Sensors—Smoke Projectors—Spring-Leap Pistons*

XP

- ◆ *Every time you roll a desperate action, mark xp in that action's attribute.*
- At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (in your playbook or an attribute) or 2xp if that item occurred multiple times.
- ◆ *You fulfilled your functions despite difficulty or danger.*
 - ◆ *You suppressed or ignored your former human beliefs, drives, heritage, or background.*
 - ◆ *You struggled with issues from your wear during the session.*

TEAMWORK

Assist a teammate

Lead a group action

Protect a teammate

Set up a teammate

PLANNING & LOAD

Choose a plan, provide the **detail**. Choose your **load** limit for the operation.

Assault: *Point of attack*

Occult: *Arcane power*

Deception: *Method*

Social: Connection

Stealth: Entry point

Transport: *Route*

*A hull has no **COIN** or **STASH** of their own, but may be granted access to the resources of their **master**.*

PLAYBOOK

- | INSIGHT | | | |
|---------|-------|--------|--|
| ● | ● ● ● | HUNT | |
| ● | ● ● ● | STUDY | |
| ● | ● ● ● | SURVEY | |
| ● | ● ● ● | TINKER | |

PROWESS

- ● ● ● FINESSE
 ● ● ● ● PROWL
 ● ● ● ● SKIRMISH
 ● ● ● ● WRECK

RESOLVE

- ● ● ● ATTUNE
- ● ● ● COMMAND
- ● ● ● CONSORT
- ● ● ● SWAY

BONUS DIE

+ PUSH YOURSELF (take 2 drain) -OR- accept a **DEVIL'S BARGAIN.**

- ☐ A Blade or Two
- ☐ Throwing Knives
- ☐ A Pistol ☐ A 2nd Pistol
- ☐ ☐ A Large Weapon
- ☐ An Unusual Weapon
- ☒ Armor ☐ ☐ +Heavy
- ☐ Burglary Tools
- ☐ ☐ Climbing Gear
- ☐ Arcane Implements
- ☐ Documents
- ☐ Subterfuge Supplies
- ☐ Tinkering Tools
- ☐ ☐

GATHER INFORMATION

- ◆ *What do they intend to do?*
- ◆ *How can I get them to [X]?*
- ◆ *What are they really feeling?*
- ◆ *What should I lookout for?*
- ◆ *Where's the weakness here?*
- ◆ *How can I find [X]?*
- ◆ *What's really going on here?*

BLADES IN THE DARK

CREW

NAME

ALIAS

LOOK

HERITAGE: AKOROS—THE DAGGER ISLES
IRUVIA—SEVEROS—SKOVLAN—TYCHEROS

BACKGROUND: ACADEMIC—LABOR—LAW
TRADE—MILITARY—NOBLE—UNDERWORLD

Your VICE is life essence, consumed from a living human. Use 1 downtime activity to hunt prey and indulge your vice. Also, when you feed, erase all level 1 harm and mark 4 ticks on your healing clock. This is the only way you can heal. How do you feed? What telltale sign do you leave on your victims?

STRESS TRAUMA COLD—HAUNTED—OBSESSED—PARANOID
RUTHLESS—SECRETIVE—UNSTABLE—VICIOUS

HARM ARMOR +HEAVY
3 NEED HELP
2 -1D other special armor
1 LESS EFFECT HEALING project clock

GHOST SPECIAL ABILITIES (FROM ORIGINAL PLAYBOOK)

STRICTURES

When you gain a new vampire trait (except veteran), add a stricture.

- SLUMBER: In downtime, you must spend one activity resting in a dark, silent place (or else suffer 3 stress).
- FORBIDDEN: You cannot enter a private residence without permission from the owner.
- REPELLED: Spiritbane charms can hold you at bay. (Take 2 stress to resist the repulsion.)
- BESTIAL: When you suffer physical harm or overindulge your vice, your body twists into a horrific bestial form until you next feed without overindulging.
- BOUND: Your spirit must remain in this body, or be destroyed.

VAMPIRE

A spirit animating
an undead body
ADVANCED
PLAYBOOK

VAMPIRE TRAITS

- UNDEAD: You are a spirit which animates an undead body. Your trauma is maxed out. Choose four trauma conditions which reflect your vampiric nature. Arcane attacks are potent against you. If you suffer fatal harm or trauma, your undead spirit is overwhelmed. You take level 3 harm: incapacitated until you feed enough to recover. If you suffer arcane harm while in this state, you are destroyed utterly. Your XP tracks are longer (you now advance more slowly). You have more stress boxes.
- TERRIBLE POWER: Take 1 stress to perform a feat of superhuman strength or speed (run faster than a carriage, break stone with bare hands, leap onto the roof of a building, etc.). This factors into effect.
- ARCANE SIGHT: Take 1 stress to sense beyond human limits. "Hear" a subject's true thoughts or feelings, see in pitch darkness, sense the presence of invisible things, intuit the location of a hidden object, etc.
- A VOID IN THE ECHO: You are invisible to spirits and may not be harmed by them. Take 1 stress to cause living things to avert their gaze and fail to observe you for a few moments.
- DARK TALENT: Choose Insight, Prowess, or Resolve. Your max rating for actions under that attribute becomes 5. When you take this ability, add +1 dot to the resistance rating of the attribute you've chosen.
- SINISTER GUILF: Take +1d to all downtime rolls.
- VETERAN: Choose a special ability from another source.

DARK SERVANTS (You start with one)

- Rutherford, a butler.
- Lylandra, a consort.
- Kira, a bodyguard.
- Otto, a coachman.
- Edrik, an envoy.

ITEMS

- Fine clothes and accoutrements
- Fine personal weapon
- Fine shadow cloak
- Demonbane charm
- Spiritbane charm

XP

- Every time you roll a desperate action, mark xp in that action's attribute.
- At the end of each session, for each item below, mark 1 xp (in your playbook or an attribute) or 2xp if that item occurred multiple times.
- You displayed your dominance or .
- You expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background.
- You struggled with issues from your vice, traumas, or strictures during the session.

TEAMWORK

Assist a teammate

Lead a group action

Protect a teammate

Set up a teammate

PLANNING & LOAD

Choose a plan, provide the detail. Choose your load limit for the operation.

Assault: Point of attack

Deception: Method

Stealth: Entry point

Occult: Arcane power

Social: Connection

Transport: Route

STASH COIN ADVANCED PLAYBOOK

PLAYBOOK

INSIGHT

- HUNT
- STUDY
- SURVEY
- TINKER

PROWESS

- FINESSE
- PROWL
- SKIRMISH
- WRECK

RESOLVE

- ATTUNE
- COMMAND
- CONSORT
- SWAY

BONUS DIE

PUSH YOURSELF (take 2 stress) -OR- accept a DEVIL'S BARGAIN.

LOAD 3 light 5 normal 6 heavy

- A Blade or Two
- Throwing Knives
- A Pistol A 2nd Pistol
- A Large Weapon
- An Unusual Weapon
- Armor +Heavy
- Burglary Tools
- Climbing Gear
- Arcane Implements
- Documents
- Subterfuge Supplies
- Tinkering Tools

GATHER INFORMATION

- What do they intend to do?
- How can I get them to [X]?
- What are they really feeling?
- What should I lookout for?
- Where's the weakness here?
- How can I find [X]?
- What's really going on here?

DEVILS

GHOST TRAITS

Row: Roll 1d per year of ghostly existence, take highest

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1 | Jealous | Desperate | Violent | Hysterical | Skittish | Fleeting |
| 2 | Curious | Deceptive | Clever | Probing | Knowledgeable | Charming |
| 3 | Prophetic | Insightful | True | Revelatory | Guiding | Instructive |
| 4 | Reactive | Territorial | Dominant | Insistent | Bold | Demanding |
| 5 | Angry | Volatile | Aggressive | Wild | Savage | Vengeful |
| 6 | Mad | Chaotic | Bizarre | Destructive | Insane | Vile |

GHOSTLY SECONDARY EFFECTS

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1-3 | Frost, Chill | Cold wind | Faint visions of the local past | Electrical Discharge | Weird shadows | Faint echoes |
| 4, 5 | Mist, Fog | Rushing wind | Intense visual echoes | Intense magnetism | Disturbing shadows | Thunderous sounds |
| 6 | Freezing fog | Storm winds | Pitch darkness | Lightning | Clutching shadows | Voices in your head |

DEMON TYPES

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|----------|---|----------|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| AFFINITY | Sea, Water | Darkness | Earth, Metal | Fire, Smoke | Sky, Stars | Storm, Wind |
| ASPECT | Humanoid w/ Bestial or Elemental Features | | | Animal | Monstrous | Amorphous |

DEMON DESIRES

Some demons have more than one desire

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|------|-----------|----------|--------------|------------|---------|-------------|
| 1, 2 | Mayhem | Murder | Justice | Corruption | Power | Control |
| 3, 4 | Knowledge | Pleasure | Suffering | War | Revenge | Chaos |
| 5, 6 | Freedom | Savagery | Manipulation | Deception | Fear | Achievement |

SUMMONED HORRORS

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Reeking Tar | Writhing Mass | Radiant Being | Crystalline Shards | Creeping Growth | Animated Stone |
| 2 | Cloud of Burning Ash | Shadow Being | Swarm of Insects | Toxic Cloud | Fiery Being | Liquid Being |
| 3 | Played Being | Shambling Rags | Freezing Fire | Impossible Geometry | Monstrous Animal | Shimmering Spheres |
| 4 | Twisting Machinery | Psychic Mist | Throbbing Viscera | Metallic Being | Coil of Thorns | Hypnotic Lights |
| 5 | Oozing Slug | Tremulous Vibrations | Lashing Hooks | Skeleton of Black Glass | Flowing Quicksilver | Clutching Darkness |
| 6 | Floating Octopoid | Cloying Vapors | Swirling Mucosa | Serpent Being | Insectoid Being | Consuming Orb |

DEMON NAMES

Korvaeth
Sevraxis
Argaz
Zalvroxos
Kethtera
Arkeveron
Ixix
Kyronax
Voldranai
Esketra
Ardranax
Kylastra
Oryxus
Ahazu
Tyraxis
Azarax
Vaskari

DEMON FEATURES

Black shark eyes

Scales (*onyx, iridescent, crystalline, metallic, etc.*)

Razor-sharp claws

Bony protrusions

Multiple eyes

Lashing tail

Leathery wings

Spines

Dripping ichor

Glowing eyes or markings

Hair or fur

(*drifting as if underwater, burning with a cool fire, etc.*)

Feathers

Multiple arms

Tentacles

Hard shell, metallic plates

Lights dim or flare

Plants wither or grow wildly

Mechanisms grind to a stop

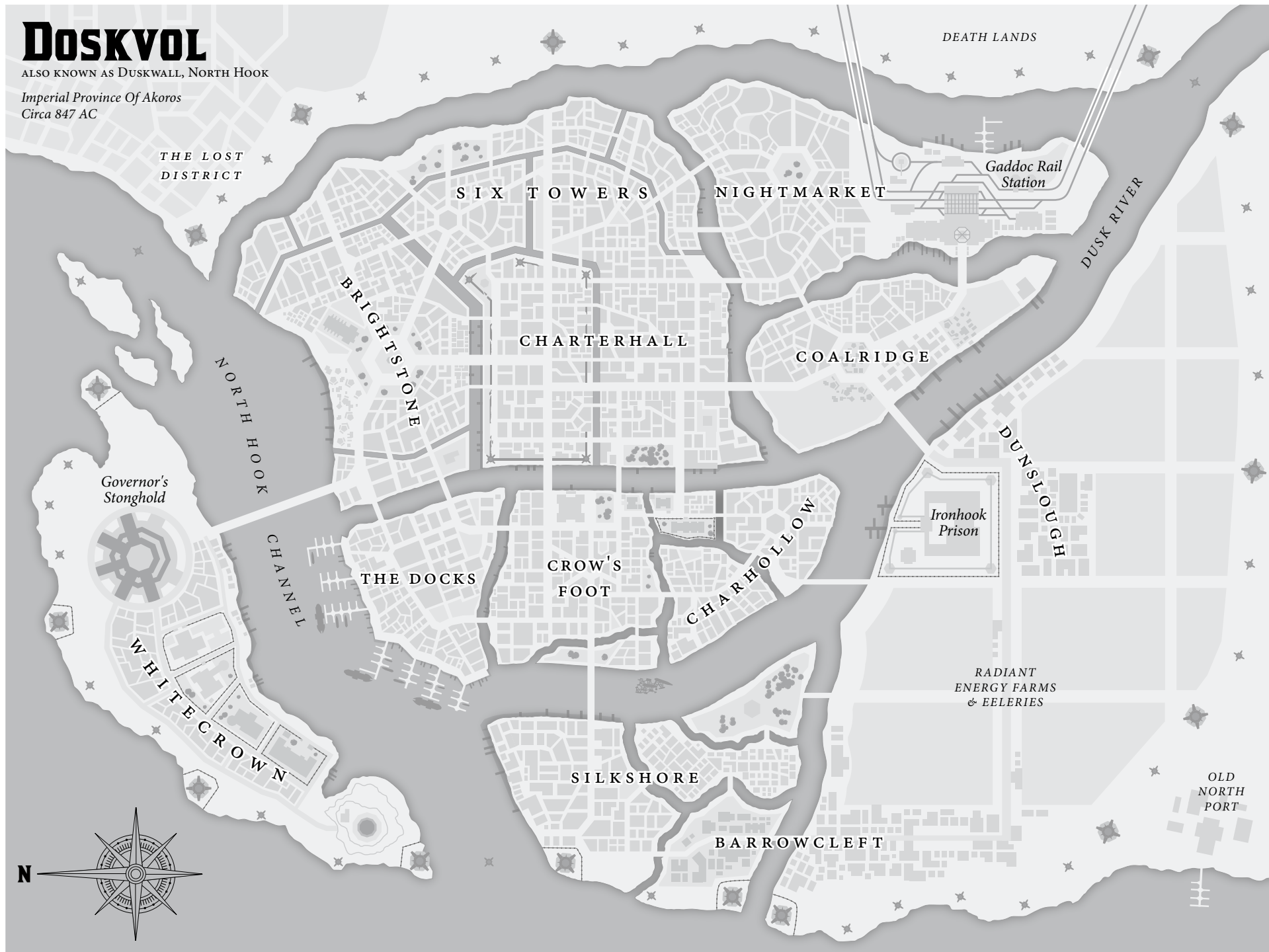
Liquid freezes, boils, turns to blood or ashes

| FORGOTTEN GODS | CULT PRACTICES |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 11 The One Within Many | Sacrifice: Fed to specially consecrated beasts / Savaged (eaten?) by frenzied cult mob. |
| 12 The Silver Fire | Sacrifice: Pitted against an annointed champion in death arena. |
| 13 The Rapturous Chord | Sacrifice: Ritually bled upon the sacred altar. |
| 14 The Fallen Star | Sacrifice: Progressively overdosed with mind-expanding drugs. |
| 15 The Lord of the Depths | Sacrifice: Ritually killed and claimed as annointed spirit-champion. |
| 16 The Silent Song | Sacrifice: Slain by arcane means (electrocuted, spirit shattered, death-cursed). |
| 21 The Lady of Thorns | Congregation: An orgy of pleasure (sex, food, dance, music) and/or pain. |
| 22 Our Blood Spilled in Glory | Congregation: Sacred hymns or prayers for days without ceasing. |
| 23 The Drowned Saviour | Congregation: Occupying a sacred nexus point during an astrological confluence. |
| 24 The Empty Vessel | Congregation: A pilgrimage to a sacred place or being in the death lands / at sea. |
| 25 The Closed Eye | Congregation: A group vision / dream-quest via essences, drugs, or meditation. |
| 26 The Hand of Sorrow | Congregation: A reenactment / dumb-show of a sacred event. |
| 31 That Which Hungers | Acquisition: A collection of eyes / hearts / blood from mystics or demons. |
| 32 The Thousand Faces | Acquisition: The shards of a shattered sacred object (jewel, sword, skull, stone). |
| 33 The Web of Pain | Acquisition: The original holy writings of the prophet / master / saint. |
| 34 The Pillars of Night | Acquisition: The severed body parts (heads, hands, tongues) of heretics or apostates. |
| 35 The Burned King | Acquisition: Properties aligned with sacred geometry or attuned by mystical events. |
| 36 The Father of the Abyss | Acquisition: The ghosts of prophets / mystics / founders / enemies of the order. |
| 41 The Forsaken Legion | Destruction: Ritual burning of sacred objects (rune-papers, effigies, flesh, hair). |
| 42 The Unbroken Sun | Destruction: Ritual eradication of a spirit or demon. |
| 43 The Revelation | Destruction: The breaking of the seals which keep the god from this world. |
| 44 The Radiant Word | Destruction: Shattering of ritual objects / altars / temples sacred to an enemy order. |
| 45 The Shrouded Queen | Destruction: Eradication of weapons / objects / sites / rituals which can harm the god. |
| 46 The Reconciler | Destruction: Eradication of social / legal / cultural elements which threaten the order. |
| 51 The Cloud of Woe | Consecration: Purification by bathing in sacred fluid (blood, wine, milk, oil, etc.). |
| 52 The Broken Circle | Consecration: Purification of the gates which give passage to the god into this world. |
| 53 The Conqueror | Consecration: Baptism / blessing of an acolyte or object by immersion in spirit well. |
| 54 She Who Slays in Darkness | Consecration: Purify / bless cult followers with tattoos / scarification / mutilation. |
| 55 The Dream Beyond Death | Consecration: Creation of blessed idols / artwork / ritual spaces / artifacts. |
| 56 The Blood Dimmed Tide | Consecration: Wards / runes / spirits bound to shun enemies of the order. |
| 61 The Guardian of the Gates | Desecration: Debasement or defilement of one sworn to an enemy order. |
| 62 The Maw of the Void | Desecration: Corruption of place / object / ritual / tradition to appropriate its power. |
| 63 The Keeper of the Flame | Desecration: Defilement of place / object / ritual to humiliate another order. |
| 64 The Throne of Judgment | Desecration: Manipulation of authorities / institutions to appropriate their power. |
| 65 The Lost Crown | Desecration: Corruption of acolytes to prepare them for transformation. |
| 66 The Golden Stag | Desecration: Mindless, pointless chaos; sewing the seeds of anarchy. |

DOSKVOL

ALSO KNOWN AS DUSKWALL, NORTH HOOK

Imperial Province Of Akoros
Circa 847 AC







OVERHEARD IN CROW'S FOOT

"Lyssa did it with her own hands, they say. Eye to eye, cold as can be."

"If she stuck her own boss she's a dirty scuttler," (spits) "... but not one I'll cross any time soon."

"I heard that new Inspector used to be a captain in the Imperial Cavalry..."

"I guess snoopin' crooks in the Dusk beats riding down devils in the deathlands, eh?"

"Red milk, I call it. Y'take scarlet toad venom, distill it pure—a method whispered to me by a demon, hahaha!—cut it with a vesch of fractionated spirit essence, the best memories of former life—dam't hard to get—but if y'got some, even a dram..."

"Yes, yes... as I said, Lord Scurlock has..."

"Highest high silver can buy—lord, lad, or lady."

"Ya see, there are two types in this world. Me, an' doffing idiots. That's why I bet on Marlane."

"You punched a guy out of his pants!"

"They were kinda loose, I guess. Boots came off, too. Then his pregnant wife came at me. What are you supposed to do about that?"

"There goes another crow. How dreadful!"

"Whassat? Seven inna last half hour? Naw, mate, this is Crow's Foot. Like, where they perch, get it? Night's just getting started."

"... seen her in the mirror."

"Like, behind him?"

"No, just her reflection, in the mirror."

"Inky hell."

"Looks like a regular tattoo to me."

"Naaaaw, see how the crab's claw wriggles? Ink's laced with demon blood."

"Sure, and I'm the weepin' lady."

"Oh, you'll see. Once it sets in..."

"He threatened you? What, with a blade?"

"Oh, no, warden sir, nothin' plain like that, or I wouldn't have summoned yeh. He, well... it was awful strange. He spoke in my Rickard's voice, sir."

"He threatened you with a stage trick?"

"Not a trick sir! Rickard's own voice! Such awful things he said, too."

(sigh) "Hardly a crime, madame."

"But Rickard's dead these seven years, sir! Never made it over from Skovlan. How could this Lampblack scuttler have his voice?"

"That wretch, Roethe. That... thing is twisted. I was walking late the other night and can swear I saw him surrounded by a damn horde of dregs like him. And they were pleading allegiance like he was the dammed king of the alleys. It was the mockery of a court, with a throne and everything. He... it's gathering an army, I tell you."

"Do you know why the Crows dispose of bodies in the canals after midnight? The spirits of the drowned live there. Well, 'live', right? They claim everything that touches the water after the clock strikes twelve. Well, everything except those gondoliers."

"Yeah, and I suppose you have just the charm to sell me to keep me safe and sound..."

"What fortune! It just so happens I do..."

"Tally's missing from the orphanage. I asked the headmistress if he was taken already, but she shunned me out! I'm desperate, I can't leave my little brother like this!"

(sung as an out-of-tune sea shanty)

"... pawned my farm for a 'viathan hunter lost me ship to the ink

paddled back home on a dead god's shell "

(louder, as if expecting others to join in)

"I'd sell me soul for a drink!"

RUMORS ON THE STREET

Weekly, or whenever you need one

| | | | |
|---|---|----|--|
| 1 | Someone is trying to organize a union for Canal Dockers. | OR | The ministry of transport is taking control of the gondoliers. |
| 2 | The Path of Echoes will buy inhabited spirit bottles, no questions asked. | OR | A leviathan hunter ship returned to port, no crew living, carrying a demon. |
| 3 | There's a Bluecoat constable that takes bribes to frame targets for crimes. | OR | A corrupt magistrate is seeking secret passage out of the city ahead of charges. |
| 4 | The streetwalkers and pleasure houses are infiltrated by rogue spirits. | OR | The Church of the Ecstasy of the Flesh is seeking a new Apex. |
| 5 | The new drug, Lure, is made from leviathan blood and turns people into demons. | OR | The Spirit Wardens are stockpiling electroplasm, expecting a shortage soon. |
| 6 | All the well-to-dos are buying Turner's new locks—said to be impossible to crack. | OR | The vault at Charterhall Bank was ransacked, but they're covering it up. |

CITY EVENTS IN THE NEWSPAPERS

Weekly, or whenever you need one

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|-------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Plague | Festival | Raids | Revolution | Accident | Disaster |
| 2 | Refugees | Strike | Prohibition | Construction | Siege | Charity |
| 3 | Demolition | Election | Scandal | Martial Law | Conscription | Exodus |
| 4 | Shortage | Excess | Discovery | Paranoia | Assassination | Witch Hunt |
| 5 | Parade | Celebrity | Holiday | Riots | Gang War | Hysteria |
| 6 | Crime Spree | Political Upheaval | Prison Break | Diplomacy | Supernatural Weather | Cult Gatherings |

DISTRICT EVENTS

Weekly, or whenever you need one

| | | | |
|---|--|----|--|
| 1 | Strange plasmic fog fills the streets—deathseeker crows shun the district. | OR | Spirit wardens set up a watch post and deathseeker crow roost in the old temple ruins. |
| 2 | Bluecoats suspend street patrols, citing 'budget cuts'. It's free reign for crime! | OR | Bluecoats set up checkpoints for contraband or whatever they feel like confiscating. |
| 3 | Citizens rally against extortion, bringing in hired bravos from other districts. | OR | Local talent (band, chef, tumblers) becomes popular, swelling crowds at market and shops. |
| 4 | Canals become choked w/ debris, overflowing with foul effluvia. | OR | Canals throughout district are drained for maintenance (or some strange purpose). |
| 5 | The ramshackle shanties of The Drop are marked for demolition. | OR | A raging fire sweeps across Crow's Foot, threatening to destroy the district. |
| 6 | A group of scoundrels, recently escaped from Ironhook, go to ground nearby, attracting bounty hunters. | OR | An ancient crypt beneath the district, covered in strange markings, is exposed and attracts wailing hollows. |

STREETS

| MOOD |
|-------------------------|
| 1 Dark or Cold |
| 2 Bright or Lively |
| 3 Quiet or Refined |
| 4 Abandoned or Decrepit |
| 5 Cramped or Noisy |
| 6 Cozy or Warm |

| IMPRESSIONS | | | Typical of Doskvol |
|-------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | SIGHTS | SOUNDS | SMELLS |
| 1 | Rain Slick, Oil Slick | Machinery, Workers | Cook Fires, Furnaces |
| 2 | Dancing Shadows, Flickering Lights | Fluttering Cloth, Howling Wind | Damp Wood, Decay, Refuse |
| 3 | Mist, Fog, Frost | Laughter, Song, Music | Animals, Hides, Blood |
| 4 | Fleeting Shapes, Echoes in the Ghost Field | Whispers, Echoes, Strange Voices | Chemicals, Distillates, Fumes |
| 5 | Soot, Ash Clouds, Grime | Thunder, Driving Rain | Rain Water, Ocean |
| 6 | Crackling Electricity, Wires, Mechanisms | Bells, Clock Chimes, Harbor Horns | Ozone, Electrolasmic Discharges |

| USE | | | | | | Many streets have multiple uses |
|------|-------------|---------------|---------|-------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1-3 | Residential | Crafts | Labor | Shops | Trade | Hospitality |
| 4, 5 | Law, Govt. | Public Space | Power | Manufacture | Transportation | Leisure |
| 6 | Vice | Entertainment | Storage | Cultivation | Academic | Artists |

| TYPE | | | | | | |
|------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1-3 | Narrow Lane | Tight Alley | Twisting Street | Rough Road | Bridge | Waterway |
| 4, 5 | Closed Court | Open Plaza | Paved Avenue | Tunnel | Wide Boulevard | Roundabout |
| 6 | Elevated | Flooded | Suspended | Subterranean | Floating | Private, Gated |

| DETAILS | | | | | | |
|---------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | Metal Supports | Ironwork Gates, Fences | Belching Chimneys | Metal Grates, Hatches, Doors | Clockwork Mechanisms | Rigging, Cables |
| 2 | Stairs, Ramps, Terraces | Wooden Scaffolds | Skyways | Rooftop Spaces | Rails, Train Cars | Hidden Passages |
| 3 | Banners, Pennants | Festival Decorations | Crowd, Parade, Riot | Street Performers | Makeshift Stalls, Shelters | Crisscrossing Routes |
| 4 | Gang Markings | Patrol Posts | Lookouts | Stocks, Public Punishment | Street Crier, Visionary | News Stand, Public Notices |
| 5 | Stray Animals | Landscaping | Muck & Mire | Construction, Demolition | Foul Runoff, Fumes, Smoke | Orphans, Beggars |
| 6 | Ancient Ruin | Leering Gargoyles | Spirit Chimes, Wards | Eerie Emptiness | Quarantine, Lockdown | Shrine Offerings |

PROPS

Nets, Ropes
Crates, Boxes
Cables, Chains
Drain Pipes
Water Pump
Oil Drums

Brick Pile
Iron Bars
Wooden Boards
Cut Stones
Loose Rocks
Cement Buckets

Sewer Grate
Rotting Refuse
Mud Puddles
Discarded Junk
Carrion & Crows
Sodden Trash

Carriages
Push Carts
Moored Boats
Cargo Barge
Gondolas
Wagons

Crane & Pulleys
Cargo Bales
Metal Ingots
Industrial Forge
Coal / Fuel
Waste Bins

Street Lamps
Electric Wires
Junction Boxes
Spotlight Tower
Clock Tower
Messenger Post

Withered Trees
Monument
Fountain
Mossy Ruin
Collapsed Bldg.
Flimsy Hovel

Barricade
Gate
Checkpoint
Piled Rubble
Canal Lock
LightningBarrier

Food Stall
Vendor Stall
Barrels, Casks
Makeshift Shrine
News Stand
Stockade

BUILDINGS

| EXTERIOR | | Some buildings have multiple exterior elements | | | | |
|----------|------------|--|------------------|---------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| MATERIAL | Gray Brick | Stone & Timbers | Cut Stone Blocks | Wooden Boards | Plaster Board & Timbers | Metal Sheeting |
| DETAILS | Tile Work | Iron Work | Glass Work | Stone Work | Wood Work | Landscaping |

| USE: COMMON | | | | | | Many buildings have multiple uses |
|-------------|------------|--------------|-----------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | Bunk House | Inn | Tavern | Gambling Hall | Drug Den | Brothel |
| 2 | Market | Workshop | Bakery | Butchery | Forge | Tailory |
| 3 | Work House | Goat Stables | Brewery | Watch Post | Court, Jail | Dock |
| 4 | Ruin | Row Houses | Tenements | Apt. Building | Small House | Bath House |
| 5 | Shrine | Tattooist | Physicker | Fighting Pits | Square, Fountain | Grotto |
| 6 | Warehouse | Stockyard | Factory | Refinery | Eelery | Mushroom Garden |

| USE: RARE | | | | | | Many buildings have multiple uses |
|-----------|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | Market House | Restaurant | Bar, Lounge | Academy | Salon | Cafe |
| 2 | Floristry | Tobacconist | Book Shop | Jeweler | Clothier | Gallery |
| 3 | Apothecary | Horse Stables | Distillery | Vintner | Master Artisan | Boat House |
| 4 | Theater | Opera House | Apt. Building | Townhouse | Manor House | Villa |
| 5 | Clinic | Temple | Cistern | Watch Post | Park | Monument |
| 6 | Archive | Spiritualist | Bank | Alchemist | Power Plant | Radiant Energy Garden |

| DETAILS | | | | | | |
|---------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | Dripping Water | Creaking Floorboards | Roaring Fires | Smoky Lamps | Buzzing Electric Lights | Ticking Clockworks |
| 2 | Plants, Flowers | Wall Hangings, Artwork | Shuttered Windows | Heavy Curtains, Thick Carpet | Dust & Detritus | Wear & Damage |
| 3 | Threadbare & Tattered | Utilitarian Furnishings | Elegant Finery | Lush & Comfortable | Rough-Spun Simplicity | Spartan Austerity |
| 4 | Circular Stairs, Ladders | Secret Doors | Catwalks | Skylights | Balcony | Cellar |
| 5 | Drafty, Cold | Stout, Quiet | Cozy, Warm | Vaulted, Spacious | Low, Cramped | Rickety, Ramshackle |

ITEMS

Chalkboard,
Desks, Papers
Maps, Charts,
Diagrams
Books, Scrolls,
Bookcases

Lamp, Inkwell,
Writing Desk
Clock, Cabinet,
Shelves
Table, Chairs,
Notebooks

Bed, Bureau,
Vanity
Bunks, Stools,
Trunks
Basin, Pitcher,
Mirror
Sofa, Divan,
Music Box
Couches,
Table, Lamps
Drapery, Pillows,
Cushions

Counter, Sink,
Cabinets
Cookfire, Pots,
Pans, Utensils
Dining Table,
Chairs, Cutlery
Game Board,
Cards, Dice
Larder, Spices,
Meat Hooks
Wine, Beer,
Whiskey

Pedestal, Statue,
Paintings
Bird Cage,
Quill, Diary
Bell, Book,
Candle
Fireplace, Rug,
Armchair
Curtains,
Vases, Flowers

Instruments,
Music Sheets

Exam Chair,
Medical Tools
Burner, Vials,
Beakers
Workbench,
Tools, Rags
Weapons,
Ammunition

PEOPLE

LOOKS

| 1, 2: MAN | | 3, 4: WOMAN | 5: AMBIGUOUS, CONCEALED | | 6: ROLL AGAIN | |
|-----------|-------|-------------|-------------------------|----------|---------------|----------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | Large | Lovely | Weathered | Chiseled | Handsome | Athletic |
| 2 | Slim | Dark | Fair | Stout | Delicate | Scarred |
| 3 | Bony | Worn | Rough | Plump | Wiry | Striking |
| 4 | Short | Tall | Sexy | Wild | Elegant | Stooped |
| 5 | Cute | Plain | Old | Young | Stylish | Strange |

GOALS

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|------|----------|---------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|
| 1, 2 | Wealth | Power | Authority | Prestige, Fame | Control | Knowledge |
| 3, 4 | Pleasure | Revenge | Freedom | Achievement | Happiness | Infamy, Fear |
| 5, 6 | Respect | Love | Change | Chaos, Destruction | Justice | Cooperation |

PREFERRED METHODS

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|------|------------|---------|-------------|-----------|---------------|----------|
| 1, 2 | Violence | Threats | Negotiation | Study | Manipulation | Strategy |
| 3, 4 | Theft | Arcane | Commerce | Hard Work | Law, Politics | Sabotage |
| 5, 6 | Subterfuge | Alchemy | Blackmail | Teamwork | Espionage | Chaos |

PROFESSIONS: COMMON

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---------------|------------|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Baker | Barber | Blacksmith | Brewer | Butcher | Carpenter |
| 2 | Cartwright | Chandler | Clerk | Cobbler | Cooper | Cultivator |
| 3 | Driver | Dyer | Embroiderer | Fishmonger | Gondolier | Guard |
| 4 | Leatherworker | Mason | Merchant | Roofer | Ropemaker | Rug Maker |
| 5 | Servant | Shipwright | Criminal | Tailor | Tanner | Tinker |
| 6 | Vendor | Weaver | Woodworker | Goat Herd | Messenger | Sailor |

PROFESSIONS: RARE

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|-------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| 1 | Advocate | Architect | Artist | Author | Bailiff | Apiarist |
| 2 | Banker | Bounty Hunter | Clock Maker | Courtesan | Furrier | Glass Blower |
| 3 | Diplomat | Jailer | Jeweler | Leech | Locksmith | Magistrate |
| 4 | Musician | Physicker | Plumber | Printer | Scholar | Scribe |
| 5 | Sparkwright | Tax Collector | Treasurer | Whisper | Composer | Steward |
| 6 | Captain | Spirit Warden | Journalist | Explorer | Rail Jack | Soldier |

HERITAGE

1-3: Akorosi
4-6: Foreigner

FOREIGNERS

1,2: Skovlander
3: Iruvian
4: Dagger Islander
5: Severosi
6: Tycherosi

Remember, each Tycherosi has a demonic trait: cat's eyes, claws, feathers instead of hair, etc.

STYLE

Tricorn Hat
Long Coat
Hood & Veil
Short Cloak
Knit Cap
Slim Jacket
Hooded Coat
Tall Boots
Work Boots
Mask & Robes
Suit & Vest
Collared Shirt
Suspenders
Rough Tunic
Skirt & Blouse
Wide Belt
Fitted Dress
Heavy Cloak
Thick Greatcoat
Soft Boots
Loose Silks
Sharp Trousers
Waxed Coat
Long Scarf
Leathers
Eelskin Bodysuit
Hide & Furs
Uniform
Tatters
Fitted Leggings
Apron
Heavy Gloves
Face Mask
Tool Belt
Crutches
Cane
Wheelchair

| TRAITS | INTERESTS | QUIRKS |
|------------------|------------------------------|---|
| 11 Charming | Fine whiskey, wine, beer. | Superstitious. Believes in signs, magic numbers. |
| 12 Cold | Fine food, restaurants | Devoted to their family. |
| 13 Cavalier | Fine clothes, jewelry, furs. | Married into important / powerful family. |
| 14 Brash | Fine arts, opera, theater | Holds their position to spy for another faction. |
| 15 Suspicious | Painting, drawing, sculpture | Reclusive. Prefers to interact via messengers. |
| 16 Obsessive | History, legends | Massive debts (to banks / criminals / family) |
| 21 Shrewd | Architecture, furnishings | Blind to flaws in friends, allies, family, etc. |
| 22 Quiet | Poetry, novels, writing | Once hollowed, then restored. Immune to spirits. |
| 23 Moody | Pit-fighting, duels | Has chronic illness which requires frequent care. |
| 24 Fierce | Forgotten Gods | Secretly (openly?) controlled by possessing spirit. |
| 25 Careless | Ecstasy of the Flesh | Serves a demon's agenda (knowingly or not). |
| 26 Secretive | Path of Echoes | Proud of heritage, traditions, native language. |
| 31 Ruthless | Weeping Lady, charity | Concerned with appearances, gossip, peers. |
| 32 Calculating | Antiques, artifacts, curios | Drug/alcohol abuser. Often impaired by their vice. |
| 33 Defiant | Horses, riding | Holds their position due to blackmail. |
| 34 Gracious | Gadgets, new technology | Relies on council to make decisions. |
| 35 Insightful | Weapons collector | Involved with war crimes from the Unity War. |
| 36 Dishonest | Music, instruments, dance | Leads a double life using cover identity. |
| 41 Patient | Hunting, shooting | Black sheep / outcast from family or organization. |
| 42 Vicious | Cooking, gardening | In prison or under noble's house arrest. |
| 43 Sophisticated | Gambling, cards, dice | Well-traveled. Connections outside Doskvol. |
| 44 Paranoid | Natural philosophy | Revolutionary. Plots against the Imperium. |
| 45 Enthusiastic | Drugs, essences, tobacco | Inherited their position. May not deserve or want it. |
| 46 Elitist | Lovers, romance, trysts | Minor celebrity. Popularized in print / song / theater. |
| 51 Savage | Parties, social events | Scandalous reputation (deserved or not). |
| 52 Cooperative | Exploration, adventure | Surrounded by sycophants, supplicants, toadies. |
| 53 Arrogant | Pets (birds, dogs, cats) | Spotless reputation. Highly regarded. |
| 54 Confident | Craft (leatherwork, etc.) | Bigoted against culture / belief / social class. |
| 55 Vain | Ships, boating | Visionary. Holds radical views for future. |
| 56 Daring | Politics, journalism | Cursed, haunted, harassed by spirits or demon. |
| 61 Volatile | Arcane books, rituals | Intense, unreasonable phobia or loathing. |
| 62 Candid | Spectrology, Electrophasm | Extensive education on every scholarly subject. |
| 63 Subtle | Alchemy, medicine | Keeps detailed journals, notes, records, ledgers. |
| 64 Melancholy | Essences, alchemy | Is blindly faithful to an ideal, group, or tradition. |
| 65 Enigmatic | Demon lore, legends | Deeply traditional. Opposed to new ideas, methods. |
| 66 Calm | Pre-cataclysm legends | A fraud. Some important aspect is fabricated. |

NAMES

Adric, Aldo, Amison, Andrel, Arcy, Arden, Arilyn, Arquo, Arvus, Ashlyn, Branon, Brace, Brance, Brena, Bricks, Candra, Canter, Carrissa, Carro, Casslyn, Cavelle, Clave, Corille, Cross, Crowl, Cyrene, Daphnia, Drav, Edlun, Emeline, Grell, Helles, Hix, Holtz, Kamelin, Kelyr, Kobb, Kristov, Laudius, Lauria, Lenia, Lizete, Lorette, Lucella, Lynthia, Mara, Milos, Morlan, Myre, Narcus, Naria, Noggs, Odrienne, Orlan, Phin, Polonia, Quess, Remira, Ring, Roethe, Sessereth, Sethla, Skannon, Stavrul, Stev, Syra, Talitha, Tesslyn, Thena, Timoth, Tocker, Una, Vaurin, Veleris, Veretta, Vestine, Vey, Volette, Vond, Weaver, Wester, Zamira, Zara.

Arran, Athanoch, Basran, Boden, Booker, Ankhayat, Bowman, Breakiron, Brogan, Clelland, Clermont, Coleburn, Comber, Daava, Dalmore, Danfield, Dunvil, Edrad, Farros, Grine, Haig, Helker, Helles, Hellyers, Jayan, Jeduin, Kardera, Karstas, Keel, Kessarín, Kinclath, Lomond, Maroden, Michter, Morriston, Penderyn, Prichard, Rowan, Salkara, Sevoy, Skelkallan, Slane, Strangford, Strathmill, Templeton, Tyrconnell, Vale, Vedat, Walund

Bell, Birch, Bird, Bliss, Bricks, Bug, Chime, Coil, Cricket, Cross, Crow, Echo, Flint, Frog, Frost, Grip, Hook, Ink, Junker, Mist, Moon, Nail, Needle, Ogre, Pool, Ring, Ruby, Silver, Skinner, Song, Spur, Tackle, Thistle, Thorn, Tick Tock, Trick, Vixen, Whip, Wicker.



BARROWCLEFT

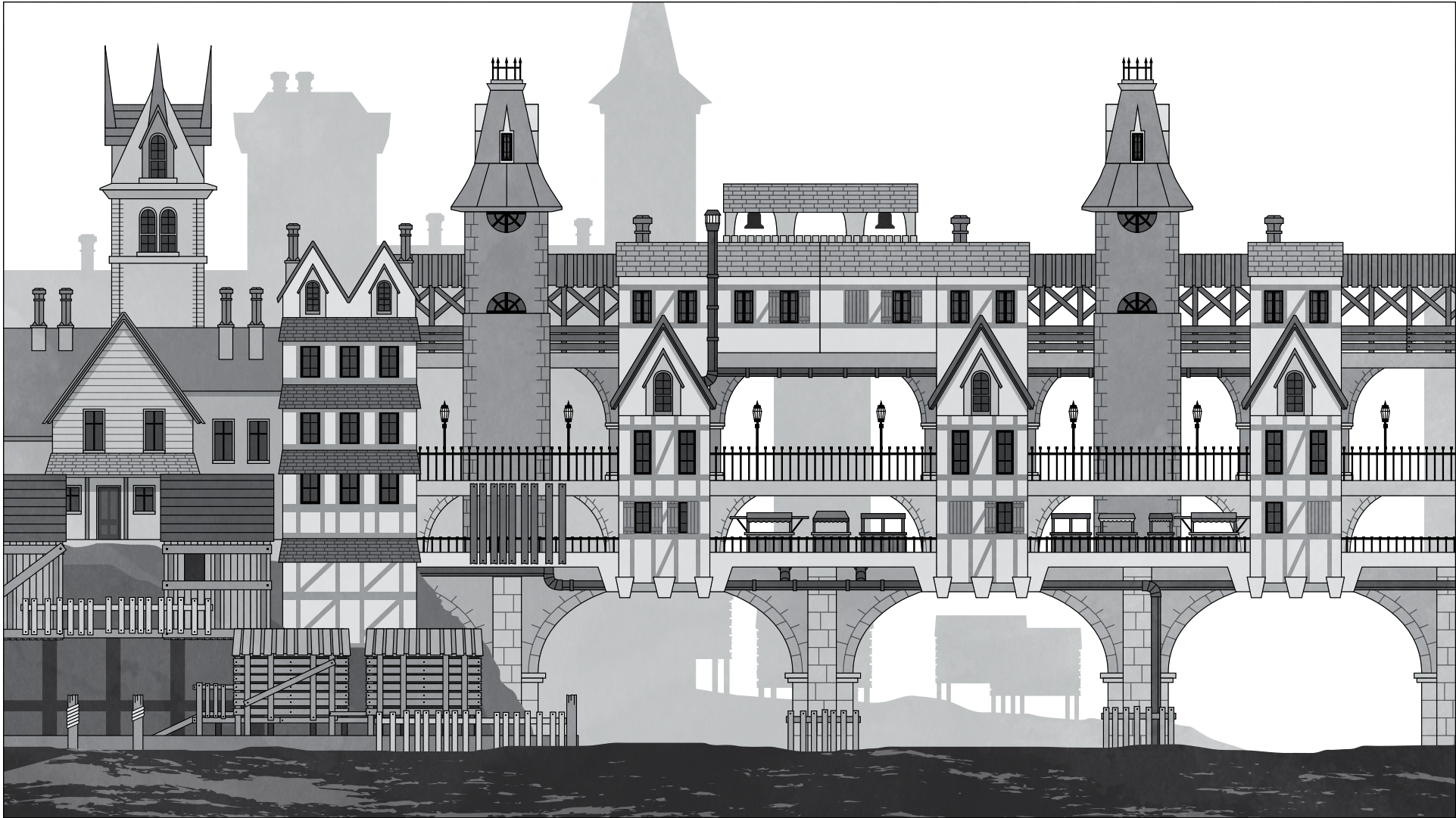
Barrowcleft is the home to the laborers and Overseers of the Ministry of Provisions who attend the radiant energy farms of Duskvol. It is a dusty, rural district, with simple wooden buildings of only one or two stories and wide dirt roads to accommodate large cargo wagons. The farmers of Barrowcleft are organized into tight-knit family-based clans that are proud of their vital role in the city's welfare and hold themselves apart from the 'city folk' across the river. Outsiders are welcome here for honest trade, but are met with a cold suspicion otherwise.

1 BARROW BRIDGE. One of several residential bridges in the city. The bridge is lined with homes, shops, and merchant stalls. Families of river-fishers work from ramshackle wooden huts along the banks on either side. They hunt the large and dangerous wild river eels that gather to feed on refuse near the channel to the sea.

2 LIGHTNING TOWER. The lightning towers of Duskvol are marvels of electroplasmic engineering, requiring constant attention from the powerful Sparkwrights guild. The largest towers are over 400-feet tall and include their own internal generators to provide power to the lightning barrier which keeps the ravenous spirits of the deathlands out of the city.

3 BARROWCLEFT MARKET. This open-air marketplace provides a place for the farms to sell fresh produce and goods made from their crops. Other related vendors have also sprung up here, including brewers and distillers, weavers, dyers, and goat breeders. The tough and close-knit people of Barrowcleft have managed to keep criminal influence out of their market and it's famous as a rare place for fair trade in the city.

4 RADIANT ENERGY FARM. The wondrous power of radiant energy allows crops to grow in the darkness of Duskwall. Life in the city depends upon these farms, so their delicate radiant lamps and irrigation systems are watched constantly by specially appointed deputies of the Watch and Overseers of the Ministry of Provisions.



BARROWCLEFT

SCENE: Farmers walking to and from field work. Tradespeople crafting simple goods. Merchants selling their wares. Heavy-laden cargo wagons transporting food into the city. Vigilant deputies surveying the fields from their watchtowers.

STREETS: Smooth dirt roads, drainage ditches. *Black Hill Road, Mill Street, Porter Street.*

BUILDINGS: Low, wide wooden structures. Barns. Animal pens. Stone mills. Hilltop manors for the Overseers.

NOTABLES

CHIEF PRICHARD. The head Overseer of the Ministry of Provisions in Duskwall. Manages the workers and food allotments for the city districts. (*Calculating, Confident, Calm*)

HESTER VALE. Matriarch of the oldest farm family. The living embodiment of “tough but fair.” (*Proud, Fierce, Suspicious*)

MARA KEEL. A former smuggler who’s gone into hiding among the farm laborers of Barrowcleft. (*Quiet, Secretive, Patient*)

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Wealth | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Security & Safety | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Criminal Influence | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Occult Influence | ● ● ● ● ● |

Barrowcleft market is one of the best marketplaces in the city, but criminal types draw lots of unwanted attention. You can take +1d to acquire an asset here, but also accrue +2 heat.



BRIGHTSTONE

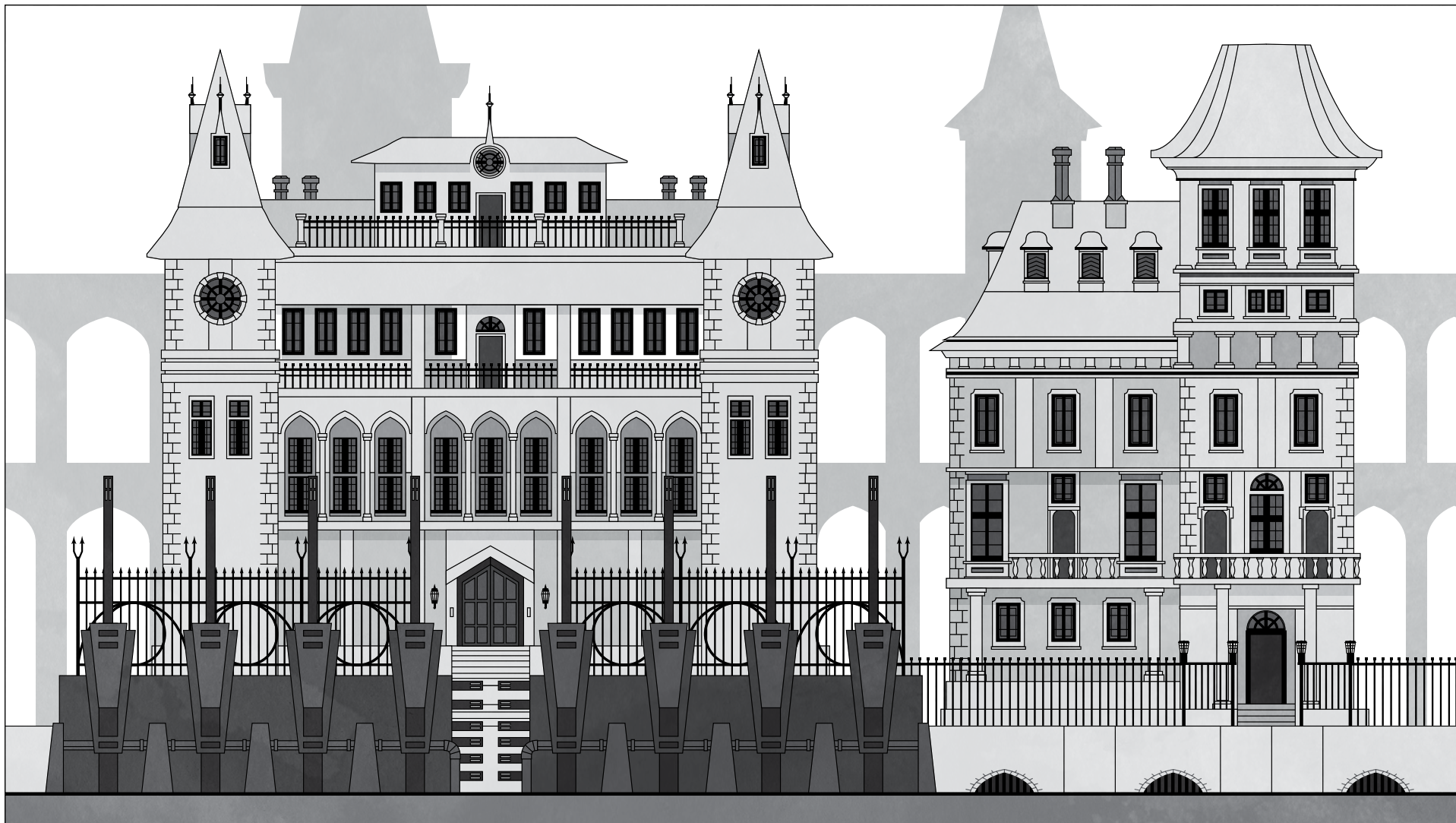
Brightstone is home to many of the wealthiest and most influential citizens of Doskvol. Its streets are broad and paved, under bright electric lights; its canals are sparkling and clean, with perfumed water; its houses are all of fine, pale marble blocks, rich timbers, and intricate ironworks. There are cultivated parks fed by radiant-energy; lavish restaurants and cafes; jewelers, tailors, and other luxury shops. Street-side vendors are forbidden here, resulting in a serene, spacious atmosphere, punctuated by the occasional carriage or marching Bluecoat patrol.

1 UNITY PARK. A grand park, fountain, and roundabout featuring an enormous monument commemorating Imperial victory in the Unity War (or the War for Skovlan Independence, depending on who you talk to).

2 SILVER MARKET. A curated open-air emporium overlooking the North Hook channel. Named for its original use as the primary marketplace for silver traders, it's now host to luxury goods vendors of all sorts, including rare Iruvian silks, spices from the Dagger Isles, horse-traders, carriage upholsterers, and rare alchemical distillations (including some illegal spirit essences—to which the City Watch turns a blind eye).

3 THE SANCTORIUM. The chief cathedral dedicated to the Church of the Ecstasy of the Flesh. It's a towering edifice of buttresses and spires, originally commissioned by the Emperor during his last visit to Doskvol nearly 500 years ago. Devotees gather weekly to purify themselves in baptismal rites and through the ritual destruction of rogue spirits in electroplasm. The catacombs beneath contain the cremated ash of many famous and affluent citizens.

4 BOWMORE BRIDGE. This massive structure of bright white stone and shimmering metal-work is said to be the largest bridge in the Imperium. Luxury apartments and shops perch all along its length from Brightstone to Whitecrown.



BRIGHTSTONE

SCENE: Elite Bluecoat patrols, arrayed in fine armor and gleaming gun-pikes. Wealthy citizens strolling through manicured parks, attended by servants. Horse-drawn coaches and the occasional electropasmic carriage rumbling along the avenues.

STREETS: Broad, clean, well-lit. *Silvermark Avenue, Goldcrest Avenue, Ruby Street, Sapphire Street.*

BUILDINGS: Pale stone mansions with lightning barriers, grand manor houses, lavish townhouses, opulent theaters and restaurants, luxury shops.

NOTABLES

LORD STRANGFORD. Operates one of the largest leviathan hunter fleets, serves on the City Council and is a high-ranking member of the secret order within the Church of Ecstasy. (*Secretive, Calculating, Arrogant*)

COMMANDER BOWMORE. Chief Officer of the Watch in Brightstone. Bowmore's family financed Bowmore Bridge centuries ago and now holds many positions of power. (*Proud, Principled, Connected*)

ROLAN WOTT. An influential magistrate who handles property, endowments, and financial cases. Famous for his extravagant parties. (*Stylish, Elitist, Shrewd*)

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Wealth | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Security & Safety | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Criminal Influence | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Occult Influence | ● ● ● ● ● |

Most engagement rolls suffer -1d due to heavy Bluecoat patrols. Operations against the nobility in Brightstone are considered on "hostile turf" for the purpose of generating heat.



COALRIDGE

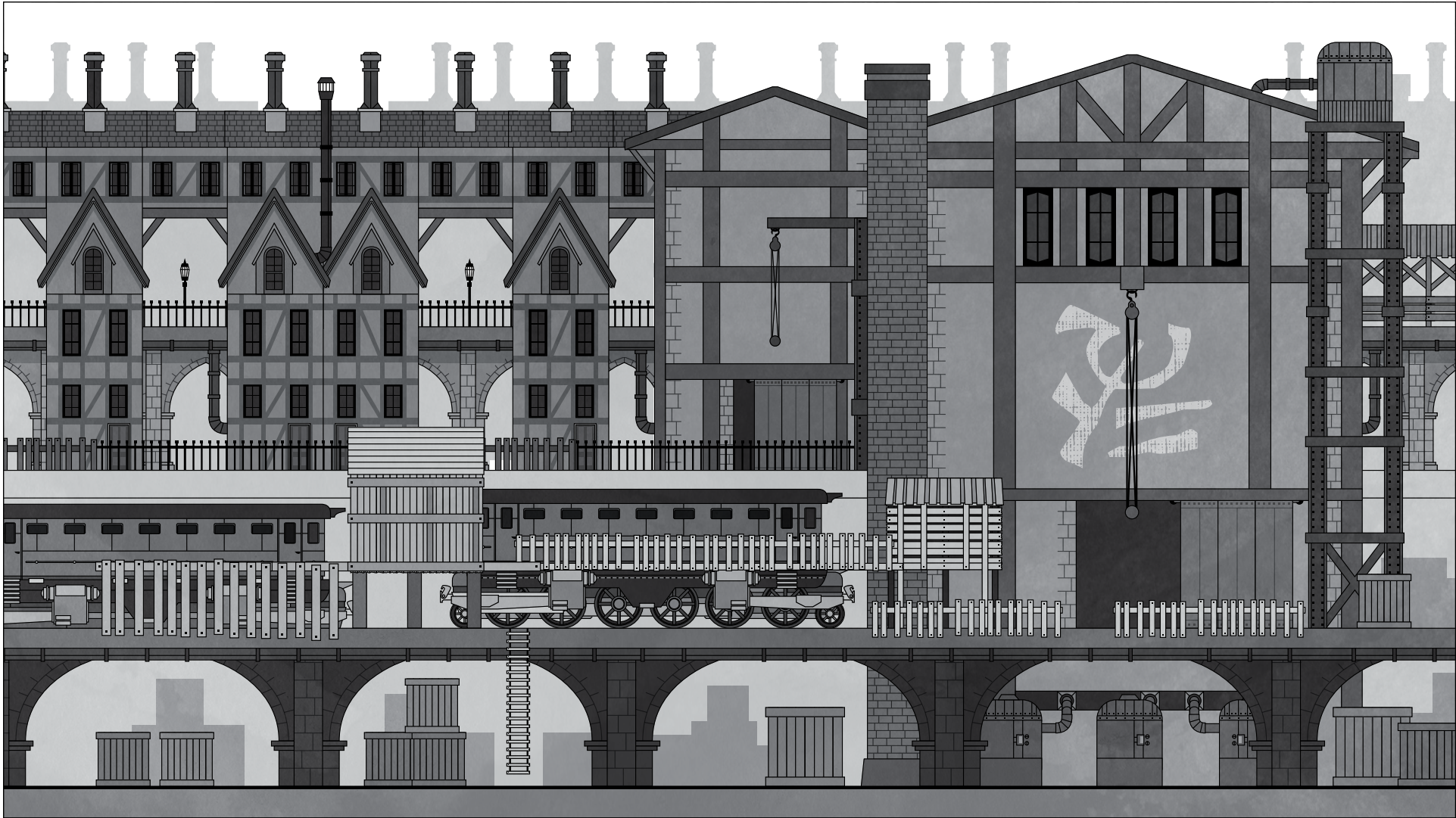
Coalridge is home to most of the machinists, industrial laborers and factories of the city. It's cramped, soot-choked, and loud—spewing dense clouds of black smoke, showers of sparks and burning cinders. The old elevated train lines that once hauled coal now carry heavy equipment and raw materials to and from Gaddoc Station, though many of the ancient tracks and cars have been abandoned to squatters who've converted them into makeshift homes.

1 COALRIDGE MINE. The site of the first permanent settlement at the river delta, the mine was originally built by the ancient Skov kingdom, who called it *Doskovol*—literally, "The Skov's Coal." The mine still operates over 1000 years later, though demand for coal has dropped sharply as the Imperium adopts electroplasmic power more and more widely.

2 THE OLD RAIL YARD. Before Gaddoc Station was built, this industrial rail yard was a center for commerce in the city. The Old Yard now serves only a couple heavy cargo trains daily, with many of its old rail cars rusted in place where they were abandoned.

3 THE IRONWORKS. The Ironworks is a sprawling collection of massive industrial workhouses. Cruel foremen drive indentured laborers around the clock to keep up with the massive production demands to replace and refit Leviathan Hunting ships as well as the need for goods transported out to the Imperium at large.

4 BRICKSTON. The mostly densely packed residential area in Duskwall. Brickston is a cramped jumble of multi-story brick row houses, stacked one atop the other. Many of the toughest scoundrels of the underworld hail from here, learning the harsh lessons of survival and gang life within its dark maze.



COALRIDGE

SCENE: Soot-covered workers hacking up black bile as they trudge home from the factories. Heavy rail cargo being unloaded by crane. Street-tough waifs running wild. A factory boss lashing a worker for an infraction. Squatters cooking a meal in the coal engine of an abandoned train car.

STREETS: Multi-level, crowded with crates and discarded junk. Elevated rail lines. *Dunvil Way, Black Rock Road, Wright Street, Crane Street, Forge Street.*

BUILDINGS: Tall and narrow brick row houses with belching chimneys, metal-clad factories and warehouses, train cars converted into dwellings.

NOTABLES

MASTER SLANE. A notorious factory foreman known for excessive and cruel punishments for the smallest infractions. Many attempts have been made on his life, but all have failed. Some say he's a devil. (*Cold, Cruel, Sadistic*)

BELLE BROGAN. A Skovlander factory worker who's been gaining popularity as a potential union organizer. It's only a matter of time before a factory boss tries make an example of her. (*Charming, Confident, Bold*)

HOPPER. A drug addict, whisper, and all-around weirdo who perches on rooftops in the district. Hopper claims to see "ghost rails" and "spirit trains" originating deep beneath Coalridge, stretching beyond the horizon.

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Wealth | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Security & Safety | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Criminal Influence | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Occult Influence | ● ● ● ● ● |

Because the factories of Coalridge operate around the clock, there's no ideal time for clandestine crime here, but foremen are happy to be bribed to 'take a break' or look the other way.



CROW'S FOOT

Crow's Foot is a crossroads, merging many qualities of its neighboring districts: the illicit vices of Silkshore, the labor and trade of the Docks, the poverty of Charhollow, and the classic architecture of Charterhall. The district is a patchwork, both held together and threatened to be torn apart by the menagerie of competing street gangs and Bluecoat squads which claim every avenue and corner as territory in an endless turf war.

1 CROW'S NEST. An ancient tower from before the cataclysm that has been a ritual sanctum, an astronomer's laboratory, and a Bluecoat watch post—before its current role as the headquarters of the district's chief gang, The Crows.

2 TANGLETOWN. Hundreds of years ago, one of the massive Leviathan Hunter ships was partially sunk in the river. Since then, it's collected an attendant flotilla of tiny watercraft, all lashed together into a floating neighborhood. Tangletown is considered neutral ground among the street gangs of Crow's Foot, and no violence is allowed there.

3 STRATHMILL HOUSE. The lost children and unwanted orphans of Crow's Foot inevitably pass through the halls of Strathmill House. Some are cared for and trained for jobs at the docks or the workhouses of Coalridge. Others are quietly instructed in the arts of the lookouts and runners used by the gangs of the district—all for a small fee to Strathmill House, of course.

4 RED SASH SWORD ACADEMY. This large mansion has been converted into a training school for the Falling Star style of Iruvian sword play. The Red Sashes, an Iruvian gang who run several luxury drug dens in the district, claim it as their HQ and legit cover operation for their illicit businesses.



CROW'S FOOT

SCENE: Dockers filing to and from work. Minks plying their trade on the corners. A squad of Bluecoats shaking down a shopkeep for a bribe. Rival gangs calling challenges to each other across the rooftops. A fine coach carrying a noble seeking illicit wares.

STREETS: Multi-level, cramped, dark, foggy. *Ash Way, Cinder Street, Rye Street, Candle Street, Hulliver Lane.*

BUILDINGS: Flophouses, inns, old manors chopped into apartments, traditional stone houses. Smiths, taverns, brothels, butchers.

NOTABLES

SERGEANT LOCHLAN. The senior Bluecoat squad leader in the district, reporting to Captain Dunvil. Lochlan is flexible and reasonable, taking bribes and payoffs when she can; enforcing the law and making examples when necessary. (*Shrewd, Tough, Commanding*)

LEWIT, JOL, MYRA, REYF. Bluecoat constables; run an extortion racket.

MARDIN GULL. Owner and operator of the Leaky Bucket public house. Mardin was the leader of the Crows many years ago (before Roric and Lyssa) and now enjoys a comfortable retirement out of the scoundrel life. (*Charming, Experienced, Respected*)

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| Wealth | ● ● ● ● |
| Security & Safety | ● ● ● ● |
| Criminal Influence | ● ● ● ● |
| Occult Influence | ● ● ● ● |

Years of murder have made this the most haunted district. Angry ghosts crave bloodshed here. You may take a devil's bargain for +1d for violent action, but the ghost will lash out, too.



THE DOCKS

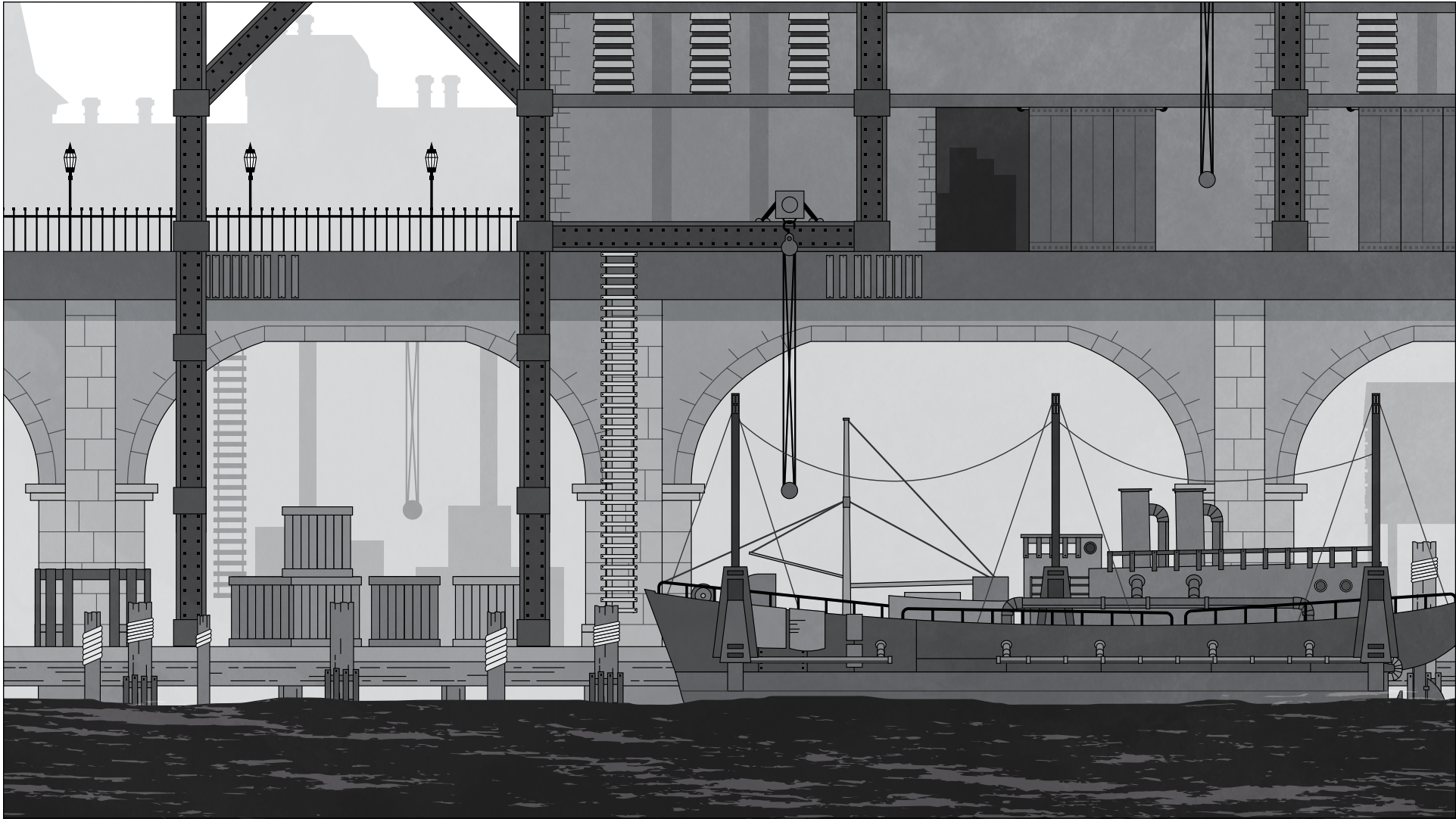
The docks of Doskvol are ancient, going back to the days before the cataclysm, when the area was just a small settlement where they could trade with the Skov kingdom without crossing the harsh North Sea. Today, some commerce has shifted to the new electro-rail lines of the Imperium, but the docks are still bustling with cargo haulers, fishing boats, and the prestigious Leviathan Hunter ships which provide the raw material that keeps the city running.

1 THE NORTH HOOK COMPANY. This grand, old-fashioned estate house is headquarters for the oldest surviving shipping and naval exploration enterprise in the Imperium. The North Hook Company has a massive fleet of trade ships and is considered by many to be merely a private front for the Ministry of Transport, which has official claim only over the commerce of the electro-rails. No one knows for sure, since enemies and rivals of the company (not to mention overly curious journalists) tend to disappear.

2 INK LANE. This twisting back-street is home to many of the city's tattooists as well as several newspapers—who all share the cost of their inks in bulk. A fine place for gossip and rumors of all kinds.

3 SALTFOUR'S. A squat stone building which houses one of the more notorious private banks in Duskwall. Being so close to the docks, Saltfour's has faced many gangs of whiskey'd sailors that decided to turn to robbery as a new line of work, and defeated them all—sometimes even hanging the corpses from their lamp-posts as discouragement to the next pack of drunken fools.

4 THE MENAGERIE. A fenced off muddy field, dotted with rusting animal pens, water tanks, and gaudy signage. Sailors traditionally drop off any curious creatures they pick up in their travels, which Captain Rye, the strange proprietor, incorporates into his makeshift zoological displays.



THE DOCKS

SCENE: Small and medium steamships docked close, dwarfed by the titanic Leviathan Hunter ships further out. Throngs of sailors and dockers, doing their work, singing work-songs. Heavy cargo rumbling away on wagons. Shouts and breaking glass from a brawl spilling out of a tavern.

STREETS: Raised streets perched over the docks themselves, rigged with cranes and winches. *North Hook Way, Carter Street, Plume Street, Saltford Street, Ink Lane.*

BUILDINGS: Massive cargo warehouses. Squat taverns, brothels, and tatoo parlors. Crowded overnight bunkhouses for sailors.

NOTABLES

CHIEF HELKER. One of the most influential senior Dockers. Helker has a lot of sway at the docks, and if you cross him, you might find your cargo tossed into the drink—and possibly you along with it. (*Cautious, Greedy*)

TRIS. A legendary tattooist who only inks those that have looked upon a leviathan and lived to tell the tale. Getting a tattoo from Tris is a rite of passage for everyone who hunts the demons of the void sea. (*Strange, Popular, Insightful*)

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| Wealth | ● ● ● ● |
| Security & Safety | ● ● ● ● |
| Criminal Influence | ● ● ● ● |
| Occult Influence | ● ● ● ● |



DUNSLOUGH

Dunslough is a ghetto for the destitute poor of the city, as well as the site of Ironhook Prison and its labor camp. Originally, the ghetto was a neighborhood for families of prisoners, but over the years, extreme poverty and neglect have worn it down into a sodden ruin. A vicious cycle plays out here: crime driven by desperation, then arrest, incarceration, and release back to Dunslough—giving Ironhook an endless supply of laborers to exploit.

1 IRONHOOK PRISON. A towering metal fortress, where the worst (or most unlucky) criminals are incarcerated. The poorest are forced to work at Dunvil Labor Camp. The most well-connected prisoners manage a comfortable stay, and may even continue to run their criminal enterprises from behind bars.

2 DUNVIL LABOR CAMP. Poor prisoners who can't afford to bribe the staff at Ironhook spend most of their days toiling at Dunvil Labor Camp, loading precious ores onto barges for the rail station and breaking the larger rocks hauled from the Mire.

3 DUNSLOUGH GHETTO The most destitute of the city end up in Dunslough, working the Mire for a pittance just to buy their daily bread. The city counts the space as "runoff" for the prison grounds, and does nothing to maintain it.

4 THE MIRE. A massive mud-quarry pit, The Mire is the site of the impact of some ancient celestial body, which left behind a variety of precious ores and jewels embedded in the stone.



DUNSLOUGH

SCENE: Mud-covered laborers returning from the Mire. Destitute families scrounging for scraps along the roadway to the Barrowcleft farms. Bored Ironhook guards, rifles slung on their backs, watching a taskmaster lash a labor camp prisoner.

STREETS: Cramped, multi-level—some of stone but many of dirt, sodden into thick black mud. No street names to be found.

BUILDINGS: Decrepit wooden row houses, many abandoned from fire damage or fallen-in from age. Stone silos, clanking steam machinery, and metal sheds for dredging equipment.

NOTABLES

MASTER KROCKET. An unsavory, greasy-haired, scarecrow of a man who runs the snarling pack of vicious dogs used by Ironhook to track down escapees and sniff out contraband and tunnels. His handlers can be found around the labor camp and all about Dunsloough, using their status with the prison for favors and bribes.

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Wealth | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Security & Safety | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Criminal Influence | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Occult Influence | ● ● ● ● ● |



NIGHTMARKET

Nightmarket is a district dominated by commerce. Situated near Gaddoc Rail Station, Nightmarket receives the bulk of saleable goods from the cargo trains that travel across the Imperium, bringing the exotic and rare to Duskwall. The citizens that call Nightmarket home constitute a new class of "elites"—wealthy people who are not of noble descent but nevertheless claim land, status, and power without titles. The district has been taken over by new construction, introducing lavish private townhouses with all of the modern advances for the elites that can afford them.



NIGHTMARKET

SCENE: Electric lights in a riot of colors advertise the market stalls of the vendors. Several devout acolytes bow in silent prayer at the statues of the Night Queen, the district's adopted forgotten god. The city's elite, hidden behind masks, slip into the underground to partake of strange pleasures in the private clubs.

STREETS: Multi-level wooden platforms and boardwalks. Landscaped parks of petrified trees from the deathlands. High-class subterranean avenues. *Song Street, String Street, Paper Street, Bell Street.*

BUILDINGS: Open air wooden market stalls. Underground stone shops and clubs. Newly constructed private townhouses for the Nightmarket elites.

NOTABLES

JIRA. A dealer of fine weapons from the Dagger Isles. Greatly respected by many street toughs in The Dusk—a "jira blade" is a status symbol that many aspire to. (*Bold, Tough*)

LECLURE. A purveyor of personal luxuries (soaps, hair oils, perfume, fine silks) who dabbles in fortune telling. Some say that her drowned lover is a ghost that whispers secrets in her ear. (*Shrewd, Tough, Commanding*)

MORDIS. A strange merchant which hides its true appearance beneath many layers of robes and hoods. Also fences occult and arcane stolen goods, no questions asked. (*Secretive, Insightful, Arcane*)

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| Wealth | ● ● ● ● |
| Security & Safety | ● ● ● ● |
| Criminal Influence | ● ● ● ● |
| Occult Influence | ● ● ● ● |

THE SHATTERED ISLES

AKOROS

Dark forests, rocky hills. Rich coastal cities and some mining colonies deep inland. The Akorosi are sometimes called "Imperials" since the Imperium began there. They are generally fair-skinned and dark haired.

SEVEROS

Windswept grass plains. Outside the Imperial cities, some native Serverosi still live in free tribes, scavenging the death-lands on their ghost-hunting horses. They are generally brown-skinned and dark haired.

IRUVIA

Golden deserts. People say that some positions of power are openly held by demons in Iruvia. They are generally amber-skinned and dark haired.

THE DAGGER ISLES

Tropical, jungle. People there live without lightning barriers. How do they manage that? They are generally copper-skinned and dark haired.

SKOVLAN

Cold, mountainous, wild. The last holdout from Imperial control. The war of Skovlan Unity ended only a few years ago. They are generally pale-skinned and fair haired or red haired.

TYCHEROS

A far off land, disconnected from the Empire. People say the Tycherosi (rudely called "Strangers") have demon blood. If you play one, tell the group what your telltale demonic physical feature is. Do you have talons? Shark-black eyes? A shadow that moves differently than you do?

A NOTE ABOUT THE WORLD

The islands have wildly different climates due to magical weirdness from the cataclysm. The "water" of the Void Sea seems to be composed of opaque black ink, but it's possible to see constellations of shimmering stars far below the surface. The sun is a dim ember, providing only purpleish twilight at dawn and dusk; leaving the world in darkness otherwise.

Don't expect realism here.



ADVANCED ABILITIES & PERMISSIONS

A sampling of additional abilities that may be gained in play.

IRUVIAN SWORD ARTS

When you achieve the rank of student in an Iruvian sword art, you receive permission to study the fundamentals of your chosen style.

When you have proven your command of the fundamentals of the style, you achieve the rank of adept. You receive permission to study the secret arts of the style. You gain the adept fighting maneuver of your style (this does not count as a special ability).

When you have proven your mastery over the secret arts of the style, you become a master. You may take the master special ability of your style as a **veteran** advance.

FALLING STAR STYLE

[**ADEPT**] **SASH FIGHTING:** You may wield a special silken sash in combat to interfere with your opponent and open them up to sword attacks. The sash resembles a very long scarf and is weighted at the tips. You may attempt to disarm an opponent or grapple them (to immobilize a limb or choke them), while staying out of arm's reach. You may also use the sash as climbing gear and to negate harm from falls.

- [**MASTER**] **THE FALLING STAR:** Your sword attacks involve acrobatic leaps with powerful falling slashes. When you make an attack in this way, choose a beneficial extra effect (this effect occurs regardless of the outcome of your action): *The target's armor is ruined — the target's weapon is ruined — the target is knocked sprawling — the target is forced back out of sword-reach.*

RISING MOON STYLE

[**ADEPT**] **MOON DAGGER:** You may wield a vicious curved dagger in the off-hand to counter your opponent's moves or launch a wild flurry of cuts with both your blades. During any exchange with an opponent, at your option, choose to fight viciously with dagger and sword—increasing the level of any harm inflicted by you and your opponent, or fight defensively—decreasing the level of any harm inflicted by you and your opponent.

- [**MASTER**] **THE RISING MOON:** Your sword attacks involve acrobatic leaps with powerful upward slashes. When you make an attack in this way, choose a beneficial extra effect (this effect occurs regardless of the outcome of your action): *The target's armor is ruined — the target's weapon is ruined — the target is knocked sprawling — the target is forced in close where a sword is useless.*

THE FORGOTTEN GODS

When you open your mind to the thought tendrils of a forgotten god, you suffer **1 trauma** and become an adept of its cult. You gain access to the following special abilities as **veteran** advances:

- **THE CLOSING OF THE EYE:** You no longer suffer terror from the supernatural, and can choose to take **only 1 stress** when you resist mental, electroplasmic, or spiritual harm, regardless of the result of your roll.
- **GLORIOUS VISAGE:** You may extend the thought-tendrils of the god from your own mind to those around you, granting them a vision of its formless form. This is a psychic attack which inflicts **3 stress** on you and has an effect determined by your trauma level. **Trauma 1+:** all those who can see you must look away and leave your presence, or be paralyzed with dread. **Trauma 2+:** In addition, you inflict level 2 harm (formless dread) to all who can see you. **Trauma 3+:** Instead of level 2 harm, you inflict level 3 harm (catatonic). **Trauma 4+:** In addition, you may also focus on one person who can see you and inflict fatal psychic harm (shattered mind).

When you suffer your fourth trauma, you mind is prepared and you ascend to mastery in the cult of your forgotten god. You receive permission to call upon your god to briefly manifest in the physical world and enact its will, at the cost of 6 stress. You receive permission to continue to play your character rather than retiring, with the following restrictions:

- ◆ You may now heal stress only by serving the will of your forgotten god. Your vice becomes **SERVITUDE**.
- ◆ When next you suffer trauma (your fifth), you ascend to avatar of the god, losing your human mind and will as the thought-tendrils of the god fully manifest within you. Retire your character to their dark fate.

THE PATH OF ECHOES

When you achieve the rank of initiate, you receive permission to attend the secret rituals of the cult.

When you make the appropriate sacrifices to the cult, master the ways of the secret rituals, and offer up your absolute loyalty to the Path, you become an adept.

When you achieve the rank of adept, you receive permission to attend the forbidden spirit-well rituals in the deathlands. You

may also take the following special ability as a **veteran** advance:

- **SPIRIT LINK:** The death or ghostly possession of your physical body instantly frees your spirit. You arise from any spirit well you have previously visited. Switch to the **Ghost** playbook and immediately take a playbook advancement.

BOUND TO THE DEMON

When, having bound yourself by arcane ritual to a demon, you indulge its dark desire, you receive permission to command it and it may not refuse you. When the demon's desire is not well-satisfied, it receives permission to work in secret toward your destruction to be free of its binding.

You may also take the following special abilities as **veteran** advances:

- **DEMONIC ATTENDANT:** A demon bound to you is compelled to stay always at hand, veiled and hidden within a nearby source of its elemental affinity, ready to appear at an instant to serve you. While its dark desire is well satisfied, the demon will manifest to interpose itself for your protection or to offer its wisdom or aid without need for your specific command.
- **DEMONIC ARTIFACT:** You may force a demon bound to you to inhabit an artifact created by arcane ritual. The demon's abilities are then controlled by the wielder, so long as the demon's dark desire is satisfied.

DEATHSEEKER

When you become a friend to the Deathseeker Crows, you receive permission to offer them sacrifices.

When you leave a worthy sacrifice for the Deathseeker Crows, you may choose a boon:

- ◆ Name a person. The crows shall not seek out their corpse upon death.
- ◆ Name a person. A crow shall lead you to the location of their spirit—alive, dead, or otherwise.
- ◆ Name yourself. A crow shall attend you for a week. If you should die during that time, the crow shall pluck out your spirit and carry it to a spirit bottle prepared for the purpose.
- ◆ Ask for no boon; leave the sacrifice as a show of respect to the crows.

What do the crows desire as a sacrifice? What do they abhor?