



CHAPTER 1

VIGILANTES

FIGHT FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT

“Doskvol is a sewer of crime and corruption filled with thugs of one stripe or another. The Bluecoats? An empty promise. Servants of the rich and the powerful, oblivious and unconcerned with the plight of the people. There is no one to protect the downtrodden and the low. No one but me.”

—Argus Fern, Vigilante

Vigilantes is a *Blades in the Dark* playset about playing the good guys, or as close to the good guys as you can find in Doskvol. The playset includes one new gang type, as well as new rules for turf, claims, entanglements, downtime, and payoffs as they apply to Vigilantes.

Otherwise all the standard rules for creating characters, performing actions, and advancement are the same as in core *Blades in the Dark*.

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.

GRAPHIC NOVELS: *Watchmen*, by Alan Moore, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, by Frank Miller

MOVIES: *Batman Begins*, directed by Christopher Nolan. *Mad Max: Fury Road* by George Miller. *Boondock Saints* by Troy Duffy. *The Crow* by Alex Proyas.

TV: *Jessica Jones* by Melissa Rosenberg. *Leverage* by Chris Downey and John Rogers. *The Wire*, by David Simon, et al.

Opposite: Cinder Street in Crow’s Foot carries the ghost echoes of the fallen. Few stop to hear their pleas, fewer still take action.

CREW CREATION

CHOOSE AN ORIGIN

Doskvol lives and breathes corruption. In every breath of electroplasm, each time the fingers of its iron steamships pierce the ink black sea, as its wounds fester and Spirit Wardens ooze out. There is no place for good people here. So where do vigilantes come from? When you are creating your crew, choose one of the following origins and personalize it for your vigilantes. What kind of people were they when they started down this road?

There are three different origins to choose from.

GARGOYLES

Wards of their homes. Protecting their family, friends, and neighborhood.

WOLVES

Scoundrels who seek vengeance or retribution on other criminals.

SHIELDS

Bluecoats, Inspectors, Spirit Wardens, and other officials who strike out on their own for justice.

GARGOYLES

Is it your family that suffers at the hands of criminals? Your sect? Your friends? Your whole neighborhood? No matter, you've stepped in to defend them, and in Doskvol that means hardening what you protect against all who would take it from you.

Self-appointed stewards of their home, your vigilantes make their "scores" by organizing people to protect each other, supplying needed goods, and most often by taking down those who would threaten them.

Starting Upgrades: Lair: Quarters, Lair: Secure, Training: Resolve

Who do you protect in your district? How do you protect them and from whom? What price do you extract from those under your care? What do you do with those who don't pay up?

WOLVES

Your vigilantes have made a profession out of knocking over other criminals. Safe houses, brothels with full tills, and drug dens may be prepared for Bluecoats, angry ghosts, and demonic possession, but they aren't prepared for you.

You may be in it for revenge, for fame, or for sport, but everyone knows it isn't for the money; that would make you no better than common thieves.

Starting Upgrades: Quality: Weapons, Lair: Hidden, Training: Resolve

Who are your targets? Why do you seek them out? How do you keep one step ahead of their wrath? What happens when they catch up to you?

SHIELDS

Your vigilantes are Bluecoats, Spirit Wardens, Inspectors, or other would-be peacekeepers in Doskvol. You have seen the corruption within your own ranks and the futility of trying to work within the system. Unimpeded by bureaucracy and politics, you've set out to deliver justice where the law is too enfeebled to act—or worse, complicit in the crime.

Starting Upgrades: Training: Insight, Training: Resolve, Lair: Hidden

Playing Shields often demands that your vigilantes live secret lives that are at odds with one another. How do you keep your actions hidden? Who do you trust with your secret? What will happen if you are found out?

Your crew begins with **2 COIN** in its coffers (the remains of the PCs' savings). You are **Tier 0**, with **strong hold** and **0 REP**.

ADD VICE: OBLIGATION

"Nobody understands a vigilante, not even themselves. The fools must pray every day for death and torment, for that's all they ever receive."

—Dewar Vance, deacon of the Weeping Lady

Vigilantes, by their nature, have cut themselves off from the easy money criminals enjoy or the relative safety provided by a starched blue coat. Their drive and obsessions are for something ephemeral that they will likely never reach.

That drive, however still needs to be fueled. Vigilantes gain **Obligation** as a second vice. If your character has already taken Obligation as a vice, add a second vice purveyor. Here are some examples of how vices manifest for vigilantes:

- ◆ **OBLIGATION:** Devoting yourself to improving your community and the people within, carrying on a family tradition, or supporting your loved ones. Your vice purveyor is often the person you're obligated to.
- ◆ **FAITH:** You are in the service of a church, bear a supernatural debt, are dedicated to an ancestor, etc.
- ◆ **GAMBLING:** Flaunting your defiance of the corrupt, challenging those above your station, betting on sporting events, etc.
- ◆ **LUXURY:** Trophies of your defeated foes, accolades from the public, living a secret identity.
- ◆ **PLEASURE:** Praise from your wards, lovers, and friends. Indulgence in food or drink, reading old histories, etc.
- ◆ **STUPOR:** Personally tormenting criminals beyond what justice requires, numbing yourself from the pain with drugs, alcohol, or other destructive distractions.
- ◆ **WEIRD:** Obsessing over foes and allies. Learning everything about them, beyond what is useful. Consorting with strange figures, or pushing yourself beyond the brink to improve.

CHOOSE AN INITIAL REPUTATION & LAIR

Your crew has just formed and acquired a lair. Given this group of characters and their previous escapades, what initial **reputation** would you have among the factions of the underworld? Choose one from the list at right (or create your own).

You earn xp when you bolster your crew's reputation, so think of this as another cue to indicate what sorts of action you want in the game. Will you be recklessly ambitious, targeting higher-Tier targets? Will you take on daring scores that others deem too risky? Are you interested in the strange weirdness of the Dusk?

AMBITIOUS
ZEALOUS
FEARLESS
HONORABLE
MYSTERIOUS
SAVVY
UNORTHODOX
STRANGE

Also, talk about where the crew makes its **lair**. You begin at Tier 0, so it's probably a very modest or abandoned sort of place. Choose one (or create your own):

- ◆ A **half-sunken grotto** in the city's maze-like underground canals.
- ◆ A **small, abandoned house** at the end of a dark lane.
- ◆ An **abandoned watch tower** atop an ancient, crumbling wall.
- ◆ A **rickety, tin-roofed shack** perched on a rooftop.
- ◆ The **unassuming back rooms** of a merchant's shop.
- ◆ A **junked rail-car**, rusted in place on its old, overgrown tracks.

Look at the map of Doskvol (page 254 in *Blades in the Dark*) and choose the district in which your lair is located. Are you based in some derelict area of a wealthy district or is your lair one of many other poor hovels in a destitute area? A good district choice for defiant types is **Crow's Foot**—the district most known for street gangs and open criminal activity.

ESTABLISH YOUR PROTECTED GROUNDS

Your crew is brand new, but you have chosen some small part of a district as your **protected grounds**. This is the area that you have pledged to keep safe, and you know it well. The area is small, only three or four city blocks—but it's still an intrusion on someone. The GM will tell you about two factions which have been impacted by your presence:

- ◆ One faction is pleased you are keeping the peace. Take **+2 status** with them.
- ◆ One faction is threatened by your presence. Take **-2 status** with them.

Choose your preferred methods to keep these places safe:

- ◆ **UNITING**: Connecting your community together to fight.
- ◆ **INTERFERENCE**: Disrupting underworld operations.
- ◆ **RESISTANCE**: Defying oppressive laws and customs.
- ◆ **TERROR**: Intimidating your enemies.

When you prepare to execute an operation of your preferred type in your protected grounds, you get **+1d** to any **gather information** rolls and a free additional **downtime activity** to contribute to that operation. This can help you discover an opportunity, acquire an asset you might need for the job, find an appropriate target, etc.

When you acquire a **claim** you also expand the size and/or type of your protected grounds. Detail the new area and/or methods with help from the GM.

A SPECIAL ABILITY

Take a look at the special abilities for your crew and choose one. If you can't decide which one to pick, go with the first one on the list—it's placed there as a good default choice. It's important to pick a special ability that everyone is excited about. You can get more special abilities in the future by earning xp.

Just like picking your crew type, reputation, lair, and hunting grounds, choosing a special ability is another chance to focus the game down to a more specific range of possibilities. Instead of playing a generic crew of vigilantes, you end up with *Shields* who are *fearless*, with a lair in the *old watch tower*, protecting grounds in *Coalridge near the factories*, a preference for *interfering*, with the **AVENGERS** special ability. That's a lot to work with, and it helps get the game going in a strong direction from the very beginning.

ASSIGN CREW UPGRADES

An upgrade is a valuable asset that helps the crew in some way, like a boat or a gang (see the complete descriptions on the following page). Each origin has three pre-selected **upgrades** that suit that crew (like **Resolve Training**, **Quarters**, and a **Secure Lair** for the Gargoyles crew). For a list of the general upgrades see **Crew Upgrades**, page 95 in *Blades in the Dark*.

You get to add **two additional upgrades** to your new crew (so you'll have a total of five upgrades when you start). You can choose from the specific upgrades available to your crew type or the general upgrades on the crew sheet. *For example, you might pick the Vigilantes attire as one of your choices and also the general upgrade Quality Weapons as your other choice.*

When you assign your two upgrades, the GM will tell you about two factions that are impacted by your choices:

- ◆ One faction helped you get an upgrade. They like you, and you get **+1 status** with them. At your option, spend **1 COIN** to repay their kindness, and take **+2 status** with them instead.
- ◆ One faction was screwed over when you got an upgrade. They don't like you, and you get **-2 status** with them. At your option, spend **1 COIN** to mollify them, and take **-1 status** with them instead.

You'll be able get more upgrades in the future by earning xp (see **Advancement**, page 48 in *Blades in the Dark*).

CHOOSE A FAVORITE CONTACT

Take a look at your list of potential contacts on the crew sheet. Choose one contact who is a close friend, long-time ally, or partner in crimefighting. The GM will tell you about two factions that are impacted by your choice:

- ◆ One faction is also friendly with this contact, and you get **+1 status** with them.
- ◆ One faction is unfriendly with this contact, and you get **-1 status** with them.

At your option, these factions are even more concerned with this contact and so you take **+2** and **-2 status** instead.

EXPERTS

An **expert** is someone who has allied with your crew. To recruit a new expert, spend **two upgrades** and create them using the process below.

CREATING A EXPERT

Choose a **expert type** from the list below:

- ◆ **CRAFTER:** Machinist, physicker, spark-crafter, chemist.
- ◆ **BRAVE:** Soldier, guard, tracker, sailor, ex-mercenary.
- ◆ **INFORMANT:** Inspector, spy, gossipmonger, scholar.
- ◆ **MYSTIC:** Whisper, Gondolier, occultist, witch.
- ◆ **BROKEN:** Deathlands scavenger, possessed, hull, ghost.

Record the experts **type** along with their name and specific details.

An expert has **quality** equal to your current crew Tier +1. Their scale is always zero (1 person). Your experts increase in quality when your crew moves up in Tier.

Some crew upgrades will add the “Dedicated” feature to an expert, which gives them +1d when they roll for a given type. *So, if you’re Tier I and have a dedicated Crafter (+1d), they would roll 3d when they try to build your spark-craft grapple gun.*

EDGES & FLAWS

When you create an expert, give them one or two **edges** and an equal number of **flaws**.

EDGES

- ◆ **Subtle:** The expert is easily overlooked or disregarded.
- ◆ **Independent:** The expert can be trusted to make good decisions and act on their own initiative in the absence of direct orders.
- ◆ **Loyal:** The expert can’t be bribed or turned against you.
- ◆ **Tenacious:** The expert won’t be deterred from a task.

FLAWS

- ◆ **Principled:** The expert has an ethic or value that it won’t betray.
- ◆ **Threatened:** The expert has troubles of their own from law, rivals, or internal turmoil.
- ◆ **Unreliable:** The expert isn’t always available, due to other obligations, stupefaction from their vices, etc.
- ◆ **Vindictive:** The expert has their own dark agenda.

MODIFYING AN EXPERT

You can add an **additional type** to an expert by spending two crew upgrades. When an expert performs actions for which its types apply, it uses its full quality rating. Otherwise, its quality is zero. A given expert can have up to two types.

USING AN EXPERT

When you send an expert to achieve a goal, roll their **quality** to see how it goes. Or, a PC can oversee the maneuver by leading a **group action**. If you direct the expert with orders, roll **COMMAND**. If you participate in the action alongside the expert, roll the appropriate action. The quality of any opposition relative to the expert's quality affects the position and effect of the action.

The Terriers want to run the Grinders out of the alley where they're selling spark. They send their Informant expert Layla to find out what she can about their operation. The GM rolls 2d for the Experts' quality, and gets a 4. An hour later, Layla comes back with the location of their warehouses, but her expression is grim, "The spotted me, that's going to mean trouble." (The GM advances the "Grinders extortion" threat clock but she succeeded in her goal.)

EXPERT HARM & HEALING

Experts suffer harm similarly to PCs. An expert can suffer four levels of harm:

1. **WEAKENED.** The expert has reduced effect.
2. **IMPAIRED.** The expert operates with reduced quality (-1d).
3. **BROKEN.** The expert can't do anything until they recover.
4. **DEAD.** The expert is dead.

All of your experts heal during downtime. If circumstances are amenable for recovery, each expert removes one level of harm (or two levels of harm instead, if a PC spends a downtime activity helping them recuperate).

If an expert is removed from play, they may be replaced. Spend **REP** equal to your Tier +2 plus two downtime activities to recruit a new expert.





VIGILANTES CREW CREATION SUMMARY

1 Choose an origin. The origin determines the group's purpose, their starting upgrades, and where they came from. Each PC gains an additional **vice**: Obligation.

- ◆ **GARGOYLES:** Wards of your home. **Starting Upgrades:** Lair: Quarters, Lair: Secure, Training: Resolve.
- ◆ **WOLVES:** Punishing for sport or revenge. **Starting Upgrades:** Quality: Weapons, Lair: Hidden, Training: Resolve.
- ◆ **SHIELDS:** Doskvol officials who took off the badge. **Starting Upgrades:** Training: Insight, Training: Resolve, Lair: Hidden.

You begin at **Tier 0**, with **strong hold** and **0 REP**. You start with **2 COIN**.

2 Choose an initial reputation and lair. Choose how other underworld factions see you: *Ambitious—Zealous—Fearless—Honorable—Mysterious—Savvy—Unorthodox—Strange*. Look at the map and pick a district in which to place your lair. Describe the lair.

3 Establish your protected grounds. Pick a district in which to place your protected grounds. Record the faction status changes related to your grounds.

- ◆ One faction is pleased you are keeping the peace. Take **+2 status** with them.
- ◆ One faction is threatened by your presence. Take **-2 status** with them.

4 Choose a special ability. They're in the gray column in the middle of the crew sheet. If you can't decide, choose the first ability on the list. It's placed there as a good first option.

5 Assign crew upgrades. Your crew has three upgrades pre-selected. Choose two more. If your crew has an expert, follow the procedure to create it. Record the faction status changes due to your upgrades:

- ◆ One faction helped you get an upgrade. Take **+1 status** with them. Or spend **1 COIN** for **+2 status** instead.
- ◆ One faction was harmed when you got an upgrade. Take **-2 status** with them. Or spend **1 COIN** for **-1 status** instead.

6 Choose a favorite contact. Mark the one who is a close friend, long-time ally, or partner in justice. Record the faction status changes related to your contact:

- ◆ One faction is friendly with your contact. Take **+1 status** with them.
- ◆ One faction is unfriendly with your contact. Take **-1 status** with them.

At your option, increase the intensity of the factions' relationship with your contact and take **+2** and **-2 status** instead.

Opposite: Vigilantes often have secret canal routes in and out of their lairs.

VIGILANTES

Daring avengers

You defy the city's corrupt institutions—both the criminal gangs and the uncaring law. Yours is a path of violence and madness.

When you play Vigilantes, you earn xp when you interfere with criminal scores, protect citizens, or antagonize the law.

What is required to see justice done? Is anyone safe from your judgment?

STARTING UPGRADES

- ◆ **Training:** RESOLVE.
- ◆ **Two more based on Origin.**

PROTECTED GROUNDS

Choose a favored operation type:

- ◆ **Uniting:** Connecting your community together to fight.
- ◆ **Interference:** Disrupting underworld operations.
- ◆ **Resistance:** Defying oppressive laws and customs.
- ◆ **Terror:** Intimidating your enemies.

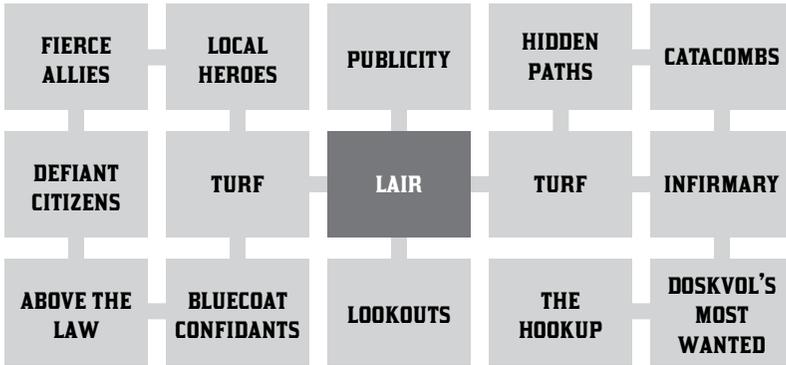
CONTACTS

- ◆ **Mara**, a chief inspector. *Perhaps she send you work the Blue won't touch?*
- ◆ **Twelves**, a leviathan hunter. *Perhaps she acts as a supplier?*
- ◆ **Soren**, a restless ghost. *Perhaps he tells you of the wrongs done to him?*
- ◆ **Remira**, a reluctant Lampblack. *Perhaps she keeps you updated on their movements?*
- ◆ **Anis**, a Spirit Warden. *Perhaps a Warden who doubts their leadership?*
- ◆ **Badger**, a brilliant inventor. *Perhaps a source for gadgets and contraptions?*

VIGILANTES UPGRADES

- ◆ **Vigilante Attire:** You get 2 free load worth of supplies or weapons. *For example, you could carry subterfuge supplies and a long blade (weapon) for zero load.*
- ◆ **Dedicated Crafters:** All your experts with the Crafter type get +1d to quality rolls for Crafter-related actions.
- ◆ **Willing to Fight:** All of your experts are considered Braves and will fight by your side. (They may have three expert types.)
- ◆ **Irregulars:** Your experts are connected to the community and good at providing solid information. They gain +1d when gathering information on their own.
- ◆ **Unbroken:** Each PC gets +1 **TRAUMA** box. This costs three upgrades to unlock, not just one. *This may bring a PC with 4 TRAUMA back into play if you wish.*

VIGILANTES CLAIMS



ABOVE THE LAW: The people put themselves on the line for you. As long as you maintain **+3 faction status** with a Citizens faction, you roll for engagements and suffer jail time as though your wanted level was one lower.

BLUECOAT CONFIDANTS: You get **-2 HEAT** per score. *A friend on the force is willing to make certain reports disappear.*

CATACOMBS: You get **+1d** to **Study** or **Tinker** on-site. *These long-forgotten halls hold hidden depths.* [No contact/threat]

DEFIANT CITIZENS: A large gang (20 people) of citizens that will fight for you in times of need. Use **acquire asset** to call on them and to determine quality.

DOSKVOL'S MOST WANTED: You get **+2 REP** in **payoff** for scores that antagonize the law. *Citizens love to see Bluecoats get their comeuppance.*

FIERCE ALLIES: All of your experts are **loyal**. *What oaths have you sworn to secure this devotion?*

HIDDEN PATHS: You get **+1d** to **PROWL** back to your lair. [No contact/threat]

INFIRMARY: You get **+1d** to healing treatment rolls. *The infirmary also has beds for long-term convalescence.* [No contact/threat]

LOCAL HEROES: You get **+1d** to indulge your vice. If you overindulge with your obligation vice, you get **+1 rep** in addition to the normal consequences.

LOOKOUTS: You get **+1d** to **HUNT** or **SURVEY** on in your protected grounds.

PUBLICITY: You get **+2 rep** on takedown scores. *Gain any time you stop a criminal score or weaken an underworld faction's hold.*

THE HOOKUP: You get **+1d** to **acquire asset** rolls. *A small network of smugglers and merchants set aside their best wares for you.*

CONTACT AND THREAT

Unless specified as [No contact/threat], each Vigilante claim also includes a new crew **contact** and a **threat** the claim faces. See **Tier and Claims** on page 17 for more information on Vigilante claims.

VIGILANTES SPECIAL ABILITIES

AS GOOD AS YOUR WORD

You may spend **REP** as **COIN** in downtime actions. Vigilantes gain **Obligation** as a second vice.

Vigilante crews get this ability automatically (in addition to another starting ability). If your character already has Obligation as a vice, add a second vice purveyor.

AVENGERS

Each PC may add +1 action rating to **HUNT**, **PROWL**, or **COMMAND** (up to a max rating of 3).

Each player may choose the action they prefer (you don't all have to choose the same one). If you take this ability during initial character and crew creation, it supersedes the normal starting limit for action ratings.

THORN IN YOUR SIDE

When you use Stealth or Assault plans against a higher **Tier** faction, your **Tier** counts as +1.

This ability is in effect during the entire score, improving your quality on all actions against your target.

MISDIRECTION

At the end of a score, you may sacrifice half the **REP** gained to make another faction lose status with your target instead of your crew.

Through hard-won battles and fierce allies, you're able to take some of the credit for your work while still casting the blame on another. How do you pin it on someone else? Who knows the truth?

UNCANNY PREPARATION

Twice per session when performing a **Desperate** action, Vigilantes may improve their effect or position as though they had done a setup action. Describe a flashback that gives you the advantage now.

You've planned ahead, outfoxed your opponent, or otherwise prepared for the worst. Treat this as a successful setup action.

MORAL COMPASS

Each PC gains an additional **xp trigger**: *You fulfilled a promise at a cost to you or the crew.*

FAVORS

Spend one **REP** and describe how one of your contacts puts themselves in danger to help you. Everyone in your crew gets one dot in an action your contact is skilled in for this score.

This ability means that your contact is putting themselves in danger to aid you. If they have any threat clocks against, them advance the clock. If not start a new one.

ROOTS

During downtime one of your contacts or experts may take a downtime action to acquire an asset, reduce **HEAT**, or recover harm for you.

VIGILANTES RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1 A poor family approaches you, seeking vengeance on another faction for the death of a loved one.
 - 2 A group of corrupt Bluecoats “lost” important evidence for putting away a criminal noble.
 - 3 Skovlander refugees have started pushing back against their oppressors, and things are likely to come to a violent head soon.
 - 4 Assassins are planning a hit to remove a noble to settle some petty differences. Their known methods are to burn the house down, servants and all.
 - 5 Leg-breakers in Crow’s Foot are pushing businesses to sell their property cheaply so a magistrate can buy them up.
 - 6 Spirit Wardens are attempting to find and destroy a demon in Doskvol, but they can’t do it with the demon’s cult constantly interfering.
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- 1 Dockers believe their own leadership has been compromised by gang influence but can’t discover the truth on their own.
 - 2 A local butcher shop-turned-hellpit is slated for orphanage construction. Stop the build or stop the dark forces lying in wait underneath.
 - 3 A miner in Coalridge was set up as a scapegoat by another gang. They need help to prove their innocence.
 - 4 A radiant energy farmer has been extorted to hide drugs for a group of Hawkers, who will destroy their crops if they don’t comply.
 - 5 Two lovers are seeing refuge. One is a member of the Red Sashes, the other is a Lampblack. If either gang finds out, they are both dead.
 - 6 A boxer at the docks refused to throw a match and now there is a price on her head.
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- 1 Kidnappers have taken a Rail Jack’s sibling and left a ransom note demanding the Rail Jack to smuggle a package off a train through Gaddoc Rail customs.
 - 2 There have already been three victims of a serial killer. They leave strange marks on the body of their ghostless victims. The child of a crimeboss was one of them.
 - 3 A ghost approaches you seeking vengeance on its killer, a prominent magistrate.
 - 4 An eelmonger is trying to come clean after years of feeding bodies to the fishes. Their old contacts want to make sure there are no loose ends.
 - 5 A group of deathlands scavengers have earned an early release, but Ironhook officials prize them too much to set them free.
 - 6 Ink Rakes are slandering your crew and hurting your ties to community. Have they found a truth or are they fabricating lies?

*For any responsibility above, consider a Uniting, Interference, Resistance, or Terror operation. To twist an opportunity or add additional elements, roll on the score generator tables on pages 306-309 of *Blades in the Dark*.*



CHAPTER 2

PLAYING VIGILANTES

WHAT WE DO

Vigilantes are a group of daring avengers looking out for their own inside a city that never does.

There will be bloody vengeance against criminals, flight from the Bluecoats, broken promises, and people that just aren't worth saving.

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 PLAYERS

Each player strives to bring their PC to life as an interesting, daring, conflicted character who reaches boldly beyond their current safety and means. They also define the source of their characters motivation. Vigilantes are unpaid and unwanted, so what drives you to do good? Who has done something so wrong that they must be stopped? Who is the family you've sworn to protect? When did you realize the Bluecoats were nothing but brutes with badges?

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.

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 and threats to the PCs. Then they follow the chain of action and consequences wherever it leads.

Opposite: Gaddoc Rail is a common hunting ground for many gangs in Doskvol. Vigilantes know this well.

TIER AND CLAIMS

Doskvol is a city of crime, top to bottom. Every faction preys on others to survive. Alliances are fleeting, vendettas are bloody. Into this chaos of corruption and violence your fledgling crew has set its course. Will you be crushed, or will you rise up?

TIER

Tier represents different virtues for Vigilantes. Instead of their wealth and size, a crew of Vigilantes is measured by their information network, support from the downtrodden, and the resources to take down larger institutions. Because Vigilantes never have gangs as cohorts, they will never be more than themselves, the dedicated experts helping them, and contacts who aid where they can but have needs of their own.

DEVELOPMENT

Advancement works the same for Vigilantes as they do for standard crews. You need both **REP** and **COIN** to advance and improve your crew's **hold** and **Tier**.

CLAIMS

For vigilantes, seizing a claim means wresting control from another faction that would otherwise exploit it, and then fighting to keep it safe. You might get a claim by breaking up a criminal operation, revealing corruption or skulduggery, or by force—however your crew prefers to operate given the opportunities at hand.

Depending on their nature, claims might be transformed when the vigilantes take them over. For example **Defiant Citizens** may be **Terrorized Citizens** (see Bravos claims on page 105 of *Blades in the Dark*) before the vigilantes fend off the gang that was terrifying them.

CONTACT AND THREAT

For vigilantes claims are a double-edged sword. Even claims that aren't **TURF** are filled with people you've protected, who will in turn watch out for you and give you their support, but those same people may come back to you in times of need as their lives will never really be safe without you.

Each time you secure new a new claim, add an entry to your protected grounds with a description and the threats it faces. Also add the claim's contact to the crew's list of friends. There are a few exceptions to this. Some places are just places. Catacombs, Hidden Paths, and Infirmary don't have contacts or threats.

Threats are project clocks added when a claim is acquired and advanced along with other NPC downtime actions (page 151 of *Blades in the Dark*).

EXAMPLES OF CONTACTS AND THREATS

Some of the lonely haunts your vigilantes might protect:

- ◆ **Gaddoc Rail Station**, and the street hawkers that peddle to rushed commuters. **CONTACT:** Nels, who roasts pig on a spit. **THREATS:** Ulf Ironborn demands protection money. Cabbies, encroaching on their meager domain. *Perhaps associated with The Hookup or Lookouts?*
- ◆ **Candle Street Bridge**, and the spirit-ridden who live under it. **CONTACT:** Kells, ex-architect who tends the Open Vein, a spirit well. **THREATS:** Eels, looking to find and control the well, often taking the possessed for their own use. *Perhaps associated with turf or Above the Law?*
- ◆ **Bellweather Stocks**, and the menial labor force employed by the Spirit Wardens. **CONTACT:** Corrin Alwyn, a Skovlan smith who works maintenance on the Crematorium. **THREATS:** Lord Scurlock, who ensorcles their members to steal spirit essence for him. The Spirit Wardens, who have noticed the discrepancy. *Perhaps associated with Fierce Allies or Bluecoat Confidants?*
- ◆ **The Leaky Bucket**, and her regular patrons. **CONTACT:** Mardin Gull, proprietor whose allegiance shifts as needed for survival. **THREATS:** The warring Crows, Lampblacks, and Red Sashes, all seeing to claim it. *Perhaps associated with Local Heroes or Publicity?*

DOSKVOL NOBODIES

Dyso, a carpenter of Barrows Lane, with gout and a mortgage.

Egrette, a young courier who watches over three even younger siblings.

Lux, a hollow rented out as an object, numb to physical pain.

Bendis Haig, a sanitary worker for the Church of the Ecstasy of the Flesh. Reeks of excrement.

Troon, ex-leviathan hunter who lost her arm at sea. She can still feel it out there.

Della Thorn, carriage driver, conspired to carry packages for Rolan Volaris. After he killed her sister, Della doesn't ask any more questions.

Torb, rubs feet at Singer's bath house in Crow's Foot. Loves his job.

Rast, a clerk in the investigator's office. Writes up reports for Inspector Krop by day, presses the Inspector's suits at home by night.

Weller the Shoe, a docker who lives in a powder-induced stupor. Taken care of by his husband Veck, after he works long days at the Silver Stag.

Adda, pen name Rayella the Divine, writes lowbrow smut fiction featuring sardonic depictions of Doskvol notables.

Callum Torborn, Skovlan shipbuilder with a terrible hacking cough, released from Ironhook last week, looking for a job in The Anvilworks.

Giller, adolescent who trash-fishes in the Canals. Strong lungs, bad teeth.

PAYOFF

After a score, the PCs take stock of rewards income from the operation. For Vigilantes, the standard Payoff is inverted. Their primary reward is **REP**, though **COIN** is still acquired, it is a necessary evil.

The crew earns 1 **COIN** per Tier of the target. If you walked away without taking anything for yourselves you earn zero **COIN**.

The crew earns **REP** based on the nature of the operation and who they impressed:

- ◆ **2 REP:** Retribution of a minor score.
- ◆ **4 REP:** Stop a minor score. Protect a citizen.
- ◆ **6 REP:** Retribution for a major score. Several citizens avenged.
- ◆ **8 REP:** Interrupt a major score. Corrupt officials outed. Many saved.
- ◆ **10+ REP:** Criminal faction destroyed.

Record the **COIN** on the crew sheet, or divvy it up among the crew members as you see fit.

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:

- ◆ **0 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 (whether the crew did the killing or not—bodies draw attention).

You mark **HEAT** levels on the **HEAT** tracker on the crew sheet.



*Marking 2 **HEAT** on the **HEAT** tracker. When the tracker is full, mark a **WANTED LEVEL** and clear all the **HEAT**.*

ENTANGLEMENTS

Vigilantes are reviled by nearly everyone. The criminals you hunt, the Bluecoats you embarrass, even the public you threaten. You also have favors and oaths from your friends and allies that are strained by your activity.

To reflect this, after each score, you roll dice to find out which entanglement comes calling. An entanglement might be a gang of blades trying to track you down, a Bluecoat with your face on a wanted poster, or the very people you protect coming to you in need.

After payoff and **HEAT** are determined, the GM rolls the Vigilantes' **WANTED LEVEL**, and uses the result of the roll to select which sort of entanglement manifests. *If their **WANTED LEVEL** is zero, roll two dice and keep the lowest result.*

HEAT 0-3		HEAT 4/5		HEAT 6+	
1-3	Turf in Danger or Public Outcry	1-3	Turf in Danger or Disgruntled Wards	1-3	Copy Cat or Lost Faith
4/5	Sending a Message, Dead You Didn't Save	4/5	Calling you out or Dead You Didn't Save	4/5	Taking You Down or Dead You Didn't Save
6	Fingered for a Crime	6	Questioning	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 (a gang at least equal in **scale** to your **WANTED LEVEL**). Pay them off with **COIN** equal to your **WANTED LEVEL** +3, hand someone over for arrest (this clears your **HEAT**), or try to evade capture.

CALLING YOU OUT

A faction calls you out. Lose 1 **REP** and 1 **COIN** per Tier of the faction calling you out as an apology, allow them to mess with you and yours, or face them.

COPY CAT

Some individual or faction bites off more than they can chew in your name. Take over the mess they've created or lose 3 **REP** and let them fry.

DEAD YOU DIDN'T SAVE

One of the Unquiet Dead that has suffered because you couldn't save them comes back for vengeance. Acquire the services of a Whisper or Rail Jack to attempt to destroy or banish it, or deal with it yourself.

*You can hire an NPC by using the **acquire asset** downtime activity (see page 22 in *Blades in the Dark*). Roll the NPC's quality level as a fortune roll to see how well they deal with the spirit.*

DISGRUNTLED WARDS

One of your contacts or friends protests that you've gone too far. Win back their trust or earn their ire.

*Depending on the NPC's status, they will react differently if ignored. The contact is removed from the crew sheet. Any other NPCs become enemies of the crew and start their own **THREAT** clock.*

FINGERED FOR A CRIME

You are the target of an investigation. Convince the Bluecoats they've got the wrong suspect, or take +2 **HEAT** as they pursue you.

LOST FAITH

One of your own—a close contact or member of your crew—stands up against you. Convince them your work needs to be done, go through them, or back down from your current endeavor and lose 4 **REP**.

This can be either a close contact, an expert, an anyone that is influential in the crew. So long as they are on the outs with you, they will not act on your behalf.

PUBLIC OUTCRY

Word on the street is you're a danger to everyone around you. Let the rumors spread and take your Tier +1 **HEAT**, spend 2 **REP** to have someone speak on your behalf, or set your detractor straight personally.

QUESTIONING

The Bluecoats grab an NPC member of your crew or one of the crew's contacts, to question them about your crimes. *Who do the Bluecoats think is most vulnerable?* Make a **fortune roll** to see how much they talk (1-3: +2 **HEAT**, 4/5: +1 **HEAT**), or pay the Bluecoats off with 2 **COIN**.

Roll 2d for a normal person to see how well they keep quiet. If they're an experienced underworld type or some kind of tough, give them 3d or 4d instead. If they're soft or if they have some loyalty to the law, give them 1d or 0d.

SENDING A MESSAGE

One of the factions that you have negative status with sends a message that you should back off. Lose 2 **REP** and gain an enemy in your community, or respond in turn.

TAKING YOU DOWN

A faction that you have antagonized sends a force to end you. Sacrifice a claim to them, lose 4 **REP** as you hide, or go to war.

GROUNDS IN DANGER

Someone in your protected grounds is in trouble because of their threat. Help them, abandon your turf, or lose respect (**REP** = Tier +1) by ignoring them.

DOWNTIME

Vigilantes have all the normal downtime options that standard crews do (and only receive one action while at war as usual). Remember also that Vigilantes can spend **COIN** or **REP** to improve the results of downtime actions.

Some of the actions they might take to work with the communities they protect include:

- ◆ **Indulge your vice** - particularly your **Obligation** - by spending time and **COIN** on the people you're pledged to aid.
- ◆ **Recover** from harm by steeling yourself for the work that must be done, often atop tall towers in the night.
- ◆ Work on a **long-term project** to bolster your neighborhood's economy with business, provide housing, improve security, start educational programs, or offer services.
- ◆ **Acquire an asset** by recruiting from the local pool of scoundrels who sympathize or idolize your cause.
- ◆ **Train** by studying your enemies, practicing secret fighting styles, or learning from those in your community.
- ◆ **Reduce heat** by turning criminals over to the Bluecoats, living a secret civilian life, and maintaining cover among your wards

NEW OPTION

Vigilantes also have one additional downtime action they can take:

- ◆ **Work a side job**: You earn **1 COIN**. *This action can only be performed once per downtime.*

NPC AND FACTION 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. If the Vigilantes have any claims with **threats**, look at those clocks as well to see if any factions are advancing them. Choose any action that makes sense for that faction to pursue. For examples see page 158 in *Blades in the Dark*.

When factions do things that affect the citizens, **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 new responsibilities for the PCs.

STARTING SITUATION: INNER DEMONS

Your crew is aware of a gang of Hawkers peddling a drug called Lure, temporary tattoos said to be made with leviathan blood. This drug is worse than spark or dreamsmoke. People enter their drug den and never return.

Lord Scurlock's interests extend into every arena—the political, the illicit, the occult. He has recently acquired a collection of men and women who have injected leviathan blood into their veins and are now transforming into something else... In their current pupal state, they are relatively easy to harvest and contain. *Will Scurlock develop the means to create an army of human/demon hybrids?*

Scurlock's supplier, the ambitious **Bloodletters**, created these monstrosities as an accidental by-product of their drug trafficking. After an internal conflict over selling the bodies and a swift and brutal coup, the current leadership is focused on refining the process to produce more "product" for Lord Scurlock. *How long until the Bloodletters start grabbing people off the street and forcibly injecting them with demon blood to get the results they need?*

The Bloodletter's leviathan blood comes from the **Fog Hounds**, a fledgling gang but one with close ties to the Leviathan Hunters, and therefore valuable.

Your crew of vigilantes lives in Crow's Foot and could put a stop to the human trafficking, or be caught between three dangerous enemies and be destroyed. Crow's Foot is your home and those nobody victims have names—Ugo rolled dice with you last week, Oris was a childhood crush, Dreana set your nose when Trevin broke it. You haven't seen any of them in a week. Unlikely you ever will again.

OPENING SCENE

After they make characters and their crew, tell the players this:

You're eating at the table of the Llewellyn home, a cramped apartment on the canal level below Cinder Street. Remira sits with you while her husband Arcus fusses in the kitchen trying to turn a few scraps and morsels into a meal.

Remira wants to know your answer. Her son Arquo is hooked on Lure and has been missing for two days. Her own daughter Brena is a member of the Lampblacks, and she won't act against the Bloodletters for fear of upsetting her gang boss... so it comes down to you. How do you know Remira? Will you help get her son off Lure? Will you dig into Remira's own shady past? Will you tell her to deal with the problems herself?

Play Remira. She's capable and smart, but way in over her head and tied up in Lampblack business she can't escape. If they're with her, she has some ideas about how to slow down the gangs involved. Choose one of the options on the next page, or create your own assignment based on the crew's origins.

If the PCs won't help, Remira is sorry to hear this and asks what they will do instead. If they're unwilling to help the Llewellyn family, they aren't welcome at her table, and she's got work ahead of her trying to find someone who cares.

SCORE 1: FOG HOUNDS SHIPMENT

Remira knows when and where a handoff is happening between the Fog Hounds and the Leviathan Hunters. Steal the shipment and the deal is dead.

- ◆ *The hand-off location is a secret, but Remira can tell you where to look if you agree to the job.*
- ◆ *What's the plan? Provide the detail.*
- ◆ *Engagement roll. Cut to the action.*

SCORE 2: COLD STORAGE

Brena won't act directly against the Bloodletters, but she knows about a tattoo parlor where they keep bodies in the basement, inside a pool covered in runes.

- ◆ *The pool she describes sounds like an occult shrine. What it's dedicated to? How will you get Arquo out of it?*
- ◆ *What's the plan? Provide the detail.*
- ◆ *Engagement roll. Cut to the action.*

OTHER SCENES

Play the NPCs. Canter, Margette, and Scurlock all have plans that don't involve Vigilantes getting in the mix. They are each likely to respond to interruptions in their particular manner. Unless confronted they will keep causing problems in Crow's Foot and beyond. Use the **scores tables** on page 306 of *Blades in the Dark* for ideas.

Also, each faction is vulnerable to vigilante action in some way. How can the players use their crew's strengths to disrupt the crimes? 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 break up the Bloodletters gambling den? It's probably not defended much right now."

Ask them to pick a plan and provide the detail, and get to it.

THE SERIES

Who ends up running the drug trade in Crow's Foot? Do the PCs go after every dealer, or accept lesser evils? Can they pit factions against each other or do they have to face all of them one at a time?

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 Scurlock take direct action or work through his intermediaries?*
- ◆ *Can the Fog Hounds be convinced to move product for another gang?*
- ◆ *Can Canter's blood lust be slaked or does he need to die to stop the Bloodletters?*

It's natural for question cards to eventually collect a clock or two, tracking the status of some developing circumstances. This situation will transform over time into something new that no one could have predicted. You'll make it your own unique story, expanding into new problems and responsibilities as the crew develops.

BLOODLETTERS**TIER II****FACTION CLOCK**

An enterprising crew of drug traffickers carving out a bloody piece of the Crow's Foot.

Control the drug market in Crow's Foot

8

TURF: A HQ in an abandoned manor home in the Six Towers district. They operate a gambling den, tattoo parlor, and brothel in Crow's Foot, in territory that used to be owned by the Red Sashes.

NPCs: **Canter Haig** (leader, *cocksure, aggressive, outrageously dressed*). **Oskarr Scurlock** (Lord Scurlock's nephew, *Whisper, young, creepy*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Small contingent of well trained ex-naval officers. A handful of ghosts bound with charms.

QUIRKS: The Bloodletters are feared for their unpredictable violence and consorting with demons. Their members gain **potency** when intimidating residents of Crow's Foot.

ALLIES: Lord Scurlock, Lampblacks, Dimmer Sisters.

ENEMIES: Red Sashes, Spirit Wardens, The Crows.

SITUATION: Canter recently took control of the Bloodletters by putting a bullet in the head of his co-founder Arcy Keel. He is now looking to secure his footing in Crow's Foot by replacing the normal drug trade with his own demon blood product. Oskarr, his second in command, is eager to explore the mysteries of leviathan blood, which he has been tattooed with as well!

LORD SCURLOCK**TIER III****FACTION CLOCKS**

An ancient noble, said to be immortal, like the Emperor. Possibly a vampire or sorcerer. Obsessed with the occult.

Fulfill debt to Setarra

12

Obtain arcane secrets (repeating)

6

TURF: A secret lair outside the city. A dilapidated manor house in Six Towers and the catacombs beneath. An array of business holdings and cult shrines across the city, collected for some united purpose known only to Scurlock.

NPCs: **Lord Scurlock** (*enigmatic, cold, arcane, old-fashioned*) is an individual, but is so powerful that he's considered a faction. His personal scale is Tier III—in conflicts he counts as a large gang (20 people).

NOTABLE ASSETS: An impressive collection of occult and arcane curios, books, and ephemera. An ancient demonic temple.

QUIRKS: Scurlock is immune to spirits. Ghosts can't see, hear, or harm him. He makes no sound when he moves and is sometimes difficult to look at directly.

ALLIES: City Council, Bluecoats, Inspectors, The Forgotten Gods.

ENEMIES: Spirit Wardens, The Immortal Emperor.

SITUATION: Lord Scurlock is bound by ancient magic to the demon Setarra. Who is the master and who is the servant? Their roles have changed many times over the centuries. Now, Lord Scurlock must fulfill a debt. Setarra has found a nest of sea demons in the harbor, encased in stone, chained by magic from the cataclysm. She seeks to free them to see their wrath loosed on the world of men. Scurlock will aid her in this or suffer a dark doom.

THE FOG HOUNDS**TIER I****FACTION CLOCKS**

A crew of rough smugglers looking for a patron.

Eliminate rival smugglers

8

Obtain a regular patron

6

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: Dockers, The Lampblacks.

ENEMIES: Bluecoats (canal patrol), The Vultures (rival smuggling outfit, Tier I).

SITUATION: Margette has an old friendship with quartermaster Harrington, who serves on the iron steamship *Nightbreaker* and he supplies her crew with barrels of leviathan blood, which she turns around to the Bloodletters. Her cut isn't enough though and her crew won't stop grumbling about it. They are looking for better options. To make matters worse the Vultures have been trying to find their source to cut in on their action.



ADVANCED ABILITIES & PERMISSIONS

Here's a sampling of advanced abilities and permissions for Vigilantes to acquire through the events of play. These advanced abilities don't explain *how* a PC achieves the requirements for them. That's something to discuss and discover in play.

FAMILY TIES

When you break bread with the head of a household and boldly declare your allegiance to the family, add one of the family members to your crew's list of contacts.

Whenever your crew's **wanted level** goes up in the service of the family, add another family member to your list or contacts or elevate an existing family member to a close friend.

PROVEN LOYALTY

When you personally bleed for a member of the family by suffering a level 3 harm, enduring a serious complication, or being incarcerated, you gain the family's unwavering trust.

TRUSTED: Your word is accepted as truth within the family. Your claims will never be doubted without absolutely incontrovertible evidence against you. If anyone within the family calls you out as a liar or doubts your loyalties, they risk being ostracized, exiled, or killed.

BLOOD FOR BLOOD

When one of your own dies for the family, your crew becomes immortalized within the family as heroes. You gain **+1 REP** per score as they sing your praises, and gain a **gang of Thugs** with quality equal to your crew's Tier and scale based on the family's size. If the gang is lost they will eventually be replaced so long as the family is not destroyed outright.

If you have **Family Ties**, **Proven Loyalty**, or **Blood for Blood** and you turn on the family, there will be blood on the street.

SHEDDING THE BLUE

When you live two lives, split between official Doskvol duties and vigilante justice, you gain permission to use Doskvol resources to aid your cause at the risk of attracting more attention to yourself.

LIVING TWO LIVES

When you use your badge of office to gain authority over criminals or your access to Doskvol justice system resources to gather information on your enemies, you may add **+1 HEAT** to **push yourself** instead of taking stress.

If you are ever caught, you may cut your ties completely to evade punishment.

CUTTING YOUR TIES

When you discard the blue coat, remove the Spirit Warden's mask, or drop the medallion of the Imperial Guard in mud of Doskvol, your crew gains **1 WANTED LEVEL** and access to the following special abilities as **shady past** advances:

- ◆ **UNWANTED ATTENTION:** You know how to generate enough commotion that the Bluecoats must intervene, even if they would rather look away. Any time

you create a grisly or sensational scene targeting one of your enemies, add **+2 HEAT** and start an investigation on the faction that your target with **quality** equal to your **WANTED LEVEL**.

- ◆ **CORRUPTION EXPOSED:** You know all the dirty secrets of the Bluecoats and can use them as leverage against your former comrades. Anytime you interact with a Bluecoat or other Doskvol official, state whether or not you have a relationship with them. If you do, you gain **+1d** to manipulate, extort, or blackmail them.

BURNING EVERY BRIDGE

When you have weakened the hold of every criminal gang in your district, your crew becomes universally **feared and loathed**.

FEARED AND LOATHED: Your negative faction status adds **potency** when you intimidate or bargain with factions that fear you. If you gain positive faction status with any gang in your district, this effect is lost.

BLADES, VIGILANTES GONE WRONG

At what point do the ends justify the means? What if you didn't work with the people who stood in your way? What if you took what you needed to get the job done? The job is more important than playing by the rules. After all, if you have to slow down, or play politics, or apologize, you'll never clean this city up. The Vigilantes playset is designed to be compatible with the core *Blades* game. If at some point you realize you're no longer in the game to protect the people, but to pursue your own agenda, congratulations, you're now playing scoundrels. Proceed as expected.

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