

ALONE

IN THE

DARK

**Solo Rules for playing Blades
in the Dark without a Game
Master**



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SOLO RULES INTRODUCTION

These solo rules contain the very simple rules needed to play Blades in the Dark as a single player rpg.

THE GAME

Blades in the Dark is a game about a group of daring characters building an enterprising crew. You will play a single member of a crew as you strive amidst the innumerable threats that surround you.

THE PLAYER

You are the only player from a crew of NPCs. The choices you make will bring your character to life as an interesting and daring character who reaches boldly beyond their current safety and means.

It is up to you alone to establish the tone and style of the game by making judgment calls about the mechanics, dice, and consequences of actions. The game only needs please you so you can take it in any direction you like.

YOUR CHARACTER

Your character attempts to develop their crew by performing scores and contending with threats from their enemies and complications thrown at them as the story progresses.

THE CREW

In addition to creating characters, you'll also create the crew by choosing which type of criminal enterprise you are interested in exploring. Your crew members will be NPCs or even alternative player characters if you wish to continue the crew's story and your character died or was retired.

THE GAME MASTER

The game master is replaced by an GM emulator, a set of simple rules, tables and pictures that can answer the sorts of question you would ask the GM. The emulator will also throw up complications

and take your story in new and interesting directions.

The emulator will present interesting opportunities to the you as the player for you to follow the chain of actions and consequences wherever they lead.

PLAYING A SESSION

Solo role playing can be a strange experience the first time. You start by just imagining your character progressing through their planned Score, you imagine the conversations they have, the things they do, and you decide on the skill rolls they need to make and the positions and effects. Where the solo rules come into play is when you would normally ask the GM. You don't have anyone to ask so you use these rules.

Solo play often frees you from the constraints of a regular game. You can jump back and forth in time to play flashbacks. You can skip from the most interesting scenes to scene as your story progresses. You can use the regular downtime rules but also extend them to cover the beginnings and ends of operations if you do not want to play the.

Often a session of solo play will cover just a single scene or a couple of scenes. If you are new to solo play you may find that the game moves slowly but as your experience grows so your game will move faster.

During a session your PC will take actions, suffer consequences, and finish the operation (succeed or fail). Then the crew has downtime, during which they recover, pursue side-projects, and indulge their vices. You get to choose where you put the focus of your game.



HOW SOLO RULES WORK

These solo rules use two different mechanics. The first is based upon the standard Fortune roll from the core Blades in the Dark rules. The second uses a library of game icons to act as inspiration cues.

THE ORACLE

The oracle is a standard term in solo play for a way of answering questions in the yes/no format. You try a car door and want to know if it is unlocked, you would use the oracle. You need to decide if the event is unlikely, about 50/50 or likely to happen. This is used to build your dice pool.

Probability	Dice Pool
Unlikely	1d6
50/50	2d6
Likely	3d6

The result of the oracle roll will give you a range of results from "yes, and..." to throwing complications at your character.

The question was in a yes/no format. You should ask the question in such a way that the Yes creates the most interesting events in the game.

If you peer around the corner of a warehouse and ask, "Are there any guards I sight?" despite a positive result would be bad for the character. You then roll the fortune roll. If you are breaking into a high security compound the likelihood of it being all clear is low so you would roll 3d6 for your pool. If it was an old barn on a rural farm the probability is high that there would be no one about so you would get a 1d6 pool.

Before we look at the possible results of the roll you need to know how to use them. Solo play will test your improvisation skills beyond the improv we all do when role playing. You can imagine your character leaning around the corner of the warehouse but when you get a yes or no answer to your question you have to take several things into account, the situation you are in, the story so far, the sort of game you want and the actual result you rolled and decide what that yes or no means right here and now. It is often best

to go with your first reaction that meets the criteria.

Your answer comes in two parts. The first is the yes, no or at worst a complication.

With the yes or the no, you may have a modifier of and..., but..., or because.

The and... modifier makes the result even better than the character has hoped for. Stealing an automobile? Not only is it unlocked but the owner left the key in the ignition.

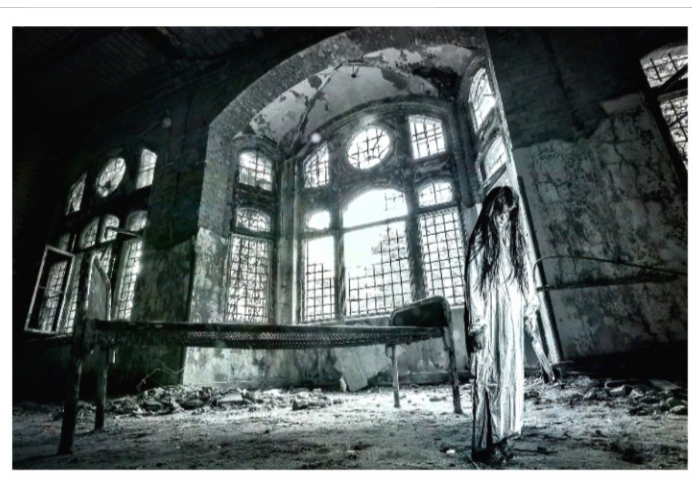
A but... modifier is the opposite of the and... The result is still a yes but not as good as you had hoped. When stealing our automobile now you hotwire it only for it to be out of gas. You have a vehicle but no gas.

The because... is the first negative result. The answer is a no but there is a reason why not and one that the character can do something about. No result can block the story. A because... is a way of providing a way to turn the no into a yes.

Complications from oracle rolls can drive your story forward. You want to steal a car but when you sit in it you notice the tag of a bigger and rival crew.

You can use complications to introduce additional story arcs, bring back villains from the dead or turn the tables on your own character. Go with what come into your mind first and rationalize it afterwards.

- **Critical:** Yes and...
- **6:** Yes
- **4-5:** Yes, but...
- **3:** No, because...
- **2:** No
- **1:** Complication



COMPLEX QUESTIONS

Not everything can be answered with a yes or a no. If you want to eavesdrop on a telephone conversation or you open a computer file a simple yes or no is not going to help move the story forward.

Complex questions need more complex answers. There is no suitable mechanic in *Blades in the Dark* to cope with the hundreds of possible results. To counter that I am going to introduce a new roll.

D666

The d666 is a 3d6 roll but you read the dice as a three-digit number. It is helpful to have dice of different colors so you can tell your tens from your hundreds and your units. The result of a d666 roll goes from 111 to 666 and has 216 possible results.

GAME ICONS

Game icons are icons or images that you get to interpret. In all there are upward of 3,000 available game icons available online but here we have provided just 216. Reading the icons is extremely easy once you have had a little practice. If you have ever used story cubes, these work the same way.

Your character has tapped the cell phone of the leader of a rival crew. The cell rings and you listen into the conversation. You roll your d666 twice and look up the two icons. In this case we get this result:



In a gang land context, I am seeing this as a plant and a gift or package. Planting a package sounds suitably dodgy for a crew and immediately creates a potential side quest. Who is the victim or recipient of the

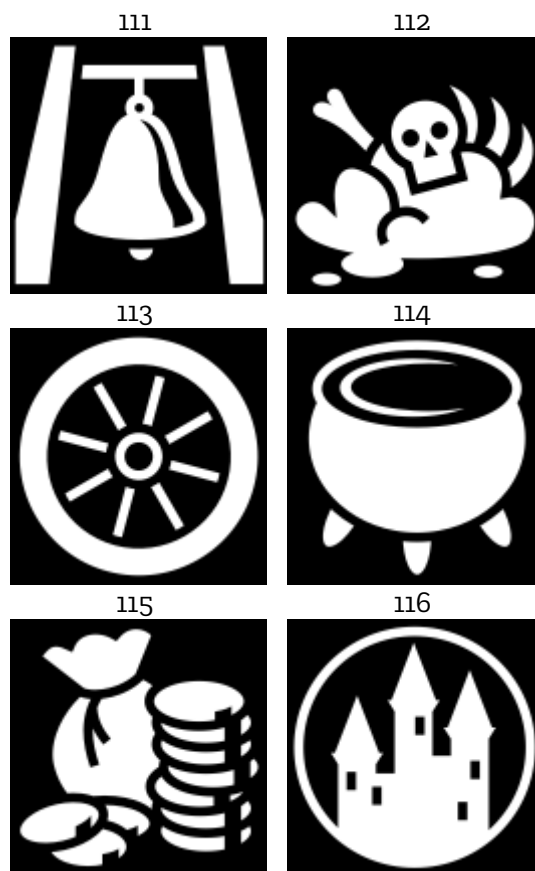
package, what does it contain? Is a package a euphemism for a person, a gun or drugs? This is where the context of the story so far, the sort of adventures your want and the current situation become so important.

If you are playing in a different genre the same icon could have an entirely different meaning. There is an icon that is reminiscent of someone having their head chopped off. In a modern context that could mean they will be fired from their job, as in 'heads will roll'. In a historical context, "Off with their heads!" was a normal execution method.

GAME ICONS

Below are the 216 game icons used in these rules.

Roll 3d6, it is helpful if they are different colours but not necessary just use them as hundreds, tens and units to find an icon.



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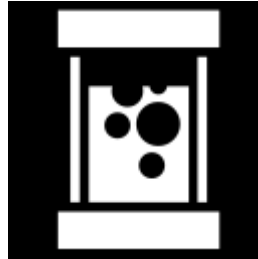
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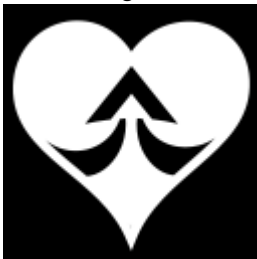
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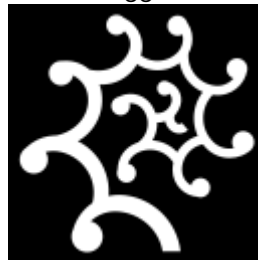
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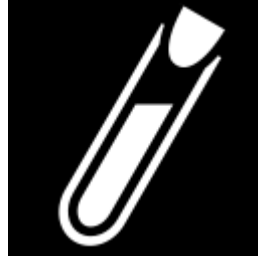
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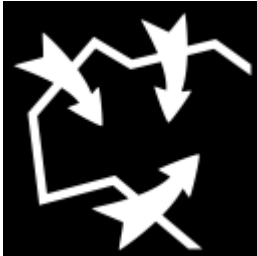
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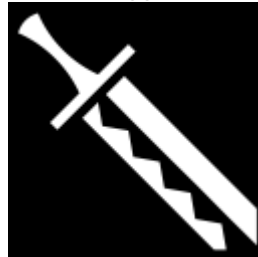
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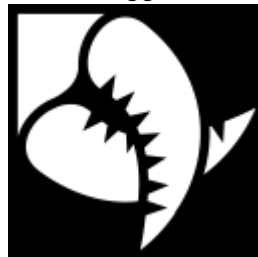
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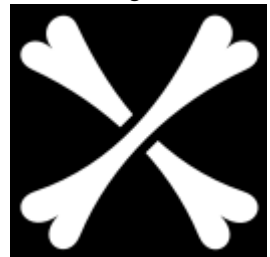
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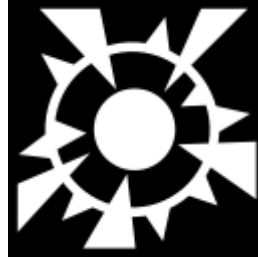
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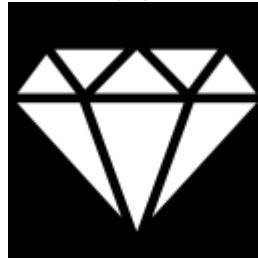
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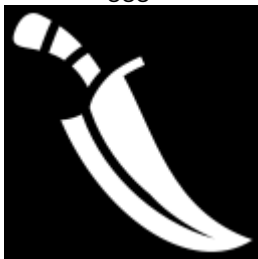
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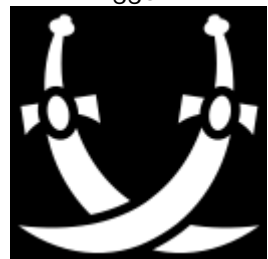
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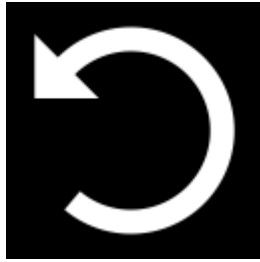
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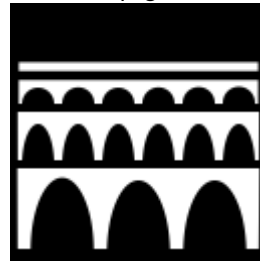
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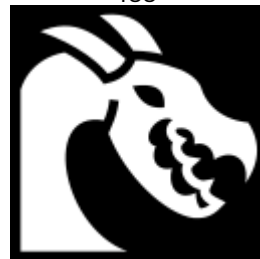
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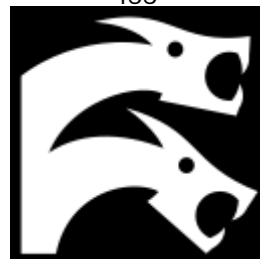
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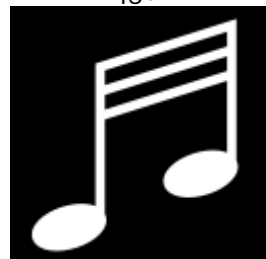
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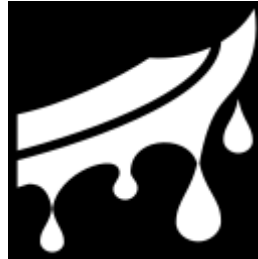
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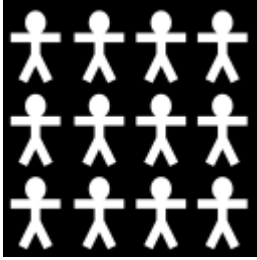
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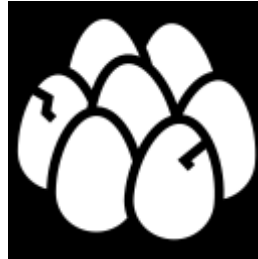
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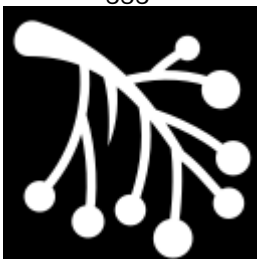
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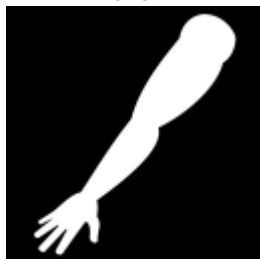
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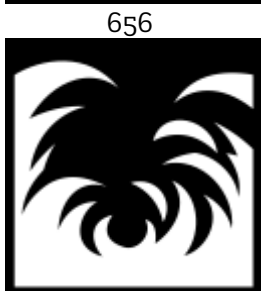
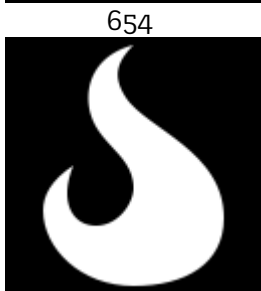
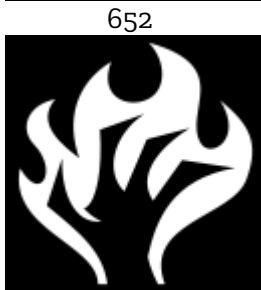
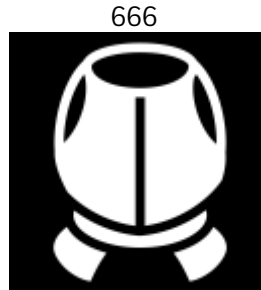
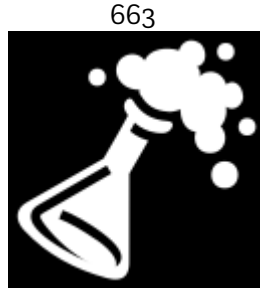


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NPC REACTIONS

There is a really simple process to handling NPC interactions.

- Decide if this is a significant NPC.
- Decide if the NPC is likely to be hostile, neutral or friendly.

If the NPC is not significant, just a bystander or member of the public then jump directly to deciding their basic attitude to your character.

The basic attitudes are hostile, neutral or friendly. You then use this to make a standard fortune roll. 1d6 for hostile, 2d6 for neutral and 3d6 for friendly.

- **Critical:** Exceptional result.
- **6:** Good result.
- **4/5:** Mixed result.
- **1-3:** Bad result.

These results can be treated much like **Faction status levels** but for an individual NPC.

Some example results are:

Exceptional results for hostile NPCs may be a sudden desire to change sides or betray their employers.

A good result for a friendly NPC may bring an offer to help. A good result for a hostile NPC may be a desire to stand off or hold a ceasefire.

A mixed result may be a reluctance to help, work with or interact possibly passive aggressive but not working against the PC.

A bad result for a neutral NPC may be that the NPC has a goal or objective that is opposed to the characters.

You now know the general attitude. For insignificant NPCs you can now use regular skills to interact with them and the attitude roll to decide the **position** and **effect**.

SIGNIFICANT NPCs

For significant NPCs, people who will be encountered more than once and have a

name and a role to play in your story there is another step.

Each NPC should have a **desire** and a **method**. To get these we use the story cubes. A pair of d666 rolls will give you two icons.

For example, our character contacts a new fence who she wants to work with. To find her desire and method we will 2d666 and get 151 + 215. Those icons are:



I am seeing a 1970s lava lamp and a comb. Our fence is a collector of automata and machines but goes over every detail of an agreement with a fine-tooth comb.

Now you have the attitude, desire and methods you can make your fortune rolls and role play the interaction. None of this replaces the Action rolls your character, it just informs the **position** and **effect**.



SOLO PLAY JOURNAL

For ease of play it is a good idea to keep a journal. It doesn't need to be any more detailed than you are comfortable with. The objective is to allow you to refresh your memory of where you are when you pick up the game later.

Some people ask a few questions, make a few rolls and then write up the entire scene long hand as if it were a chapter in a book. Others record questions and results and just the barest details in little more than a bulleted list. I am of the second sort. There is no right or wrong way.

I find a few lists also come in handy. The first is the Score List. Others are the NPC list and the Loose Ends list.

SCORE LIST

The point of the score list is to log the key actions in your planned core.

The first entry for a new score is all the rolls from the core rules relating to that score such as the **Engagement roll** and **Major Advantages / Disadvantages**. You should also include a brief description of the intended outcome.

You can then add in the scenes that make up the score as the obstacles are encountered. You can skip back and forth in time. Blades has rules for flashbacks you can role play these out in as much detail as you want. Just record the flashback as a separate scene in the Score List. Whenever a movie director would call "Cut!" would be an end of scene. If the action changes location that is typically a change of scene.

With each change of scene, it is not uncommon to ask the oracle questions to clarify the specific detail. This can lead to unexpected complications and in turn can take your story in unexpected directions and could even completely derail your planned score.

NPC LIST

The NPC list contains the basic details you need to remind you of a specific NPC. It is not their entire playbook. I suggest recording their name, where you met them last and their desire and method. As you create NPCs, which will happen spontaneously as you play, you add them to the list. If they end up dead, you cross them off. It means that if you are hanging around Six Towers then your PC has a chance of meeting familiar faces. If you suddenly need an NPC, reusing an existing one will move your game forward faster and make the world seem more coherent.

LOOSE ENDS

A solo adventure may create unexplained events. Some of these could suggest future scores. Imagine you want to get to City Hall. You are already wanted for previous scores and you want to check there are no constables about. You ask the oracle and it comes back with a Complication. The first thing that pops into your mind is an explosion and all the ensuing chaos. This has nothing to do with your current adventures but must have bubbled up out of your subconscious, maybe you read something about a gas explosion last week.

Going with the explosion idea you decide that the front facade of the city hall explodes from a bomb left in the atrium. People run about screaming and in seconds you can hear the whistles of approaching constables.

You have a new situation to role play, but you also have some unanswered questions. Who did bomb city hall and why?

You would add these to your Loose Ends list.

Just as it is useful to reuse NPCs it can be just as beneficial to try and reuse Loose Ends if you find your list is getting longer. Do some of them start to look connected? Is there a Modus Operandi appearing? Could any of them be the work of a rival crew?

A score may look like this¹: You are working for a cultist, who wants you to arrange an accident to a constable at a Six Towers location. The trouble: Toxic Substances.

You can quickly fill in the score list and start your engagement rolls. You already have two NPCs, the cultist and the constable.

At the start of your adventure you should not have any loose ends, but you can start to accumulate them through complications.



¹ Courtesy of
<http://software.brentnewhall.com/blades/>

NPC List

Name

Location

Desire

Method

SOLO PLAY HINTS AND TIPS

Solo Playing Tips

Playing as a single scoundrel, without backup is hard. Where in your normal games there are other characters to cover your back or get you out of trouble, here you are on your own.

Solo adventures are the most heroic of all. You are the hero. You will succeed or fail on your own merits.

Below are some tips to help your hero survive.

- You do not need to start as an inexperienced crew. Blades in the Dark assumes you will have an entire crew to draw on when there is only you. Use the advancement rules to level the playing field.
- Give yourself 2 to 4 added **Action Dots** or a **Special Ability**.
- It is not necessary to start at the beginning of an adventure. Pick a crisis point and jump straight in. Normally this would be the first obstacle unless you had a luck engagement roll. Do not let the dice dictate your adventure. If the first obstacle is not that exciting move on to where you want the story to start.
- Did you die? Jump backward a scene and play the same character in a flashback that leads up to his or her heroic(?) death.
- If you don't want to play through it just jump forward to the parts you want to play.
- Playing a prewritten adventure? Read it all start to finish and get a good understanding of both the what your character will encounter but also the narrative style of the adventure. When you ask questions, you can use that knowledge to inform your answers.
- The first time you solo play it will probably be slow and stilted as you don't know the rules or what to expect. Don't worry, this is normal and the more you play the faster and more fluid it all becomes.

- Too many questions can slow the game down and break up the flow. As soon as you have an idea of what comes next just go with it.
- It is useful to have a stock of pre-generated NPCs. When you are learning a new game, it is useful to make a few characters to try and get an idea for how the rules work. Keep those characters and use them when you need an NPC. That saves breaking up your game to create an NPC at a crucial moment.
- Narrative Description is your friend. Have you ever had a character in a barroom brawl and asked the GM if there a bottle or chair at the table you can throw? Or maybe you asked is the chandelier secured by a rope, when you wanted to swing across the hall. In solo play the answer to all these questions is yes. It is your story, your adventure, you are star and director. The props will always be in the right place.
- Fail Forward. Sometimes you would normally just make a **Fortune** roll where there is no specific skill to roll but there is still a chance of success or failure. It is often more interesting to add a complication than simply have a No/Fail result. If failing does not move the story forward turn it into a mixed result but add a complication.

