SILHOUETTE CORE GENRE DESCRIPTION: DETECTIVES

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document was written to supplement chapter 7.5 *Worlds and Genres* of the **Silhouette Roleplaying CORE Rules**. Its purpose is to introduce gamers to the traditions and backgrounds of a "new" genre and enable them to play detectives and private investigators as characters. Since this document is not restricted in length like the single-page subsections in the rulebook were, it follows the established outline only in a loose way.

Section 2.1 of this document describes the traditions and stereotypes of the typical detective stories from the Victorian age up to the end of the Golden Age of the detective story, and provides character concepts, campaign ideas and suggestions for Gamemasters and players wishing to enter the world of Sherlock Holmes and Miss Marple. Section 2.2 does the same for the Chandlerian tough-guy detective. Section 2.3 deals with contemporary investigators and private detectives. Section 3 provides ideas on alternate realities, twists and variations on established concepts.

2. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The detective roleplaying genre, in essence based on the detective stories and, later, crime fiction that developed in western Europe and northern America from the late 19th century on, is a highly specialized subcategory of the Modern or Historical genre, speaking in roleplaying terms. At its center is the eponymous private detective, who is presented with a crime and then sets out to solve the mystery and hunt down the felon. The detective genre differs from the espionage genre in that it does not focus on gadgets, cold war type intrigues, all-out gunfights and global doomsday plots, but on the exploits of the detective(s) or investigator(s), who usually solve their cases by using their wits and their legs, collecting evidence, interviewing witnesses and slowly identifying the person(s) who committed the deed by fitting together the pieces of the puzzle. (This does not mean there's no room for some spicy action scenes!)

Some of the subgenres detailed below are well suited for solo-play, where the Gamemaster concentrates on a single player, while other subgenres work best for two or more players. See below for more details and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

A general bit of advice in front: in the course of roleplaying campaigns days or even weeks often take up only a few hours of actual playing time. Since detective campaigns often focus on clues and hints which have to be correlated and puzzled out, Gamemasters should make sure players are given enough time to assimilate the data and think it over. If your players fail to make the same easy conclusions as the protagonists of the detective novel you found that wonderful plot (and characters, and background) in, give them something to occupy them for the rest of the running session (a bit of a subplot, some action or what not) and let them mull it over between sessions. Don't expect them to reach into their hat and pull out the solution, just because the protagonists could do it in the space between two paragraphs. Your players won't be able to do a week's thinking just because the next paragraph's first line tells them a week has passed since the last full stop.

2.1 THE CLASSICAL DETECTIVE

The genre of the classical detective story was created back in the 19th century and became a fixed genre with firm rules in what is commonly called "the Golden Age of the Detective Story", about the

time from 1920 to 1940. The most famous of its protagonists have become household names: Sherlock Holmes and Miss Marple will ring a bell even if you have never actually read one of the novels or stories they featured in. The number of movie adaptations is legion.

Authors include Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849) and his sometimes quite overdone M. Dupin, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) and his immortal creation, Sherlock Holmes, and Agatha Christie (1890-1976), responsible for Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) is also not to be forgotten, as his likable Father Brown lives on. For the sake of convenience these and all other roughly similar authors have been grouped together under a single heading.

The classical detective has several noteworthy features: He is, a) an integrated and respected part of society, holding common moral and political values, often being a member of an established social class or family ("gentleman-detective"); b) he is an amateur in the old sense of the word, usually not doing investigations for a living, but because he feels attracted by puzzles and mysteries; and c), he is a man (or woman) of education, usually gifted with extremely acute mental faculties, if not an outright genius. Puzzles are often solved not by legwork, but by logic, knowledge or science.

Classical detectives often have very firm morals and occasionally display overbounding patriotism, especially when they are busy uncovering conspiracies or unmasking agents in the employ of a foreign power (the Russian and German Empires being favorites, while they lasted). Often they are the last resort of desperate people (even the police!), or will be called on by high personalities to perform a task no-one else could do: retrieve an important diplomatic note or an incriminating trinket, find a missing person of importance and so on. The main crime they have to deal with, their staple diet, so to speak, is murder. This is the big cliché of the Golden Age detective story, the who-dun-it: a dead body, often a lord, a duke, or a member of the parliament, found with a knife in his back, or lying in a room locked from the inside (an entire sub-genre all of its own!), dropping dead in the midst of a conversation without apparent exterior causes or receiving threatening letters and mysteriously being murdered despite taking all possible and impossible precautions.

A who-dun-it has its own traditions, demanding a strict set of rules. The murderer is not an outsider or a stranger, but has to be a member of the "cast", usually from the very beginning, as is the victim. Another rule demands that the murderer must not be suspicious at first; usually there will be several persons with a strong motive, making the task of identifying the villain much more difficult. "Murder in the high society" is a strong cliché which can be used to advantage; it also justifies a large cast - a big mansion will have inhabitants, guests, friends of the family, servants, cooks, gardeners, drivers and so on.

Enter the detective, called to the scene of crime by helpless inspectors and policemen, usually with a "Watson" tagging close behind as a contrasting background to better display his dazzling genius (and to record his astonishing mental feats for posterity). If you choose Agatha Christie as a model, the detective will then proceed to systematically open all available closets, exposing any number of hidden skeletons to the harsh light of day. (A Sherlock Holmes-type detective will, of course, simply restore order to a still Victorian society, treating any indescretion with utmost discretion on his part. Delicate matters can be safely left in his hands.)

Investigations in a who-dun-it usually take place in some location with definite boundaries: a mansion, a train, a steamer, a small village and the like. The murderer will not leave the place, but try to remain hidden and perhaps put the investigators on a wrong trail. Violence committed against the detective is usually considered a violation of the rules - as are many of the things Agatha Christie and other authors puzzled and infuriated her readers with.

Victorian detectives, however, will sometimes, at least in extreme cases, have to resort to violence in order to arrest a fleeing villain or prevent a crime, and accordingly take along a revolver when they expect dire situations. Miss Marple will leave all that tussle to the constable (but then she wouldn't think of slumming it out in an opium den in order to catch a fugitive criminal - and wouldn't it be a shame to deprive players of colorful scenes like those?).

(Another tradition was that every clue and piece of evidence discovered by the detective had to be made available to the readers as well. Gamemaster won't have much trouble adhering to that rule, obviously.)

The classical detective was born in the age when science still seemed to point the way to a gleaming and magnificent future in which all problems would have a neat and scientific solution. It is no wonder that scientific thinking, the merciless application of logic, is his main tool, next to the magnifying glass and the actual application of science. Chemistry, optics, forensics, biology, kryptanalysis, medicine, all these are powerful devices for clearing up confusing points, but in the end it's the detective's ingenuity that leads to certain triumph in the climactic last scene when all is revealed to lesser human beings (and the police constables arrive to take away the criminal).

2.1.1 Tools of the Trade:

Skills and Attributes:

High Knowledge, Creativity and Perception are an absolute must. Everything else is secondary. Characters may be strong tough men or weak old grannies, as long as they got brains.
Mandatory Skills include Etiquette and Notice; Science Skills, Disguise, Hand-to-Hand, even Investigation may well prove helpful, but are not strictly necessary.
Classical detectives almost always have a hobby to give them a bit of personality: gardening, playing the violin, needlework, cooking (and eating), whatever catches the player's fancy.
Character power ranges from average to very high - the most legendary of detectives may at times appear superhuman and require equally powerful arch-enemies to be vanquished (or so the villain hopes).

Perks and Flaws:

Acute Senses, Famous, Intuition and Photographic Memory may be considered useful Perks, while Flaws like Addiction, Age, Nemesis and a number of interesting Quirks add spice to bland characters.

Technology:

Technology may well play an important role, especially when the campaign is set in the Victorian age, which saw the rise of many important forensic procedures and tools. If the character is the first one to be able to distinguish the blood of animals from that of a human, he may well prove the innocence (or guilt) of a suspect. Gamemasters should be careful to limit Science Skills according to the technological level of the time of their campaign.
Players will usually amuse themselves by whipping out their magnifying glass at every conceivable and inconceivable opportunity. Let them have fun! (Of course the best detectives don't even need that simple tool, but set out on the quest armed only with their awesome mental powers.)

RDF and Genre Points:

Typical campaigns featuring classical detectives will usually be Adventurous. There is not much demand for cinematic effects, and the flair of the genius often suffers when exposed to gritty settings. Useful Genre Points include Accessorize, Get a Clue, Mimic Skill and The Return Of... (if the detective character vanishes instead of dying, why, his secret plan demands he fake his death in order to deceive the villain. But of course!)

Campaign Ideas:

GMs should give their players what they want: talk it over with them and decide together on the nature of the campaign. If it's to be the world's biggest and most famous legendary detective or a wizened old lady solving murder cases in her spare time is just a matter of taste. Both can be highly entertaining. This genre is equally well suited for one or two players, and there's always room for an inspector or the heir of the deceased Lord to tag along. Traditionally, however, one character will be in the center of the limelight, so the GM has to make sure other players don't feel left out.
The detective's "super powers" could be spread out, or one character might supply the brain and another the brawn. Enterprising GMs may want to consider using the traditional Sherlock Holmes/Dr. Watson constellation, where the Watson-character is as much puzzled by his mentor figure as by the

crime itself, while the Holmes-character occasionally receives hints (see *RDF and Genre Points* above) from the GM and in turn writes the odd secret note himself. The Watson should be kept busy as well, of course - stumbling over the decisive clue, saving the Holmes from physical danger and so on. He must be allowed to shine on his own, lest his player feels disappointed.

This is difficult to pull off, but can be entertaining to say the least, especially when the GM takes a leaf from Agatha Christie's book(s) and has, for example, the Watson commit the crime, who then trots along behind his idolized friend, fretting over and erasing leads as soon as they are discovered! (In this case the GM will have to keep up a fair amount of secret note-exchanging with both characters - see also the cautionary note below).

A close relative of the gentleman-detective is the gentleman-criminal, another species whose members survive on their wits and intellect. Often enough these noble-minded robbers themselves engage in a bit of investigating, especially when king and country are in danger or another thief threatens to eclipse them and steal the fame they deserve. Examples include Pierre Alexis Ponson du Terrail's (1829-1871) gentleman-burglar Rocambole, his British pendant, the "amateur cracksman" A.J. Raffles, created by E.W. Hornung (1866-1921), and, greatest of them all, the literary brain-child of Maurice Leblanc (1864-1941): Arsène Lupin, the Sherlock Holmes of crime. And indeed he had a few run-ins with that venerable detective, or rather with his *doppelgänger* Herlock Sholmes. (It seems Sir Conan Doyle took copyright matters quite seriously.)

I really recommend **The Moonstone**, by Wilkie Collins (1824-1889), with his memorable inspector Cuff. The trick on which the story turns is, however, a very mean one to play on unsuspecting players.

Cunning Gamemasters may want to have two parties or solo-players work against each other on different sides of the line. A word of caution, though: this should only be attempted with serious and experienced roleplayers, as it could easily lead to bitter conflicts within the group(s). The GM will have to pick the right people for this to work. An alternative would be to introduce a common enemy, a truly evil master criminal who forces both parties/characters to unite in order to vanquish the villainous abomination with their combined power. GMs who want to assign that role (Moriarty?) to yet *another* player should realize they are probably digging their own grave.

2.2 THE TOUGH GUY DETECTIVE

This is probably the most popular of all detective story settings, deriving its name from the most distinguishing characteristic of the detective hero: his toughness.

This specifically US American literary genre was created by Dashiel Hammet (1894-1961), whose protagonists were some of the toughest and hardest ever seen; it was brought to perfection by Raymond Chandler (1888-1959), a masterful writer who integrated the detective story into the realm of high literature and fixed the conventions and clichés associated with this subgenre up to this very day. He liberated the detective story from the artificial, escapist world of the conservative high-society detectives and murdering butlers and brought it back into the real world, giving it substance and meaning.

The setting of the classic tough guy detective story is California somewhere between 1930 and 1950, after the big depression and around World War II; it can easily be adapted to other times and places, though, modern day New York being a favorite. Chicago during the prohibition (1920-1933) is not a bad place either, if player characters feel adventurous and wants to put that tommy gun to good use.

The player character is a licensed private investigator (also called private eye, private dick, shamus, gumshoe, sleuth and a plethora of other colorful names), often a former police detective, who earns his living by renting out his wits, fists and feet to paying clients. He is hard-boiled and tough as nails - he has seen everything and will be surprised by nothing. He's got a big mouth (sometimes too big for his own good), but he also knows when to keep it shut; he's often a cynic, but with a weak spot in his heart.

The player character can seem like the last honest man in a crooked town, and that's not too far from the truth. Despite all of the dangers involved, he will tough it out and remain loyal to his client - if the client remains loyal to him and doesn't use him as a tool for his own immoral means, which may well result in paid fees being returned to free the investigator from his obligations. (Breaking a few rules now and then probably won't cause the character to break a sweat; however, if he should happen to uncover a capital crime he will have to report it to the police, which can put him in a tight spot between the law and his client - keeping his mouth shut about a murder for a day or two should be the limit.) He knows he will get threatened, called names, knocked out, beaten up and have guns

pointed at him, but no matter what, he'll never sell out his client. Once he accepts a client's his money ("25 dollars a day plus expenses" - and never two clients at once) he will move heaven and earth to get to the bottom of the case.

This can be dangerous in the California of 1940. People who claim that the USA lost its innocence with the war in Vietnam obviously have never read a single Chandler novel. Crime, filth and corruption are everywhere in evidence, if you know what to look out for. Neon and chrome are filling the night with radiance while the rich and beautiful drive by in their polished cars, but in the backrooms crooked politicians are shaking hands with local crime lords. Blackmailers, thugs, killers, heisters, prostitutes and illegal gamblers and pornographers are hiding in every shadow (or should I say, behind every palm tree?). A different racketeer can be found round every corner, and having a racket means having protection as well, from either side of the law.

Money and morals often seem mutually exclusive. You can be sure there's dirt behind every spotless facade, and half a dozen skeletons in the closet of every millionaire. But you don't need to have a villa to be entitled to a rotten heart. Step through the door of any house and chances are you will find domestic violence, greed, bigotry and more sins and vices than you can shake a dictionary at. People, especially women, who openly disapprove of drinking, smoking and swearing are especially suspicious. And skeletons don't need to be deposited in closets, by the way. There are lots of lonely canyons near LA, and the desert has always room to plant a dead body more next to a cactus.

The police are no exception, but just a part of the machine. Bought and used by the rich and powerful (mobsters or politicians, doesn't matter) as a means of exerting that power, they also got tons of petty crimes to investigate. In short, beneath the stylish exterior, the whole society is rotten to the core. And if you think LA is bad, pay a visit to Hollywood, a world of its own! The movie industry has created whole new realms of sleaze. If that's still not enough, or if that's too slick, take a look at Bay City. The smaller the city, the easier it is bought out. Mexico is not far away either.

Thus, when someone can spare the money and wants something or someone found or investigated, they go see a private detective who is willing to risk his bones and maybe bend the rules a bit in the name of truth and integrity.

Well, maybe it's not all that bad, but it certainly may seem so when the character has a bad day.

The character's toughness and moral integrity come at a price, though. He has to remain somewhat detached from the rotten society that surrounds him in order not to be absorbed by it and have his own morals corrupted. This makes him something of a lone wolf, not only regarding cooperation with other people, but especially regarding women. Working together with that sharp honest cop for a while may be all right, but marriage is right out. He could never expose himself to the risks he has to take each day if he had somebody depending on him. He may well dream about another life - marriage, a house in the country, children - but he knows that this can never be more than a dream, because it would mean having to sell out and play the role of a citizen, becoming an indistinguishable part of the society whose dark side he knows so well .

On the other hand tough guys tend to attract women. Not just beautiful women, but true *femmes fatales*. This is *the* predominant cliché of this genre, so be sure not to neglect it. But remember - these femmes can be very fatal indeed, and often it's not clear who plays the role of the moth and who plays that of the candle. Having to decide between his duty to uncover the ugly truth and the attractive force of that beautiful vamp is often the ultimate test of the character's integrity and toughness. Of course there will be honest people as well - they're the minority, though, and trust is a precious commodity.

A final bit of advice: Don't let yourself be fooled and try to put style over substance. A character will need plenty of style to make a good tough guy detective, but he will need even more solid substance underneath if he wants to make it through the day. Style without substance often leads to nothing more than a stylish death.

2.2.1 Tools of the trade:

Skills and Attributes:

Characters will have to be tough both physically (high Stamina and Health) and mentally (high Willpower being a must, with Influence a close second). Better-than-average Creativity and Perception are also highly desirable.

Mandatory Skills include Combat Sense, Defense, Hand-to-Hand, Interrogation, Investigation, Notice, Pilot (Car), Small Arms and, of course, Streetwise. A knowledge of Etiquette, Business, Stealth, Navigation (City), Social Sciences (Law) and Athletics can be useful as well. The character will have to know how to tail a car or person, how to intimidate lesser characters and how to survive sticky situations, either by using his wits and mouth or his fists. Higher learning and scientific skills are seldom called for; these are left for Sherlock-type detectives. Looking up a deed or other record or taking a peek at the license holder of a suspicious car are the usual methods of gaining information, apart from old-fashioned legwork and, of course, interacting with people, which should form the focus of any detective campaign.

Characters should not be overly powerful, but weaklings and fools won't last in this business either.

Perks and Flaws:

Useful Perks and Flaws include Connections, Intuition, Lucky, and Thick Skinned resp. Code of Honor and Dedicated. Strong Immune System may prove helpful as well, though Immunity (Alcohol) should be considered cheating.

Technology:

Technology should not be allowed to play a big role. Tough guys usually don't resort to gadgets and science. Only the police will check for fingerprints and do ballistic tests.

A tough guy detective needs a car, an office with a phone and a bottle in the desk drawer, and a pair of good solid walking shoes. A gun is optional, most of time - a private detective license is not, so don't make the police too cross at you, or you risk going out of business. A friend in the DA's office or on the force is also a must. Apart from that the phonebook and the local library will serve most needs.

RDF and Genre Points:

The default setting is Gritty; if more action is desired, tough guys will also feel at home in Adventurous campaigns. Typical Genre Effects include Blessed Unconsciousness, Get a Clue and Inner Well of Strength. Gamemasters with highly complicated plots on their hands may consider the use of Dramatic Editing.

Tough guy characters seldom change or learn new skills - Experience Point rewards should focus on buying Emergency Dice, which allow them to be really tough and have a big mouth, and still stay alive.

Campaign Ideas:

This type of campaign is admirably suited for a GM and a single player. GMs are, of course, free to include a second or even third character, but should realize that this creates certain problems, as the tough guy was conceived as a lone wolf. Focusing on a single player will allow the GM to do away with all the efforts needed to maintain the unity of the party and to keep every player happy. The solo player in turn enjoys total freedom and can take actions that would usually lead to the disintegration of the party. But the true advantage is that solo-play allows total immersion in the character. In a group of five or six players it will seldom be possible to sound out all the depths of every character's mental and emotional processes, if only because the other players will get bored after a while and demand their share of the limelight.

Solo-play can be very exhausting, though. The player (and the GM as well) will have to be alert and thinking from the beginning of the session to the very end; there are no other players who can take up the slack, and he will have to think of everything by himself. The GM should keep in mind that a single character is easier to kill by far than a big party, and not needlessly expose him to more dangers than that character can handle with a reasonable chance of success. If the character dies, the story is

probably over. Of course, characters who charge recklessly into dangerous situations probably deserve what's coming to them. A tough guy needs to be smart as well.

A typical beginning will have the character sit in his small office on a cloudy day, when the phone rings or, better still, a beautiful and mysterious woman walks in the door. He will have to find a missing relative/lover, or retrieve a photograph, trinket or document, deal with blackmailers, solve a murder the police seems unable (or unwilling?) to investigate and so on. The GM should be sure to throw lots of complications in his way and take him on a tour through the dark underbelly of society. Mysterious callers and people threatening the character to stay away from the case are as much a staple of the genre as the inevitable *femme fatale*. Encounters with some honest, smart cops and similar characters will provide additional variety and the necessary contrast - if everything is black and grey, white loses all meaning. Two or more honest characters might even team up to do their bit against the corruption around them - a great opening for integrating other players.

If you are looking for some ideas and feel up to tackling some extremely complicated plots, read the Philip Marlowe novels by Raimond Chandler - these will also furnish lots of colorful characters and plenty of gloomy local atmosphere. Chandler's spirit lived on to strongly influence, among others, the Cyberpunk literary movement of the 1980s.
A modern-day descendant of Phil Marlowe can be found in the novels of Andrew Vachss - nothing for those of a squeamish disposition, though. His protagonist Burke is a criminal near-psychopath waging a constant battle against rapists and the jungle of a society running amok, a ruthless killer with a strong sense of justice, whose every moment is filled with fear and hate. Everybody pays.

2.3 THE MODERN DETECTIVE

This is the realm of the contemporary detective story - a huge range of authors and characters are available, ranging from farcical TV serial detectives via the ever-popular police inspector to feminist tough gals and ethnic detectives.
Designing your own detective character can be a heap of fun. After all, that's the point of roleplaying, right? So forget all those cheap crime writers and their serial heroes, and do it yourself; this is the postmodern age, and all bets are off. Few are the professions and classes that have not seen a detective character rising from their midst. (Plus you could enjoy a perfect knowledge of the background, if you should decide to use your own city as your character's playground!) You can have a touch of the exotic as well, though you'll have to do a bit of research if you want to play, say, an Inuit detective. (If you think that's preposterous, take a look at Peter Hoeg's Ms. Smilla. The ending was very poorly written though, and would not satisfy any ambitious player.)
It doesn't have to be murder, either. The list of possible crimes is endless. Environmental pollution, corruption, vanishing people, modern slavery, hackers running amok... it can be as big or as trivial as you want.
The full range of options is available, from Realistic to Cinematic RDF, from low-powered guy-next-door characters to overpowering near-James Bonds. It all depends on what you want to do with it. If you want a default setting for generic modern detective campaigns, however, you are probably best served with the Adventurous RDF and with characters whose power level is slightly above the average.

A relatively new subgenre is the crime story centering on police procedures. James Ellroy has written hard-boiled crime novels set in several decades of the 20th century. Even if you don't like his work - he provides a well-researched panorama of (US American) police procedure and society spanning most of the last century. This genre is ideal if you want to accommodate two players. Make them partners, either an old team or two guys having to first get to grips with each other before they can hunt down the grisly killer.
This calls for a Realistic RDF, and characters of average power level. It also presupposes quite some knowledge on the part of both Gamemaster and players.

If you're still stumped for ideas or just want a few reading recommendations, try some of following authors (serial offenders, all of them):
George Simenon and his commissar Maigret, trailing criminals through Paris; Sarah Paretsky's tough gal V.I. Warshawski (who can cook a great Italian-style diner as well as dish out mean punches); Ian Rankin's Scottish Inspector John Rebus, formerly SAS, investigating the dark side of Edinburgh; or Tony Hillerman's Navajo Tribal Police officers Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee, trying to restore the

harmony disturbed by a crime, painting the (somewhat idealized) picture of a radically different society.

3. VARIATIONS

Lately it has become popular to infuse genres with a good dose of the old supernatural. Cyberpunk, Western, Martial Arts, everything seems to sell better if it's got magic and demons in it. If you want a Gothic Detective divinating the murderer's whereabouts and banishing criminal demons, or a sleuth coming back from a premature grave to haunt the killer - well, feel free to try it. If you shy away from a completely transformed, all-magical world, try using just a single supernatural being or item, X-Files style. People being murdered by means of an ancient idol, a legend about an evil monster apparently coming true, whatever - Scully will feel skeptical about it, of course, but the proof is out there, if only you can find it.

Another type of alternate reality that has become popular is the Steampunk/retro-Cyberpunk genre. Why not try a different 1940 with clunky computers and crude cybernetic replacements? The sleuth, the hacker and the cybersoldier... just remember to bring along a sufficient supply of spare vacuum tubes.
Fans of the Gear Krieg-line will probably have read **Fatherland**, by Robert Harris, set in the 1960s of a world in which Hitler won World War II. If not, give it a try - a perfect nightmare, and a very peculiar detective story.

Of course you could also twist the established concepts detailed above. Your tough guy could look like a fat, weak fool or, worse still, be a grim and imposing looking coward, your wizened old granny-detective could set out to rid the world of murderers by serving them a plate of poison-laced cookies ("Arsen, anyone?"), or your Sherlock-character might prove to be a sadistic monster... psychopaths, drug addicts, split personalities, megalomaniacs, all driven by some personal motive to solve the case and hunt down the people responsible.

What if the solution of the case would cause more harm or problems than letting the perpetrator off scot-free? Perhaps your detective has a few difficult moral problems to solve, compared to which the case itself is small fish?

Or why not play a detective in your favorite universe, be it Science Fiction ("We must find and bring to justice that rampaging droid!") or Fantasy ("Faith! 'Twas poison! Oh murder most foul! Bar all the gates, and summon the court magician!") or something entirely different. Of course there are private investigators on Terra Nova and in the Jovian space habitats as well.

Historical settings can be fun, too, even if they require a lot of preparation. Why not play a proto-sleuth in ancient Rome, or an investigator in Moscow during the Cold War (**Gorky Park**? Or try E.F. Russell and his Chinese detective, the source of the "may you live in interesting times" curse.) Medieval investigator-monks are also a favorite; you don't need to go all the way to Umberto Eco. If you don't like the thought of investing all that time and effort needed to research and bring to life the historical "truth", feel free to mix and match and twist whatever you don't like till you feel comfortable. If you prefer pseudo-medieval near-fantasy settings, well, it's your game, isn't it? Make sure your players are of the same mind, though.

The traditional detective is also very susceptible to parody, as is the hard-boiled private eye. Making satirical use of all the accumulated clichés can result in a highly entertaining Comedy campaign, or at least lighten up the mood a bit. This is nothing new - remember the **Thin Man**? Written by the very man who invented the tough guy detective, we have a series of screenplays about a detective who seems more interested in being a witty, drinking socialite and caring for that poodle than in solving the case. It does get solved, of course - but with style. Add his wife for two players, and you can have lots of fun just thumping your nose(s) at society and serious people.
Or what was the name of that movie in which the truth was finally revealed, namely that Sherlock Holmes was an imbecile actor hired by the real master-mind, Watson, to make an impressive front?

Players who *really* want something unusual may like the idea of having fun as a bunch of juvenile detectives - a gang of bright, young, likable kids who seem to stumble over spies, bankrobbers and

impostors with every youthfully innocent step they take. Unfortunately no grown-up will listen to them, so they have to catch the villains all on their own. Yes, this is detective/comedy. So keep the tone light and everything slightly absurd, and your players will have a jolly good romp harkening back to the (hopefully) happy days when they still were kids. (Of course adding black humor and some bizarre elements can lead to even more absurdly entertaining results. Go Heavy Metal Goonies, go!) To do this the traditional way you will need about three or four boy characters, a girl and a dog. Don't tell me you never read Enid Blyton's **Famous Five** as a kid!

The possibilities are only as limited as your imagination.
The world is full of crimes just waiting to be solved. So what are you waiting for? Whip out that magnifying glass (or .38, or whatever) and start to investigate!