

FATE™ WORLDS

VOLUME TWO: WORLDS IN SHADOW



JOHN
ROGERS

MARK DIAZ
TRUMAN

LISA
STEELE

SHOSHANA
KESOCK

J.R.
BLACKWELL

ROBERT
WIELAND

JOHN
ADAMUS

TOM
CADORETTE

MANDA
COLLIS

SEAN
NITTNER

KAREN
TWELVES

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Flexible RPG systems like **Fate Core** are terrific if you have the time and energy to put into building a world. But we also realize that sometimes extensive prep just isn't feasible. The good news? You can still experience the Fate awesomeness with the help of the **Fate Worlds** expansion.

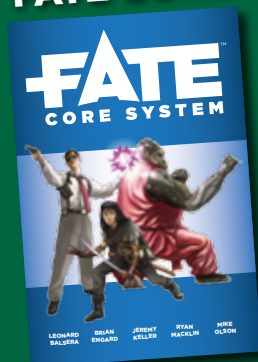
Fate Worlds Volume 2: Worlds in Shadow is the second in a two-volume set. In **Worlds on Fire**, you get six rich story settings. Each setting includes custom mechanics, NPCs, and story elements—all ready to go using the system provided in **Fate Core**. We've got you covered regardless of your flavor of RPG choice. Be a knight in a giant robot suit in **Camelot Trigger**, or get on the grift with **CrimeWorld**. Fight off alien invaders in the court of Louis XV in **Court/Ship**, or indulge your time travel fantasies in **Timeworks**.

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FATE CORE



FATE™ WORLDS

VOLUME TWO: WORLDS IN SHADOW

CRIMEWORLD

by **John Rogers**
editing by **John Adamus**
art by **Melissa Gay**

NO EXIT

by **Shoshana Kessock**
editing by **John Adamus**
art by **Jonathan Wyke**

TIMEWORKS

by **Mark Diaz Truman**
editing by **John Adamus**
art by **Damon Westenhofer**

COURT/SHIP

by **J.R. Blackwell**
editing by **Manda Collis,**
Karen Twelves, and
Sean Nittner
photography by **J.R. Blackwell**

THE ELLIS AFFAIR

by **Lisa J. Steele**
with **Jonathan Turner,**
Bill Collins, Robin Holly,
and **Allen Wilkins**
editing by **John Adamus**
art by **David Flora**

CAMELOT TRIGGER

by **Rob Wieland**
editing by **Tom Cadorette,**
Mike Olson, and **Brian Engard**
art by **Brett Barkley**

creative direction by **Fred Hicks**
layout by **Ruben Smith-Zempel**
project management by **Sean Nittner**
brand marketing by **Chris Hanrahan** and **Carrie Harris**



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www.evilhathat.com • feedback@evilhathat.com
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For those working at a copy shop and not at all sure if this means
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This is a game supplement where people have made up stories
about wonderful, terrible, impossible, glorious things. All
the characters and events portrayed in this work are fictional,
or in the case of those based on history, fictionalized.

Resemblances to real people, sleek and dangerous cons, pulp heroes,
crimelords, sinister apartment complexes, octopi, members of
Louis XV's court, aliens that scoop out your guts and impersonate
you, insane artificial intelligences, or once and future kings inside of
giant stumpy robots is purely coincidental, but kinda hilarious.

Also a little bit terrifying.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Fate Core* Kickstarter campaign was nuts. Seriously nuts. The good kind of nuts. The kind of nuts that makes the numbers seem like pure imagination and fireworks—until you start to get the chance to turn those numbers into something *real*.

The book you're reading now is one of those real things.

With that in mind, let's say then that the *mixed* nuts of that happy occasion were found throughout the project's stretch goals in twelve delightful flavors of settings and adventures for *Fate Core*. Originally, these weren't thought of as a unified whole. Each world-setting stands on its own to provide a brief, easily digested tour of one set of possibilities for the game.

The direction I gave to each author was simple: create a world, support it with *Fate Core* rules, and keep an eye out for doing something a little different with the mechanics—something an enterprising reader might steal for their own games. And deliver they did, as you'll soon see, and as our project's backers already have. In fact, they delivered too much to fit into one book.

And so, here we have *Worlds In Shadow*, the second volume of *Fate Worlds*. Each of these settings lives somewhere in the darkness. Sometimes those who live there master the shadows—other times, they're conquered by them. Let's shine a little light around the place and see what we might find:

In *Leverage* showrunner John Rogers' **CrimeWorld**, you'll get nothing less than a primer on how to run cons and heists. (In a game! *Totally* not in real life.) This is a resource applicable to any game where the players might spend a little time skulking in the shadows to pull one over on the bad guys. Let's go steal us an adventure!

In Mark Diaz Truman's **Timeworks**, players are paid top dollar to drop into the past for covert, corporate-sponsored history-hacking, *Inception* style. But will they survive when history strikes back in the form of the sinister Shadow Men?

In Lisa Steele's **The Ellis Affair**, you'll explore an international murder mystery set in the 1920s. Backstabbing crimelords, earthquakes, pirates, madness, and a dollop of super-science await those who dare to investigate the seemingly-simple question: *who was Earl Ellis?*

In Shoshana Kessock's **No Exit**, Fate takes a turn for taut psychological horror. Characters are residents of the Complex, a gated apartment complex that doesn't let go of its residents so easily. What is the Complex? And what does Management have in store for those who live there?

In J.R. Blackwell's **Court/Ship**, the court of Louis XV is rife with intrigue, sex, secrecy, and more. Then things get even more complicated when a pod of body-snatching, human-eating aliens stage an invasion of France. You read that right.

In Rob Wieland's **Camelot Trigger**, the solar system is under siege by a potent machine intelligence known as MerGN-A. Mecha pilot John Arthur and his fellow knights must ply the Wyrmgates with the help of MerLN to fight for the future of all humanity—if only he can convince the others to aid him in his quest. It's the story of the Knights of the Table Round like you've never seen it before!

All in all these are some of the strangest, most exciting settings I've ever seen in gaming. I can't wait to play them myself—and more to the point, I can't wait for *you* to play them. When you do, please email us about it at fatestories@gmail.com!

— Fred Hicks



CRIMEWORLD

WHAT IS CRIMEWORLD?

In 1972 Paul Shrader wrote one of the first serious American essays on the Film Noir genre. It was titled “Film Noir is not a Genre”.

As amusing (and wrong) as that idea may be, it’s relevant to our attempts to bring the cons and heists of *CrimeWorld* into our roleplaying games. When we create (or often, borrow) story worlds for roleplaying, we establish that story world’s genre signifiers. “Genre signifiers” are the elements of story world which stylistically define that world in its broadest sense. Fantasy has swords, magic and monsters. Steampunk involves zeppelins, gears, corsets, and often geared corsets. Cthulhu Horror reeks of moist rot and madness. Your Space Opera best have starship battles, ray guns and alien cultures.

The genre signifiers of the most famous elements of *CrimeWorld*—cons and heists—are much harder to pin down. The infamous pressure-sensitive floor? That element stars in many crime movies, but is also featured in the spy movie *Mission Impossible*. Conning your way past the guards by dressing like them—a plot point in both the World War II movie *Where Eagles Dare* and the sci-fi classic *Star Wars*. The train heist is in both *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and the first broadcast episode of *Firefly*. What’s the difference between *The Dirty Dozen* and *Ocean’s 11*?

Crime stories are tricky in that they don’t have a uniform set of costumes, props, stock characters or even attitudes. Crimes are ways of solving story problems. Crimes are a style of conflict resolution more than a genre, a collection of story beats and moments. The Read, the Hook, the Crack, The Blow.

So *CrimeWorld* takes a slightly different tack than most supplements. It’ll attempt to give you those storytelling tools in the most generic sense, without adding a bunch of specialized character building mechanisms, stunts and specialized skills. You should be able to drop *CrimeWorld*/book ideas into any setting in any genre with minimal disruption. Any world is *CrimeWorld*, if you’re telling a crime story.

THE LINGO

What follows is an incomplete list of *CrimeWorld* terminology. A quick internet search for “con lingo” or “criminal slang” will provide you with dozens, if not hundreds of more colorful terms for every criminal occupation and scam in existence. A list of specific kinds of crimes is included at the end of this supplement. This particular list is concerned with the basic terms needed to understand how a crime story works.

Artist: A forger.

Bent: Corrupt or stolen.

The Box: The physical container for the Score, indicating the outer edge of highest security. A safe, a vault, an armored car, etc.

Box Man: Originally a safe cracker, now any Thief who specializes in the physical security immediately surrounding a Score.

Citizen: Non-criminals who live by the rules of society. Usually spoken in a tone of derision or pity. Some Thieves also use the word “Taxpayers”, with all that implies.

Crew: A stable gang of criminals who pull repeated jobs.

Dancer: A burglar specializing in break-ins leaving no evidence of their passage. High-rise buildings pose their own specific challenges, and Dancers who specialize in those sorts of buildings are sometimes called ‘Flyers’.

Dipper: A pickpocket.

Extras: Low level con men who play bit parts and roles in the con. Short-timers, hired for just this occasion. In a Clear-Out, sometimes unwitting Citizens serve the purpose of Extras.

Grifter: The traditional con artist, specializing in smooth talk and false identities. When working in a Crew, because they spend the most amount of time in the con working the Mark they’re also known as ‘the Inside Man.’

Hacker: A criminal specializing in penetrating and subverting electronic systems either remotely or on-site. Sometimes known by their old name, a ‘Wire Man.’

Handler: The master planner, the coordinator of the Crew. Handlers take care of general planning and back-up plans to deal with complications, so the specialists in the Crew can focus on their specific jobs.

Heat: Law Enforcement or attention from Law Enforcement.

Heavies: Muscle, anyone involved in a Job whose responsibility is the judicious application of violence. A Job depending primarily on violence is a “**Heavy Racket**”.

The House: A lower-security area where people live or work which surrounds a Box. For example, the CIA Headquarters might be the House, while the server room containing classified hard drives would be the Box.

Hunting License: Permission from the local authorities, either crooked cops or other criminals, to execute a specific Job on their turf in exchange for a cut or straight payoff.

Job: A specific con or heist, usually referenced by the location it occurred e.g. “*The Logan Airport Job.*” Sometimes the Job is known by the the Score, but this is less common as very valuable objects are often stolen multiple times by different Crews. As Jobs make up a Thief’s reputation, everyone in *CrimeWorld* is very invested in being clear about who did what, when.

Joint: A temporary location used for part of a con or heist. There are several types of Joints.

- **The Boiler Room:** A Joint designed for making high volumes of phone calls or internet connections. Sometimes these calls are the whole point of the con—fishing for investments from the Citizens on the other end of the phone lines. Sometimes it's just meant to create buzz for a con, to spread large amounts of disinformation quickly, etc.
- **The Big Store:** A complicated fake business (traditionally set up in an empty space) stocked with Props and Extras, and meant to convince the Mark of its legitimacy. Big Stores range from illegal betting houses to charity headquarters to high-end investment firms.
- **The Clear-Out:** A legitimate business where the Citizens have been cleared out under false pretenses, allowing the Crew to co-opt the location's reputation to con a Mark. Calling a lawyer away from his office so your Inside Man can sit at his desk and pretend to work at the law firm is one simple Clear-Out.
- **The Front:** A otherwise legitimate business set up (or often “borrowed”) for the explicit purpose of hiding the Crew's activities. A Front is sometimes long-term, designed to launder the Crew's ill-gotten gains and provide them with Taxpayer papers to fend off any nosy Heat.

Long Con: An elaborate multi-stage con constructed to get the Mark to hand over a very large, otherwise inaccessible Score.

Mark: The human target of a crime.

Mechanic: A grifter specializing in deck manipulation during card games.

Name: Not your real name, Citizen. Your Thief Name. The one attached to your CrimeWorld reputation, to the Jobs you've pulled. Now, you have plenty of aliases—hell, you even pay taxes under a few of them. But you only have one Name. Using another Thief's Name is stealing his reputation. It's a killing offense.

The Read: The stage of the Job where you gain intel on the Mark. This is recon, the learning of patterns and habits, the mapping out of buildings and the prep work that goes into a Job. A good Read makes life easier. A bad Read makes life a whole lot messier and shorter.

Short Con: A quick con meant to relieve the Mark of whatever funds he might have available, Usually no more than three or four steps long, an afternoon's work.

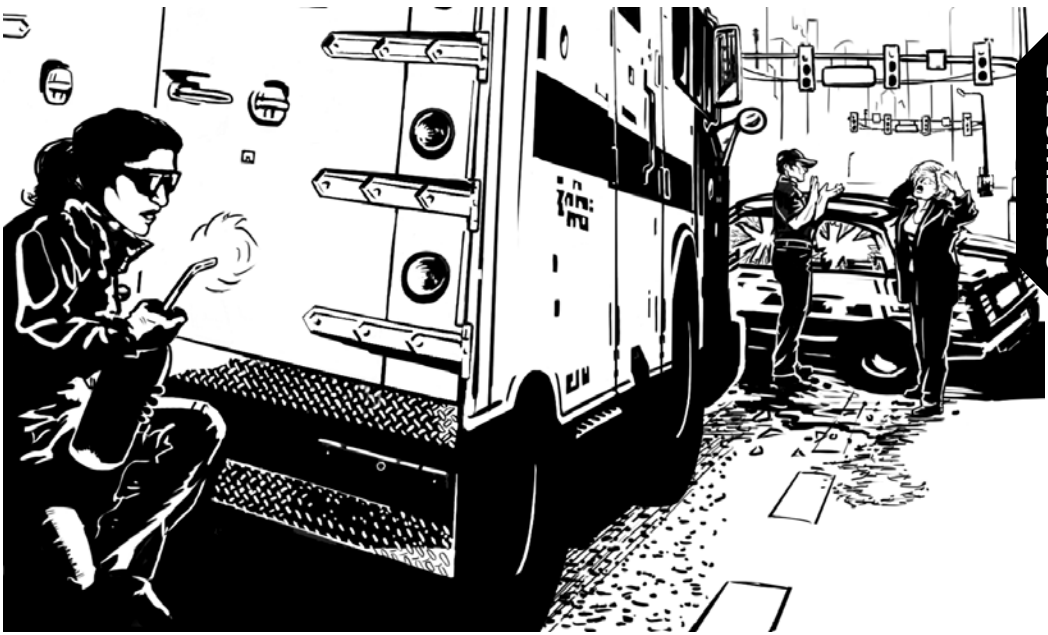
Score: The object of value, the target of a con or heist.

Strapped: Carrying a firearm.

Thief: From Cracker to Dipper to Muscle to Mastermind, the single generic term every criminal accepts is “Thief.” The world is made up of Thieves and Citizens.

Whiz Mob: A Crew organized in order to accomplish a single Job.

FATE WORLDS



New Skills in Crimeworld

Expertise: In *CrimeWorld*, the **Lore** is renamed **Expertise**, to refer to the active pool of knowledge a Crew member has on a Job or what makes a Mark unique. It otherwise functions similar to Lore, as an awareness and knowledge of particular facts, abilities and education.

Information: Information is the skill of parsing information, breaking down the paper trail, creating disinformation, purposefully misdirecting and misleading material to either put a Mark on a false trail or warding people off a real trail. It's hacking the Mark's social media, printing fake advertisements and anything else related to the pool of facts (real or fake) that the Crew needs to accomplish the Con.



Overcome: Use Information to overcome any obstacle that arises when someone needs knowledge or to discover information. For example, you can use Information to find the financial records for a company dating back ten years. Or find the photos on Facebook that someone didn't want you to see. However, knowing what to do with that material—finding the pattern and putting the pieces together—that's Expertise.



Create An Advantage: Use Information to Create Advantages based on what you've discovered. Here again we see Information dovetailing nicely with Expertise, so that a computer genius can send the financial statements to the press while the Grifter holds a fake press conference decrying the leak.



Attack: Information isn't used to Attack. Not directly, anyway.



Defend: Information isn't used to Defend.

WHAT IS A CRIME STORY?

A Crime Story is like any other story. The players have a problem they care about and they need to find a solution. In a Crime Story the solution is often a concrete thing which the players don't own. (If they did, after all, they wouldn't have a problem...)

It often helps to frame to frame the problem as: "In order to _____, we need to _____."

"In order to wreak vengeance on the High Priest, we need to get evidence of his sins."

"In order to enter the Tomb of Amon-Ra, we need to get the Golden Key."

"In order to save the villagers, we need to get the antidote."

"In order to find the mole, we need to get a confession from the Nazi general."

The Crime Story twist is that the first, most obvious solution to the problem is impossible because of either *accessibility* or *responsibility*.

The solution may be inaccessible because it is too heavily guarded, or its exact form unknown, or it is only available for a short amount of time. Responsibility is a factor whenever the fallout from acquiring the solution to the problem would be even worse than the original problem. In a Crime Story, the players seek to solve problems without anyone ever knowing they succeeded.

And so the problem shifts from two parts to three:

"In order to wreak vengeance on the High Priest, we need to get evidence of his sins ... but if we go directly after him, the Church will destroy us."

"In order to enter the Tomb of Amon-Ra, we need the Golden Key ... which will be put on a boat for the Far Lands tomorrow morning."

"In order to save the village, we need to get the antidote ... which the doctors haven't made yet."

"In order to find the mole, we need to get a confession from the Nazi general ... who is based on the top of the highest mountain, and accessible only by cable car."

Notice the common thread. Crime Stories involve problems that can be solved, generally, by getting something from the Opposition. A Crime Story is only as good as that **Opposition**. Which is why a GM builds the **Opposition** first.

THE OPPOSITION

Okay, Thief. You want something that belongs to somebody else. Something valuable—the Score. There are only two ways to get it. And so there are, in the whole world, only two types of property crimes:

You take it. This is The Heist.

You trick somebody into giving it to you. This is The Con.

That's it. Millennia of human venality, ambition, stupidity and guile all boiled down to two crimes. Two crimes which have evolved, during those same millennia, along classic lines proven efficient by the most brutal marketplace testing of all.

In a Heist you **Break the House, Crack the Box, and Dodge the Heat.**

In a Con you **Hook the Mark, Stall to the Sting, and Blow.**

Every Heist and Con story follows this pattern. What variety there is in CrimeWorld, what keeps you from telling the same Con or Heist story over and over again, comes from just three variables: **The Score, The Mark, and The Box.**

As a matter of fact, your high-quality Crime story absolutely does *not* depend on the cleverness of your Crew, your exotic setting, or your fantastic action sequences. All of those concepts emerge because you've properly built your Score, your Mark and Your Box.

Each Score, Mark and Box is a collection of Aspects and Skills. Not all stories involve all three elements, and in a story involving all three it's very rare they're all built out to the same level of detail. But at the very least each will have a High Concept and a few other context-specific Aspects.

The Score, the Mark and the Box aren't developed in any particular order during game prep. To a great degree it depends on which element is the focus of the story your group is telling at the time.

A good rule is: **"Whatever presents the most interesting problem becomes the primary element of the story."**

Not every Con story involves a Heist and not every Heist involves a Con, but there's always a Score. So we'll start there.

THE SCORE

The Score is something of value which currently belongs to somebody else. It will, if all goes well, soon belong to you.

Why is it valuable?

"Well," you might answer, "it's money. A giant pile of money. Or jewels, . . . Or information we can sell. It's objectively valuable."

Those are boring answers to the wrong question. The right question is **"Why do you need the Score?"**

"I need the money to pay off my brother's gambling debts. I need the information to clear my name. I need to ruin the Mark's reputation, I need the golden key to open the Forbidden Vault, I need justice. ... "

Better. Now go one step further: **"Why do other people need the Score?"** Is it for the same reason? What if it's not for the same reason?



The answers to these questions help you build the Mark and the Box. Often in crime stories, the Score is simply a MacGuffin. A MacGuffin is a term allegedly invented by Alfred Hitchcock back in the '30's. It's an object that exists solely to drive the plot. People want it, people chase it, people kill over it, but it could be any interchangeable object.

Don't make a MacGuffin. **A good Score is a collision of needs.**

The Score's High Concept

To build a Score begin with its *High Concept*. The High Concept is the physical form—and often vulnerabilities—of the Score. Much as a character's High Concept can be invoked for good or ill, the Score's High Concept should imply both advantages and disadvantages.

"A ruby-encrusted Faberge Egg" is hard to disguise as anything but a ruby-encrusted egg, but also small enough to be hidden in a variety of improvised containers. It will shatter if dropped, but is in theory water-proof.

"Mussolini's 1938 Packard" is too big to hide under a trenchcoat, but can be driven from location to location. It's a Score which provides its own getaway.

"The Names of all the undercover agents in Budapest" is just information. It can be duplicated, written into another medium, encoded to hide in other information. At the same time, that information can be corrupted by electromagnetic pulses if on a hard drive, or burned if on paper.

The Score's Value

The Score's other primary Aspect is its **Value**. This Aspect describes exactly how the Score is an intersection of competing needs. To illustrate using some well-known fictional examples:

- In the movie *National Treasure* the Declaration of Independence is “A Delicate Treasure Hiding a Dark Secret.” The government wants the document back, the historian-thieves want to preserve it, and the conspirators want it so they can get to the treasure.
- Jason Bourne seeks a file containing “The Dangerous Truth about Treadstone”. He needs the truth of his name; others need to hide the truth of their sins.
- Han Solo, aided by an old man and a useless farmboy, aims to steal a “Troublemaking Leader of the Rebellion”. He needs the reward to pay off Jabba the Hutt, the Rebellion needs its leader back, the Empire needs her dead, and she’s going to go throw some elbows along the way.

Thinking about the Score as the fulfillment of a need allows you to think about it in ways other than just “taking” an object. The Crew in *Inception* needs to plant an idea in their Mark’s dream. So what are they stealing? “*Access to the Mark’s Deepest Dreams*”. It doesn’t take much to figure out that there’ll be some conflicting needs when people’s id-scapes collide, even before you add *Ghost Guilt Wife*.

Even Scores that are apparently just of financial value have some needs attached. “*The payout from the grand-prize fight*” currently sitting in the Mark’s vault serves some purpose for him. It’s his cut to even bigger criminals, it’s his buy-in to a bigger empire. ...Nothing is valuable without context.

Is the Score a **Tool**—something used on a regular basis for some larger purpose—or a **Treasure**—something locked away, rarely taken out, and valuable solely because it is possessed? Is it a Tool for you but a Treasure for others? These questions lead you to the *Mark*.

THE MARK

The Mark controls access to the The Score. This character may have already been constructed at some other time during play if he’s a major character in the game world. If not, the Mark needs to be built out depending on how large a role the con plays in your story. Some Marks are defined by a single Aspect and skill, some are complex Main NPCs as set out in the *Fate Core* rules. But whether starting from scratch or tuning an existing opponent, your Mark needs to provide specific information to fit in a Crime Story:

THE MARK’S ASPECTS

If the Mark is anything more than a Nameless NPC, he needs at least two Aspects.

The High Concept: Who he is, what he does, and how he does it.

Trouble: “Trouble” for a Mark is quite specific. A Mark’s Trouble is related to a need—something he needs to have so much, something he needs to do so badly, he’ll make foolish decisions to fulfill that need. Coming up with the Mark’s Trouble is often the most challenging part of building a crime story because it can be difficult to separate out what the Mark wants and what he needs.

The Mark wants things that fit his High Concept. A “*Megalomaniacal Software Genius*” wants to crush his rivals and establish a monopoly. But is that because he needs to believe “*Everyone Knows I’m The Smartest Guy in the Room*” or he’s obsessed with the idea “*I’ll Never be Poor Again*”? Does your “*Mob Accountant on the Run*” sigh “*I Miss the Finer Things in Life*” or is he “*Looking for a Way Back In*”?

Not all Marks are bad guys, of course—your “*Charity-Loving Debutante*” may have the tendency to write big checks because “*It’s All for the Children*” More likely, of course, is that she’s “*Atoning for Past Crimes*” Spend time in CrimeWorld, you begin to assume the worst in people...

If the Mark’s context in your story doesn’t readily suggest a Trouble, a good place to begin is with a sin: theirs, or someone else’s. You can even start with the Seven Deadly Sins: Wrath, Greed, Sloth, Lust, Envy, Gluttony and Pride. Pick one. Then consider what the Mark must do to service that sin, or how they’re beholden to that sin.

Here are some suggested Troubles for each of the Seven Deadly Sins. The resulting Troubles can be general or specific; as with most Aspects, the more colorfully expressed, the better.

Wrath is excessive hatred—but also revenge, spite, even obsessive justice turned to anger. Some Wrath Aspects may be “*Punish First, Negotiate Second*” or “*The Rebellion Must Be Crushed At Any Cost!*”, or even more specifically “*I Will Destroy Count Diego!*”

Greed is an obsession with material things and often the most common Trouble for people of means. Your Mark likes to say “*You Can Never Have Enough Cash*”, or “*Craves the Riches of the East*”

Sloth is not just laziness. In medieval times Sloth was understood to include the sin of spiritual inactivity, of standing by and letting bad things happen. A Slothful Mark takes shortcuts, looks the other way so long as they get what they want. This is a very passive sin but can provide a very active need, because the Mark’s balancing “*So Many Cover-Ups*” and is always “*Looking for the Easy Way to Move Up*”

Lust is intense desire for a specific need. Greedy Marks want more stuff; lustful Marks crave one thing. The Mark’s lust could just as easily insist “*The Lost Renoir Must Hang On My Wall*” as they may crave “*Redheads! Redheads! Redheads!*”

Envy is also desire, but specifically for what other people have. This can involve not just possessions but status. An envious Mark swears “*I’d Make the Better King*” or is “*Sick of Other People’s Headlines*”.

Gluttony is overconsumption and indulgence. A Wrathful Mark needs to destroy his rivals; a Gluttonous Mark needs to own them. Gluttonous Marks believe “*The Entire Waterfront Should be Mine*” or “*Every Great Painting Should Hang on My Wall.*”

Pride, or excessive self-regard, is considered the original sin, the source of all others. Hurt Pride leads to Wrath, for example. Pride is the Mark’s sin in the classic con movie *The Sting*. In this story the Mark is crime boss Doyle Loneygan. When Loneygan’s conned in the opening act his hurt pride leads him to violently murder one con artist and send the other—Johnny Hooker—on the run. When Hooker



teams up with the infamous con man Henry Gondorf, they suck Longan into their scheme by not just cheating him at cards, but cheating him at his own rigged game, tweaking Longan's Pride in his own criminal skills. Longan's Trouble most certainly is "*Nobody Makes a Mug Outta ME!*"

Note that some of these Troubles could be read as virtues. Indeed, an important thing to remember about the Mark is that no one is the villain in their own story. While the heroes might consider the Mark's trouble to be "*The Rebellion Must Be Destroyed!*", the Mark may well dedicate himself to "*Bringing Peace to the Empire, No Matter the Sacrifice.*"

THE MARK'S SKILLS

The Mark's Skills are built as an NPC according to the *Fate Core* Rules, with a few adjustments.

It's suggested that the Lore skill be renamed as the Mark's **Expertise** as defined by his High Concept. Adapting to a Mark's specific realm of **Expertise**, overcoming it and exploiting it, is a crucial part of every con. It's worth calling out. (See sidebar on page 27.)

OTHER FACTORS

Although these other factors may be covered in the Mark's Aspects, the GM should make sure they're fully defined just in case.

AIDES: Doe the Mark have anyone who works with him who may challenge the Crew? Specifically, does he have ENFORCERS who execute his wishes or EXPERTS who may aid him in seeing through the Crew's falsehoods? On the plus side, co-opting the Aides makes it easier to earn the Mark's trust.

ALLIES: Who does the Mark trust? Who do they work with?

ENEMIES: From violent opponents to friendly rivals, who does the Mark strive against?

AUTHORITIES: Who does the Mark answer to? Who will make the Mark sit up and take notice, make them nervous, force cooperation? It may seem an imposing Mark answers to no-one, but influence is always relative within a power structure. Some churches exist at the whim of the government, and some governments exist with the permission of a church. Thieves answer to their Guildmaster and the King's Hand.

In a pure Con, the Mark and the Score define the story. But if there's a Heist in the tale, then the GM needs to build one more story element: the Box.

THE BOX

Simply put, the Box is whatever security keeps people from just walking away with the Score—a vault, an encrypted server closet, or even just a locked room. The building or area surrounding the Box is called the House. Sometimes the House's sole purpose is to keep Thieves from getting to the Box. Often it serves a secondary role, such as providing services or acting as living quarters.

- A fortune in blood diamonds (the Score) sits in a heavily alarmed safe (the Box) in the basement of a busy Manhattan bank (the House).
- The plans to Dr. Van Graf's sinister Robobrain (the Score) are in his secured laboratory (the Box) located within his flying Zeppelin Fortress (the House).
- The Book of Dark Truths (the Score) rests on a pedestal in the Chamber of Torments (the Box) deep beneath the King's castle (the House).

As seen in the Heist section of "Getting In" (page 23), the House is treated as a series of Zones with accompanying obstacles, handled by the basic *Fate Core* rules. The Box is a little more specialized.

The fully defined Box is defined by a High Concept, a Trouble and three Skills:

ACCESS

EYES

BOLTS

It should be pointed out that one of these skills will be of a higher rank, since that's the BOX's stand-out skill, while the other two are at least one step below it.

THE BOX'S ASPECTS

The HIGH CONCEPT provides the context for the skills needed to enter the Box. A "*Secret Military Lab*" will involve different Skills than a "*Pharoah's Ancient Trap-laden Tomb*".

The TROUBLE is the House or Box's weakness. Although they feel like two separate spaces, the House and Box are complementary in this Aspect.

This may seem like cheating to the GM, automatically building a path for the Crew into the Box, but there's a real world reason for this balance: Every secure space has a weakness based on its everyday use.

Let's say your Mark's research facility is very inaccessible and heavily alarmed. Thieves have a hard time getting to it and moving freely within it—but that also means anyone who belongs there has a hard time getting to it and moving freely. If the House serves any secondary purpose at all, its capacity is compromised.

At a large pharmaceutical company, for example, it's not unusual for a thousand people to work in the research facility at any given time. Can the company really function with a thousand employees travelling hours to the remote facility, being spot-checked every few meters, and constantly triggering a false alarm? No, the system has to allow for access and a variety of employee statuses—guards, scientists, visiting executives, etc. That facility's trouble is "*Too Many People In and Out!*," which the PC's can invoke to blend in or aid them in fabricating ID's.

Contrast this with a truly Top Secret location, like the Los Alamos laboratories where the United States built the first atomic bomb. The Government solved this problem by moving the scientists and their families to the fenced-off camp in the desert. This allowed them to tightly control who entered the facility, removing the need for endless spot checks within the labs. It created other problems though: the camp was effectively a town, requiring tons of supplies to be brought in on a regular basis. The fenced area was naturally sprawling and the guards were lulled into a false sense of security by the isolation. All these factors were notoriously exploited by the physicist Richard Feynman, who made it a hobby to sneak in and out of the facility at a whim. "*Supply trucks and Endless Fences*" is a distinct Trouble for such a place.

This points out one another of the great conundrums security planners face—the strongest piece of a security system makes the other pieces more dependent on it, and therefore less effective. Like all Aspects, the High Concept and Trouble should suggest both advantages and disadvantages. Sure, Players may invoke "*Supply Trucks and Endless Fences*" to aid their infiltration of Los Alamos; the GM can then invoke that same Aspect to put a stalled truck—and annoyed guards—right in the path of their escape.

THE BOX'S SKILLS

The ACCESS skill defines any obstacle the Thieves face in order to enter the Box. Access includes vault doors, locks, time-specific obstacles, etc.

The EYES can be guards, cameras, heat sensors—anyone or anything which may detect the Thieves' presence and react accordingly.

The BOLTS are anything that physically restrain the Score. Glass case, safe deposit box door, magnetic bolts, even encryption in the case of a digital Score.

These terms are defined as Skills rather than Difficulties because they often move from a passive to active Challenges or Contests very quickly, as detailed in the "Getting the Goods" section (page 26). Note that some Boxes may not have all of these skills, or more than one implementation.

Some examples are shown on page 19.



BANK VAULT

- THE SCORE:** Gold bars in a safe-deposit box
- HIGH CONCEPT:** *“The Heart of the Bank since 1879”*
- TROUBLE:** *“The Door is as Big as it is Dumb”*
- ACCESS (Great) +4:** A Great 1948 Glenn-Rieder Stock Tumbler Vault Door.
- EYES (Average) +1:** Average video cameras on a feed to Average Guards watching.
- BOLTS (Fair) +2:** Fair locks secure the safety deposit boxes in the Vault.

CIA SERVER ROOM

- THE SCORE:** The digital blueprints of a new bomb
- HIGH CONCEPT:** *“Super-Secret Climate-controlled Data Hub”*
- TROUBLE:** *“So Secret, We Barely Know What’s Going on in There.”*
- ACCESS (Superb) +5:** Superb front door biometric security system.
- EYES (Good) +3:** Good pressure-sensitive floor.
- BOLTS (Fair) +2:** Fair encryption must be defeated before the target file can be downloaded.

MAYAN CHAMBER

- THE SCORE:** A golden fertility idol
- HIGH CONCEPT:** *“Claustrophobic Crumbling Deathtrap”*
- TROUBLE:** *“Unsubtle Murder Machine”*
- ACCESS (Fair) +2:** Floors covered with paving stones, fires darts when triggered.
- EYES:** None. It’s been empty for centuries.
- BOLTS (Great) +4:** Nothing prevents removal of the idol—except a weight sensitive stone under the idol which, when triggered, releases a giant boulder to roll after the Thief and crush him...

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

To tell the truth, you'll rarely do all the work detailed in the previous sections. Depending on the nature of the Score and the skill set of your Crew, the Job will naturally lean toward becoming a Con or a Heist. If a Con, the Score and Mark are detailed; if a Heist, the Score and Box.

One extra layer of style—and to make sure all members of your Crew are included in the Job—is to salt your main crime with elements of the other. Make sure your Con depends on information which can only be acquired through a Heist. Let your Crew know the best way to gain access to the Heist is by a password that needs to be conned off the Mark.

Of course, that still leaves your Crew wondering exactly how they go about committing their crime. The PC's players are (probably) not criminals. Luckily, Cons and Heists break down into just four very intuitive phases. Once your Crew learns these steps, they'll be well on their way to a life of crime. The GM won't need to direct them. Just put the Job in front of them and they'll know how to tackle it.

It's all about Getting In, Getting the Goods, Getting Out, and Getting Paid.

This may seem like an exaggeration, the idea that one can learn how to properly think like a criminal by learning how crime stories work. On a personal note, let me tell a story from the *Leverage* writer's room.

Apollo Robbins (<http://www.istealstuff.com/>) runs a crew of professional thieves who consult for law enforcement. He was also our criminal consultant on *Leverage*. Every few weeks he would visit the writer's room to advise on the scripts and keep us up to date about new cons and the latest in criminal technology.

One day during the third season he sat in with the writers while we broke a story. We posted the details of a real-life white collar criminal up on the room's whiteboard, using him as the basis for our Mark. We looked at his weaknesses, how he moved his money, what his hobbies were. Once we were happy with that element of the story we added a Vault to the mix, one that used an interesting new alarm technology we'd researched. We then spent about an hour figuring out how to circumvent that alarm. We even sketched out a map of the imaginary building so we could keep track of our Crew's movements during the Job.

"Well, I'm done here," Apollo muttered. Noting our confusion, he pointed at the board and index cards cluttering the wall. "This is exactly how real Crews plan these things. This writer's room is now a fully functioning criminal gang. You could be thieves."

Of course writing television pays better than crime (usually), with far less chance of being arrested (usually), so we all managed to resist the temptation. But aside from the day a US Attorney asked us to change a plot because we'd created a scam that was a little too foolproof, or when a Homeland Security Agent admitted they were spooked by a security hole we'd exploited in our season finale, it was certainly one of the proudest moments I had on the show.

GETTING IN

GETTING INTO THE CON: Hooking the Mark

The Crew's done their research. They know what the Mark likes, what he needs, his weaknesses, his friends and enemies. Now to put him on the Hook. How? Look at the Mark's Trouble—his defining Need. Now decide how the Crew could offer to help achieve that Need.

The Crew's job is to insert themselves between the Mark and his Need. The Smug Banker needs money? The Crew represents an alluring investment, which only the Mark was clever enough to find. The Mob Boss needs relief from prosecution? The Crew are dirty cops who can make the evidence disappear. And the price for that aid? The Score—although when well done, the Score won't even be mentioned until well into the next phase, Stalling to the Sting.

Hooking the Mark is a tricky business. Any villain worth his salt can smell “too good to be true” from a mile away. A good Con is a clue path, letting the Mark build his own reasonable story towards the final decision. That first step, the Hook, establishes the style for the entire Job. The key Skill for this phase of the Con is often Rapport rather than Deceit. Your cover story is light on details, focused on trust-building.

How to set the Hook best? There are several styles of varying efficiency and subtlety.

The Straight-Up Offer: “We hear you’ve got a problem.” Fast and dirty, and works if the Mark is already under an enormous amount of pressure to satisfy his Need. This one ranks low on the trust factor, however, and the Crew better have a damn good reason they happen to know so specifically what the Mark needs.

The Expert: “Oh, you have a problem? Why yes, we specialize in that.” In this hook the Inside Man and the Crew come to the Mark's attention as he actively pursues his Need, and the Mark then seeks them out. The Mark trusts the Crew more, as *he's* the one who sought *them* out. This approach requires decent Expertise to establish the Crew's ability, Investigation to create a research trail for the Mark to follow, Contacts and Resources to make the Crew stand out among other options.

The Unwitting: “Um, I don't understand how you think we can help you ...” The Crew's cover story seems utterly unrelated to the Mark's problem, but the Mark is led to realize the connection no one else can see—the Crew is his out-of-the-box solution to his problems. This is the finest Hook, as the Job becomes the Mark's idea from the very first step. Making the entire Job seem like the Mark's idea is, as we'll see in the Stalling to the Sting, the perfect execution of a Con. Along with the Skills required for the previous entry, this approach where Deceit primarily comes into play.



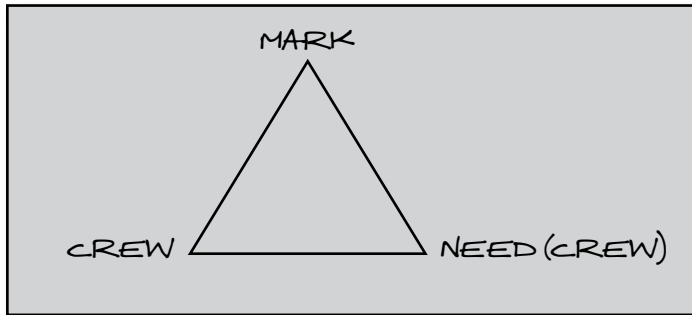
AMPING UP THE NEED

If you envision the relationship between the Mark and the Need as a straight line, the Crew inserts itself into that line to become the Mark's path to his dreams.

Mark → (Crew) → Need

This assumes, however, that the Mark is not only actively pursuing his Need but doing so ferociously enough to motivate bad decisions. What if he's not? What if the Mark really isn't under too much pressure to fulfill his Need?

This is where true gamesmanship comes into play. Part of the Crew becomes dedicated to creating the crisis. Part of the Crew, in essence, *controls the Need* while the rest of the Crew is the solution to the problem. The line becomes a triangle.



Triangles, as we all know, are the most stable structures. The Crew now controls two elements of the Mark's life and can fine-tune the pressures on him from every direction. If the Mark shows reluctance in trusting the Crew, they can amp up his Need. If he becomes obsessed with the Need, the Crew can give him some early successes, engendering trust and buying time. If the Mark circumvents the Crew somehow in pursuit of the Need, they still have their hooks into the Mark's life.

At this point the Con has begun. The Mark is Hooked. But how does a Heist begin?

This is the structure of *The Sting*, as noted earlier. Hooker and Gondorf don't wait for some other schmoe to cross Loney's Pride and then insert themselves into the situation; they provoke his Pride against Gondorf through the crooked card game, then offer Johnny Hooker as the means to Loney's revenge. It's also one of Jim Rockford's favorite techniques on *The Rockford Files*, which was the direct influence on our con style in *Leverage*. It's the most controlled style of con, and professional criminals are all about mitigating risk. That said, it involves another stress point in the plan where an error could reveal the Crew's identity. Players who are just learning the CrimeWorld ropes will do just fine with simpler Cons.

GETTING INTO THE HEIST: BREAKING THE HOUSE

In a Heist the Crew wants to get to the Box, Crack it, grab the Score and get out as fast as possible. But the Box is stored somewhere, a "somewhere" usually full of people and guards and cameras and complications, called the House.

Unless you have a specific heist location in mind previously established in the gameworld, the House can be summarized as three Zones: First Base, Second Base, and Third Base.

First Base is the House's front door or anywhere the Crew first gains access to the physical location.

Second Base is the transit between the front door and where the Box is, usually filled with all sorts of bystanders and the trappings of the House's secondary purpose, if any.

Third Base is the threshold to the Box, whatever area directly surrounds your target. The identity of these Zones come out of the Crew's research.

For example, if the Box is a legendarily difficult CIA server room, the House is CIA headquarters. The Heist could be constructed as :

- **First Base:** The front door security of CIA Headquarters.
- **Second Base:** The offices accessing the IT department.
- **Third Base:** The ventilation shafts providing direct access to the Server Room.

As always, whatever presents the most interesting problem should be the focus of the game—accessing the Zeppelin Fortress of Dr. Roboto may well be more interesting than cracking the safe within, in which case the House can be built out in a series of Challenges. But when building the bare minimum House for a game, it's best to boil each Zone down to a single generalized Difficulty number. The PC's then attempt to surmount the Obstacle with interesting Skill choices. The GM is within her rights to award a bonus or a penalty depending on the appropriateness (and creativity) of the attempt.

In the CIA Headquarters example above, the GM may state that getting into the building is the hardest part, so First Base has a Difficulty of +5. Once inside most people assume you belong there, so it's actually just Fair +2 security within. There are no alarms in the ventilation shafts, but they're incredibly difficult to move around within, especially without making any noise—a Good +3 Difficulty.

At each Zone, one Crew member must Overcome the Obstacle to pass through that Zone. He can be aided by other PC's if that makes sense within the story. Each attempt covers any of the Crew moving together.

In the above example, three members of the Crew enter the CIA building—First Base—is using fake IDs crafted using Investigate, or whatever Crafts skill makes sense in your Campaign.

Second Base consists of the corridors and offices of the building the Crew passes through on the way to the Server Room. Stealth would make sense here, although Empathy to try to sense if anyone's noticing them also works.

Third Base is the ventilation shaft granting access to the Server Room. Moving through these vents require Athletics more than Stealth. No one can hear the Crew, but shimmying through the vents is exhausting.

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Cons and Heist stories are tricky; failure often out-and-out stops the story cold. In a Crime Story, make sure the characters always *fail forward*. That's not to say they can't fail, but failure actually pushes them deeper into the situation as opposed to ejecting them.

If a Crew member fails a check and decides to succeed but with a Moderate Consequence or a new Situational Aspect, then simply assign a boost or Aspect as seems appropriate. But there is an alternative: convert that Zone's check to a Challenge, Contest or Conflict which can be attempted by a single Crew member. That Crew member will deal with the failure as the rest of the Crew moves on. (In the case of a single Crew member on a job, that Crew member stays behind to deal with the new problem). This mimics the "hand-off" aspect of Heist movies.

For example, let's say the fake IDs don't quite get the Crew through the CIA front doors. One Crew member can declare that he's taking on the failure. He'll run a Deceit Contest against the Guards' Notice, creating the distraction the Crew needs to move on. The Guards at the doors are befuddled and useless as they struggle to resolve the Contest against the Crew member. If the Crew Member eventually wins, they move on. If he loses he's forced out of the Job at this moment, but has bought the rest of the Crew forward motion. They do not have to deal with those Guards until the Contest is resolved.

Once inside, the remaining Crew members attract the attention of some passing Guards by failing the next check. The hand-to-hand specialist announces he'll take on that failure. That fight could be run as a Contest or a Conflict, but while that goes on, the Burglary expert heads off into the vents.

Once in the Vents (Third Base) the Burglary expert fails her Athletics check to make her way through the easiest part of the maze. She could take the Moderate Consequence, but also could ask the hacker of the Crew to aid her by taking on the failure. He agrees. The GM and players decide the reason the Burglar failed was because she set off motion alarms within the vents. The hacker engages in a running Contest with the alarm system, trying to shut it down before it can trigger. A Challenge here might also work.

This technique can also be used in a Con, although failure in that crime tends to leave the Crew with more options, so they may not need to scramble to buy time during the Job in this way. The important thing to remember is to keep the fiction moving forward.

So you've Hooked the Mark, or you've made it through the House. Now it's time to Get the Goods.



GETTING THE GOODS

Your Crew is enmeshed in the Mark's life, or standing on the threshold of the Box. The Con and Heist diverge here in structure, primarily because of *time*. The Con is a slow play, taking days. A Heist is under a time crunch. Someone's going to notice the Crew hanging around in a place they don't belong picking locks they shouldn't be near. This difference is reflected in the names of the next step in each operation. Cons Stall to the Sting, while a Heist Crew hurries to Crack the Box.

THE CON: STALL TO THE STING

Cons walk a very fine timeline. They can't proceed so slowly the Mark has time to ask too many questions. A crisis regarding the Mark's Need, either natural or manufactured, drives him forward fast enough to avoid this problem. But the Crew also doesn't want to arrive at the point of the Con where the Mark hands over the Score—the "Sting"—before they're sure the Mark is so committed that there'll be no hesitation at that crucial moment.

So the Crew Stalls. They work the Mark, pushing him away and then reeling him in. They create obstacles for both the Mark and his new friends, the Crew, to overcome together. The Stall has many variations but a good one always has one over-riding purpose: to convince the Mark that the entire Job is his idea. Human psychology does an excellent job of making sure we're convinced that our own ideas are always good ones.

Even more importantly, studies have shown that people who lose access to something they believe they are about to receive have the *exact same physiological response* as someone who has an object they already own taken away from them. The human mind projects forward; indeed, some argue that the ability to perceive the future is the defining trait of true sentience.

The Stall can be seen as a series of Mental Conflicts the Mark doesn't really know he's involved in. The Crew's Deceit, Information, and Provoke skills wearing down the Marks's Mental Stress boxes, until the Mark picks up the Consequences affecting his state of mind at the Sting. This is why a Crew is particularly dangerous—they can switch off techniques against the Mark, and the few times he scores a win they can rotate that Crew member out of the path of the Con, protecting themselves and nullifying the GM's ability to invoke any Consequences the Crew member suffers under.

All this is to build to the Sting, which can be presented by the GM as either one last Contest or a single Skill roll with a Difficulty equal to the ludicrousness of the Mark's decision.

EXAMPLE

In one episode of *Leverage* the Crew convinced the Mark that he was going to fly the Spruce Goose, the world's largest airplane, out of the museum where it was stored. They would use Crafts in order to create an ad-hoc flight simulator within the Spruce Goose.

Obviously the Mark, an expert on Howard Hughes and himself an experienced flyer, never would have bought the con in broad daylight on the first day of the scheme. But after having his "*I AM the new Howard Hughes*" Trouble invoked to Hook him, and the first few moves used to wear down his Mental Stress Boxes, the Crew's Deceit against his Empathy burdened him with the -2 Consequence "*People Will Kill Over This*".

A follow up car bomb—Crafts—versus Empathy gave him the -4 Consequence "*I Can Trust No One*". His own Expertise was used to convince him that the old airplane contained secret research and so "*The Spruce Goose is worth BILLIONS!*". Each of those was invoked during the final Deceit roll against his Empathy, aided by the Crafts of the simulator. He was convinced he had to fly the plane to flee foreign assassins ("*People will Kill Over This!*") because he couldn't call for help ("*I Can Trust No One*") and there was no way he was letting anyone else get this treasure ("*The Spruce Goose is worth BILLIONS!*"). The ridiculous becomes conceivable, particularly as each step was set up as a discovery for the Mark's to make with the Crew's Inside Man as his hapless sidekick.

The other key to the Sting is for the Crew to compress the timeline and amp up the pressure as they approach the Score. A Week to Hook the Mark, days to build up his anticipation, and then a crisis forcing the crucial decisions to be made in hours, or even minutes. Start with business as usual, then threats, suspicion and fear, leading to crisis and panic at the crucial moment.

All this requires the Mark to focus more and more on the Con, even take refuge in it. But how does the Crew keep the Mark focused where they want him to go?

The real-world key to this style of Con is what close-up magicians, pickpockets and con men call **framing**. When the human mind is focused on a particular object within a "frame", anything happening outside that frame, no matter how outrageous, won't be noticed. In fact, there are studies which indicate that information *can't* be noticed because of the way the human mind processes vision.

Frames can be physical, such the area around a deck of cards or the coin in a magician's hand. Pickpockets will spill something on an expensive piece of the Mark's clothing, and while their victim stares at the distressing stain they rob every *other* pocket on that person. Con men's frames are informational. The con man taps into a subject about which the Mark cares very deeply. The Mark's singular focus blocks out all other information, even warning signs that all may not be what they appear.

I was once given a devastating demonstration of framing by Apollo Robbins while shooting a *Leverage* episode. Apollo approached our Unit Producer, shook his hand, and asked him about his watch. Apollo asked our Producer about the watch's cost, where he got it, everything about the timepiece you could possibly imagine. Our Producer, having seen Apollo remove watches from other victims, kept his eyes fixed firmly on that watch. He wouldn't be fooled!

And so the rest of us watched as Apollo, still talking about the watch, removed the Producer's mechanical pencil from his breast pocket, removed the lead from that mechanical pencil, *balanced the lead on the man's left shoulder*, then returned the mechanical pencil to the Producer's shirt pocket. All while his victim stared resolutely at that watch.

A useful tool in this stage is the Mark's preconceptions, their worldview. This is why the Crew went to all that trouble to learn the Mark's friends, rivals and troubles. The frame should integrate elements of the Mark's world so he doesn't even see it sliding into place. The frame belongs, because it conforms with how the Mark believes the world works. The Crew uses the Mark's rivals and enemies as the boundaries of the frame. When a Mark resents the interference of the SEC, for example, making him believe that Agency is out to foil him, even peripherally, drives him even harder at the Score.

THE STING

Although it's become common to call the entire Con "The Sting", it's technically the moment when the Mark hands over the Score to the Crew.

It's easy to think about the Sting as the moment where the Mark hands over a literal briefcase full of cash. The cash hand-off is, after all, a reliable payoff in any situation. But the key to a good con is to understand that the Sting is not necessarily the moment when the Mark gives the Crew the Score, but gives them *access* to the Score in order to fulfill his Need. A Mark who leads the Crew to his secret warehouse of stolen art so he can hand over a stolen painting in trade for bars of (fake) gold may never even notice that the rest of the Crew is wheeling crates out the back door while he negotiates with the fake Saudi Sheik.

Regardless of execution, the Sting is the moment where the Mark trades something of immense value for something of lesser or no value. What happens next is often a matter of style as much as necessity, and covered in the section "GETTING OUT".



The Heist: Crack The Box

Compared to the Con, the Heist is simplicity itself. Crack the Box to get the Score. The Box must be Accessed, its Eyes fooled, and the Bolts released.

If Breaking the House already proved difficult and engaging, the GM may wish to run the Crack as a simple Challenge, with each of the three Skills defeated by the Thieves' appropriate Skills. If the Heist is the climax of the adventure, each step can be broken out into a separate Challenge or Contest.

Using our recurring CIA server room as the example, it has:

ACCESS +5: Superb front door biometric security system.

EYES +3: Good pressure-sensitive floor.

BOLTS +2: Fair encryption must be defeated before the target file can be downloaded.

The Thief could use Burglary to circumvent the doors, Athletics to high-wire over the floor, and the campaign-appropriate Crafts or Expertise skill to defeat the encryption. If the GM wishes to build suspense, the encryption might be aggressive enough to fight back, requiring a contest between the Thief and the software.

Failure can be "handed off" as before. Nothing screams "Heist" like simultaneous action!

GETTING OUT

The Crew can hope it pulls off the perfect crime, the one-in-a-million Job where the victim never even discovers his loss. But as the saying goes, “Hope is not a plan.” So every Crew prepares a way out of the Job.

Cons and Heists have different exit strategies. If a Heist is executed properly, there’ll be no evidence left behind but some grainy surveillance footage. During a Con the Mark has seen the Crew’s faces, spent time with them. The Crew is uniquely vulnerable. As a result, the Con Crew must pull off an effective **Blow**. All the Heist Crew need do is **Dodge the Heat**.

THE CON: The Blow

The Blow is designed to not just allow the Crew to get away, but to hinder or even eliminate any pursuit of the con men. There tend to be three distinct types of Blows.

The False Trail: Flat out disappearing with the Score is slick, but nothing drives obsession like an unsolved puzzle. Too slick an exit often inflames pursuit. Much like the Stall, this type of Blow leaves a clue trail for the Mark or authorities to pursue. The seemingly careless phone call, the dropped matchbook, all placed to convince eager pursuers that they are closing in. As long as the hunters follow a convincing trail, why wander off it?

If the GM wishes to spring an unpleasant surprise on the Crew, he can have them make opposed rolls against the pursuer’s Skills in order to mislead them. Information to lay false paper trails. Deceit to convince nosy hotel clerks they overheard talk of a “trip to the Bahamas”. Failure on the Crew’s part doesn’t necessarily mean the cops kick in the door. But getting tagged with the Aspect “Inspector Gregg is Closer Than You Think” might well make the *next* Job interesting.

The Dead End: The authorities give up because the Score is unrecoverable. The Score is destroyed—often before the Mark’s very eyes—and the Crew is dead or scattered. There’s no recourse. The Mark must accept his loss and move on.

Of course, the Score was switched to another briefcase well before that convenient car bomb, and the dead crew members were carted away in an ambulance driven by a strangely familiar paramedic. This type of Blow is best executed during the Sting itself, to take advantage of the Mark’s heightened stress. It’s also known as “the Cackle Bladder” from the days when a con man would burst a packet of chicken’s blood under his shirt to simulate being shot before the Mark’s very eyes. If the Mark is a character of status just the prospect of being involved in the con man’s death may drive him away, as he fears.

Discrediting the Mark: Maybe they got the Mark to break some laws along way, maybe it’s a straight-up frame job, but the Crew’s left the Mark with all the attention from authority figures. At the very least, these authorities are going to assume the Mark’s stories about “con men” are a pathetic attempt to divert attention from his own sins. Combine this approach with a false trail and the Mark’s story seems even more ludicrous.

Properly done this Blow may make the Mark realize that even acknowledging the crime is a bad idea. The victim would rather eat the loss than admit he was taken. A Mob bookie who lost his bankroll on a “sure thing” will not be calling either the cops or his bosses about the theft. It’s too risky for the Mark to even look for the Crew, as his activities may tip off others to his own malfeasance.

THE HEIST: Dodging the Heat

Because the Heist is over more quickly and requires less interactivity, the Crew’s main concern is just getting out of the Box as neatly as possible. Pursuit of Con men takes a while. Pursuit of thieves busting out of a vault involves a high speed chase that’s going to happen right now.

Any attempts the pursuers make to chase down the Crew can of course be resolved by straight-up Contests. However the Crew’s usually accumulated some Consequences by this late stage of the Heist. The GM has a lot of options to bring the heat down on the players. As a workaround, some crews build a “hot exit” right into their plan. They *assume* somebody’s going to figure out what’s going on and work the resulting reaction into their plan.

A key element of that reaction is *protocol*. In order to get the fastest response out of a security system, human or otherwise, that system has a protocol to follow. Guards are not expected to think, they’re expected to act according to their training. Nobody is deciding what doors lock down, they all lock down. Independent thought only slows things down.

Although the system is expected to behave exactly as it’s designed to, that doesn’t mean the reaction is chaos-free. By their nature, alarm situations are atypical. In a good security infrastructure, thieves are the rare exception, not the rule. Combine extraordinary, stressful activity and a highly predictable pattern of behavior, and you have a perfect bit of cover for the thieves to slip out as *part* of the response. Guards looking for black-clad thieves will not notice the new faces on the squad. A squad car is immediately dispatched to the back gate of the compound? In that case, no one will be surprised to see that car race toward the rear exit. This option is one of the reason the Crew spends time during the Read discovering the authority figures, the allies, the frame through which their victim sees the world. As long as the Crew stays within the frame nothing will be seen as amiss.

Once clear of any immediate danger the Crew can then use one or more of the Blows to cover their tracks.

GETTING PAID

Sure, you’ve finally got the Jade Amulet of Qui-Hong. Now what the hell do you do with it? Thieves profit from their ill-gotten gains in many ways, but these are the most popular:

On Commission: The Score was specifically requested by someone willing to pay handsomely for it. The specific nature of the prize means the Crew had less room to maneuver during the Job, incurring more risk. As a result the Crew can ask for a much higher fee than they’d receive if they simply —

Fence it: Fences are professional middle-men. They receive the item, contact any buyers, take their cut and pass on the rest of the purchase price to the Crew. As the fence is incurring considerable risk—he's the one who has to go out and *advertise* that he has stolen goods—and the buyers understand the pressure the Crew faces by holding on to the item for any longer than necessary, the Crew takes a much lower payout in order to unload the Score.

Ransom it: Ranging from straight buy-back to blackmail over illicit secrets. A large percentage of modern art theft, particularly high-profile art theft in Europe, is essentially kidnapping. When a famous painting goes missing the authorities wait by the phone, knowing the instructions for an exchange are imminent.

This method has the advantage of quick turnover—the Crew doesn't need to hold the incriminating Score for long—and a built-in buyer. It does create another failure point in the Job, through the exchange. In some cultures this can almost be considered business as usual, but the Crew had best lay a false trail to discourage any nosiness after the trade-off.

Launder it: This applies specifically to currency but can be a problem in any society where markets are monitored by the authorities. A duffel bag full of cash or a chest of gold doubloons, both elicit suspicion from the authorities in your game-world. How do you take dirty money and make it clean?

Laundering is the art of injecting illegitimate money into legitimate businesses. When the money shows up as profit it can be accounted for, taxed, and then spent with no concerns that the funds will incriminate their owner.

There are many ways to launder money. The two we'll discuss are the *Flip* and the *Wash*.

In **the Flip**, the money is used to make a series of transactions in order to disguise the source of the original funds. The Crew wants to buy high-value items which don't lose much value when sold quickly. For example, the Crew could use the Score to buy some houses, flip the houses and invest their money in diamonds, then trade the diamonds for rare stamps. If there's a single decent fake ID used anywhere in that process, the chain of evidence is broken.

Appraised or collectible items are best. One popular modern-day technique is to buy comic book collections on-line, then flip them immediately. The collector community on-line is large enough to produce a steady demand.

In **the Wash**, the money is inserted into a business's normal cash flow in order to appear to be legitimate profits of that company. The trick to the Wash is finding a cash-intensive, inventory-free business. If you claim that your shoe store's profits are from selling shoes, there are too many places for a clever investigator to poke holes in the story. Where did you store these shoes before you sold them? Where are you buying the shoes *from*. Where are those receipts?

This is why the Wash is often used in the restaurant business. Food is cheap and high mark-ups common. Pour a \$10 bottle of wine down the drain and claim you sold it for \$40, there's no way to prove otherwise. Rental businesses are particularly effective at the Wash. During the heyday of the videotape business, video rental stores were excellent money-laundering opportunities. Once past the initial outlay of the tapes, how can anyone prove how many people rented out, for cash, a certain video? It's not like the inventory has changed; after all, the tape is always returned.

A FEW LAST WORDS

Remember crime stories go both ways. The players aren't the only ones with new tools. When the Princess who sent the players on a quest turns out to be a scullery maid on the take, your players who might have once grumbled "How does *that* make sense?!" will instead sigh "Yeah, we should have seen that coming."

Always make sure your Opposition have has good plans that would succeed in the absence of the players. Nobody sits around waiting to be conned. The Opposition wants things, and should already be trying to get them.

Although there's a strong tradition of "everything goes wrong" in the con and heist genre, don't punish your players for good planning. They will pick up enough Consequences and Aspects during the con to complicate things without throwing out-of-the-blue obstacles in their path.

Assuming no one in your Crew is a real criminal, here's a list of real-life cons to inspire their schemes:

ADVANCE FEE FRAUD: The ur-fraud basis for most modern fraud. The Mark is put in contact with a persecuted nobleman or authority who is, due to governmental persecution, currently not at liberty to move his vast fortune. The con artist convinces the Mark to supply legal fees with the promise of great rewards once the nobleman is freed. Of course the Mark is bled for as long as he'll buy the story, at which point the con man disappears. Over the years the purpose of those "advanced fees" and the nature of "the prisoner" have morphed into dozens of variations, including the modern Nigerian Money Transfer Fraud. Versions of the scam inspired by the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars are now in play.

THE BANK EXAMINER: Any con where the Mark is co-opted into an investigation of a third party, making transactions which are then held as "evidence" to be returned later. The name of the scam comes from the modern version where elderly people are asked to make withdrawals from their bank so the bank's internal accounting can be checked—the potential sins run anywhere from counterfeiting to money order fraud. The withdrawals are then held by the "authorities" temporarily until the matter is straightened out.



This can be used by the Crew for the Blow. After trading a prize to the Mark in exchange for the Score, other members of the Crew arrive and solemnly inform the Mark he's been tricked. They seize the fake goods as evidence and promise to keep the Mark updated on the investigation. Now instead of gambling on the Mark calling the authorities when he discovered the con, the Crew has both convinced the Mark the matter is already being dealt with and seized any evidence of their wrongdoing.

BADGER GAME: A general term for any con putting a man in a compromising position with a woman. It can run from straight blackmail to the arrival of an angry "spouse" who needs to be bought off, even to a faked death that needs to be covered up.

FIDDLE GAME: Known by a thousand names, the Fiddle Game is designed to take advantage of a Mark's dishonesty and greed. In the traditional format one con man enters a bar and asks the bartender to hold his belongings while he goes on a job interview.

While the first con man is gone a second enters, recognizes the fiddle among the possessions as a rare antique. He offers the bartender thousands of dollars for the instrument. The bartender, knowing that if he just sold the thing he'd be in trouble, promises the second con man that he can come back and buy it later.

When the "owner" of the fiddle returns with a hard-luck story about blowing his job interview, the bartender offers to buy the fiddle for several hundred dollars, knowing he'll make a fortune off the second con man. Needless to say the fiddle is worthless, the first con man takes the money and Blows, the second con man never returns.

This may seem prosaic, but it boils down to any con where the Mark believes he is the only one to know the secret value of something, and will trade something of great (but in his mind lesser) value for it.

LANDLORD CON: A catch-all for the big-item location-based cons. In the small scale, the Crew assumes control of an abandoned home and advertises it an attractive rental price. They then collect first and last month's rent from prospective tenants, taking advantage of the fact that everyone knows they have to wait until the first of the month to move in.

On a grand scale this con was used by Victor Lustig to sell the Eiffel Tower *twice*. He claimed the government could no longer afford to maintain the landmark and it was being sold for scrap. In the 1800s con man Gregor MacGregor sold homesteads on the entirely fictional island nation of Poyois.

THE MURPHY GAME: A variant of “the Pig-in-a-Poke”. The Mark is given the chance to purchase something off the black market, probably stolen, at a remarkably low price. The prize holds up on first inspection, but once cash changes hands and the Mark takes possession of the prize it proves to be worthless. As he's buying stolen goods, the Mark has no way to get his money back.

PONZI SCHEME: A centuries-old con popularized by Charles Ponzi, who used it to scam millions during the early 1900's. The con is presented as a legitimate business investment, often in the stock market. Dubious investors see earlier investors receiving generous payouts, and so hand over their money. After all, other people are getting paid!

Yes, being paid with *your* money, sucker. The earlier investors are being paid with the funds from the new investors. Pleased by the high rate of return those first investors often plow their profits right back into the Ponzi scheme, both legitimizing it and giving up their one chance to get paid out. At no point is any of the money ever invested. It all sits in a bank account, moving back and forth between people who believe they're getting a healthy, though never spectacular, rate of return.

If that sounds like a pyramid scheme, yes it is. It all depends on the investors keeping their money in the fund and never asking for it back until the con artist has amassed enough to Blow. A famous and primitive con, it was used by modern-day fund manager Bernie Madoff to run a twenty-year Ponzi Scheme stealing fifty billion dollars. Billion. With a “b”.

PROXY FRAUD: Originally built around lottery tickets. The con man buys a ticket with yesterday's winning numbers, then changes the date so it appears to have been bought two days before—and so can claim the previous day's jackpot. The con man then explains to the Mark that he can't collect the high-profile money for some reason—he's an illegal immigrant, in a lawsuit, not eligible, etc.—and sells the ticket to the Mark. The Mark then attempts to cash the ticket and finds he not only doesn't get the funds, he's the one on the hook for the forgery.

This may seem like the Fiddle Game, but the key difference is that the con man *knowingly* sells his valuable item to the Mark. This produces the illusion of a legitimate transaction, allowing a wider landscape of morality from which to choose targets.

ROUND THE CORNER SCAM: The Crew puts a “buzzer broken” sign on a warehouse with a phone number to contact. When deliveries arrive the puzzled truck drivers call the number, whereupon the con men tell the driver to simply proceed to the door “around the corner”. The Crew accepts delivery of the valuables, the Mark heads out none the wiser, sure he’s done his job. The more general form of this Job is when the Crew intervenes as the rightful recipients of valuables during any series of transfers.

SALTING: In the 19th Century at the height of the North American gold rush con artists would load gold dust into a shotgun and fire it into a tapped-out mine, giving the illusion of outrageous wealth. Although this scam seems primitive, a version was used in the 1997 Bre-X gold scandal that bilked investors out of hundreds of millions of dollars.

SPANKER’S PARADISE: Not the official name of the con, but my favorite. The Mark makes a purchase of explicit pornography, assured that the payment will be routed through a company with an innocuous-sounding name so as to avoid embarrassment if the purchase ever comes to light. The Crew then sends the Mark a very polite letter explaining the order cannot be fulfilled, and cuts the Mark a refund check—on a check with the most explicit company name they can conjure. Sheer humiliation prevents the Mark from cashing the check, allowing the Crew to keep the money.

The large-scale version of this involves an investment of the Mark’s going bankrupt. In order to recover his money, the Mark must reveal his involvement. To his horror, he discovers that he invested in one small legitimate division of a much larger illicit enterprise. Rather than go to court and be tarred by the association, the Mark walks away from the deal, his original investment now in the hands of the Crew.

SWEETHEART SCAM: Gifting gifts from a Mark in love is crude yet effective. A more stylish version of this con involves the con man or woman absolutely refusing offers of cash from their sweetheart. No, she’s self-sufficient, even starting her own business! Unfortunately the business hits a snag, some problem with the loans, etc. The sweetheart has the down payment cash, but can’t get the loan! At this point the Mark valiantly offers to get the loan, even become partners in the business—how romantic—and hands over the loan funds to the sweetheart to make the last purchases needed to launch the business.

The sweetheart writes a check to the Mark for the loan deposit, as a sign of good faith. In the end the check bounces and the sweetheart disappears, leaving the Mark on the hook for financing a business which never existed.

WIRE GAME: Named after the oldest version of the con, built around the telegraph lines. Generally speaking, the Mark is led to believe that through some idiosyncrasy of information transfer—time delay for sports results, server delays on the internet, etc—that he can attain valuable knowledge just a short time before everyone else and act on it. The con involves stringing the Mark out with a series of small wins in order to provoke him into making one last, giant wager, at which point the system breaks down and the money is lost. As the Mark was cheating in the first place, he has no recourse to regain his funds.



TIMEWORKS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Reyes Recruitment

[PHONE CALL – JUNE 23, 1973, 22:34:01]

[OPERATIVE A. REYES AND UNKNOWN, POSSIBLE RECRUITMENT TARGET]

[START TRANSCRIPT]

REYES: I've got some bad news for you, bud. Your life doesn't amount to anything.

UNKNOWN: You're not the first person to tell me that. The guy who gave me this number said this call would be interesting.

REYES: I don't mean what I said in the usual way. I'm not trying to encourage you to go back to school, or to finally marry that girl you've been stringing along for the last few years. I don't care if you quit drinking or straighten up and get an office job. You've heard all that before, and it's never made a difference to you. It never will make a difference to you. You and I both know that.

The sad fact is that when you pass from this mortal coil, no one will notice. And why should they? You're a petty thief, a pickpocket in a world that's going to go digital before you figure out a new way to pay the bills. Hell, even that girl you knocked up a few years back—the one with the kid you'd like to pretend isn't yours—even she doesn't show her pretty face when they put you in the ground.

Your life today isn't much better. Your brother hasn't spoken to you in years. Your mother's been dead for a decade. Your father is due to kick the bucket next Tuesday, but you'll be too busy on a job to say goodbye to him. Let's face it; you're all set to die alone, and the ride between here and death ain't much to brag about.

UNKNOWN: How (pause) how do you know all this?

REYES: It's obvious, isn't it? I'm from the future. And if you play your cards right, kid, you can be from the future too.

[END TRANSCRIPT]

Welcome to Timeworks

Making time work for you!

Dear [REDACTED]:

Thank you for accepting your new position with Timeworks Incorporated (hereafter referred to as Timeworks). We are excited that you have chosen to pursue your new career with us and hope that you find your new assignment to [REDACTED] productive. We have been assured by your Timeworks Recruitment Specialist, [REDACTED], that your skills will be of unique use to the unit, and hope to see your work produce the high quality results that our clients have come to expect from Timeworks. Good luck.

As you have no doubt been informed, there are a number of official Timeworks policies you must abide by during your employment. While it would be far beyond the purview of this introductory letter to convey all of the rules and regulations that ensure the smooth facilitation of our services, there are a few notable safeguards that we must direct your attention to at this time:

1. Timeworks equipment is not to be used for unauthorized displacement under any circumstances
2. The calibration of Timeworks core systems should not be undertaken without experienced supervision
3. All operatives must carry both Timeworks identification information and [REDACTED] at all times
4. The use of advanced technology while displaced is strictly prohibited under all circumstances

These core safety protocols are self-explanatory, but we urge you to seek additional information from your unit if any of the above is unclear or confusing. It is especially important that you [REDACTED] if you see any other Timeworks' employee violating key safety norms, even if the employee in question has procedural authority over your position. Remember: Time is a resource that should not be wasted.

Once again, we are thrilled and excited that you have chosen to join our team here at Timeworks.

Truly yours,

Julian Moreno

Julian Moreno
 Chief Executive Officer
 Timeworks Incorporated

NEW KID - DONT TRUST REYES
 HE ALWAYS TELLS THE NEW PEOPLE THAT HE WANTS TO
 HELP BUT IT NEVER WORKS OUT FOR THEM
 THE COMPANY DONT WORK THAT WAY, YOU GOTTA
 LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF
 NO ONE GETS PICKED FOR THIS JOB BECAUSE THEY
 WANT TO WORK HARD AND MAKE MONEY MONEY DONT
 MEAN NOTHING ONCE YOU GO THROUGH THE CLEANERS
 WATCH YOURSELF...
 - LT

WHAT IS TIMEWORKS?

Timeworks is a *Fate Core* setting in which the players take on the role of “time displaced” operatives, time-traveling crooks who bend the timeline at the behest of their corporate overlords. The fictional corporation Timeworks Inc. provides the backdrop for these adventures, thrusting our heroes backward through time in order to alter the timeline in ways that suit Timeworks’ corporate clients while miring the operatives in a hotbed of conspiracies and politics in “the present.”

Much of the setting limits time travel in order to focus on the tension that arises when the characters are never really sure who to trust. However, it should be possible to lift many of these mechanics and metaphysics for use in other Fate games, including the Dresden Files and Spirit of the Century.

Here’s what the setting includes:

- Primary documents from Timeworks trainings and onboarding procedures
- Leaked transcripts and notes from the Timeworks internal security archives
- Character creation modifications for Timeworks operatives
- New Skills and Stunts for Timeworks operatives
- Mechanics for creating timelines, timeline alterations, and timeline stress
- NPC profiles for key Timeworks personnel

INFLUENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This setting is inspired by a variety of conspiratorial sources but draws heavily on Inception, LOST, Minority Report, and 12 Monkeys. While there a number of mechanical pieces in this setting that can be lifted for use in other settings, my main goal has been to produce a setting that uses time travel as a method of engaging player paranoia in the midst of a large corporate machine. I hope you enjoy it.

I’d like to thank Evil Hat for taking a chance on a bit of a wild pitch, Rob Wieland for his help and support in writing for Fate for the first time, and Don Roberts for helping me find some metaphysics that make the game playable. I’d also like to thank Marissa Kelly for her continued support as I continually try new projects in new systems. Thank you!

CHAPTER TWO: WORKING FOR TIMEWORKS

Retrieval Transcript

[TIMEWORKS HQ SECURITY TAPE – PRESENT DAY]

[OPERATIVES [REDACTED] AND D. SINGH AT TIMEWORKS HQ]

[START TRANSCRIPT]

HQ: What did you find? Who has the girl?

██████: I don't know... it's... where are we?

SINGH: I don't think we know enough yet. The girl was taken by someone close to her, but all the signs point to the father. He's already dead.

HQ: Already? You mean relative to when we retrieved you.

SINGH: (long pause) Yes. Relative to (pause) the original displacement. (long pause) If he took the girl, than she's hidden away from everyone. He's dead. She's gone. Just before you pulled us back we were being pursued by the authorities. They thought we took the girl.

HQ: Yes. That encounter ended with a shootout that left ██████ dead. That led us to you.

██████: What time is it now? Are we back?

HQ: That's irrelevant. All that matters is whether or not you've found the girl. She needs to be found alive. It's key to a major project that she be found alive.

██████: I don't think we can do it. Whoever took her (pause) they're gone. Just gone. Don't send us back.

HQ: Do you agree, Singh?

SINGH: No, we can find her. Send us back.

██████: Please...

HQ: Very well. Next time, try to have more concrete information to offer us. ██████, pull yourself together.

[END TRANSCRIPT]

Training Video #4 Transcript

[TRAINING VIDEO #4 – THE SCIENCE OF TIME ALTERATION]

[FOUNDER MICHAEL FITCH EXPLAINS TIMEWORKS PATENTED METHODS]

[NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION]

[START TRANSCRIPT]

FITCH: Hello. Welcome to Training Video Four: The Science of Time Alteration. In this video, I'll be explaining how Timeworks' patented temporal displacement methods work to successfully alter the space-time continuum. I will not be covering the mechanics of time travel—all of that was covered in Video #1. Please let your Timeworks Recruitment Specialist know if you need to re-watch that video.

As you will remember from earlier training videos, the core elements of the space-time continuum are events that are held constant by quantum fields, specifically those fields generated by sentient beings. Before an event occurs, all of reality is made up of a set of quantum switches that are flipped by an event, and then those switches are set by the fields projected by sentients who observe or interact with the event. The switches are locked in to the fabric of space-time itself, essentially acting as invisible conduits for the actions and beliefs of millions of people.

Events that have interactions with larger numbers of sentients are essentially load-bearing, holding up the other events like support beams in a mining tunnel within the space-time continuum. These key events are difficult to change and deeply important to the timeline. Other events are significantly less important. In other words, trees that fall in the woods alone aren't nearly as important to the structure of reality as a car crash with many, many witnesses. And both are less important than a world war or a globally publicized murder.

Since all events in a given timeline are both preceded by and followed by key events, making changes to the timeline can be extraordinarily difficult. We may stop an assassin in 1963, only to find that another gunman kills the target we were trying to protect in 1964. The timeline, in essence, works to achieve the results that will bring reality back into concert with the existing key events, thwarting our efforts to enact permanent changes. Time, apparently, fights back.

This leads us toward two primary strategies for ensuring that Timeworks operatives can solidify changes to the space-time continuum:

First, we strive to avoid high-profile changes, opting for lower energy expenditure efforts instead of massive campaigns against major events. While our clients often propose ludicrously direct methods of resolving conflicts in their favor, such as killing an important figure or stopping a war years in the making, we often counter-propose more subtle and efficient methods of achieving results. We don't usually need to be so direct!

For example, it was much easier for us to ensure that a major software company hired the engineer responsible for [REDACTED] than it was for us to kill that engineer before his inventions were complete. [REDACTED] affected too many people to die without someone rising to take his place; it was simple to deliver a dossier on his efforts to key people ten years earlier than he would have otherwise caught their attention, allowing our client to hire him years before he became famous. [REDACTED] is, of course, still a household name, but now a large chunk of his fortune went to our clients instead of directly to him.

Second, if we are tasked with resolving a major event in a new direction, we now understand that we will have to continually and repeatedly alter the timeline until a substantial number of key events turn in our favor...

[END TRANSCRIPT]

I REMEMBER MY SON
HE IS GONE NOW
OR MAYBE I AM GONE NOW
I REMEMBER ALL THE SAME
THEY SAID I WOULDN'T CARE
THEY LIED

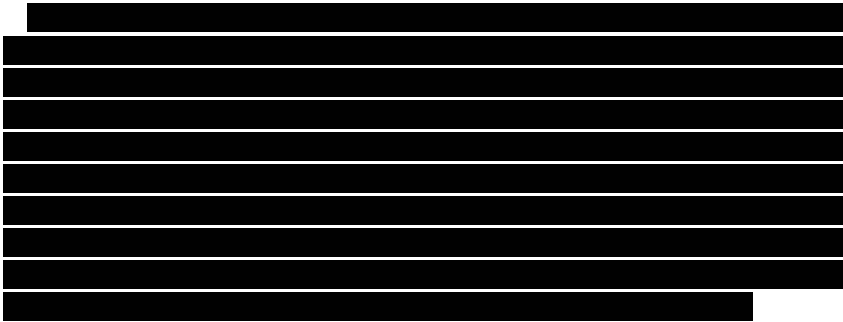
Training Manual p27

[TIMEWORKS TRAINING MANUAL, PAGE 27]

The Myth of the Butterfly Effect

Many Timework operatives express a deep fear of **displacement** before engaging in their first alteration, claiming they are frightened of the potential side-effects that displacement can bring about in the timeline. Partially this is the result of popular media we embedded throughout history to discourage time travel, such as Mr. Ray Bradbury's infamous work, *A Sound of Thunder*, in which a misplaced footstep in the Cretaceous leads to disastrous effects in the present.

The truth is that the greatest difficulty we discovered when traveling through time is that our actions *will not matter*; rarely do we find unintended consequences. The **timestream**, or space-time continuum, is robust, and easily shakes off the death of a single butterfly or the application of an additional sniper on a grassy knoll. Our operatives are often forced to undertake drastic measures to successfully alter the timestream. Accidental timestream manipulation is rare and the effects are usually localized and contained.



Coping with the Stress of Displacement

In addition to the more general fears about the effects of displacement on the timestream, operatives also express concerns about the stress of displacement itself. Operatives often find the idea of "living in the past" simultaneously exciting and terrifying, hoping to see what life was like "back then" while fearing that they will be unable to pass for normal in an era that is not their own.

These fears are not misplaced. One unfortunate effect of displacement is the tendency to attract unwanted attention from local authorities. Given that Timeworks operatives are usually involved in clandestine affairs, such attention can quickly get out of hand, spiraling into violence or incarceration. It is of the utmost importance that Timeworks operatives avoid these kinds of encounters and minimize their contact with local authorities at all times. Failure to do so will potentially damage the timestream, perhaps even cutting off Timeworks HQ's ability to retrieve operatives from the field.

Dealignment and Personal Quantum Fields

In order to protect Timeworks operatives from the effects of altered timelines, each Timeworks operative undergoes a process known as **dealignment**. This procedure simultaneously reinforces the operative's personal quantum perspective and severs the operative's link to the current timestream, enabling her to alter events in the past without fear of altering herself. Because this process is involved and quite dangerous, Timeworks operatives go through a complex and lengthy screening process to ensure that they are prepared for the procedure and Timeworks employment.

Once the process is complete, however, a dealigned operative could kill her own mother or father without fear of never coming into being, as the dealignment separates her from the original timestream where such events did not take place. Upon returning to the present, she would find that no one outside of Timeworks knew her, and that all records of her existence outside of the company had been erased, but she would not cease to be.

It should be noted that there is currently no method of realigning operatives after the procedure has taken place. After all, the timeline in which an operative originated will have ceased to exist by the time said operative decided to leave Timeworks. Psychological profiles of operatives indicate that only rarely is dealignment seen as a loss once an operative has undergone the procedure; the vast majority of operatives have built successful lives free from the burdens of their original timeline.

[REDACTED]

[END PAGE]

Training Video #7

[TRAINING VIDEO #7 – THREATS AND DANGERS]

[FOUNDER JULIAN MORENO EXPLAINS THE THREATS AND DANGERS OPERATIVES ENCOUNTER WHILE PERFORMING TIME ALTERATIONS]

[NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION]

[START TRANSCRIPT]

MORENO: Good evening. This is Video Seven, Threats and Dangers, and I'm Julian Moreno, co-founder of Timeworks. I'll be explaining to you today some of the threats and dangers you may experience while attempting to conduct time alterations on behalf of Timeworks. While we have full confidence that you will be able to cope with the various problems that arise while traveling through time, the following issues deserve some special note.

Of course, most of these techniques are highly dangerous and should only be used in the event that you feel that you are unable to complete your time alteration without support and aid from Timeworks HQ. Use of these techniques outside of emergencies will be met with disciplinary action.

It is also worth noting at this time that future displacement, namely assignments that take you ahead of the present era, are strictly prohibited. Under no circumstances should any operative or staff person set the displacement generator to future dates, as teams that are sent to the future cannot currently be retrieved. Teams that we have sent to the near future have not made contact with us, and we are forced to assume that either the device does not work for future displacement or that some force is intercepting those units before they can make contact. Again, I repeat, *do not attempt future displacement.*

Finally, Timeworks HQ has a number of unverified reports from operatives in the field that they have been pursued by what they have described as "Shadow Men," the almost supernatural figures who attempt to intervene to stop time alterations. While we cannot verify these reports, we urge all operatives to use caution when dealing with any time anomalies they encounter while displaced. It may be possible that these Shadow Men may be connected to our failure to make future displacement work, but more investigation is needed to be sure of the connection.

[END TRANSCRIPT]

Tysiac Transcript

[TAPED CONVERSATION – PRESENT DAY]

[OPERATIVE L. TYSIAC AND STAFF [REDACTED] IN TIMEWORKS HQ]

[START TRANSCRIPT]

TYSIAC: Are you kidding me? HQ expects us to believe that they don't know anything about the Shadow Men?

[REDACTED]: Maybe they don't.

TYSIAC: Do you know why Donny didn't come back from that job to 1947? Because some shadow bastard shot him, gathered him and all his stuff into a bag, and dumped it all into some kind of portal. I saw it. I was hiding in the closet and I saw it. And when I came back HQ didn't believe me.

I looked directly into that thing's face. It was wearing a dark suit, like a Fed, but the pinstripes looked all wavy when I tried to stare at them. Its face was nothing but darkness, like a cheesecloth mask was stretched over all his features without any texture or shape. And when he was stuffing Donny into the bag, I swear to god he turned and looked right at me. And grinned.

HQ knows when to pull us back to the present by records, death records, dental records, all that stuff. If you die without any records, if it's just a shallow grave or an empty portal for you, they can't get you. You're just gone. That's what the Shadow Men do. They make sure you're just gone. That you ain't never coming back.

[REDACTED]: Shut up, Lisa. You didn't see anything.

TYSIAC: (Shouting) No, you shut up! Donny didn't deserve what he got. He didn't!

[SOUNDS OF SCUFFLE AND DISRUPTION]

[END TRANSCRIPT]

Training Video #11

[TRAINING VIDEO #11 – TIMEWORKS HQ CALIBRATION]

[FOUNDER MICHAEL FITCH EXPLAINS THE TIMEWORKS HQ CALIBRATION SEQUENCE]

[NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION]

[START TRANSCRIPT]

FITCH: Hello. Welcome to Training Video Eleven: Timeworks HQ Calibration. In this video, I'll be explaining how Timeworks finalizes changes to the timeline using our internal calibration systems. I'll assume for the purposes of this video that you have completed viewing the previous ten videos in the series, especially videos six and nine, as those explain the background research our archivists complete before a unit is assigned to process a time alteration.

As I noted in video six, all of Timeworks HQ is protected by a quantum field neutralization (QFN) cage, a variation on a Faraday cage that protects HQ from alterations to the timestream. From our vantage point here in the present, we are able to observe what changes our operatives have been able to implement and protect ourselves from unauthorized

alterations that may endanger Timeworks as a whole. We can't be too careful when messing with time!

In order to accurately measure the effectiveness of our alterations, however, we must calibrate our systems with the reality outside the cage. If we don't do this, our timeline diverges too far from the core timestream for us to safely launch operations. Imagine if you were always worried that leaving for lunch would expose you to a totally different reality. It would be a nightmare!

The calibration sequence begins through an official report on the changes that will be affecting Timeworks when we reconcile with the core timestream. We use a set of 25,643 key variables—such as elected leaders, country names, and economic indicators—to judge the size and scope of alterations. Once those changes are approved by Timeworks HQ, we recall all teams to the present and shutdown the QFN cage. That seals in changes permanently, and resets our systems to be more sensitive to time alterations.

In some cases, alterations may dramatically alter the history of our current operatives, perhaps even erasing an operative from reality. As all operatives have gone through the dealignment process, this poses no danger to the operative himself, but it would erase any record of the operative working for Timeworks—a perplexing conundrum. In order to compensate for this, we have an interior computer system that remains within a permanently embedded secondary cage. This system relays to us any employment information we need to verify operative employment in the event of erasure.

[END TRANSCRIPT]

Dealignment Warnings

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

YOU ARE ENTERING A DEALIGNMENT AREA

DEALIGNING EQUIPMENT IS LOCALLY IN USE

NON-OPERATIVE PERSONNEL SHOULD AVOID STANDING NEAR, ENTERING, OR WORKING IN THIS AREA AS IT MAY RESULT IN AN ACCIDENTAL DEALIGNMENT OF YOUR PERSONAL QUANTUM FIELD

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

CHAPTER THREE: MAKING TIMEWORKS CHARACTERS

Character creation in Timeworks is similar to character creation for any *Fate Core* setting. Here are a few suggestions to make your characters fit the setting more fully from the start:

High Concepts, Trouble, and Issues

Timeworks operatives are generally recruited from two sources: modern day mercenaries or thieves and con artists from earlier times. There are, of course, some scientists, researchers, and eggheads who decide to go into the time alteration business, but generally the cost of dealignment is too high. Most operatives are folks with desperate needs, holes in their lives that can only be filled by the money or access that Timeworks has to offer.

Fate's Aspect system helps to create these kinds of characters, skilled at performing their duties as Timeworks' operatives, but troubled by a past debt or present relationship that drove them to give up on the present in the first place. To that end, you should select a **high concept** that displays a set of skills that you have mastered, i.e. whatever makes you useful to Timeworks, and a **trouble** rooted in a personal struggle, i.e. a problem that will follow you through time. You'll have additional chances to add additional **aspects**, including problematic relationships through the phase trio. Remember that the best aspects are double-edged, giving your character advantages and complications in equal measure.

Carlos wants to create a skilled pickpocket that can help his unit get the information they need to successfully perform time alterations. He names this character Juan Ruiz and decides that his high concept will be ***Gifted With Sticky Fingers***. He also decides that Juan was recruited by Timeworks after being left for dead by some folks he ripped off and settles on a trouble of ***Wounded Pride***. During the game, Carlos expects that Juan's high concept will get him into trouble with the authorities while his trouble might, on occasion, help him pick himself up off the ground when he's knocked down.

HERE'S MY CARD

If you want to have your game take on a more surreal quality, like the time travel in *12 Monkeys*, you might want to use your job title as your high concept. Juan's high concept in the example would be something like ***Acquisitions Specialist*** instead of ***Gifted with Sticky Fingers***.



The Phase Trio

For the most part, operatives in Timeworks begin the story as seasoned professionals, people who have already been through the dealignment process and journeyed back through time to fulfill the company's instructions; they have past experiences both from before they were operatives and on the assignments that took place prior to the start of the campaign.

First Phase

For your first phase, you should select a major event in your character's backstory, ideally from before you were selected as a Timeworks operative. In addition to sketching out a quick adventure or important detail, make sure to identify when your character's experience occurred. Remember that Timeworks often recruits individuals from prior eras!

Carlos decides that Juan's first important piece of backstory is that he grew up on the streets of Los Angeles in the early 1980s. While he never got into any serious trouble, he knows his way around the complex urban politics of South Central. He writes ***Raised on the Streets of LA—1980s*** on an index card for his first phase.

Second Phase

For your second phase, you should reflect one of your first journeys back with Timeworks and try to capture how your character feels about time travel itself. What was it like for your character to go back in time? Did things go smoothly on the job or did everything come crashing down? Make sure to include the era in which your first time alteration took place.

Carlos thinks that it would be interesting if Juan's first trip back in time actually took place in the 1990s, previous to the present day but more than a decade after Juan was recruited by Timeworks. Under the guidance of a more experienced unit, Juan helped Timeworks stop an assassination attempt on a major pop star, but Juan had a near brush with death when he ran into a set of Shadow Men. Juan's quick reflexes served him well, and he escaped with his life, earning the aspect ***Touched By Shadows—1990s***. Carlos writes his second phase and accompanying aspect on a second index card.

HOW DOES TIME TRAVEL WORK?

To date, none of the HQ staff at Timeworks can tell you exactly how the system works. Moreno and Fitch built the time displacement device—a large, dark room in which they push people back in time and summon them back to the future—decades ago, and only they know its inner secrets. Until they spill the beans, it's pretty difficult to say much about the science that powers the device.

Third Phase

For the third phase, borrow either from the first or second phase of another player and add your character to the adventure, similar to the instructions found in *Fate Core* for the second and third phase of the trio.

First, Carlos passes the index card for Juan's first phase to another player, Joanie, who adds that she recruited him to Timeworks while completing a time alteration during that era. This adds an aspect to her character and ties the two characters together in something like a mentor relationship. Carlos adds Juan to another player's second aspect, declaring that he helped Marissa's character Otuna when she was locked up in a 1940s jail cell. Carlos adds the aspect ***There When You Need Me*** to his sheet.

WHAT ABOUT NEW OPERATIVES?

For characters brand new to Timeworks, either recruits or staff, feel free to ignore these suggestions and use the original phase trio rules from *Fate Core*, on page 38.

Anchors

When new recruits are put through dealignment, they are encouraged to keep a single item with them to remind themselves of the timeline from which they came. Most prefer some sort of locket or photograph, but any sort of item is permitted, as long as it can be carried on the recruit's person. Timeworks staff refers to these objects as **temporal displacement anchors**, but most operatives call them **anchors**. Each and every anchor is unique, and operatives guard them with their lives.

In essence, the dealignment process removes any temporal connection between operatives and their timelines. An individual operative has no past, nor future, only the present, a series of events that are happening to the operative *right now*. This means that paradox is impossible; an operative could travel backward in time and kill herself with no ill effects on her present because her “past” was only a set of experiences that she went through at some time previously. It has no bearing on her continued existence.

Their anchor, therefore, is necessary to keep the operative grounded in that present. It allows the human mind to process what has been done to it through the dealignment process. Some Timeworks operatives develop unhealthy relationships with their anchors, believing them to be a mystical source of power or a way to communicate with otherworldly beings, but such psychosis is rare. For the most part, operatives simply keep the anchor nearby at all times.

While no direct comment on this topic is ever made in public by Timeworks staff, it is widely known that operatives who lose their anchor develop serious emotional issues stemming from their dealignment. These operatives are usually decommissioned as quickly as HQ can identify them, but occasionally one will slip through and lose it while displaced. There are rumors that it is possible to steal another operative's anchor, leading to a certain amount of secrecy on the part of suspicious operatives. These rumors, of course, are denied by Timeworks HQ.

WHAT DOES DEALIGNMENT LOOK LIKE?

How dealignment looks is up to you and your gaming group, but it would be in keeping with the themes of Timeworks for it to involve large, foreboding machinery that appears to work as if by magic. For most recruits, they won't notice anything is different until someone makes a change to the past and their memories start to differ from reality!

Anchor Creation

To create the anchor for your character, you should imagine a personal object that is deeply personal and portable. A television set might matter to your character, but it's unlikely you would be able to take it with you everywhere you went. Write your anchor on an index card and put it in your pocket—don't share it with anyone!

Anchor Stunt—Remember My Past

While an operative carries an anchor, she has access to a unique Will stunt—**Remember My Past**. Once per session, the operative can spend a fate point to make a Fair (+2) overcome roll, representing a last-ditch attempt to rebound while drawing on the strength of her memories. If successful, the operative gains **two** fate points and clears her mental stress track.

Operatives who draw on their anchors for strength in difficult situations often recount vividly remembering (or even reliving) key moments in their pasts. While the process of dealignment does not remove memories from operatives, many operatives find that they lose track of which timeline was their timeline, and which memories were their memories originally. Anchors clarify for these operatives which past is their own, and that certainty lends them strength in times of need.

Losing an Anchor

If an operative loses her anchor for more than an hour or so, the mental toll is costly: she takes one mental stress per session until she can reclaim her anchor or find a new one. In addition, she acquires the aspect **Lost Anchor**. Operatives can invoke **Lost Anchor** to represent the desperation of an operative who knows she will lose her mind, but this is most often compelled by the GM to represent the negative effects of a lost anchor.

The effects of a lost anchor manifest differently for each operative, but they are consistently degenerative. Some get angry and violent; others get weepy and have difficulty concentrating. Regardless, it quickly becomes clear that the operative is struggling to cope, and HQ will eventually decommission the operative. No one is sure where decommissioned operatives end up.

Finding a New Anchor

There are two ways to get a new anchor: steal one from someone else or get a new object of personal import from the date of your recruitment. Given that most operatives are loathe to doom another operative to a anchorless fate, finding a new anchor may involve a bit of unauthorized use of company technology...

Carlos decides that Juan wants to remember his late mother, the one person who believed in him despite his mistakes. He keeps her rosary as his anchor, believing that it will keep her close to him while he works at Timeworks.

New Skills and Stunts

Timeworks introduces some new skills, adds new stunts to old skills, and offers new interpretations of a few skills for use during displacement. A few skills are also renamed and are designated as such.

Burglary

Burglary is a common skill among Timeworks operatives, as the company's subtle approach to time alterations often requires a bit of underhanded theft. While not every Timeworks operative is a skilled burglar, almost every Timeworks unit will have an expert locksmith on hand.

New Burglary Stunts

Old Locks, Old Tools. You're an expert at dealing with locks from bygone eras. You even know how to use tools thieves haven't used in a century. +2 on Burglary rolls made when you're dealing with an old lock or using old tools.

Distract the Guards! Before security cameras existed, armed guards used to be a lot more common. Your familiarity with these "security devices" allows you to roll Burglary instead of Deceit when trying to get past armed guards.



New Skill: Breaking

No one at Timeworks remembers nicknaming them Breakers, but the official title for men and women at Timeworks gifted with an almost uncanny sense of the flow of time when displaced—Timestream Sensory Awareness Operatives—never stuck. Some people think the name derived from “circuit breakers,” as these operatives often acted as conduits for information directly from the timestream itself. Others think the name comes from the rumors that Breakers are able to damage the timeline itself; stranding units that disobey company instructions.

Regardless, Breakers are an essential part of a successful Timeworks unit. They can detect what changes need to be made intuitively, predict what might immediately happen in the vicinity, and trace information and relationships that can't be discovered by Dispatch. Breakers know how small changes will play out in the larger timestream, and they can help displaced units survive in hostile environments.



Overcome: You don't typically use Breaking to overcome challenges directly; much like Notice, you might use it to detect small changes that are otherwise overlooked by your unit. Sometimes Breakers can take advantage of timestream events right before they happen—hopping on trains that whiz by at the right moment or catching a glass right before it breaks against a stone floor. Breakers just know stuff, and GM's can call for Breaking rolls to see if your character gets the jump on everyone else.



Create Advantage: Much like Empathy or Notice, Breaking is used to create aspects based on the unfolding events in the timeline—looking over situations for new assets and relationships that were not foreseen by HQ. These rolls might lead you to add new aspects to the scene or even to the timeline itself to help your unit complete the alteration. For example, you might use Breaking in a shootout to predict that the cops are nearby, giving your unit time to get away before the police arrive and arrest everyone.



Attack: Breaking isn't used for attacks, with the exception of the Banish the Demons stunt below.



Defend: Breaking isn't used to defend.

Breaking Stunts

Banish the Demons. You may make attack rolls using Breaking against Shadow Men and other time anomalies.

Breakdown. You may spend a fate point to make an Overcome roll against a Good (+3) difficulty to deliver stress directly to the timestream, causing one point of stress per shift. If you succeed with style, a target within your line of sight also suffers an equal amount of stress.

Contacts

When traveling through time, Contacts isn't so much about who you know already as it is about who you can find *quickly*. Timeworks operatives who are proficient at this skill know how to find the right people and earn their trust in record time.

New Contacts Stunts

I've Always Been Here. When you attempt to integrate yourself into an unfamiliar network, you may roll Contacts instead of Deceit to convince people that you've been a member of the network for a lengthy period of time.

Where Particular People Congregate. You know how to find the people that matter to the local network. Make a successful Create Advantage roll with Contacts to find a lead that can put you in contact with people with whom you need to chat. If you succeed with style, you find exactly the people you were looking for... or they find you.

Crafts

Timeworks operatives face a unique challenge when dealing with machinery: out-of-date technology can be difficult to improve or repair. Many operatives receive special training from Timeworks to familiarize them with long-lost techniques for dealing with older machines.

New Crafts Stunts

Old Cars Love Me. You're gifted at working with machines from distant eras. +2 to Craft rolls made when you're working to repair or improve older technology.

Future Tech. When you attempt to construct technology you have seen before—but it is beyond the technological capability of your current era—you may make an Overcome roll. If you succeed, the device mostly works. Mostly. If you succeed with style, the device works almost perfectly.



Deceit

Deceit is a crucial skill for Timeworks operatives who attempt to affect time alterations through subtle social manipulation. Normally a Timeworks unit will have a “face” or other socially skilled operative who can help the group secure resources and integrate into existing social structures.

New Deceit Stunts

Homewrecker. You are good at driving people apart from each other. +2 to Deceit rolls made to create suspicion or encourage conflict between two NPCs in a romantic or close personal relationship.

I Grew Up Like That Too. When someone shares a story about their childhood or upbringing, spend a fate point to convince them that you had similar experiences, no matter how you actually grew up, and add the aspect *[Your Character] is just like me* to the target’s character’s sheet.

Renamed Skill: History (Lore)

Many of the most effective Timeworks operatives have extensive historical training, using their academic studies as a way to get ahead in eras that would otherwise seem bewildering and strange. Use History to identify the era you are in, remember important events in the era, or understand ancient customs and cultures.

New History Stunts

When Am I? You’ve put in a great deal of effort to learn the tell-tale signs of history—the models of cars, the cut of a particular dress, or the prevalence of fonts and design elements. You always know what decade you are in, even if others try to mislead you.

Pop the Hood. You love antiquated technology. When an older machine breaks down, you may roll History instead of Crafts to repair it.

Rapport

Timeworks operatives are never authorized to reveal the full truth of their alterations—they would probably be locked up by the authorities if they tried!—but sometimes the judicious use of true information is key to completing an assignment. Rapport can help operatives enlist support from people native to the eras in which they are working.

New Rapport Stunts

Fortuneteller. When an event you have claimed will happen comes to pass, add the aspect *I Believe in [Your Character]* to a character who did not believe you.

Culture Chameleon. You may use Rapport instead of History when dealing with a culture from a time period different from your own.

New Skill: Dispatch

Officially called the Archival Timestream Analysis Unit by Timeworks HQ, the men and women who study the records and archives to determine how best to make changes to the timeline are usually referred to as **Dispatch** by Timeworks operatives. Operatives who possess this skill are able to crack open the archives for themselves and learn what changes to the timeline would be necessary to make their time alterations stick. In addition, operatives can use research materials while displaced to try to find leads and resources that were not apparent to Dispatch in the present.



Overcome: Assuming you have access to research materials, you can use Dispatch to identify which underlying milestones must be altered to solidify a Significant, Major, or Extreme change to the timestream. You may also use Dispatch to determine the effect, if any, of a proposed time alteration.



Create Advantage: If you have access to research materials, you can use Dispatch to identify elements in previous eras that would be helpful in achieving timeline alterations. You might discover dangerous threats that didn't quite achieve their goals (*A foiled assassin!*) or resources that were previously untapped (*Abandoned Inheritance*). These aspects are added directly to the timeline.



Attack: Dispatch isn't used for attacks.



Defend: Dispatch isn't used to defend.

Dispatch Stunts

Message Home. Spend a fate point to embed a message into materials that Timeworks HQ will look at in the future. The number of words you can send is equal to your Dispatch skill.

Secret Cache. You know where to find hidden Dispatch archives in ancient eras. +2 to create a Dispatch Archive advantage.

New Skill: Scratch

It's quite difficult to arrange for resources in past eras, so Timeworks operatives are often left scrounging for money, weapons, and tools to get their jobs done. It's possible to bring items back to previous eras, but nothing sets off alarms like using money that hasn't been printed yet. Timeworks operatives with high skills in Scratch are good at finding resources and putting them to use effectively.



Overcome: You can use Scratch to come up with a way past an obstacle your unit is facing. Between trading up on resources, bartering down the price, and cutting deals too good to refuse, you can get your team where they need to be before time runs out.



Create Advantage: You can use Scratch to come up with resources your unit needs to get a job done, even if the request is a bit on the unsavory side (*Automatic Weapons, High-Powered Explosives*). If the demand is really big or beyond the capacity of the era, you may have to settle for something a little less glamorous but still functional (*Two Seater Biplane* instead of a *Fighter Jet*).



Attack: Scratch isn't used for attacks.



Defense: Scratch isn't used for defense.

Scratch Stunts

Timeworks Banking Codes. You have access to a secret network of deposits managed by Timeworks operatives throughout multiple eras. Spend a fate point to make a withdrawal from the accounts without alerting Timeworks HQ. Withdraw the cash without spending the fate point if you're willing to risk HQ's ire.

Sports Almanac. You're pretty much memorized all the important sports events of the last few hundred years. Make a Create Advantage roll to find someone willing to take a bet on a game you already know will go your way. If you succeed with style, they are willing to bet a lot of money on the game.

Stealth

Stealthy operatives stay alive. Clumsy operatives who act like a bull in china shop get shot by the authorities, intercepted by Shadow Men, and fired *if* they make it back alive at all.

New Stealth Stunts

Fit Right In. You know how to blend right in with a crowd or disappear at the right moment. +2 to Stealth rolls made to avoid the attention of suspicious authorities, so long as they did not specifically witness you doing something illegal.

In Plain Sight. Every era has a costume, and you know how to dress the part. +2 to Stealth rolls made to select exactly the right clothes for the timestream you are in. If you buy, borrow, or steal the clothes, gain the aspect *The Right Clothes for the Job* while you have them on.

WHAT SUPPORT DOES HQ OFFER?

In general, HQ offers few tangible resources. While the company has vast financial resources, the metaphysics of timeline stress are not clearly understood, and HQ fears triggering disastrous events upon displacement. For the most part, HQ expects operatives to secure the resources they need to complete alterations within the era they are assigned to change.

Will

Will is an especially useful skill for Timeworks operatives, as it determines their ability to withstand many of the mental stresses that occur as they alter the timeline in past eras. It's rare to find a Timeworks agent who is completely unskilled at Will, as Timeworks tends to screen operatives for psychological stability and mental resilience.



Defend: Operatives may use Will to defend the timeline from stress caused by time alterations. (See pg 65, Timeline Stress)

New Will Stunts

I'm My Own Anchor. You are able to withstand the pressures of dealignment without an anchor. You can use the Remember My Past stunt without an anchor and do not suffer any negative effects for losing your anchor after dealignment.

Time Anchor. You are able to resist HQ's attempts to pull you back to the present for a scene by spending a fate point. You may extend this ability to your whole team by marking a box of mental stress. You may activate this stunt in consecutive scenes. The stress arising from this stunt remains on your sheet until you allow HQ to retrieve you.

Hold Steady. You can defend the timeline from stress even when you are engaged in other contests or challenges without suffering a penalty to your roll. If you succeed with style, you get a boost on whatever other challenge you were facing.

Gifted Holder. +2 to Will rolls made to defend the timeline from stress.

CHAPTER FOUR: TIMELINE MECHANICS

Timeline Aspects

One of the reasons that Fate is a perfect fit for time travel stories is the Fate Fractal, the idea that all the elements of a story can be represented as a kind of character, albeit one with a smaller sheet! In that spirit, *Timeworks* tries to capitalize on the Fate engine by building out timelines as a kind of extra, an element of your story that interacts with characters through the mechanics of the Fate fractal.

Therefore, each Timeline should begin with a high concept—similar to a regular character—an idea that defines the particular era where the Timeworks unit is working. The high concept doesn't have to capture the entirety of human culture in that era, but it should give the players a sense of what they are getting themselves into by traveling backward through time to that particular era.

Timeworks is sending Carlos' character Juan to the 1930's to deal with a large contract they have signed with an art collector. Before describing the details of the mission, the GM lays out the timeline as it stands, labeling the high concept for the era as ***The Great Depression***.

In addition to the high concept, each timeline should also possess a trouble that describes a fundamental difference from the present that will make things difficult for the characters. The trouble should represent the challenge that people from the present would face while trying to operate in a society that existed decades prior.

After labeling the high concept for the 1930s timeline, Carlos' GM adds the trouble aspect ***Racism is normal!*** to the timeline, indicating that the majority of white characters that the group encounters will be used to thinking of other races, especially African-Americans, as different and lesser. Juan, a Mexican-American who grew up on the streets of LA, might face similar discrimination.

Finally, each player should contribute an additional issue to the timeline, similar to determining a setting in *Fate Core* (page 28). These issues should reflect either the political and social issues of the era that players want to wrestle with while completing their alteration or personal plot and politics that might be following the characters through time.

Carlos thinks that the inequality of the era will be interesting for the players, so he adds the aspect ***The Haves and Have-Nots*** to reflect the growing divide between the rich and poor. Jasdeep, another player in Carlos' group, adds ***The War in Europe*** to remind everyone that the politics outside the United States play a role, and Joanie adds ***Hunted by the Shadow Men*** because she thinks it would be interesting to be followed by the Shadow Men that almost got them last session.

Using Timeline Aspects in Play

Remember that players can invoke any of these aspects as if that aspect was their own—and players can be compelled by any timeline aspect as if it were their own as well. It's common for timeline invocations to be situation based (i.e. Depression-era gangsters are especially persuadable with money), but as with all aspects, the group can rule whether or not the usage fits. For compels, players should consider them to be incentives to act “normal,” i.e. like everyone else in the era. Failing to accept a timeline compel not only costs a fate point, but is also likely to draw the attention of the authorities, perhaps even the Shadow Men.

Changing the Timeline

Making changes to the existing timeline is extraordinarily difficult. Timeworks operatives have to risk life and limb, and employ no small amount of craft, in order to achieve their objectives. Luckily, Timeworks HQ is often able to supply direct instructions arising from the research done by Timeworks archivists. These studious men and women analyze the timeline for key events, providing a roadmap for changes that need to be made in the field. The GM can often relay this information directly to the characters, moving the adventure along at a brisk pace.

There are times, however, when the records are not clear enough for HQ to issue specific instructions to the operatives assigned to an alteration. In these cases, Timeworks typically sends experienced operatives who can discover the needed changes and execute them during the displacement. In order to discover the changes required, operatives may need to investigate the relationships between individuals, solve previously unsolved crimes, and pierce the veil of secret conspiracies. In essence, the unit must do reconnaissance on the targets and execute the mission simultaneously.



Timeworks' displacement technology is not precise enough to send a unit back to the exact minute that an event occurs, making investigative skills key to the success of any mission. Often, Timeworks HQ will send a unit back into the past weeks before a key event in order to give that unit time to make the needed changes before the event occurs. Timeworks HQ can then pull units back to the present, relaying crucial information or interrogating the operatives before sending them back to the timeline. On occasion this will result in operatives becoming disoriented, as they are jolted back and forth between the past and the present.

During a previous mission, Juan's unit was tasked to stop the assassination of a famous pop star, but HQ was unable to determine who killed her or exactly when she was killed. HQ informed the unit of additional potential assassins they would need to nullify to make the changes permanent, and Juan's unit integrated itself into the pop star's inner circle, neutralized the potential assassins, and found the real assassin in time to stop her murder. During the mission, HQ pulled the team back to relay new information discovered by archivists and ask the unit questions about what they had discovered so far.

Remember, however, that the changes needed are relative to the scope of the effect; the quantum fields that hold the Third Reich in place are much more rigid and unbending than those that hold a car crash or individual murder constant. *The amount of work the characters must put into changing the past is therefore relative to the degree of change they want to accomplish.* If characters want to make small changes, it may only take a short trip or two to set things the way they want them, but longer and more risky adventures will be required to make serious alterations to the past.

In mechanical terms, alterations to the timeline are treated as **alteration milestones**, occurring at the same time that the characters receive the benefits from the milestones themselves and varying in scope relative to the characters' goals. For example, saving the daughter of a wealthy client from a murderer may be only a significant milestone, but stopping an airline crash involving a hundred times as many people will certainly be a major milestone. If your group decides to tackle even larger goals, like killing Hitler, you may even use a new category: **Extreme Milestones**.

In addition to accomplishing the main goal of their displacement (i.e. the primary milestone), the characters must also achieve a number of secondary or tertiary milestones to undergird the change they are making to the timeline. Remember that the timeline has a tendency to correct itself, substituting new people or events to keep things consistent. Therefore, *each alteration milestone must be supported by at least two milestones on the next lower rung.* These underlying changes do not have to happen in order, your group could jump from event to event in reverse, but they must occur for the changes to be permanent.

Juan's unit has been assigned the task of murdering a famous painter early in his career, ensuring that his few early works are worth additional millions. The GM rules that this would be a Major alteration to the timeline, as the artist is extremely well-known; Juan's group needs to find two Significant alterations they can make to undergird the Major alteration. They decide to separate the artist's wife and best friend from him to isolate the artist's ideas, hoping to get the wife to leave the artist and the best friend to reject the artist's friendship. Each of these alterations will require two Minor alterations as well, but the GM tells the group that they can figure out what those will be during play.

Suggested Alteration Difficulties

Minor Alteration	Changes to names of historical locations
Significant Alteration	Death of a mostly unimportant figure, the loss of a work of art or set of documents
Major Alteration	Death of an regionally or nationally important figure, major shift in causal events for household products
Extreme Alteration	Stopping a world war, death of a globally important figure

HOW DOES TIMEWORKS GET PAID?
 I leave this up to your group to discover. Obviously it's difficult to collect payment if no one can remember that you were hired to make a change to the timestream; everything seems to be as it has always been! But there are rumors that Timeworks charges in information and in favors to be done at a later date. If your operatives want to look into the issue, I'm sure there's a fascinating answer...

Timeline Stress

Changes to the timeline, however, are not without their dangers. Every time that the characters enact a change, intentional or otherwise, they run the risk of causing stress to the timeline itself. Strangely, the timeline seems to respond not solely to the actions of the person who changes the events of history, but also to the people who observe the changes, giving quick-witted Timeworks operatives chances to minimize the damage.

Timeline Stress

Each timeline begins with four boxes of stress. When a character makes a change to the timeline, the timeline experiences stress equal to the level of the change—Minor (+1), Significant (+2), Major (+3), Extreme (+4). This stress is applied directly to the timeline immediately after the change occurs, leaving only a moment for a Holder (see Absorbing Timeline Stress) to try to avert the damage. Remember that unintended changes create timeline stress; many operatives have found themselves in dire straits after being careless with the continuity of the timeline.

If the timeline suffers enough stress to be stressed out, it begins to acquire consequences exactly as a character does (albeit without the Extreme consequences): tics and problems that can wreak havoc on the characters' plans. Large amounts of stress appear to alert the Shadow Men that changes are being made to the timeline; anything more than a Minor amount of stress usually draws their attention.

If an era is ever unable to absorb the stress of the changes inflicted upon it and is taken out, that era is shut down and can no longer be entered or exited by any time traveling operatives. In order to leave the era, the operatives will have to find some way to refresh the timeline's consequences, perhaps by setting right the events they damaged. For example, a team might connect vital researchers who they separated or care for a child whose mother they killed. Taking out the timeline can be an excellent—albeit dangerous—way to lock down a timeline that others are trying to attack. Since they can't get in, it's unlikely they will be able to make the changes needed to open it back up.

Absorbing Timeline Stress

To try and avert damage to the timeline, any operative who witnesses the change can make a Defend roll using Will against the level of the change—Minor (+1), Significant (+2), Major (+3), Extreme (+4)—to absorb some of the stress the timeline would otherwise experience. Only one operative can make this roll per change, as one person struggles to grab hold of the timeline with their Will and hold it steady, there is little metaphysical room for others to do the same or help.

Because of the consequences of timeline stress, most Timeworks units have an operative whose specialty is holding the timeline steady. While Timeworks HQ calls these operatives Timeline Stress Facilitators, most operatives call them **Holders**. A good **Holder** is worth her weight in gold; most units refuse to leave HQ until they are assigned a Holder who can handle the mission.

Remember that anything that disrupts the normal flow of events will cause stress to the timeline, including small actions that snowball into larger changes. In addition, operatives visiting an era they have previously visited or the use of technology too advanced for the era also causes stress, leading to specific Timeworks policies that prohibit those actions.

Defending the Timeline From Stress

Roll Will against the level of stress inflicted by the action:

When you fail at defending the timeline, you and the timeline both suffer the Mental stress inflicted by the change.

When you tie at defending the timeline, the timeline takes the full Mental stress inflicted by the change and you take half that stress, rounded up.

When you succeed at defending the timeline, you may absorb levels of stress instead of that stress affecting the timeline.

When you succeed with style at defending the timeline, you can cut the stress in half (rounded up) before absorbing it, effectively turning an Extraordinary amount of stress into a Significant amount of stress.

After killing the painter, Juan's fellow operative Deepa—the team's Holder—steps up to absorb the stress to the timeline. Since the change is a Major change, she must defend against a Good (+3). Luckily, Deepa is a gifted Holder with a Will of Great (+4) and a stunt that lets her defend the timeline even when she's engaged in other actions. She rolls a +2, for a total of Fantastic (+6), defending the timeline with style. She cuts the stress in half (rounded up) and checks off two mental stress boxes on her character sheet.

TIME TRAVEL WITHOUT DEALIGNMENT

If someone is traveling without first undergoing the process of dealignment (or if you're using these mechanics with a setting in which characters are not dealigned), it is possible for a time traveler to jump backward in time to alter their own aspects and skills and then immediately jump back to the present to make use of those skills. When a time traveler does this, however, it inflicts stress on the timeline equal to the effective milestone the character advanced, (i.e. Minor milestones—one point of stress, Significant milestones—two points of stress, Major milestones—three points of stress). Characters who have been dealigned cannot accomplish this feat, as changing their past does not alter their present selves.

WHO ARE THE SHADOW MEN?

No one knows, but it's clear that they don't like operatives messing with time. Here are a few ideas for your campaign:

- Agents from a future government that prohibits time travel
- Supernatural avatars of time itself
- Former Timeworks operatives warped by lost anchors

CHAPTER FIVE: TIMEWORKS NPCS

Julian Moreno

Raised in Central Phoenix by a single mother, Julian Moreno was not exactly destined for greatness. But he scrapped his way through high school, found a talent for convincing others to believe he could accomplish great things, and made his way to college on a debate scholarship that paid for most of his education.

In college, he met Mike Fitch, a budding innovator who thought he had cracked the quantum time problems that stood in the way of practical time travel. Julian helped Fitch raise the money to build the prototype and has been by his side ever since, bringing in the clients that are willing to foot the bill for the expensive alterations Timeworks offers.

And yet, something haunts Julian. He's been at the office late, often scribbling notes and diagrams to himself during company meetings when he should be paying attention. Even Fitch has noticed that he's distracted. And while no one is going to publicly question the alterations Julian schedules, several members of Dispatch have quietly noted that they aren't being asked to do research on many of the cases Julian is proposing. What is he up to?

JULIAN MORENO

High Concept:	<i>The Face of Timeworks Inc.</i>	
Trouble:	<i>Keeper of a Terrible Secret</i>	
Other Aspects:	<i>I Want to Know the Truth, Grace, Not Brawn, Dead Calm</i>	
Skills:	Superb (+5): Rapport	
	Great (+4): Empathy, Deceit	
	Good (+3): Will, History, Contacts	
	Fair (+2): Crafts, Fighting, Investigation, Resources	
	Average (+1): Dispatch, Stealth, Notice, Burglary, Athletics	
Stunts:	Pearly Whites. People trust you, especially when you flash your perfect teeth. +2 to Rapport rolls made to gain the trust of others.	
	Choose up to two more stunts to customize for your game.	
Stress	Mental: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Physical: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Mike Fitch

When Mike Fitch was in college, his freshman engineering project turned out to be far more impressive than his professor expected. With little more than a car battery, copper wiring, and a saline solution, Mike was able to show that displacement was possible on a small scale. His work was instantly popular, but under Julian's influence, he kept as much as possible to himself, trying to identify ways that such technology could be safely marketed. The resulting structure, Timeworks Incorporated, arose out of Mike's desire to limit the use of technology without burying the whole project.

While Julian is the face of Timeworks, Mike Fitch is the man who built the Timeworks' "patented displacement device," the time-traveling engine that shoots operatives back into the past. Mike's role at Timeworks gives him unique freedoms within the company. He is the sole employee with access to all of the technical records, including new technology designs generated by Timeworks' research and development teams. He is perpetually curious, not only about the technology that's currently being utilized by operatives but also about the potential for future displacement and travel back further into the past.

And yet, he is completely dismissive of reports of the Shadow Men. He cuts people off at meetings, buries reports on the subject, and demands that people focus on other problems. His close staff insists that he keeps his own records on the topic, but he refuses to share them with others. The operatives claim he knows something, but no one knows what exactly he might have discovered.

MIKE FITCH

High Concept: *Chief Time Travel Engineer*

Trouble: *Needs More Power!*

Other Aspects: *Stand Back—I'm Using Science, Best Engineer in the Business, Eternally Independent*

Skills: Superb (+5): Crafts
Great (+4): Will, Resources
Good (+3): Investigation, Dispatch, Notice
Fair (+2): Physique, History, Contacts, Provoke
Average (+1): Athletics, Deceit, Empathy, Fighting, Rapport

Stunts: **Always Making Useful Things.** Whenever you're in a situation that demands a certain tool, you may make an Overcome roll to declare that you retroactively happen to have one on hand. If you succeed with style, you can add a boost to that item as per normal.

Stress Mental: Physical:

Lara Martin

While Julian and Mike spend their time meeting with potential clients and messing with powerful displacement technology, it's fallen on Lara Martin to run the company. A former COO at a major bank, Lara was recruited to Timeworks by Julian, an old college friend, when Timeworks started making real money. She's been running Timeworks for the better part of the decade, and she's tough enough to run it for another decade if that's what she wants to do with her time.

LARA MARTIN

High Concept: *Middle Manager at an Odd Office*

Trouble: *Too Loyal*

Other Aspects: *Office Gossip, Quiet Confidence, Smartest Woman in the Room*

Skills:
 Great (+4): Rapport
 Good (+3): Will, Resources
 Fair (+2): Notice, Empathy, Provoke
 Average (+1): Contacts, Deceit, Physique, Dispatch

Stunts: **Are You Listening?** +2 to Provoke rolls made when giving instructions to paid employees.

Choose up to two more stunts to customize for your game.

Stress Mental: Physical:



Arturo Reyes

Technically, Arturo Reyes is nearly three hundred years old. Born in 1734 to a wealthy family in southern Spain, Reyes was recruited to Timeworks at the age of twenty-four by Deepa Singh. Today, Reyes is one of Timeworks' most deadly operatives, an assassin in every sense of the word. He's responsible for over fifty separate major time alterations, often leading teams into some of the most dangerous and complex situations that the company is contracted to alter.

Little is known about Reyes' life outside of Timeworks. Some of the operatives joke that he doesn't have one—that he merely bounces from assignment to assignment. Others think that he's up to something, either plotting to replace Moreno or... something bigger. And Reyes' close friends... well... Reyes doesn't really have close friends. He's always good with new recruits, though. He often spearheads recruitment when it's needed, locating people who are irrelevant to the timestream, but useful to Timeworks.

ARTURO REYES

High Concept: *Assassin From Another Age (Dealigned)*

Trouble: *My Reach Exceeds My Grasp*

Other Aspects: *Good With a Knife, Company Recruiter—1980s, One Step Ahead*

Skills: Superb (+5): Provoke
 Great (+4): Fighting, Shooting
 Good (+3): Investigation, Deceit, Physique
 Fair (+2): Will, Stealth, History, Scratch
 Average (+1): Dispatch, Crafts, Notice, Burglary, Athletics

Stunts: **When Am I?** You've put in a great deal of effort to learn the tell-tale signs of history—the models of cars, the cut of a particular dress, or the prevalence of fonts and design elements. You always know what decade you are in, even if others try to mislead you.

Choose up to two more stunts to customize for your game.

Stress Mental: Physical:

Lisa Tysiac

Lisa is on the edge. She's seen the Shadow Men. She knows that Moreno and Fitch are keeping secrets from the operatives. And now she's determined to figure out what's really going on at Timeworks. She's be happy to have some help, especially from new recruits who won't draw as much suspicion when they ask a lot of questions.

LISA TYSIAC

High Concept: *Breaker with a Heart of Gold (Dealigned)*

Trouble: *Emotionally Attached*

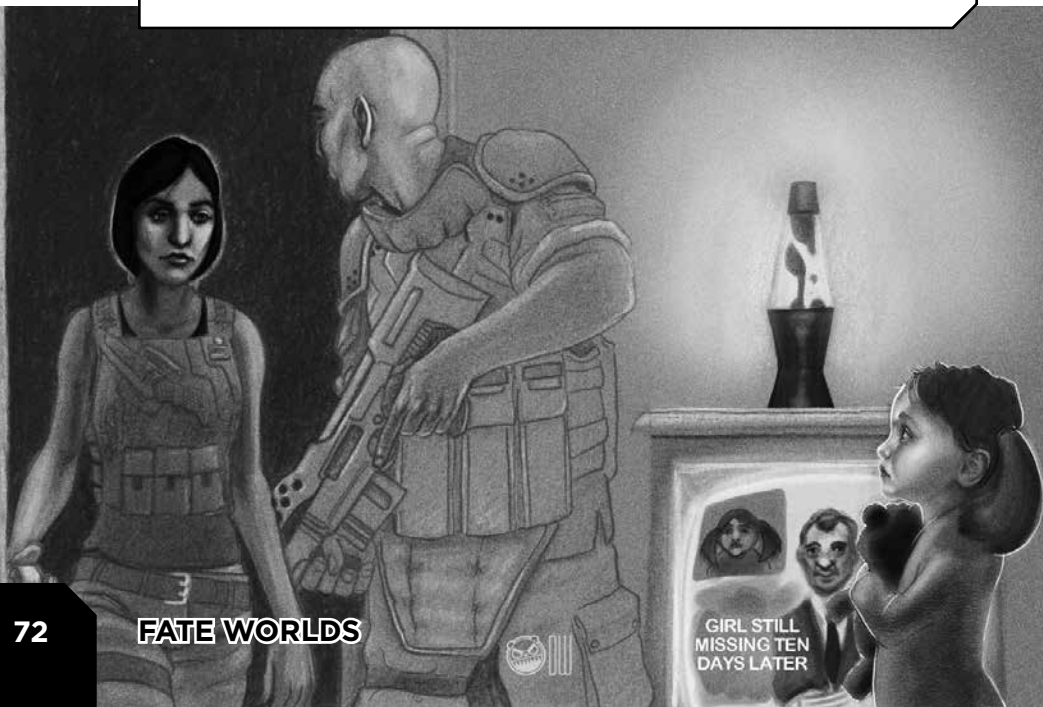
Other Aspects: *Survivor, Slow to Forget, Eyes Wide Open*

Skills:
 Great (+4): Breaking
 Good (+3): Athletics, Empathy
 Fair (+2): Burglary, Crafts, History
 Average (+1): Rapport, Deceit, Scratch, Fighting

Stunts: **Breakdown.** You may spend a fate point to make an Overcome roll against a Good (+3) difficulty to deliver stress directly to the timestream, causing one point of stress per shift. If you succeed with style, a target within your line of sight also suffers an equal amount of stress.

Choose up to two more stunts to customize for your game.

Stress Mental: Physical:



Deepa Singh

Deepa Singh was one of the first employees Mike Fitch found to work at Timeworks, and she was the first operative to successfully undergo the dealignment procedure. She's been on more assignments than any other operative, often accomplishing alterations that have left other operatives dead or permanently damaged. She's carefully guarded about her past, and fiercely loyal to the operatives she recruited, even when it becomes obvious that those operatives may not be the people she thought they were.

DEEPA SINGH

High Concept: *Timestream Stress Facilitator (Dealigned)*

Trouble: *Loyal to Reyes*

Other Aspects: *Haunted by Her Past, Precision Trumps Power, Strange Intuition*

Skills: Superb (+5): Will
Great (+4): Physique, Empathy
Good (+3): History, Deceit, Breaking
Fair (+2): Scratch, Dispatch, Stealth, Fighting
Average (+1): Athletics, Rapport, Notice, Shooting, Provoke

Stunts: **Hold Steady.** You can defend the timeline from stress even when you are engaged in other contests or challenges without suffering a penalty to your roll. If you succeed with style, you get a boost on whatever other challenge you were facing.

Choose up to two more stunts to customize for your game.

Stress Mental: Physical:

Shadow Men

They are coming. For you. For your friends. For your unit. For anyone who dares to destroy the sanctity of the timestream. They hiss and buzz and get in your mind. They want to eat you from the inside out.

When you see them, they are black suits and black faces in darkened alleys. And they will be the last thing you see.

SHADOW MEN

High Concept: *Mysterious Monsters*

Trouble: *Single-Minded Hunters*

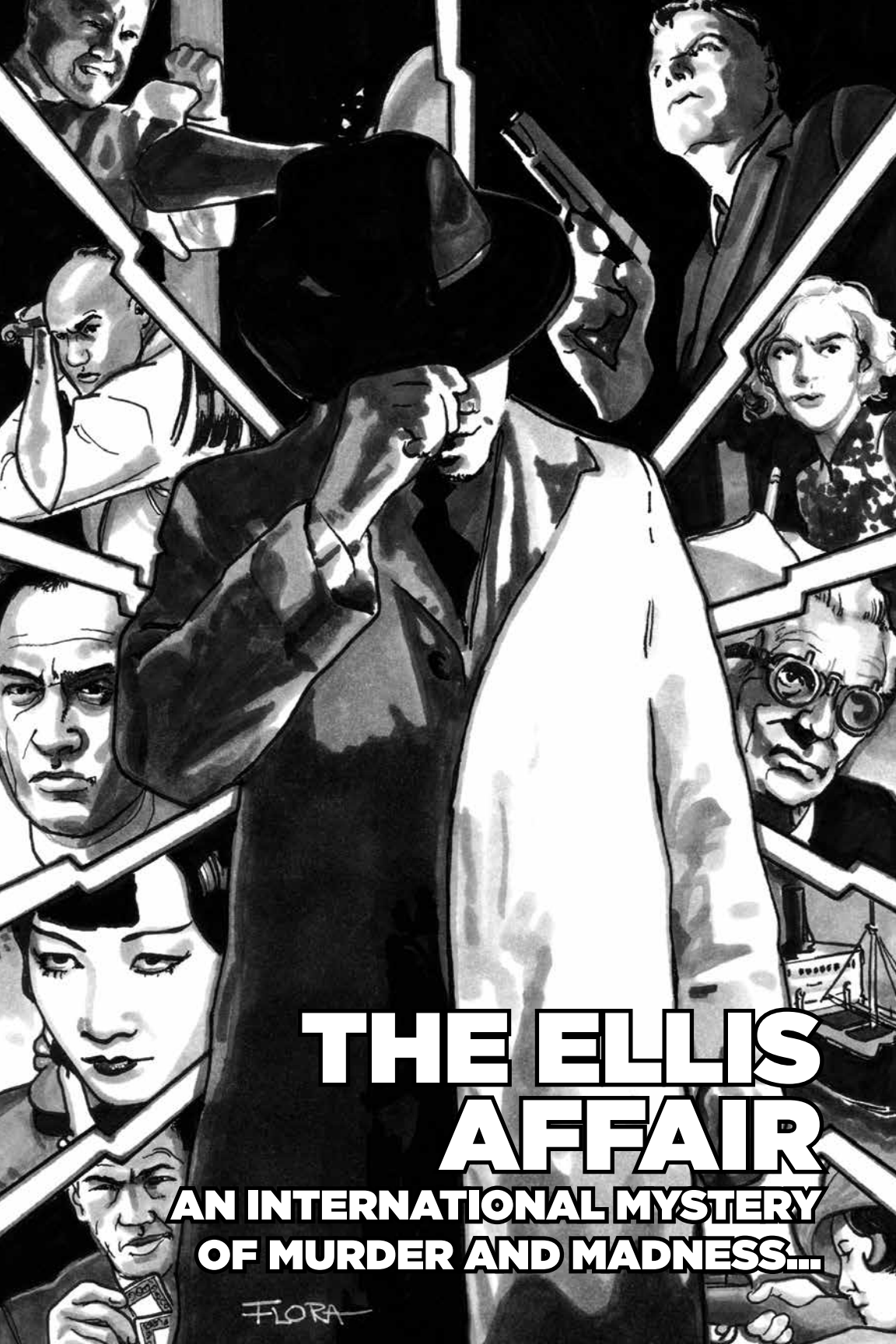
Other Aspects: *Empty Suits, Demons from the Far Future, Time Alteration Bloodhounds*

Skills: Fantastic (+6): Fighting
 Superb (+5): Provoke, Breaking
 Great (+4): Will, Stealth, Investigation
 Good (+3): Physique, Shooting, Notice, Burglary
 Fair (+2): Crafts, History, Scratch, Contacts, Deceit
 Average (+1): Empathy, Athletics, Rapport, Resources, Dispatch

Stunts: **Portals Home.** Spend a fate point to open a portal back to the era from which you came. This portal will stay open long enough for you to send one large object and yourself back to the future.

Choose up to two more stunts to customize for your game.

Stress Mental: Physical:



THE ELLIS AFFAIR

AN INTERNATIONAL MYSTERY
OF MURDER AND MADNESS...

FLORA

May 21, 1923: The American embassy in Tokyo cabled the State Department in Washington to say Earl H. Ellis, a representative of Hughes Trading Company of New York, died on May 12 in the Caroline Islands. The Japanese government, it said, awaited instructions as to his remains and effects in their possession. The story was reported as a routine note in several newspapers.

Two months later, Lawrence Zembsch, the chief pharmacist of the American Naval Hospital in Yokohama, returned from Peleliu, where he'd been sent to recover Ellis's body. A Navy Intelligence officer found him sitting on his bunk, near-catatonic, unshaven, unkempt, and muttering incoherent words. In his arms, he clutched a white wooden box containing Ellis's cremated remains. Ellis's papers, maps, and charts had been confiscated by the Japanese. Zembsch eventually recovered from his catatonic state, but remained without memory of what happened. He died in the September 1, 1923 Yokohama earthquake, never reporting what happened in Peleliu.

What the public does not know is that Earl Ellis was no merchant. In 1921, as a Marine major, he sent his superiors Operation Plan 712, Advanced Base Operations in Micronesia—a document warning that the Japanese intended to seize the Philippines, Singapore, and other Southeast Asian territories, and were fortifying various former German islands for the eventual assault.

Marine officials prevailed upon the president of Hughes Trading Co.—a retired Marine Corps. officer—to give Ellis a cover. Ellis came to Yokohama to survey the islands and try to verify his theory. Zembsch treated him for neurasthenia at the American Naval Hospital; he was last seen on Oct. 6, 1922. (All of the foregoing, strangely enough, actually happened. What happened to Ellis and his notes are a historical mystery.)

Starting in the ruins of Yokohama, the mission is to find out what happened to Major Ellis and find out whether or not our allies, the Japanese, are preparing for war.

OVERVIEW

The Ellis Affair is set in historical South-East Asia, with strong pulp-ish tone. Thrown together in the aftermath of the Great Yokohama Earthquake, the characters must discover what happened to Ellis and Zembsch, in part because anyone who would normally follow-up is either dead, injured, or busy with rescue and recovery. The scenes outlined here are a skeleton for the adventure, but you can depart from it at any point if you or your players have a more interesting idea—so long as the PCs get certain key clues (listed in each section), they can stop a tragedy.

If you want to know more about why the adventure is set up in this way, there's an Appendix on Mysteries in Fate (page 124) which explains some of the design philosophy.

A TINY BIT OF HISTORY

Why should there be a war with Japan? The Japanese are our allies. I do not believe there is the slightest chance of war in our lifetimes.

— Winston Churchill, Chancellor of the Exchequer (1926)

The shadow of World War II looms over this adventure, but remember that the war is nearly 20 years in the future. In World War I, Japan was one of the Allies. As a reward, Japan received several German colonies in South-East Asia—including the Caroline Islands, where Major Ellis died.

Since the War, there has been a rise in communism, socialism, and demands that Japanese society westernize. Right-wing nationalists resisted these changes, and have found sympathy in the Army and Navy.

Diplomatically, matters came to a head in the 1921-22 Washington Naval Conference. The 1922 Treaty limits capital ships among British, American, and Japanese fleets, and restricts Japan to 60% of U.S. and U.K. tonnage. Right-wingers, livid at this perceived racial and national put-down, stepped up the agitation that will lead to their eventual takeover of the government.

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

The Ellis Affair is designed for four characters. The sample characters (page 120) are:

- **Dr. Ashiko Angell**, flamboyant, mixed-parentage, scientific adventuress
- **Frederick Lewis Beckwith**, playboy, Naval lieutenant, and spy
- **Rebecca Dewey**, plucky gal reporter and crusader for justice
- **Typhoon Mike McGinnity**, cynical two-fisted skipper with a heart of gold

For simplicity, this write-up uses these characters, but there's no reason your players couldn't change them or design their own. There are several things they should have.

- They should be willing to get involved and be people that Captain Webb, the Commandant of the American Naval Hospital, would trust with sensitive information.
- Characters should have some social skills like Empathy Provoke, and Rapport.
- Contacts, Resources, and Crafts may also become important.
- It would be useful if one PC has access to a ship.

GM BRIEFING: THE BACKSTORY

"I suppose it was necessary," Bischoff sighed. He looked down at the body of Earl Ellis, and his face darkened. "Ach! Another madman ranting about wars and invasions, preaching violence and fear instead of international brotherhood. I tell you, Takagi, it makes my blood boil."

"Rightly so, Bischoff-san," said the other, in a weak and reedy voice. "He could not be allowed to spread his militaristic lies and fantasies."

"Precisely." Bischoff turned away, with a gesture of mixed resignation and disgust. "I'm sure you can handle this, my friend. I admit that when Japan took over these islands I was nervous, but I know now that I may trust you."

"Completely, Doctor," he said. Ito Tagako, known to Imperial Japanese Naval Intelligence as "Number Seven," bowed slightly.

Dr. Reiner Bischoff has a vision of world peace. And he's willing to kill to achieve it.

The world committed itself to disarmament in the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations Covenant. The Great War showed the manifest folly of further armed conflicts. His three brothers all died in the blood and mud of the trenches—and for what? The arms race continues.

If the world will not willingly give up its weapons, they must be taken away! Years ago, when he worked for Nikola Tesla, Bischoff helped discover an oscillator that could shake an entire building as if it were in an earthquake. He has been refining this device, using it to mine his family's plantation. But it can do much more—it can overwhelm the mightiest warship with rogue waves, or send a powerful surge through the ocean to strike ships along a distant shore.

Of course, this plan will require men, resources, and money. Bischoff, an ordinary plantation owner, lacks all three. However, his new Japanese neighbors in the Caroline Islands have been extraordinarily sympathetic and helpful. It just goes to show what high-minded men can accomplish when they work together.

It hasn't yet occurred to Bischoff that there might be those who like to destroy warships for quite different reasons.

What Happened to Ellis

When Ellis began poking about the Caroline islands, Takagi stole his papers to find out what he was up to. He showed them to Bischoff to convince him an American spy was poking into his affairs and perhaps after the oscillator itself. Ellis had an unfortunate encounter with the Oscillator, leaving him in serious pain which only alcohol seemed to dull. Bischoff himself went to Peleliu to speak with a drunken Ellis, confirming for himself that Ellis was a spy and masterminded a plan for how the United States would steal the Carolines from the Japanese (a corrupted interpretation of Ellis's Operation Plan 712). Takagi killed Ellis later that night to make sure he couldn't tell anyone about Bischoff.

What Happened to Zembsch

When Zembsch arrived on Peleliu, Ellis had been cremated in the Japanese tradition. (This isn't unusual; bodies rot quickly in the tropics.) Locals recalled that Ellis had spent the days before his death travelling around the islands. When he returned to Peleliu, he drank heavily—sometimes with local planters, sometimes with the Japanese administrators. Some of the locals recalled his maps, sketch books, and notes, but Japanese authorities claimed none existed.

Zembsch questioned the islanders about Ellis's activities, and eventually heard a rumor that just before his death, Ellis visited tiny, isolated St. Isobel Island. Uncertain who to trust, Zembsch paid islanders to take him there secretly. There, he found a small plantation with a mine. Following signs Ellis left, with the hill trembling under his feet, he climbed into a limestone cave. There, he saw Dr. Bischoff using a small oscillator to shake and collapse a portion of the rock wall. Zembsch had just time to realize that he was in the path of the oscillator, followed by a terrible ache in his bones, and then,,,

The rest is a blur. Zembsch crawled out of the mines. Guides took him back to Peleliu, where his erratic condition was mistaken for malaria. The colonial administrator bundled him, along with Ellis's remains, on the first ship back to Yokohama before he had yet another dead American on his hands. Takagi (Number 7) heard about his condition, poisoned Zembsch with a powerful hallucinogen (see page 108) before the ship sailed, and subjected Zembsch to a nightmarish interrogation.

The Villains

There are three separate groups of bad guys in this adventure: the Octopus Pirates, Dr. Bischoff, and the Japanese militarists.

- The pirates are in it for the money, at least initially. Once they see that Bischoff's device can eliminate naval patrols, they'll be even more enthusiastic about his success. They're hired by Dr. Bischoff, using money supplied by his Japanese backers, to provide muscle and a ship. The PCs are aware of their existence from the start of the adventure.
- There are two major pirate NPCs: the much-feared but little-seen leader known only as **The Octopus**, and the Octopus's trusted lieutenant **Udatn**—a Dayak headhunter from Borneo.
- **Dr. Reiner Bischoff** is an idealist, driven half-mad from long-term exposure to the Oscillator and grief over his lost brothers. The PCs should become aware of Bischoff, and possibly his motives, during the adventure. Ultimately the PCs may be able to show him the error of his ways.
- The Japanese militarists are Bischoff's ultimate backers. Infuriated by condescension from Western nations, ferociously nationalistic, anti-Communist, and contemptuous of democracy, they actively try to undermine the current government. They should remain almost entirely in the background, merely hinted at, until the final climax. The militarists' agent is the shadowy **Number Seven**, Dr. Bischoff's "plantation manager" (handler). Number Seven may be glimpsed or referred to during the story, but tries to maintain his cover as

merely a loyal underling until the very end.

Timeline

May 23: Ellis's death is reported.

July: Zembsch goes to Peleliu to try to track down Ellis's doings.

August 14: Zembsch is found clutching Ellis's cremated remains. He is "incoherent" and "highly nervous", and shrinks fearfully from any Japanese—even former friends. He remembers nothing. He is brought to Yokohama Naval Hospital to recover.

August 31: A big disarmament demonstration in Yokohama is broken up by truncheon-wielding police. Dr. Bischoff helped organize the demonstration and spoke at it.

September 1, 9:00 a.m.: Dr. Bischoff is prominent in a photograph of the demonstrators in the morning newspapers. Zembsch sees it and recognizes someone in the photograph, but can't recall who.

September 1, 11:58 a.m.: The earthquake strikes.

Already unhinged, Dr. Bischoff looks out from his ruined hotel room at the damaged ships listing in Yokohama harbor and is inspired. Mere demonstrations would never be enough! The time has come! If the world will not disarm on its own, he will make them!

Number Seven takes him to meet Feng, a local leader of the Octopus Pirates. Dr. Bischoff needs the pirates to get into the bank vault, where key parts for a much larger oscillator are stored. He also needs a large ship to help him with his plan; the pirates can supply one. In return, Feng and his men are free to loot the vault, starting with Bischoff's own valuables.

However, Zembsch has been worrying over the photograph all morning. The quake's physical vibration restores his memory. He flees the hospital before it collapses, taking a rifle from the wreckage of the Marine guards' armory. He's still confused, but determined to confront Bischoff.

September 1, 2:00 p.m.: Zembsch staggers through the ruins of the Grand Hotel, spotting Dr. Bischoff with several Chinese pirates and follows them to the Yokohama Specie Bank (where the adventure opens).

Dr. Bischoff meanwhile uses the Oscillator to open the vault, striding in and retrieving key parts of his greatest invention, departing before the scene starts. He's on his way to Shanghai to meet with the Octopus.



ACT I: YOKOHAMA, NOT LONG AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

Yokohama is a charnel house: the streets, canals and waterfront are filled with the dead and the stench from decomposing bodies is unbearable. It is estimated that more than 200 foreigners lost their lives there.

Most of the dead and injured among the Yokohama foreigners were those who were caught by the earthquake and fire while shopping in the downtown district. Thousands of the terror-stricken natives drowned in the canals when seeking safety from the raging inferno which followed the temblor.

The earthquake left great gaps in the pavements and wrecked most of the buildings. Fire, which started in numerous places at once completed the destruction

— “Refugees from Yokohama Call City Charnel House”, Meriden (CT)
Morning Record (Sept. 6, 193) at 1.

Just before noon on September 1, 1923, an 8.2 magnitude earthquake struck Yokohama and Tokyo. As the adventure opens, only a few hours have passed, and the city is in chaos. Ruptured gas mains leak. Cooking stoves have overturned, starting massive fires. Electrical lines, some live, are down. Water mains are broken, making firefighting nigh-impossible. Many major buildings have collapsed, crushing their inhabitants. Nobody knows when or whether help might arrive—the city’s main contact with the outside world is by wireless, relayed from intact ships in the harbor to Japanese wireless stations.

WHAT THE PCS MUST LEARN DURING THIS ACT

- Zembsch knows Dr. Bischoff and blames him for Ellis's death.
- Dr. Bischoff is a prominent voice among the pacifists.
- Dr. Bischoff was one of Tesla's assistants.
- Dr. Bischoff is a plantation owner in the Caroline Islands, which is the same area where Ellis died and Zembsch mysteriously fell ill.
- The pirates work for the Octopus, a much-feared pirate leader on the Chinese coast, and are commonly found in the waters near Shanghai.

WHAT THE PCS MAY LEARN DURING THIS ACT

- Ellis was stabbed either by Feng's knife or one similar to it.
- Both Ellis and Zembsch were affected by something that caused tiny fractures in their bones.
- The bank vault door (see below) had similar damage.

NPCs**DR. ULYSS WEBB, SUPERINTENDENT, NAVAL HOSPITAL**

Aspects: *Cautious Commander; Haven't Outlived My Usefulness Yet*

Skills: Lore: Fair (+2) Will: Fair (+2)

Dr. Webb, a 22-year Navy man, has been the Superintendent of the American Naval Hospital for just over a year. It's not a prestige post; the hospital is virtually shut down, and Zembsch was practically only patient.

**LAWRENCE ZEMBSCH, FORMER CHIEF PHARMACIST,
NAVAL HOSPITAL**

Aspects: *Only Mostly Mad; Revenge For Me! My Wife! Ellis!*

Skills: Lore: Fair (+2) Shooting: Fair (+2)

Zembsch had been with the hospital for some time. In July, he was entrusted with a seemingly-routine task—recovering the remains of a dead Marine from Japanese-administered Peleliu. Before he left, his poker buddy Ellis M. Zacharias—a Navy Intelligence officer stationed in nearby Tokyo—impressed on Zembsch the importance of the opportunity to look around in the Carolines, where the Japanese rarely allowed outsiders, and hinted that Ellis's death was not natural.

When Zembsch returned nearly comatose, he was tended by his wife Gladys. She died in the collapse of the hospital. Zembsch is already badly wounded when he appears in the opening scene. He survived the collapsing Naval Hospital, then made his way down a 100' steep bluff, and wanders the city looking for Bischoff. He's burned, battered, and exhausted.

FENG, LOCAL OCTOPUS PIRATE

Aspects: *Who Said Anything About a Fair Fight?, Lust for Loot*

Skills Drive: Fair (+2) Fight: Fair (+2)
 Notice: Good (+3) Will: Good (+3)

Stress Physical: Mental:

Feng is the local eyes and ears of the Octopus pirates, and their local liaison to the Yakuza and the militarists. Number Seven gave him a dagger with a blade made of cupric obsidian (volcanic glass laced with copper) as a reward for his work forging an alliance between Chinese pirates and Japanese militarists.

How Did You Survive?

Ask the characters to describe how they survived and what they've been doing in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Ideally, you should gather them together in the ruins of downtown Yokohama near the Yokohama Specie Bank. You may want to work with the players to give each of them a "hook", bringing them to this point. Here are some ideas (continuing onto the following page):

- Vigilante bands of Japanese men (*jikeidan*) set up roadblocks and patrols soon after the quake, searching for and sometimes killing Koreans rumored to be poisoning wells and using the carnage to plot against the government. (Japan has occupied Korea since 1905). PCs—such as Typhoon Mike McGinnity, with his *Tough Hide, Soft Heart*—might be attracted by such a scene. A non-Japanese Asian PC, such as Dr. Angell, might even be accosted. Either way, the bank might look like a refuge.
- Able-bodied survivors are combing the ruins looking for the injured or trapped. Surviving doctors are setting up makeshift field hospitals with limited supplies. Our heroes could be nearby, pulling victims out from the teetering rubble. A grateful rescuee could even give a PC a key to a safe-deposit box. Alternatively, a doctor might want to use the mostly-intact bank as a first aid station.

- Others are using the disaster to loot and settle personal scores. In the aftermath, police rounded up many labor leaders, known socialists, communists, and anarchists. Rebecca Dewey will do *Anything For the Scoop*, including taking pictures—an activity which would enrage perpetrators.
- The PCs might themselves have reason to go to the bank. Anyone with decent Resources, such as Frederick Beckwith, might have stuff in the safety deposit boxes there—valuables, weapons, highly-classified espionage notes, incriminating photographs, love letters, geological samples, or anything else you can dream up.

“I REMEMBER!”

Once in the Bank, the character with the highest Notice hears a series of explosions. They sound like gunfire, a rarity in Japan.

A disheveled American wearing pants and a hospital robe is partly under cover in the ruins. He has a military-issue rifle. At his feet is a white box, the kind used by Japanese to hold cremated remains. Near the vault some Asian thugs with knives and clubs hunker down. The vault door is open, and looks oddly distorted. “Assassins!” the American is yelling. “I remember now! Show yourself, you coward! You won’t escape!”

Again, the character with the highest Notice glimpses a couple of thugs who are about to jump the American.

The American is Zemsch, who made it here from the American Naval Hospital before it collapsed and burned. The box at his feet is labeled “Ellis”; it contains human ashes and bones. Zemsch is still a bit crazed, which is why he brought the remains with him. (During the fight, he may talk to, or argue, with them.) He’s almost to the point of collapse (maybe with mild and moderate consequences). (Note: He’s not expected to survive this scene, but give him a heroic death if you can.)

The thugs, led by Feng, are here to loot the vault, but they retreat if the PCs make a strong show of force. Treat everyone other than Feng as a mob, Average skill, at least two per PC. One of the thugs is a bit tougher than the rest—Fight Good (+2) and a wickedly sharp tantō (6” Japanese stabbing/slashing knife favored by the Yakuza).

If the fight goes on too long, break it up by with more of the building collapsing, or a fire starting to break out from a leaking gas line. Don’t destroy the entire building yet; it has some important clues.

Getting to those clues is another matter. The building becomes *Unstable and Dangerous*. There may be leaking gas, live electrical wires, precariously perched debris, and many other hazards. Key documents might be in danger of catching fire, or being submerged in a growing puddle from a broken water pipe. Some clues may be scattered in the vault near valuables scattered by the thieves, tempting a character to pocket some temporary Resources, rather than a bulky, boring box of documents.

Scene Aspects

- *Unstable and Dangerous*
- *Buried Hazards*
- *Scattered Wealth*

Clues

- On Zembsch:
 - His pants have his papers, which identify him as chief pharmacist of the American Naval Hospital.
 - In his pocket is a crumpled photograph, torn from today's newspaper (*Asabi Shimbun*), of yesterday's rally by local pacifists against a recent American naval exercise with Australia, which was suppressed by truncheon-wielding Japanese police.
- The thugs have a variety of local money and Mexican silver dollars—the main currency used in China, as Captain McGinnity or any other PC familiar with this area might know. From the various bits of ink and steel die impressions attesting to their genuineness, the silver dollars come from Shanghai.
- The vault door, its bars, and hinges are oddly bowed. The character with the highest Crafts realizes the damage can't be accounted for by the earthquake. It's as if the door warped itself.
- A half-open safe deposit box, with a key still in the door, reveals that something heavy was taken from it, as it left an impression on some papers, all in German. The top ones are three telegrams from the German government: notices of three German soldiers, all surnamed Bischoff, killed in combat at Saint-Mihiel and Château-Thierry. Other papers pertain to a plantation in the Caroline islands.
- If the PCs Investigate the papers from the safe deposit box, they find that the plantation's finances suffered. Recently, though, there have been several large infusions of cash, source unclear, to stave off creditors.
- One of the pirates—the toughest one—is Japanese, not Chinese. His Octopus tattoo is smeared: it's merely inked on. In reality he's Yakuza, and one of Number Seven's men planted among the pirates.

Consequences

The Octopus tattoo isn't well-known locally. If the PCs use their Contacts to ask around, they eventually learn of a ruthless gang operating in the South China Sea. They are based out of Shanghai, but have tentacles in various ports, especially Japan. They use small fishing boats to shadow prey until a larger vessel can attack it. You may want to give them this information *after* they talk to Superintendent Webb, perhaps shortly before the police show up at the end of this act.

Through the Streets

When it appears the PCs have the upper hand, Feng makes a run for it, grabbing a bicycle stashed nearby. Looking around, the character with the highest Notice spots a gleam of chrome under some rubble: an Indian Chief motorcycle. It's damaged, but a few adjustments with Crafts could fix that. Be inventive with a chase through the rubble, the flames, refugees and their life possessions, and so on. Ideally, Feng should expire messily. If caught, he tries to kill himself—the Octopus's tentacles can reach him anywhere, and the penalty for betrayal is a slow, painful death.

Scene Aspects

- *Shattered Streets*
- *Shell-Shocked Survivors*

Clues

Feng has some information. If the PCs can capture him intact, he'll be a hard nut to crack. If he dies, they may be able to get a few last gurgles out of him, depending on how well they can apply medical care. Tailor the info to what the PCs need to have revealed or reinforced. E.g.:

- “Tell ... Number Seven ...”—an early hint of the militarists' involvement
- “Shanghai”
- As his last act, Feng tries to stab the person leaning close to hear his dying words with a knife. Oddly, the blade is made of cupric obsidian (volcanic glass, made greenish by veins of copper in it).

Briefing

The PCs can eventually locate Superintendent Webb, the commander of the American Naval Hospital. The Hospital is gone, but with Contacts, the PCs can readily find that Webb and many survivors made it from the blazing ruins of the Hospital down to the shore, where they were picked up and taken to one of the undamaged ships in the harbor. There they set up an aid station. When the players arrive, Webb is being bandaged up by a corpsman, but is eager to hear their story. If the PCs don't come to Webb, someone from the Naval Hospital will eventually come to them—gunshots from the bank will attract some attention, even in the midst of Yokohama's chaos.

Webb wants to follow-up, but he's not sure he can trust the PCs to do this. He'd much prefer to use Navy staff, but everyone he'd rely on is injured, dead, or busy.



This is a social challenge (*Fate Core*, page 147). This will be a series of Rapport or possibly Deceive rolls by one character, with others creating appropriate advantages (or being compelled to weaken the primary roll) in opposition to Webb's Fair (+2) Will. Success takes 3 overcome actions:

1. to convince Webb that something must be done,
2. to convince him that he doesn't have the staff to do it himself, and
3. that this hodgepodge bunch of oddballs (the players) can do it.

The more the PCs persuade him that they are the right people for this investigation, the more information he gives them about Ellis and Zembsch. He gives them a basic briefing about the mysterious death of Ellis in the Japanese mandate islands, and of Zembsch's amnesia, and tasks them to help find out what happened.

Scene Aspects

- *Do I Trust You?*
- *Desperate Times, Desperate Measures*

Consequences

If the PCs fail the challenge, they hear only the unclassified backstory: Ellis went to the Japanese mandated islands on a business trip; he died from over-drinking; Zembsch went to fetch his body and came back quite ill, perhaps suffering from malaria. An Empathy roll could suggest that Webb knows things that he isn't telling them. He won't help them, but he won't hinder them either.

If they succeed, Webb admits that Ellis was a spy, searching for evidence that the Japanese are fortifying the Caroline Islands and that he died on Peleliu. He also tells them about Zembsch's condition upon his return and how it mystified the staff of the hospital. Malaria was a possible explanation, but his symptoms just didn't seem right.

If the PCs are thinking of going to Peleliu, you can either improvise what they find or try to redirect them. Webb reminds them that (1) it's two weeks by steamer away, and (2) it's in the Japanese mandate, and getting permission for Zembsch to go and get Ellis's body took weeks.

With Tokyo damaged and Yokohama destroyed, it isn't possible to get the paperwork. If necessary, Webb hints that a naval intelligence officer (Zacharias) is in the area and his cover would be jeopardized by the *Salamander's* arrival without permission.

Clues

The character with the highest Notice sees a copy of today's newspaper crumpled in the trash, the picture that Zembsch was clutching partly visible. If the PCs grab it, it reminds Webb that Zembsch was very agitated after he read this morning's paper—it's not a classified detail, so he could mention it whether or not they succeed in the challenge.

If they don't grab it, then Webb can remark on Zembsch's agitation on his own and himself notice the crumpled paper.

Without rolling Contacts or spending a fate point, Dewey should recognize at least one person: she covered the rally and spoke briefly to the lead speaker, Dr. Bischoff. If you're using your own characters, see if someone has an appropriate background to recognize Dr. Bischoff.

Dewey knows that Dr. Bischoff is a German plantation owner from somewhere in the Japanese mandate. He is a prominent voice among the pacifists both because he is a passionate speaker and because he has generously spent much of the money from his plantation on the pacifist cause. She interviewed him at the rally yesterday. He met Dr. Einstein at one of his lectures in Tokyo and respects him. He was a brilliant scientist, part of Tesla's lab, and strongly supports disarmament. Dr. Bischoff has been very generous with his money, although his manager almost balked at bailing several demonstrators out of jail after police showed up.

He seemed a passionate speaker who firmly believes in his cause—an opponent of violence, not an advocate of it—it is against the spirit of his cause.

Any character with a high Lore skill could recognize Bischoff's name as a noted physicist who was part of Nikola Tesla's laboratory in New York, but who hasn't published anything in at least a decade.

When the characters look at Ellis's cremains, there's something odd about them. Even with high Lore, one would need a lab to be certain. Both the British and American Naval Hospitals burned to the ground. What remains of the medical staff aboard is busy tending the wounded, but there is a small amount of space and equipment the PCs could use.

With a microscope, a character with Lore can discover that Ellis's bones are riddled with microscopic stress fractures, very unusual and not caused by the cremation itself.

If the PCs brought with them any material from the vault door, it shows similar fractures. If the PCs also autopsy Zembsch, they will find the same tiny fractures, though less serious than Ellis's and starting to heal. Zembsch also shows signs of brain damage—he has multiple mostly-healed hemorrhages. There is no sign of malaria.

One of Ellis's rib bones has a cut in it, perhaps a knife wound, perhaps an artifact of the cremation process. Oddly, there are some tiny flakes of obsidian and of copper mixed in the cremains.

Time to Go

When you think the PCs have enough clues and are starting to dither, give them an impetus to get out of town. Some Japanese police show up asking questions about the bodies left in the Yokohama Bank and perhaps things the PCs did prior to arriving at the Bank. They seem particularly hostile to Dewey and want to seize her camera and notes. They are rude to Dr. Angell because she's Eurasian. The officers are persistent, but recognize that they are on an American ship challenging American citizens: If the PCs decline to go with them, they'll be warned about their lack of cooperation.

Play this menacingly, nothing good will happen to the PCs once they are out of sight of witnesses.

Ideally, the PCs should be strongly motivated to get out of Yokohama until things settle down. If, for some reason, the PCs agree to go to the station, the police will look for excuses to hold them in protective custody pending an investigation at the Bank. Things are tense, tempers short, and foreigners look like good scapegoats. Increase the menace and be ready to improvise a jailbreak.

If the PCs have not concluded that they need to go to Shanghai next, you may have to give them another nudge. Perhaps at least one of the pirates recognized McGinnity and escaped the bank to tell his buddies. They might sabotage the *Salamander* leaving a warning drawn in oil—"Octopus says stay away from Shanghai".

Clues

- Damage from the Oscillator.
- Ellis's knife wound
- The bits of obsidian and copper

ACT II: SHANGHAI

Through the narrow streets, beneath the blazing balconies and the swinging hieroglyphic signs, the crowds surged in a steady rhythmical current, murmurous, smiling, intent, their goal of pleasure casting anticipatory gleams of brightness over their faces and even the silks of their dress. And the chorus of the myriad voices, the t-rrrrr of the rickshaw bells, the honk honk of the automobiles, the screams of the coolies, and the curses of the Sikhs, were all caught, as it were, in the barbarous swirl of the tea-house music which harmonized all to its own dissonance. Meanwhile from every cook shop and kitchen, the odours of cookery steamed upon the evening air, as if the whole metropolis were one vast chop suey.

—Marjorie Barstow Greenbie, *In the Eyes of the East* (1921)

Shanghai is a treaty port divided between the French Concession, the International Settlement, and Nantao (the Chinese city). Neighborhoods of wealthy European, American, and Chinese merchants and administrators are ringed by slums packed with tens of thousands of Chinese laborers. The heart of the brothels, opium dens, gambling halls, and organized crime is the French Concession, which holds those businesses too risqué for the International Settlement.

The confusion of jurisdictions means a multiplicity of overwhelmed police forces. Many Europeans, and most wealthy Chinese have personal guards, many of them White Russian ex-officers or unemployed western veterans. The opium trade, the stew of conflicting intrigues, and the many layers of private vendettas ensure that bodyguards are never short of work.

WHAT THE PCS MUST LEARN DURING THIS ACT

- The existence of the Oscillator, and Bischoff's threat against the world's warships.
- The Octopus pirates have leased a ship to Dr. Bischoff.
- The rough location of the Octopus's base and of their ship, the *Lao Hu*.

WHAT THE PCS MAY LEARN DURING THIS ACT

- Although Chinese, the Octopus pirates are based in the Little Tokyo neighborhood and have some protection from the Japanese authorities.
- The Octopus's second-in-command, Udatn, uses the same poison that was used on Zembsch.
- The Octopus Gang was *very* well paid for the use of their ship.
- Bischoff's plantation manager, a Japanese man, is doing legwork and carrying out Bischoff's orders

NPCs

The Octopus

The Octopus (Jing Ping Chen) is loosely based on various historical Chinese pirate queens and the Dragon Ladies that appeared in *Terry and the Pirates* and other pulp adventures. When the Qing Dynasty fell in 1912, she was a young princess at court. Family retainers tried to spirit her out of the country, but they were robbed and captured at sea by pirates. Jing became a sort of pirate mascot. She watched, learned, and eventually became one of the pirates—working her way to being first captain of her own ship and eventually to controlling several raiders and a small fortress near Shanghai.

The Octopus—few know her real name—is pragmatic and ruthless. These days, she rarely goes to sea herself, relying instead on Udatn to seize targets and hold the captives while she negotiates their ransom. She hides in plain sight: the Green Gang controls the French Concession police, and William Fairbairn (page 92) has made it hard to operate in the English-controlled parts of the International Settlement, but Little Tokyo is a law unto itself.

The Octopus has contacts in various ports and ships, which let her know which targets are most profitable. Dr. Bischoff's manager pays her well for the use of her ship—too well perhaps, for a mere plantation owner. She doesn't know his plan in detail, but she's figured out enough to know that if it works, piracy will be much easier.

THE OCTOPUS, CHINESE PIRATE LEADER
Jing Ping Chen

Aspects: *Pirate Queen of the China Coast*
Woman in a Man's Underworld
Arms and Eyes Everywhere; Attracted to Power; Mesmeric Gaze

Skills Contacts: Great (+4) Deceive: Fair (+2)
Empathy: Average (+1) Fight: Average (+1)
Investigate: Average (+1) Provoke: Good (+3)
Rapport: Average (+1) Resources: Fair (+2)
Stealth: Good (+3) Will: Fair (+2)

Stunts **Fatal Attraction (Provoke):** Can use Provoke instead of Rapport
Ninja Vanish (Stealth): Spend a fate point to disappear

Stress Physical: Mental:

William Fairbairn

William Fairbairn has been a member of the Shanghai Municipal Police since 1907. After being beaten on patrol, he learned jujutsu and later studied Chinese boxing, judo, and various other martial arts. Since 1910, he trained Shanghai's officers in hand-to-hand combat, knife fighting, and handgun combat. In 1923, he's a 38-year-old veteran, covered with scars from numerous street fights.

Almost uniquely for Shanghai, Fairbairn doesn't drink, swear, or brag—and he doesn't like people who do.

WILLIAM FAIRBAIRN, MARTIAL ARTS EXPERT WITH THE SHANGHAI MUNICIPAL POLICE

Aspects: *Toughest Cop in Shanghai*

Unhealthily Honest

Master of Martial Arts; Few Vices

Skills Fight: Great (+4) Provoke: Good (+3)
 Shoot: Good (+3)

Stress Physical: Mental:

Eric Sykes

Eric Anthony Sykes, former hunter, expert with both pistol and rifle, works as the local representative for Colt and Remington. He knows Fairbairn. (In the future they form a partnership that will produce the Fairbairn-Sykes Fighting Knife and highly influence British commando training in World War II.) Sykes has a lot of trouble with the pirates and gangs trying to steal Colt and Remington's shipments. He's familiar with the major crime leaders, and they with him.

ERIC SYKES, GUNS EXPERT AND LOCAL AGENT FOR AMERICAN ARMS MAKERS

Aspects: *Gun Expert, Getting Bored With the Desk Job*

Skills Contacts: Good (+3) Investigate: Good (+3)
 Shoot: Great (+4)

John Wilson

John Wilson is an English reporter, a down-and-out freelancer from London looking for the one big story that will make his reputation. He's every stereotype of a British tabloid reporter rolled into one cigar-chomping, hard-drinking bloke. He's currently in Shanghai, and is bloody furious that he missed the first wave of ships headed for Yokohama while sleeping off a typical night on the town.

If Miss Dewey is not a PC, then Wilson might attach himself to the PCs, trying to interview them to get the scoop on Shanghai, and dropping information about Dr. Bischoff's missive in return. If the PCs give him any leads, he'll chase the story on his own, and might wind up on the *Lao Hu* in the final scene.

JOHN WILSON, FREELANCE REPORTER

John Wilson

Aspects: *Hungry For the Big One; If It Bleeds, It Leads; Cigar-Chomping, Hard-Drinking Bloke; Damaged Goods*

Skills

Contacts: Fair (+2)	Deceive: Average (+1)
Fight: Fair (+2)	Investigate: Good (+3)
Provoke: Good (+3)	Physique: Average (+1)
Rapport: Fair (+2)	

Du Yuesheng (“Big-Eared Du”)

Du is the right-hand man to “Pockmarked” Huang Jinrong, one of Shanghai's most important gangsters. He drives a hard bargain—he's opened some business transactions by sending an ornate coffin to a potential partner's home. He's famous for giving his word, and keeping the letter of it.

Du is known for his fine clothing, beautiful women, and opium. He only wears Chinese silk over European boots, and insists that his minions dress well rather than like street thugs. He is superstitious—he has three small monkey heads, sewn to his clothes at the small of his back, for protection. He's so paranoid that his White Russian bodyguards watch his tailor take measurements so his tailor can't stab him in the back.

Du appears often at the city's best clubs and gambling dens. He has a four-story ornate mansion in the French Concession. Approaching it uninvited would be suicidal.

DU YUESHENG (“BIG-EARED DU”), RISING STAR IN THE SHANGHAI UNDERWORLD

Aspects:	<i>High Roller in Low Places</i>	
	<i>Too Fond of His Own Wares</i>	
Other Aspects:	<i>“You Have My Word.”; Double or Nothing;</i>	
	<i>Paranoid and Superstitious</i>	
Skills	Burglary: Average (+1)	Contacts: Good (+3)
	Deceive: Fair (+2)	Empathy: Average (+1)
	Fight: Fair (+2)	Notice: Average (+1)
	Provoke: Good (+3)	Physique: Average (+1)
	Resources: Great (+4)	Will: Fair (+2)
Stunts	Trust Fund Baby (Resources): Boost for cash windfall	
Stress	Physical: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Mental: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Getting There

If Captain McGinnity is a PC, he can take the party to Shanghai on the *Salamander*. If not, the PCs can either hire him, or travel with one of the ships evacuating survivors to other ports. The trip from Yokohama to Shanghai takes about four days, and is tense going. The seas feel “strange”—waves are strong and the currents don’t feel right.

Whispers In the Ether

While on-board (either the *Salamander* or another vessel), the radio room bustles with news about the earthquake. There are reports of damage even to California ports, including \$50,000 damage to ships in San Pedro. There’s a lot of coded military traffic between American naval vessels, mostly destroyers en route to Yokohama from China and the Philippines. English, French, and Dutch naval ships are also on the way.

A couple of days into the journey (September 4), their ship receives an S.O.S. from the *Taiyo Maru*, a well-known passenger vessel, 300 miles east of Yokohama. They can hear radio traffic among the vessels en route to assist, and rescue the 600 passengers if need be. The *Salamander* is not in a good position to get involved. The cruiser USS *Huron*—flagship of Admiral Edwin Anderson Jr., commander of the American Asiatic Fleet—was en route to Yokohama from Chefoo, but altered course to be able to assist in a rescue.

As their ship arrives at Shanghai, the next day (September 5), the radio receives the news “*Taiyo Maru* safe” and some details. The badly leaking ship lost its propeller to a rogue wave, but was able to repair its radio enough to coordinate with rescue vessels. There is also news that USS *Stewart* is the first American destroyer to reach Yokohama with supplies, having made a remarkable dash from Darien.



I'd Know That Fist Anywhere

When the PCs venture into the radio room to check on the *Taiyo Maru* rescue, or to send messages of their own, a character can use Contacts or an appropriate aspect to recognize the Morse Code “fist” of the *Huron*'s radio operator—a friend/relative of whatever sort an appropriate PC decides. The PC can use that friendship to get more information.

However, the conversation is interrupted by jamming (Crafts Challenge +2). Admiral Anderson tasked one of the destroyers to relay radio messages to and from Yokohama because of other jamming problems, probably from Japanese military transmitters.

Clues

Assuming they get past the jamming, the PCs may learn that:

- Admiral Anderson has ordered pretty much every American warship in China and the Philippines to recall their sailors and make steam as fast as possible with supplies for Yokohama.
- *Huron*'s radio operator suspects the Japanese are jamming American communications to “save face”.
- The battleship *Texas* and its battlegroup, under Admiral Shipman, broke off war games near Australia and are en route to the area, ready to assist.
- The *Huron* begins saying something about some sort of sighting. The jamming gets particularly strong at this point; all that can be deciphered is something about “bigger than anything we saw in the War”. This is a reference to a Japanese submarine (page 114).

Shadow at Sea

Not long after this contest, the characters should roll Notice against Average (+1) Stealth. Anyone who succeeds notices a small fishing boat shadowing them. It could be just a coincidence, but it's strange that it follows their course and doesn't do much fishing.

- If the ship changes course or speed radically, the fishing boat tries to break off. If the PCs want to confront their shadow: it could be just a fishing boat, it could be a scout for the Octopus, or it could be a Japanese patrol ship intrigued by the overheard radio traffic.
- If the PCs want to lose their shadow, it's a chase (*Fate Core* page 150). The shadow's Drive is Average (+1). The PCs or the GM should take advantage of the *Strange Seas*: there can be sudden squalls, fog banks, rafts of kelp, rogue waves, strong currents, or uncharted reefs/shallows.
- If they do nothing, they occasionally hear intermittent strong-coded radio signals from a nearby source. Their shadow breaks off as they cross the sandbar at the mouth of the Whangpoo river in Shanghai.

Scene Aspects

- *Strange Seas*
- *Eavesdroppers*

Arriving in Shanghai

Shanghai is a thin slice of heaven riding on a thick slice of hell.

—local saying

The *Salamander* is a small ship, so it can travel straight up and over the sandbar and up the Whangpoo River, to Shanghai. Shanghai's harbor—the fifth busiest port in the world—is full of junks, sampans, barges, tugs, small coastal steamers, lighters, and ferries. In normal times, there would be American, English, French, and Japanese warships here, but every warship capable of making steam is en route to Yokohama with supplies for earthquake survivors. As the *Salamander* docks, the travelers glimpse the skyscrapers of the Shanghai Bund—one of the most famous skylines east of Suez.

Arriving in the midst of Shanghai's chaos is disorienting at the best of times. Coming from the charnel house of Yokohama, the contrast is dizzying. As the ship docks, customs officials, eager workers, and ranks of sedan chair and rickshaw drivers surround the ship.

Encourage the PCs to describe who they meet and where—a smuggler may be knowledgeable about gangs and pirates, but also reticent to talk about their business with outsiders. If the characters have Contacts, they should get the information below. Use a skill roll to see how easily and quickly they can get it.

- The most powerful local gang is the Green Gang. Their head, “Pockmarked” Huang Jinrong, is also the highest-ranking Chinese detective on the French Concession Police.
- Huang Jinrong’s right-hand man is “Big-Eared” Du Yuesheng. He knows everything there is to know about the underworld, but he’s not easy to approach. (Du is the face of Shanghai’s *City of Vice* aspect. See *Fate Core* page 57)
- The local underworld buzzes with the opportunities available while the European navies are busy in Yokohama. Piracy and smuggling boom already. Demand for bodyguards increases rapidly.
- The Octopus pirates are a successful group, who frequently prey on shipping between Japan and China.
- Lately the Octopus formed ties with the Yakuza in Little Tokyo—surprising, since Chinese and Japanese criminal groups don’t usually cooperate.

The PCs may have other ideas for investigating Dr. Bischoff and the Octopus Pirates. Encourage them to act, and dribble this information out as seems appropriate.

It Must Be a Hoax

When Miss Dewey goes to the wire services office to file her story about the earthquake—scooping almost every other reporter—she finds several local reporters gathered around a desk. Offer a Fate Point for *Anything For the Scoop* if filing the first detailed eyewitness story about Yokohama doesn’t occur to the player. They received a press release (A Warning To All Nations Of War—below), which must be a hoax. As soon as they realize that Dewey is fresh from Yokohama, the reporters toss the release in the trash and pepper her with questions about the earthquake. Some of the attitudes are decidedly confrontational.

Worse, one of the reporters is a familiar face, John Wilson—or another personal nemesis chosen by the PC—who’s aggrieved that Dewey has the scoop on Yokohama and he doesn’t.

Dewey has a decision to make. Does she want to risk other reporters realizing that the press release is a lead to a genuine story and having competition for it? Or does she want to share what she knows, in hopes that more eyes and ears can find Bischoff before he does something drastic?

If she decides to keep things to herself, Dewey can use Deceive vs. Wilson’s Notice to fish the release out of the trash without the other reporters noticing.

If Miss Dewey is not a PC, Lt. Beckwith or any character with good Contacts could get the same information from the embassy. Alternately, Wilson can show up at an inopportune moment to badger them for an interview about Shanghai and let slip the story about the press release.

If no PC has a logical reason to get this information, then the release will appear in one of the smaller papers in the morning.

A WARNING TO ALL NATIONS OF WAR

Too long have the people of the world groaned under burdens of war and the weight of armaments. If ever the world might have beat its swords to ploughshares, settled disputes by appealing to reason and not force, surely it was after being steeped in blood and horror.

Five years have passed since armistice, and only Germany gives up her arms. The League of Nations has failed, not because the nations refused to meet, but because nothing has been done. Instead, the Great Powers enter treaties that, under the guise of limiting warships, grant each freedom to scrap obsolete vessels and replace them with the newest arms. Likewise, the French have made it clear that France will never disarm on land, no matter how prostrate Germany is laid by unpayable debts.

And so, if the nations of the world will not give up their warships, they will be taken from them. All ships in the Yellow Sea should keep to their harbors. Warships at sea in two days' time will be struck down by nature, as nature has struck down Japan. This shall continue until the nations of the world agree to give up their weapons of war and to find common cause for peace.

It is unsigned.

Scene Aspects

- *Not-So-Friendly Rivalry*

Clues

- A little casual asking around (Rapport) establishes that the press release was delivered by messenger.
- The release is printed, not typewritten, and the printer's name and address is on it. For a small bribe (Resources), the printer describes a Japanese man who delivered the copy and paid for it in cash. There were two originals: one in English, delivered to the British and American embassies and to the American and British wire services, and one in French, delivered to the French embassy and the French wire service. The man had a very thin, reedy voice, as if ill or unable to catch his breath.



Ambushed!

Being nosy in Shanghai is unhealthy. As the PCs investigate, their actions tip the Octopus's allies in Little Tokyo that trouble brews. The Octopus first tries discouraging the PCs by setting one of Shanghai's many street gangs on them.

The ambush takes place somewhere in the International Settlement. There is at least one gangster for each PC, two for any PC that seems obviously large and dangerous.

The gangsters, armed with sticks and knives, have Average Fighting (+1).

They don't know who wants the PCs hurt, and they don't really care. They just want to be paid, and break off if they take significant damage. This is their part of the city; they take advantage of the twisty alley terrain. Feel free to break out some improvised weapons—a thrown chamber pot; laborer's shoulder pole loaded with rice and strong peppers; workers' tools; maybe even a rickshaw.

The ambush attracts an audience—William E. Fairbairn, one of the Shanghai Municipal Police Force's finest—who watches to see if the noisy tourists teach the street gang a lesson or vice-versa.

If the PCs find themselves badly over their heads, Fairbairn intervenes before someone gets maimed. If the PCs hold their own, they may Notice Fairbairn quietly observing the fight; he approaches afterwards to find out what they're doing in his city.

Scene Aspects

- *Our City, White Ghost—Not Yours*
- *A Maze of Twisty Little Alleys, All Alike*

Clues

Fairbairn's first advice is that this city is too dangerous for amateur detectives! Assuming the PCs get on his good side anyway, he has the following information:

- “Big-Eared Du has big ears, all right—not just physically, either. There's not much he doesn't hear about. Talking, that's another story. He doesn't give away information—he trades it, or sells it.”
- “I don't know much about the Octopus himself [Fairbairn assumes the Octopus is male]; the pirates don't cause trouble in the city. Not many people have even seen the man—it's not certain whether he's Chinese, Japanese, or something else.”
- “The fellow to talk to is Eric Sykes. He's the Shanghai representative for Colt and Remington, and you can bet they have trouble with pirates. He's in the Union Building on the Bund—I'll have my sergeant call him and tell him where you are staying.”
- If the PCs ask Fairbairn if “Number Seven” means anything to him, he gets a thoughtful look:
- “Now that's a fair question. Number Seven is a mystery. Pops up every few months, then vanishes. Something hush-hush to do with the Japanese Navy, is my guess. Don't know his real name.”
- *If and only if* the PCs have gained his trust, Fairbairn adds: “But I've heard his voice. Very thin, like he's always gasping for air.”

In addition, *Fairbairn knows Du's Aspects*. This is very valuable information—knowing that Du is **Paranoid and Superstitious**, for example, will give the PCs a potential major edge in upcoming scenes—so the PCs should have to earn it.

An Invitation to Tea

Intrigued when the ambush fails, the Octopus invites the Captain and one other to a meeting with the Octopus in Sakura, a Little Toyko nightclub. The invitation comes from a pair of muscular rickshaw drivers who want to take the Captain and one guest for a ride to meet the Octopus. (They are polite, this is an invitation, after all, but make it clear it is for the Captain and *a* guest.) If the Captain is not a PC, then Octopus invites the most appropriate PC instead.

Little Tokyo is part of the International Settlement, but it acts like a transplanted bit of Japan. For the most part, the neighborhood is self-sufficient, with little interaction with other foreigners or the Chinese. The Japanese Consular Police, not the Shanghai Municipal Police, keep the peace.

SPLITTING THE PARTY

If you split the party for this social scene and the next, it gives you a chance to have one PC take the lead, with a second PC to Create Advantages and add support rather than having one PC lead with three others trying to figure out what to do. Alternate the scenes. Start with one scene; and at a particularly tense moment, shift to the other. This gives the PCs who are “off-screen” a chance to think and re-group if needed.

If you keep the PCs together, beef up the Octopus and Du’s supporting minions; otherwise, they’ll be overwhelmed as the PCs pile on Advantages and aspects.

She Is The Octopus!

Sakura is a mix of traditional Japanese architecture and modern decorations, curiously empty at this hour. The sound of jazz drifts down the stairs from a band playing to a virtually empty house. Perhaps the lack of customers has something to do with the large man, a Borneo dayak, standing at the top of a set of ornate stairs, who gestures them down. His western suit clashes with his native *parang* (sword), and fits him poorly. (This is Udatn, the Octopus’s second-in-command.) There are a number of other large men in ill-fitting suits casually watching the PCs approach. They aren’t obviously being menacing, just making sure to dissuade the PCs from any hasty action.

The room has a small bar, a table, and chairs. In addition to lights around the walls, a dim glow comes up from a transparent section of floor over a large fish tank. There’s something large in its depths (a Giant Pacific Octopus). The table sits next to the tank, with two low chairs over it.

By the table stand several young Asian woman, eyes cast down demurely, with pots of tea and trays of sweets. If Dr. Angell or Miss Dewey is here, there are a couple of male servers as well. There’s a certain amount of small talk, with the Octopus using Empathy to figure out the PCs’ aspects.

If Captain McGinnity or a similar male character is present, his server uses a *femme fatale* approach. It’s an act: she’s interested in what he knows, although she wouldn’t mind making an ally of him.

At some point it should dawn on the party that

1. only one of the girls is talking,
2. her questions get nosier, and
3. the guards do not expect someone else to enter.

Instead, they carefully watching the PCs’ actions towards one of the young woman—*she is the Octopus!*

The Gloves Come Off

Time for out-and-out social combat. First, the Octopus wants to know what Feng has involved her in. She's paid suspiciously well to lend Dr. Bischoff her ship and let him hang some sort of machine on it. Second, and equally important, her ship, the *Lao Hu* can't be everywhere. The earthquake distracted the region's navies—ships crowded with refugees and all their surviving wealth are a tempting target. She could use a second ship, and the *Salamander* is a perfect candidate.

The Octopus uses **Provoke** (Good (+3)); Udatn stands menacingly nearby, creating supportive advantages when he can. With a clever use of **Rapport**, the PCs may be able to get some information from her questions. Eventually, she steps to a hidden doorway and disappears, using **Ninja Vanish** (*Fate Core* page 126). The other men leave by the main door, Udatn last. The underground room floods rapidly, and a giant octopus roams these waters!

Udatn's job is to keep the PCs in the room. If he can escape and bar the door behind him, he does. If the PCs try to rush either door, he tries to stop them. He has a Good (+3) **Physique** and can hold his breath an abnormally long time with **Swims Like a Fish**. If the PCs best him, he swims away, into the octopus tank. The Giant Pacific Octopus now loose in the rising waters ignores him. The genuine tea girls may still be in danger in the room; our heroes may have to rescue them as well as themselves.

GIANT PACIFIC OCTOPUS

A North Pacific Giant Pacific Octopus weighs 300 pounds with a 15-foot armspan. It has an effective **Physique** of Good (+3) and **Fighting** of Fair (+2). Real octopi are shy creatures and don't often attack people, but this is a pulp octopus. It tries to engulf or drown the PCs. Give it the **Grappler** stunt (*Fate Core* page 119) and have it alternate between creating advantages using **Physique** to entangle characters and then crushing them with **Fighting**.

Water Combat

The room rapidly fills with water. Most modern guns fire underwater, at least once, but their range is severely limited. The character's ability to swim (**Athletics**) limits **Fighting**.

After a few exchanges, the characters need to make **Physique** rolls—the target number will vary based on how the PC exerts himself—or take physical stress from being unable to breathe. A character might be able to use **Crafts** or **Notice** to Create an Advantage and declare an air pocket.

Scene Aspects

- *Rising Waters*
- *It's a Trap!*

Clues

From the Octopus's questions, the PCs can glean:

- The Octopus met with Dr. Bischoff's servant—really Number Seven—and made a deal with him. She describes him as a Japanese man with a whispery voice.
- The deal doesn't smell right to her. She's being paid ludicrously well for the use of a large ship and its crew, no questions asked. She's worried about Number Seven leaving her to take the blame for whatever it is that he does.
- On the other hand, the Octopus is pretty sure that whatever's in prospect will hurt the local navies, which will be good for pirates, which is one reason she'd like to get ahold of the *Salamander*. (If the PCs let her know about Dr. Bischoff's threat, she smiles and claps her hands.)



Raising the Stakes

Early on, the PCs contacts had told them that Du was the most knowledgeable person about the Shanghai underworld. If you have split the party to meet with the Octopus, this would be a good time for the other PCs to meet with Du. You may be able to play off similarities and differences between how the Octopus and Du deal with nosy Westerners as you interweave the scenes.

How they approach Du is up to them. If Fairbairn told them about Du's aspects, they can use appropriate ones in their Contacts roll to arrange a meeting. If Lt. Beckwith is a PC, then he has the resources to be in a high-stakes gambling game with Du, which will give him an excuse to trade for information.

Du is almost always surrounded by multiple bodyguards—mostly White Russian ex-military—ambitious yes-men, and lovely ladies. For the most part, treat them as scene aspects.

Fate Core does not have a Gambling skill. There are several ways to address this:

- The easiest method—A Gambling skill can be created, then players engage in a contest and the highest roll “wins”.
- A more complicated, but intensive method:

Create a stress track for this gambling scene. Name it something appropriate like “Gambling” or “Resources”. If you want to base this track off of your Resources skill, then for every 2 levels in Resources, create an additional stress box. (Assume you have a minimum of one to start)

For the “ante” you take one stress on this track. Consequences are possible if stress can't be absorbed.

To start, each player rolls one 1dF openly, adding in narration as they see fit. This roll represents the first two cards dealt.

Everyone involved then rolls a social skill roll, called a **strategy** roll: People choosing to bluff roll Deceive, people making aggressive plays roll Intimidation, people searching for “tells” roll Rapport.

Note: Add in narration and explanation where appropriate—are you talking to the other players, scanning their eyes? Or are you nose-down into your cards, waiting to see who flinches first?

After rolling strategy, participants have the option of folding or staying in, at the expense of an additional stress to the track.

Each participant (PC or NPC) rolls their respective remaining 3dF privately (read: so that other players can't see it) Here also, those not gambling (or those who lost) can use skills like Rapport, Deceive, or Notice to create advantages for those participants still gambling.

Note: Players looking to cheat may apply Burglary to create an advantage for themselves or another participant. Compare your result to another participant's Notice to see if you're caught and by whom.

The rolls are then revealed, advantages are tabulated and the best hand wins the round. Those who remained in roll Empathy against the strategy roll result of the round's winner. This result will tell you how well you insulated yourself from taking a loss. The results:

- **Failure:** You take Gambling/Resources stress equal to the difference between your roll and the difficulty.
- **Tie:** You lose the only the ante.
- **Succeed:** Success: You may erase your lowest Gambling/Resources stress mark (typically 1, the ante box)
- **Succeed With Style:** You may erase your highest Gambling/Resources stress mark and gain a boost.

The round's winner clears their entire stress track and gains a boost. Play continues in this fashion until all opponents are taken out or have conceded,

Once the game is complete, the stress track is entirely cleared (not any resulting consequences) and a Resources roll is made. A result of Fair (+2) or lower REDUCES your Resources by one for the rest of the Act, and gives you the temporary aspect "Lighter pockets"—after all you just gambled some of it away.

If the complicated version seems too onerous for you, here's a simple approach to it:

Complete steps a and b as above.

Roll 1dF.

Make an appropriate social skill check to Create an Advantage.

You can bail out now if you want to, or stay in and take another 1 stress.

Roll 3dF. You can also attempt to cheat here (another skill roll, as in 3 above), to gain an advantage

Total the results from steps 2 and 5 (the combined 4dF), plus any advantages picked up from steps 3 and 5. The best hand wins the round.

This continues until there is a single winner.

Consequences

- If the PCs win: Du sticks to the precise letter of the stakes—probably information. He knows about:
 - There's no love lost between the Octopus Pirates and the Green Gang. Fill in any information the PCs have not gotten earlier about the group and its activities.
 - The Octopus has some sort of arrangement with the Japanese Navy, which frequently turns a blind eye to her predations.

- The Octopus has several large freighters under her control which she uses for raiding. (In fact, she has only one, a former German commerce raider equipped that can change its funnels and masts to look different.)
- Dr. Bischoff's manager has been all around town buying expensive vacuum tubes and other electronics.
- Although many western ships headed for Yokohama, several local Japanese ships are still in port with unexpected mechanical problems (If they sailed for Yokohama, they would be in the path of Bischoff's device.)
- If the PCs win big, they might also have a temporary aspect like *Target On My Back*.
- If the PCs lose: they get the aspect *Tapped Out*, plus any complications from borrowed money or resources.
- If the PCs lose but play well: Du offers them some information—for a price. “I have a sealed package,” he says. “It must arrive in Manila, unopened, within the next month. It will be delivered to your ship within the hour. I would be most disappointed if it failed to arrive on time and without its seals intact.” What's in the crate is up to the GM. If the PCs do open it, one option is that it's empty—someone already stole the contents!
- If the PCs get caught cheating: well, the Green Gang doesn't take well to cheaters. Running would be good....

Scene Aspects

- *Flunkies, Flunkies Everywhere*
- *High Stakes*

The Octopus Strikes

After the PCs have met Du and the Octopus, it would be helpful to get one more bit of information from Sykes. If they made a favorable impression on Fairbairn, he's mentioned them to Sykes. If they either didn't meet Fairbairn, or didn't get along with him, Sykes calls them anyway, having heard from his own sources about their inquiries. Sykes is eager to talk to them. He's at the Union building just down the street.

The Union Building is a beautiful new structure. It's a six-story building housing various offices on the Bund at Guangdong Road. A character with high Crafts would recognize that it is a steel framed building, the first in Shanghai, and a relatively new kind of construction in Asia.

The Octopus paid rickshaw drivers and others to watch out for the PCs—they're especially easy to find if they won big at Du's table and have temporary aspects like *Really Flush* or *Target on My Back*. The Octopus knows who Sykes is and that he has been compiling a file on her raiders. When they go into his building, a snitch phones Udatn. Udatn soon arrives with the small Oscillator—the PCs are too nosy, and, having survived the Octopus Tank, too dangerous. It's time to get rid of them.

Sykes is eager to talk. As he lays out reports, charts, maps, and grainy photographs, PCs—starting with the highest Notice roll—hear a rumble, as if a heavy truck passed nearby.

Sykes keeps talking. There's another rumble a few moments later. A few more things, then something breakable falls off a shelf and shatters. The building sways as if in a wind. Sykes runs over to his safe on one wall to get a photograph of the Octopus's ship—perhaps, he says, the only photograph of it in existence. The building sags alarmingly with an ear-splitting screech. Sykes falls, a file cabinet falls on him—he's out cold. The safe remains locked. If they want that photo, it will take a Superb Burglary (+5) roll to open it. This could be a single Superb roll, or a series of lesser rolls as ceiling and walls begin to come down.

Sykes's office is on the 5th floor; the party needs to cross three zones to escape. This is an Athletics challenge. It starts at Fair (+2) difficulty, rising by +1 each exchange until it reaches Superb (+5). Add in interesting obstacles or incidents.

- Falling plaster creates a choking cloud
- Light bulbs shatter and fixtures come crashing down, the remaining wires sparking ominously.
- The sprinkler pipes rupture, water makes footing treacherous.
- The fire escape tears away.
- The door the PCs need is blocked by furniture, warped shut by the sagging building, or just locked.
- The way is blocked by a panicked crowd. Use Rapport or Provoke to quell the panic and get everyone out.

NOTE: The building should *threaten* to collapse at any moment, but not actually do so until moments after the last PC is out.

If any PC thinks to look out the window after the building starts sagging alarmingly, then roll a contest of Notice vs. Udatn's Stealth. Before this point, Udatn is somewhere in the building using the Oscillator. If they win, they spot him one zone away on a rooftop. He's got a heavy backpack. If they lose, they still spot him, but he's at least one zone further away or there is a least one barrier between them. If no one thinks to look, give them another chance when they get to the streets.

SPLITTING THE PARTY...AGAIN

This is another good place to split the party, with a couple of characters chasing Udatn while the others get Sykes out of the building and rescue his photograph from the safe. If you do split the party, make sure you have some interesting incidents or obstacles for both groups to overcome.

The PCs could ignore Udatn, but they probably won't. A parkour chase across the rooftops ensues. Keep it lively—every exchange should have a colorful incident or obstacle, if possible. Possible elements:

- Shifting roof slates
- Jumping across wide streets
- Clouds of angry chickens
- A tangle of clotheslines
- A shocked Westerner interrupted in his or her bath. Bonus if you can invoke one of the PCs' aspects to make the bather someone who knows them.
- The chase descends to street level.
- If the PCs tackle Udatn, their momentum carries them into a ring of people around a snake charmer. The cobra is startled by the commotion and will bite at the first to move. Make Will rolls to remain still, Stealth to slowly get out of its reach.

If Udatn can get more than four zones ahead of the PCs or impose three barriers between himself and his closest pursuer, he gets away. If the PCs get within a zone, Udatn tries to hide the Oscillator so he can move faster. He may just throw it off the roof into a handy pile of trash, drop it in a chimney, or find some clever place to stash it. Use Notice against his Stealth for the PCs to find it during the chase, or Investigate against his Stealth if they make a more thorough search after he's caught or escaped.

If cornered, Udatn has one last trick up his sleeve. The Dayaks make a hallucinogenic dust from the long-spined thornapple, *Datura ferox*. Udatn has a small amount of this dust, which he blows in the face of the strongest attacker. You can handle the poison in a couple of ways:

- If you don't want this to be the focus of the scene, treat this as a Create an Advantage action—Udatn's Fight against the target's Physique. If successful, the target has the aspect *Seeing Strange Things*, which lasts until the end of the scene.

- If you want the PCs to wrestle with the poison, treat it like a character. (See *Fate Core* page 214). Udatn needs to make a successful Fight attack against the target's Physique. If successful, the poison attacks with Average (+1) Deceive—it's a hallucinogen, after all—against the target's Will. It has two Stress, but can only be attacked by Physique (for a tough constitution) or Will (for overcoming its effects) vs. its Physique of 2. The poison always acts last in an exchange. If it causes consequences, they're hallucinations.

Scene Aspects

- *Nice Building You Got Here*
- *Enemies in High Places*

Clues

Sykes knows a great deal about the Octopus Gang. If they haven't met Du, he can give them similar information about its links to the Japanese Navy. He does not know about the Japanese patrol ships with "engine trouble." He also knows more about the Octopus's ship. For example:

- They have a fast freighter, the *Lao Hu*—a poorly scuttled German commerce raider the pirates found near Borneo. The freighter has masts that can be raised and lowered, false funnels, and a tiny seaplane that it can use for scouting.
- Some ships reported seeing naval guns poking from hidden gunports. The gun on the port side has fired a shot across a ship's bow, but never the one on the starboard—it may be a dummy.
- Their main base is Yinger Island, a flea-speck in the South China Sea not too far away. Sykes can give coordinates and confirm that the *Lao Hu* was recently spotted there.

Consequences

Whether or not Sykes survives, the PCs should have learned from him that the Octopus's ship has at least one naval gun on its port side. If they stay to the starboard side they may be safe. If Sykes doesn't make it, the PCs may not want to stick around for official questions. They don't have much time left on Bischoff's ultimatum.

If they stayed to open the safe and recover the photograph of the *Lao Hu* they can use it to plan their approach and boarding. This can provide a *Prepared* aspect in the boarding scene.

Ideally, the PCs should at least end up in possession of the small Oscillator—a bit worse for the wear. With Lore and Crafts, they can start to figure out how it works and what a much larger device might be capable of.

ACT III: THE EYE OF THE STORM

As soon as the *Salamander* clears the Whangpoo's sand bar, heavy waves buffet it. Oddly, there is not a cloud in the sky. Freighters going to and from Shanghai crowd the sea as usual. A number of them head towards Yokohama riding low with holds full of supplies. Any of these could be the *Lao Hu*. The seas are not dangerous yet, but the waves get worse as the *Salamander* sails towards the Octopus's island. At first the waves are strongest dead ahead, but they start to change bearing towards the east, as if the source is moving.

While the *Salamander* is near the island, a tiny seaplane circles it a few times (well out of rifle range), then flies off in the same direction as the waves' origin. This is the *Lao Hu*'s seaplane. If Udatn survived, he's on board. If not, then it could carry Wilson, or just more pirates.

The waves start slowing the *Salamander*'s progress. Captain McGinnity will need to make Drive rolls against an increasing difficulty (start with +0, then increase by +1 per roll) to stay on course. This is, in effect, a contest—the *Salamander* will need 4 successes to catch up to the *Lao Hu*. Failure could mean delays in catching up and damage to the other ships in the area (see below), or damage to the *Salamander* itself as the seas grow stronger.

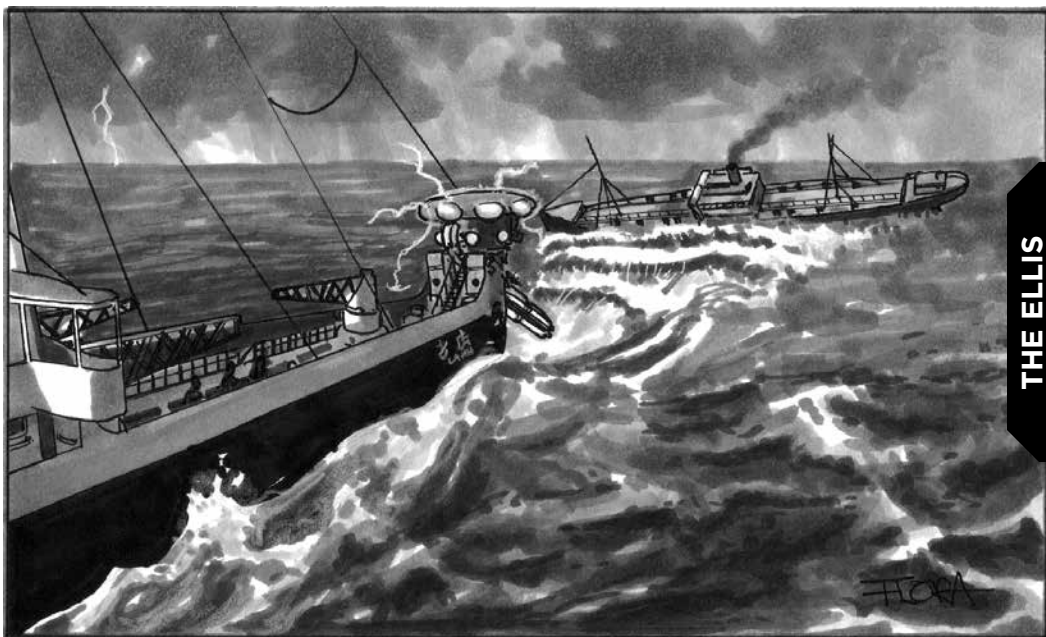
With Weird Science and a Fate Point to borrow the Mad Science Stunt (page 119), Dr. Angell could use her Crafts to jury-rig the small Oscillator to create the scene aspect *Perfect Counterwave*. Roll her Crafts against the difficulty McGinnity last faced, +1 (That is, if she tries it immediately, the difficulty is only +1; if she waits until the *Salamander* is being buffeted by +3 waves, her difficulty would be +4). As best she can tell, the waves are being generated in a pulse pointed in a different direction—this is just the backwash.

On the radio, the Captain begins to hear distress calls from ships to the east. One has a familiar fist—the *Huron* has trouble as it forges through the strange seas towards the *Texas*. The battleship reports serious damage from a series of waves threatening to capsize it.

A voice transmitting strongly on this frequency interrupts the distress signals. (This is unusual for ship-to-ship traffic; almost all radio messages sent at sea are in Morse, which is more reliable over longer distances, in worse conditions. Bischoff is a Mad Scientist, tho, and never bothered to learn Morse.)

READ THIS TO THE PLAYERS:

"You didn't listen. You mocked my warning. I have witnessed this world consume itself, its sons, my brothers, with hatred. It is bent on self-destruction. I watched from paradise and did nothing. I've failed my responsibility. This is the world's last chance to change its course. I will show all of the warships that they are as nothing to the power of nature. The nations of the world will disarm or I will disarm them myself."



Characters can use Empathy to try to glean Bischoff's aspects from his rant. Rapport would be tough; he's not listening to the radio.

By steering right into the worst of the waves, the *Salamander* can try to reach the Octopus's boat, board, and stop Dr. Bischoff's oscillator before it can sink the *Texas*, *Huron*, and all the other warships and merchant ships headed towards Yokohama.

Intermittent jamming from the Japanese Navy makes it hard for the *Salamander* to enlist others in searching for the *Lao Hu*. If the PCs think to ask for help from other vessels or even airplanes, they can find the ship faster—but only if they've gotten Sykes's photograph.

Boarding the *Lao Hu*

Once the *Salamander* reaches the *Lao Hu*, it can come alongside easily. If the PCs interviewed Sykes, they know to keep starboard to avoid the port gun. If they retrieved the photograph from Sykes's safe, they can study it for best ways to attack and use the **Prepared** scene aspect when they try to board.

The *Lao Hu* must keep her bow pointed towards the American ships in order to maintain the large Oscillator's attack. If the PCs realize this, they could try to ram or push the *Lao Hu* off course. The *Salamander* is the smaller ship. Treat this as a Contest of Drive, with the *Lao Hu*'s helmsman having an effective Drive of Fair (+2 (+1 skill and +1 for the *Lao Hu*'s greater mass)). The Octopus crew attack the *Salamander*'s and the characters with fire hoses, rifles, and other weapons. The PCs need 3 successes to break up the *Lao Hu*'s attack.

Ending the adventure by having the *Salamander* ram and sink the *Lao Hu* is anticlimactic. Unless your players enjoy ship-vs.-ship battles, encourage them to board. For example:

- Sykes was wrong about the *Lao Hu*'s guns being just a bluff—someone needs to get over there to silence that artillery before they sink the *Salamander*.
- A sharp-eyed PC Notices Wilson being hustled below deck by menacing Asian men. He managed to track down Bischoff in Shanghai, tried to get the story, and got himself taken aboard the *Lao Hu* as prisoner.

The Oscillator

The Oscillator itself is a grey metallic ball about 6' around, lashed to the *Lao Hu*'s bow just under the surface, with thick cables running up to the deck—some for power, some to hold it in place. If cut loose, it floats with only a bit of itself above the surface. It will be hard to Notice the Oscillator while attached or afloat, but easier to Notice the cables attached to it.

Boarding

Boarding takes one or more Athletics rolls to swing across, probably using the *Salamander*'s cargo crane to get people far enough over the water. The *Lao Hu*'s crew are mostly nameless minions (Fight Average (+1), Shoot Average (+1)), armed with knives, boat hooks, fire hoses, and some rifles. Most are Chinese pirates, but there are some Yakuza among them. They're a rough bunch, but more used to taking on ill-armed merchant ships than fighting a determined foe.

Once aboard, the PCs have up to three significant opponents—Dr. Bischoff himself, Udatn (if he's alive), and Number Seven. The details of the fight will vary depending on your PCs' decisions and preparations, and what clues and themes you want to pay off in this scene.

SPLITTING THE PARTY AGAIN...YET AGAIN

You guessed it. Having different characters facing different threats, and switching between them, is a good way to build suspense here.

Dr. Bischoff is not hard to find. He barricaded himself in the radio room with the controls for the large Oscillator. There he can rant while adjusting his device. Vacuum tubes, wires, gauges, and other breakable equipment cramp the room. Bischoff has no combat skills and is willing to be a martyr for his cause. Once they reach him, the PCs have to force open the door, smoke him out, find and destroy his control cables, or perhaps try to make him see reason with a social combat.

Udatn leads the PCs on a merry chase around the decks, sniping at them from range and cover, trying to distract them from Bischoff and buy time for the plan to succeed. From Udatn's point of view, the more warships Bischoff damages or destroys, the easier the pirates' pickings will be. Furthermore, Beckwith or a similar character would command a handsome ransom. If he has a choice between killing and capturing, he tries for the capture.

Number Seven's goals are to: first destroy as much as he can of the European navies, and failing that, cut the large Oscillator loose and take it aboard the shadowing Japanese submarine. Or failing even that, make sure the Oscillator and Bischoff are destroyed so that the Oscillator can't be used against Japan. He's a good liar, but only a Fair shot. He snipes at the PCs from range, making it hard for them to identify him, or tries to get the drop on them using his Yakuza minions (Fight Average (+1), Shoot Average (+2), armed with pistols or rifles and knives). If confronted, he tries to grovel his way out—"I was merely doing as Dr. Bischoff instructed me!"—and waits for a chance to either sneak off or stab an isolated PC in back. If you can, keep him alive for the finale.

The *Lao Hu's* Hold

As a commerce raider, the *Lao Hu* has a large, secure hold for prisoners. The Octopus pirates use it for crew and passengers captured from the ships they raid. They leave valuable prisoners intact, unless their families are reluctant to pay—then a thumb or an ear speeds payment nicely. Prisoners of no particular value may be tortured by the crew before being tossed to the sharks.

During the boarding action, at least one PC hears frantic muffled cries from below and someone banging on the pipes. (Roll Notice, or pick whoever is least involved in other conflicts.) The prisoner is Wilson, captured when he got too close to finding Dr. Bischoff.

The hold is locked (Burglary Good (+3) to pick it or Physique Good (+3) to break it open). *And* the prisoner is chained. (Burglary, Crafts or Physique at Fair (+2) could be used to free the chains from the ceiling). *And* a couple of pirates try to sneak up on any would-be rescuer while she's trying to free the prisoner, leading to a firefight with the helpless NPC trapped in the midst.

Scene Aspects

- *Smells of Blood and Sweat and Misery*
- *Hot, Dark, Damp*
- *Chains Sway From the Ceiling*



Torpedoes In the Water!

Even if our heroes take out Dr. Bischoff, either by physical or social combat, that's not the end of the story. Bischoff had backers, specifically Number Seven.

- “You disappoint me, Dr. Bischoff”: If the PCs have taken out Bischoff by convincing him that he has been manipulated by the Japanese militarists, Number Seven is not going to give up so easily. If he hasn't been killed, he drops his guise as cringing lackey, draws a pistol, points it at Bischoff, and says in clear English—“You disappoint me, Dr. Bischoff. You have no choice but to continue.” Several of the best-trained Yakuza with pistols (Shoot Fair (+2) or even Good (+3)) enter to try to stop the PCs.
- Torpedo!: One of the *Salamander's* crewmen yells “Torpedo!” From somewhere nearby a submarine fired a torpedo at the *Salamander*. If any of the PCs are still aboard, they can try to evade using Drive. The crew of the Japanese Navy's sub wants to make sure the *Salamander* does not get away with the Oscillator, and to get rid of any inconvenient witnesses. If there are no PCs aboard, the torpedo just misses as the *Salamander's* crew spin the wheel wildly and try to get out of the way. Can the PCs get the *Lao Hu* turned to put the submarine on its port side where they can sink it with the ship's naval gun? Or perhaps get the starboard gun working swiftly?
- It Belongs to the Emperor!: If the Yakuza are losing the fight, Number Seven disappears. He dives into the water, intending to cut the Oscillator free and take it to the submarine. The PCs will have a tough time stopping him without going into the water themselves.

Oscillations!

This adventure could end in many ways. The ending should build out of things you have foreshadowed earlier in the game. These are a couple of ideas.

- Being near the Oscillator is dangerous—that's what made Ellis's bones so brittle and helped drive Zembsch catatonic. If the device is activated while Number Seven is trying to cut it free, the vibrations will kill him (and make a Superb attack on anyone else in the water). The vibrations are also not good for the submerged Japanese submarine, forcing it to withdraw.
- Activation tears the device free from the remaining lines securing it to the ship. It is lost forever at sea.
- Bischoff recovers from being taken out in the confrontation scene long enough to lunge at the Oscillator's controls. Bischoff plunges a handy fire ax into the controls—fat sparks arc into him. It overloads. The ship begins to vibrate wildly. The characters have moments to flee to the *Salamander*. Again, anyone in the water is in danger and the Japanese submarine must withdraw.
- Number Seven succeeds in cutting loose the oscillator, but sees he can't possibly get it to the sub. He opens its flotation chambers and lets it sink. Better that no one have it than the Emperor's enemies! Of course, once it gets deep enough, the pressure causes it to malfunction or even explode. On the other hand, the submarine might try to snag it on the way down ...

Epilogue

As the dust settles, and Admirals Shipman and Anderson start looking for answers, the news reports the loss of half of Destroyer Squadron Eleven, near Santa Barbara, CA. Seven destroyers ran aground off Honda Point; two others in the squadron were damaged. Twenty-three sailors died. Some blame the disaster on navigational errors. Others cite strange seas and currents that began a day after the Yokohama Earthquake and are now slowly subsiding.

Curiously enough, among the survivors is a civilian: Eugene Dooman, a State Department expert on Japan, of all things.

Was this a natural effect of the Earthquake? A side effect of Dr. Bischoff's device? The result of the Oscillator's destruction? Or perhaps his was not the only Oscillator...

MAJOR NPCS

PCs start on page 120.

Reiner Bischoff

Dr. Bischoff was the eldest son of a German family who owned a plantation in the Caroline islands. He went to America to study, and eventually became a senior researcher in Nikola Tesla's New York laboratory. He became concerned about the implications of Tesla's work and had an excuse to depart when his aging parents could no longer maintain the plantation.

When World War I broke out, his three younger brothers went to Germany to serve. All were killed in various battles. Bischoff became an ardent pacifist. His hopes that the world had learned its lesson were raised by the League of Nations, but then dashed by each country's refusal to disarm.

Dr. Bischoff is a persuasive orator—he believes entirely in his cause. It's self-evident to him that he dismisses contrary views as ignorance or malice, and has never considered whether his allies have ulterior motives.

REINER BISCHOFF

High Concept: *Retired Mad Scientist and Ruthless Idealist*

Trouble: *The Risk is Acceptable*

Other: *Utopia Justifies the Means ... Doesn't It?; Survivor's Guilt; Naive*

Skills

Athletics: Average (+1)	Contacts: Average (+1)
Crafts: Fair (+2)	Drive: Average (+1)
Empathy: Average (+1)	Lore: Great (+4)
Notice: Fair (+2)	Rapport: Good (+3)
Resources: Fair (+2)	Will: Good (+3)

Stunts **Demagogue:** +2 Rapport for inspiring speeches (*Fate Core* page 121)

Weird Science (Lore): Understand unrealistically-advance science

Mad Science (Lore): Understand impossible science

Extras **The Oscillator** (an extra; see *Fate Core* page 270)

Aspect: varies

You can spend a fate point to:

- Destroy a metal or metal framed structure up to the size of a building over the course of several minutes.
- Create large waves which can capsize a ship at very long range over the course of an hour
- Create a series of waves which can travel great distances over the course of hours or days and cause significant damage to anything in their path

Stress

Physical:

Mental:

Ito Takagi (Number Seven)

Takagi is a leader in Japan's *Genyōsha* (Black Ocean Society), a group of radical militarists. He was an observer in Europe during the Great War and was badly injured in a gas attack. Deemed unsuitable for field work, he was pastured off to Japan's new mandate, where he could consider its military potential while recovering in the fresh air and mild climate. There, he came upon Dr. Bischoff and his marvelous mining Oscillator, and a chance to prove to his superiors that he was prematurely retired.

He got himself a job as the chief administrator for Dr. Bischoff's planation, a role that lets him travel widely to buy and sell goods, and which has made him an all-too-sympathetic ear as Dr. Bischoff tried to cope with his brothers' deaths and his increasing frustration with the West's refusal to disarm as it promised. He's become interested in archaic weapons—the cupric obsidian knives used by a long-suppressed Kali cult from India; the native poisons of Borneo; and a Tausug *Barong* from the Philippines.

ITO TAKAGI (NUMBER SEVEN)

High Concept: *Spider in the Center of the Web*

Trouble: *Prematurely Put out to Pasture*

Other: *Fanatically Loyal to the Emperor; Weak Lungs/
Distinctively Reedy Voice; Weird Weapons Collector*

Skills

Athletics: Fair (+2)	Contacts: Average (+1)
Deceive: Good (+3)	Fight: Average (+1)
Investigate: Great (+4)	Notice: Average (+1)
Provoke: Average (+1)	Rapport: Good (+3)
Shoot: Fair (+2)	Will: Fair (+2)

Stunts **Mind Games (Deceive):** substitute Deceive for Provoke when making mental attacks that involve clever lies
Torturer (Provoke): +2 bonus to skill when inflicting pain on a helpless foe.

Stress Physical: Mental:

Udatn

Udatn is a Dayak, one of the indigenous inhabitants of Borneo. Having won fame for his fighting skills, he joined the Octopus and her pirates. He's now her trusted second, often standing beside her silently with a hand casually on his traditional *parang* (sword). He also wears a modern revolver, which he uses if he has to.

Dayaks were once headhunters, although the tradition is on the wane. Udatn keeps a few heads in his cabin to intimidate his fellow pirates. He respects his traditions and his faith, and fights honorably against an honorable foe.

UDATN

High Concept: *Octopus's Right-Tentacle Man*

Trouble: *The Old Ways Were Better*

Other: *Smarter Than He Looks*

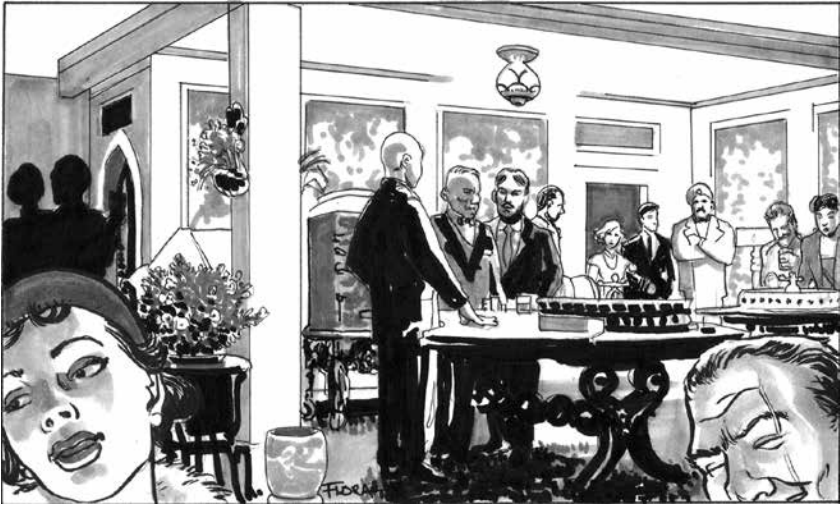
Skills

Athletics: Great (+4)	Deceive: Average (+1)
Fight: Good (+3)	Lore: Average (+1)
Notice: Fair (+2)	Physique: Good (+3)
Shoot: Fair (+2)	Stealth: Fair (+2)
Will: Average (+1)	

Stunts **Swims Like a Fish (Athletics):** +2 bonus to Athletics or Physique rolls for swimming or holding your breath

Tough as Nails (Physique): Reduce severity of consequence once per session (*Fate Core* page 119)

Stress Physical: Mental:



New Stunts

Athletics

Swims Like a Fish: Bonus (+2) to any Athletics or Physique rolls involving swimming or holding your breath.

Empathy

Razor Tongue: You are a master of polite insults. If you have made a successful Empathy roll against a target, you can use Rapport as Provoke during the same scene.

Intimidation

Fatal Attraction: You're dangerous, all right ... but sexily so. Against anyone who finds you attractive, you may use Intimidation, instead of Rapport, even in non-confrontational (or not obviously confrontational) situations.

Lore

Weird Science: You may use Lore to analyze or create scientific discoveries that are plausible in light of modern science, even if they're anachronistic to the setting.

Mad Science (requires Weird Science): You may use Lore to analyze or create scientific discoveries that are scientifically impossible, but fit within the genre.

FOR THE GM: SAMPLE CHARACTERS

Here are four sample characters. Some Aspects, Stunts, and Average skills have been left open for players to personalize them. If you want to use your own characters and none of them has a ship, you may want to modify Captain McGinnity into an NPC.

Dr. Ashiko Angell

A daredevil archaeologist/treasure hunter in the mold of Roy Chapman Andrews, Annie Montague Alexander, and certain fedora-wearing exemplars. Daughter of a western scientist father and an Oriental mother, with a foot in both worlds.

DR. ASHIKO ANGELL

High Concept:	<i>Globe-Trotting in the Name of Science!</i>	
Trouble:	<i>“Conventional” Is Another Word for “Stupid”</i>	
Other Aspects:	<i>Isn't It Obvious How It Works?, Mine Goes to Eleven!</i>	
Skills	Contacts: Average (+1)	Crafts: Great (+4)
	Drive: Good (+3)	Investigation: Fair (+2)
	Lore: Fair (+2)	Shooting: Good (+3)
	Will: Fair (+2)	
Stunts	Better than New! : when repairing machinery, can give an additional situational aspect to an object after succeeding with style.	
	Pedal to the Metal (Drive) : when racing, tie counts as a success; spend a fate point to turn an actual success into success with style (<i>Fate Core</i> page 107)	
	Weird Science (Lore) : Understand unrealistically-advanced science	
Stress	Physical: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Mental: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Frederick Lewis Beckwith

Lt. Beckwith is broadly modeled on Ellis M. Zacharais, the Navy Intelligence officer in Yokohama who found Zembsch in his cabin on his return from Peleiu and who later became the head of the Far Eastern Division of the Office of Naval Intelligence. Beckwith is from a wealthy family, with a proud history of naval service. He often pretends that he is a playboy who got his commission due to his connections and wealth, and who lacks any common sense.

FREDERICK LEWIS BECKWITH

High Concept:	<i>Playboy-Spy, My Dear Fellow</i>	
Trouble:	<i>“What Could Possibly Go Wrong?”</i>	
Other Aspects:	<i>Family Connections; Of Course There’s a Reasonable Explanation!</i>	
Skills	Burglary: Good (+3) Empathy: Fair (+2) Resources: Good (+3) Will: Fair (+2)	Deceit: Great (+4) Notice: Fair (+2) Stealth: Average (+1)
Stunts	Mind Games (Deceive): substitute Deceive for Provoke when making mental attacks that involve clever lies	
	Money Talks (Resources): substitute Resources for Rapport	
Stress	Physical: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Mental: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Rebecca Dewey

Miss Dewey is modeled loosely on three 1930s female journalists: Helen Foster Snow, an American journalist who worked in China; Andrée Viollis, a French journalist who wrote about French Indochina; and Sigrid Schultz, the Chicago *Tribune's* bureau chief for Central Europe. Dewey is a freelancer, mostly selling material to American newspapers and magazines. Her stories about crime, corruption, and colonialism have earned her a number of enemies. She's frequently watched by colonial police forces suspicious of the limelight she gives to nationalist and communist speakers.

REBECCA DEWEY

High Concept: *Crusading Journalist With a Nose For Trouble*

Trouble: *Anything For the Scoop*

Other Aspects: *I'll Tell You If You Tell Me; Dogged Investigator*

Skills

Athletics: Average (+1)	Deceit: Fair (+2)
Empathy: Good (+3)	Fighting: Average (+1)
Notice: Great (+4)	Rapport: Good (+3)
Stealth: Fair (+2)	Will: Fair (+2)

Stunts **Keen Nose (Notice):** +2 to Notice rolls to detect smells

Cut to the Quick (Empathy): if you have made a successful Empathy roll against a target, substitute Rapport for Provoke

Stress Physical: Mental:

Typhoon Mike McGinnity

Captain McGinnity is modeled on Louis L'Amour's two-fisted Captain Jim Mayo, but Han Solo or Malcolm Reynolds are equally good inspirations. As captain and owner of his own ship, he has the freedom to wander the region. The ship and crew's expenses provide motive for sometimes taking cargo or passengers of dubious provenance. In his rounds, Captain McGinnity may find himself in contact with corrupt officials, smugglers, opium dealers, rival captains, pirates, sunken treasure, mutineers, and spies.

TYPHOON MIKE MCGINNITY

High Concept: *Two-Fisted Skipper*

Trouble: *Never, Never, Never Back Down*

Other Aspects: *Tough Hide, Soft Heart, Been There*

Skills

Athletics: Fair (+2)	Contacts: Good (+3)
Crafts: Fair (+2)	Drive: Good (+3)
Fighting: Great (+4)	Notice: Average (+1)
Physique: Fair (+2)	

Stress Physical: Mental:

Stunts Heavy Hitter (Fighting): success gives a full scene aspect (with free invocation) instead of just a boost

Extras SS *Salamander* (see *Fate Core* page 286)

Aspects: *Doesn't Look Like Much, But Has It Where It Counts; Never Thought I'd be Smuggling That*

The *Salamander* is a small tramp steamer. Her captain has access to her aspects and can spend fate points to overcome an obstacle, or to hide cargo from customs, pirates, and other snoops. He might take a compel when someone underestimates his ship or must be persuaded to trust it, or when he realizes he's smuggling something unexpected.

MYSTERY ADVENTURES IN FATE

A mystery adventure assumes that there is a solution—one that the investigators can figure out by collecting clues and reasoning through them. It's harder in a mystery to improvise a scene or a clue, because whatever you improvise, it has to fit together logically at the end. To make your life as GM easier, this adventure provides a spine and a trail of clues. You don't have to follow it and you probably won't. Adapt to your players' ideas. If the PCs put together the clues you provided in a way that makes logical sense, is interesting and exciting, but is completely different from what you thought was going on, by all means feel to adopt their solution and pretend that that was your intent all along.

That said, mysteries reward planning and preparation as well as flexibility. Here are a few principles to keep in mind.

The Bread Crumb Trail

In designing and playing mystery adventures, I prefer “planned spontaneity”. I have a good idea for the first scene that sets up the problem, and the end confrontation, and at least some ideas for how the PCs could get from one to the other. The characters should have at least one clear idea at the end of each scene about a person, place, or thing they can follow up on.

I like a reasonably detailed outline with scenes, NPCs, snippets of possible dialog, physical clues, encounters, scene aspects, and incidents that might occur during a scene. This gives me a skeleton to fall back on if the players take some time to warm up, or seem to be at a loss about what to do next. It also helps me think about pacing, breaking up exposition and social scenes with action sequences, and ways to make all those scenes interesting. Importantly, the skeleton does not indicate how the adventure must go—only how the adventure *may* go.

Organize Your Information

In addition to the adventure skeleton, I usually have a bullet point list of clues the PCs would need to solve the mystery. If the PCs decide to do something unanticipated, which they generally do, I know that they should still learn certain information even if it's from a NPC they declared on the fly. It's vital that the PCs get the information they need to move on to another scene. It's not vital that they get it in a particular order, or from a particular source.

Equally, if there's some surprise that you want to spring on the PCs, you should make sure to hold that information back until it fits in. It won't be very much fun if the PCs find Number Seven and beat the truth out of him right in the first scene, for example—so he's not there, and neither is anyone else with his level of knowledge.

Finally, I usually have ideas what the opposition is doing and why. That's always helpful when I need to improvise—either because the PCs thought of something I missed, they miss something I'd thought they'd find, or tossed a spanner into the NPCs' path to provoke a response.

Keep It Simple

Things that seem obvious to you as you design the mystery or improvise on the fly may be utterly baffling to the players, particularly if your adventure spans more than one session with significant time between games. It's okay, even desirable, to have more than one source give PCs the same basic information in slightly different ways. Players are never unhappy about having an obvious thread—or, better yet, several obvious threads—to pull on. Sitting around waiting for them to twig to your subtle yet brilliantly-foreshadowed devious twist, on the other hand, is a recipe for disaster. Don't overdo the repetition, though; if the PCs track down several sources, each should have something new to offer in addition to reinforcing core information.

If the players are thrashing about, undecided about what to do next, then give them a push to a way to get more information. In the worst case, follow Raymond Chandler's advice and have a couple of nameless thugs try to maim or kill the PCs—they can provide a clue when they attack (“The Octopus says stay away from Shanghai!”), when they are captured (“You can't make me talk, the Octopus's tentacle will find me anywhere!”) or on their bodies (“Hey, this guy's got a tentacle tattooed on his arm.”)

Failure is Boring

Completely failing to get key clues because you didn't make a roll is boring, which is also against the spirit of Fate. The emphasis here is not in finding clues, but in interpreting them. Some clues should be things that don't require a roll. If a character has the skill, give them the information. Roll dice when failure is interesting—usually because it comes with a complication or a risk. The opening scene in the Yokohama Specie Bank uses Notice, Investigate, and Crafts in a dangerous location. To the extent that you require skill checks, failure might mean that a key document is partly buried and the character must move an unstable pile of debris, or crawl under a precariously balanced bit of rubble to get it. Or a bulky clue might be next to a distracting pile of gold from a shattered safe deposit box, forcing a choice between taking the clue, and picking up some temporary resources.

Exposition is Boring, Too

From a screenwriters' book called *Save the Cat!*, I take the idea that each scene has some tension or an underlying conflict. It might be a conflict within a Contacts source weighing the favor the PC is asking in a query against the risk if he is revealed as a snitch, or Superintendent Webb listening to the PCs' Rapport, trying to decide how far to trust them, and whether he has any choice. Expository data dumps are boring! Make them lively and entertaining. The players are more likely to remember information if they feel they had to work to get it.



Building the Mystery

The villain's Aspects should be a key part of the crime—a murder committed by a *Cold Blooded Professional* should look different from one by the *Sworn Blood Foe of the Montagues*. Your villain's aspects might reflect the motive for the crime or the means by which it was done.

Likewise, the crime can suggest the villain's skills and/or stunts. A victim shot precisely in the center of his forehead with a high-powered rifle from a neighboring building suggests one set of skills, and a different set than if the poor blighter was poisoned, strangled, or stabbed. Skills can suggest both means and opportunity, particularly if the killer caught the victim unawares, or killed him in a locked room or high-rise apartment, and then vanished.

Forensics of the 1920s

The Ellis Affair is not a procedural mystery, but I did keep in mind during design the forensic capacities and police investigation methods of the time. If you did want to do *CSI:Gangs of Chicago*, here's a bit about real-world forensics.

The 1920s and 1930s are an era where an investigator can still depend more on his "little grey cells" instead of puttering about collecting bits of hair, blood, and fingerprints. That's not to say that there are no forensics, but the field is crude by modern standards. It's best at comparing a bit of crime scene evidence to a known sample—a latent fingerprint to a specific suspect, or that bit of reddish mould on Dr. Watson's instep to a sample of the soil near the Wigmore Street Post Office. It can tell you that the evidence is, to use a modern phrase, consistent with a known example, but the databases and indexes needed to try to link crime scene evidence to a suspect to the practical exclusion of all others either don't yet exist or are the province of large police forces like the Metropolitan Police (Scotland Yard), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Sûreté.

The practical effect is that an investigator's player can portray a competent detective with the knowledge he or she has likely gleaned from high school science and

TV crime dramas. You shouldn't have to bog an adventure down in CSI-jargon or have a PC plausibly identify your clever bad guy with a good Investigation roll that matches saliva on a discarded cigarette to a DNA database with near perfect precision. Forensic evidence will help narrow the suspects, but it won't solve the mystery.

If you want to use Investigation for pulp-CSI, or if your characters are trying to cover up a crime from official attention by a large Westernized police force, the 1920s/30s state of the art would let a detective:

- Determine the four basic blood types (A, B, AB, O) from a wet or dry blood stain, or wet stains of some other body fluids (usually requires a chemical laboratory, possibly including a spectrometer).
- Compare fingerprints from a crime scene to a known suspect. Comparisons to a large police index file could take days or weeks.
- Test for some poisons and toxins.
- Compare bullets and cartridge casings to each other (to figure out how many firearms are involved) or to a seized firearm (requires a comparison microscope, a bulky device generally found in a laboratory).
- Test the hands of a dead body or a cooperative suspect arrested shortly after a shooting for gunshot residue by applying a thin layer of paraffin, letting it set, removing it, and testing the cast with a re-agent (requires chemicals, will only tell you if the hands were exposed to nitrates, which can include many other things besides gunshot residues).
- Compare shoe prints, lip prints, tire marks, or other impressions to a known sample. For shoe prints or tire track, one could show a photograph or impression mold to a manufacturer or sales person who could probably identify the make and perhaps model or size of item that made the impression.
- Compare fibers, paint chips, and hairs found at a crime scene to known samples (generally requires a comparison microscope in a laboratory)
- Roughly estimate of time of death (perhaps to within a range of hours) based on body temperature, rigor mortis (post-death stiffening of the muscles) and livor mortis (post-death pooling of the blood in the lowermost tissues).
- Tell whether a body was moved after death when the livor mortis is inconsistent with the position the body is found in.
- Determine some non-obvious causes of death in an autopsy.
- Use an early version of a polygraph.

Many of these methods require a laboratory, which may mean the PC must borrow facilities and equipment from a local university or police department, raising questions about what the character is investigating, or requiring bribes or traded favors that may complicate things later.

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EXIT



NO EXIT

INTRODUCTION

FROM THE DESK OF MANAGEMENT:

Dear Tenant,

It is with cheer that we welcome you to the Eastmarch Living Complex, which our tenants colorfully call the Complex. As our newest tenant, we'd like to offer our support during your resettlement process. Should you have any trouble acclimating to your new surroundings, please rest assured that a member of Management is always on hand to help make your transition a successful one.

First, a brief overview of your new accommodations. The Complex is a housing community which encompasses several individual apartment buildings which are called by their individual house names. You have found your new home in our newest six-story development, Wesley House, built in our most recent expansion. Wesley House features ten apartments per floor, state of the art elevators, private mailboxes, and laundry and garbage disposal facilities. Each building features a Daily Java shop, which sells refreshments and toiletries. Should you wish, Management may provide additional supplies through our Speed-E Services delivery.

Simply dial 0 on your house phone or visit our kiosk in the lobby, and whatever you require will be delivered to your apartment same-day. We in Management are here to make sure all of your needs are met.

A brief review of the ground rules of the Complex is in order. Tenants are asked to remember that while they are residents of their individual apartments, they are guests within the rest of the Complex's facilities and must respect the public space at all times. No destruction of public property will be tolerated. Trespassing into other sections of the Complex is strictly prohibited. We ask that all residents respect the peace of their neighbors and refrain from loud music, elevated voices, and demonstrative external apartment decoration. For the peace and comfort of others, no public gatherings may occur in the house courtyard or in Complex Square outside your individual building. After dark, no loitering is tolerated in public spaces whatsoever. Should you wish to bring guests into the Complex, their names must be passed to Management by dialing 0 or accessing our lobby kiosk. Guests must then pass through Complex security at the gate and sign in with security before entering.

NO EXIT

Finally, all emergency exits are to be used only in the event of a real emergency. These are not exits to be used for your convenience. We ask our tenants to keep that in mind going forward.

These precautions and rules are for your comfort, to preserve the serenity of the Complex and its way of life.

Should there be any difficulties or questions, please direct your needs to our knowledgeable Management staff. Our office is in the lobby in room L10 by the rear exit. Remember—we are here for you.

Once again, welcome home.

Yours,
The Management

MANAGEMENT LIES. THERE IS NO EXIT.

FOREWORD

Let me tell you about your living room. It's cozy, isn't it? The walls are just the way you like them—not too bare, with just the right amount of personality. Your sofa has that spot that feels best, it has that cushion that eases your lower back pain after a long day of work. But you haven't worked in some time, so long you can't remember. Now you just stay at home, in the Complex, and think.

What do you think about? Everything. You have your past to consider, review and rehash. You may make a cup of something and sit and think about the past, about the days you could have changed things and the times that slipped through your fingers. You wonder if there was ever a time when you made a wrong choice that could've changed everything. Inevitably though, thoughts flit away and you're there. On your couch, or perhaps in your kitchen by the cupboard. Or you're in the bathroom, staring at the mirror, and wondering how it is exactly you came to the Complex. Most days, you can't remember.

The Complex apartments are standard but yours is your own. If you look out your window onto the Acheron River, you know the view is the same as all the other apartments. It's all modern and clean and just a little drab, but it's a good place to live. And you're happy here, aren't you?

Well, aren't you?

No Exit is a scenario and setting written for *Fate Core*. At its heart, it's a game about people and the demons they bring with them when they move to a new place. Players take on the role of a tenant in the Complex, a modern living development where folks are meant to live in peace and solitude. But once they check in, they discover they can't check out so easily—if at all.

This scenario gives you the tools to create a psychological sandbox of containment, tension and fear. You'll find ways to adjust *Fate Core* character creation to create memories that are both tools of self-discovery and weapons against their environment. You'll find tips about how to invoke psychological horror in your game and examples of the many flavors of horror out there. A word of caution: some topics may be too intense for some players, so to steal from television—***Player discretion advised.***

So what is the Complex? It's a simple place to live, to rest your bones after a long, hard road. Here you can be alone with your memories, your regrets, and your past choices. You have time to explore those things in your apartment, all alone. Or, you can go bother your fellow tenants and see what they've brought with them to the Complex. They say hell can be other people—but when the alternative is this purgatory, maybe you'd prefer a little hell.

Influences and Acknowledgements

This scenario was inspired by a lot of elements, from the television shows *Lost* and *666 Park Avenue* to the *Silent Hill* video game series and White Wolf's old World of Darkness game, *Wraith: the Oblivion*. But most importantly, I was inspired by the play called *No Exit* by French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre and a crazy pre-sleep notion: What if there was no way out of my home?

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WELCOME TO THE COMPLEX

What Is The Eastmarch Living Complex?

That is, no pun intended, a complex question. Eastmarch is a development on a peninsula where two rivers meet. Wesley House, where you live, sits at the very tip of the land and is surrounded on three sides by the misty, fogged waterways. If you stare very hard out your window, you can see land in the distance.

Wesley House is the newest building in the development. It has seven floors of ten apartments each, a lobby, and a basement. Each apartment is occupied. There are two elevators on either side of a small foyer. There are emergency stairs, one beside the elevators and one at the rear of the building. The staircases extend from the lobby to the rooftop, whose doors are shut at all times and wired with alarms. Each is marked NO EXIT.

That tells you a little about what the Complex physically is. But it's also much more.



The Complex is an oppressive force, bearing down on you and holding you in. Each day you stay, your life falls further away until you become a mindless drone, ambling through life in your apartment. Without something to drive you from your comfort, you might stay there forever.

Who Are You?

You are a tenant in Wesley House, the newest apartment building in the Complex. You've come here after a life of drama, passion and experience. Things weren't always easy, but that's what made it exciting. In the end, you came to the Complex and found a little quiet where you can take a deep breath and reflect. You've brought with you the relics of your life, the trinkets and reminders of the person you were. They decorate the inside of your apartment; you pass them every day on your way to the kitchen, or at your desk, or on the door to get coffee down at the Daily Java. In the beginning, you believed here you'd find welcomed peace.

Instead, all you found are silence, and isolation, and suffocation.

These walls have become your whole world. You don't have a job. Maybe you used to, but not anymore. You had family that you contacted, friends that were important to you, but not anymore. Now you have your home in the Complex. And the Complex is not always so calm and quiet. Odd smells and strange sounds often plague you in your apartment or in the hallways. Management tells you everything is fine. But the tiny noises wake you in the middle of the night, and you've seen strange things and stranger tenants in the hallways. It all makes your rest uneasy.

How long have you been there? That's up to you as the player to decide. Every day is like the one before and each day, times seems more ephemeral and unimportant. Even the memories you had of the life you led outside the Complex are slipping further away. Only the items in your apartment keep you anchored to who you were. Who you'll become from here is up to you.

Character Creation

Character creation for *No Exit* is the same as character creation for any *Fate Core* setting with a few changes.

High Concept and Trouble

Characters in the Complex led dramatic, complicated lives before leaving it all behind. When selecting a **High Concept** for your character, it's important to reflect that exceptional life in the words you choose. A police officer escaping from memories of a dead partner might have a High Concept like *Haunted Ex-Cop*, while a thief retired from a life of crime might have a High Concept like *Thief On The Lam*. It's important that while these events are in the character's past, they've still shaped the character. Since the High Concept will become an Aspect to be tapped in-game, it must still be applicable to the present, so word it carefully.

A character's **Trouble** defines something that complicated their life experience. Where in most Fate games this could be either a *personal struggle or problematic relationship*, characters in *No Exit* should focus on having a Trouble that is based on a personal struggle. The problematic relationships will come from intertwining with other characters in your first, second and third Phases (described next). Pick a Trouble that reflects what psychologically drives your character, the heart of what makes them restless in the silence of the Complex.

Example: Heidi wants to create a wealthy, rugged outdoorsy explorer named Melinda Conners, whose life was turned upside down by a climbing accident. She decides on the High Concept **Fearful Ex-Explorer** to reflect Melinda's former life of adventure and the damage done by the accident. Her Trouble, she decides, should be about what the accident did to Melinda, and so she settles on **Always Afraid of Falling**.

First, Second and Third Phases

After you have your High Concept and your Trouble, you'll go on to create Aspects based on your character's past. This is done cooperatively with other players with only a couple of important changes. First, when creating your character, you're creating your character as they were *before* coming to the Complex.

Your **First Phase** should be a major adventure in your character's history.

Example: Heidi decides Melinda's first adventure was her first trek across the Gobi Desert after college. She wants this to be a defining moment in Melinda's life, and calls this first aspect **Hardened by the Desert**.



The **Second Phase** should reflect how you crossed paths with another character.

Example: Next, Heidi works out with Joel that their characters will know one another from an adventure tour to Chernobyl after she survived the Gobi. They joke that Melinda and Joel's character Gabe would have gotten lost together in the frightening Russian woods because Melinda was distracted by Gabe's good looks. Melinda takes the Aspect ***Distracted By A Pretty Face*** for not keeping her eye on the compass.

The **Third Phase**, however, should be a defining moment of your life that brought you to the Complex. This phase should focus on an event that stalled your life and cast you adrift. You had an idea how your life would go, but this one event changed everything, leaving you unsettled and transformed forever. Usually these events are negative, and they certainly left you with unresolved and unsettled feelings. This event ought to still intertwine in another character's story which is standard for *Fate Core*, but thematically it should be a moment in your life that you reconsider and rethink constantly.

Example: The last character Heidi works into her backstory is Todd. She and his player Ben decide that the two were dating when they went spelunking together. It's during this trip that Melinda's rope slipped and she nearly fell to her death in a deep cavern. She takes the Aspect ***Spelunking Accident Survivor*** to reflect both her trauma and the fact that she walked away from the accident intact—for the most part.

Items

You will then choose an **Item** that your character would have in their apartment to represent each phase. Each item must be directly linked to the events of its particular story, or to the other character(s) involved. Maybe your character revisits the death of his sister in a car accident over and over. A fuzzy rabbit foot keychain sits on his coffee table, a relic of the crash. These items act as a touchstone to their memories, which can otherwise be vague in the Complex. Items should remain small for portability and GMs are encouraged to disallow anything that is too ridiculous. It'll be hard to take a tense horror situation seriously if someone is carrying a giant, breakable Ming vase around.

Example: Heidi considers what Melinda's apartment would have to represent her adventurous past. She settles on a rock from the Gobi desert, the broken radiation counter from her walk through Chernobyl, and the frayed rope that nearly caused her death while Spelunking.

Character creation continues as per normal. Players then choose their Skills and Stunts, and go on to record their stress tracks and their refresh. One of these skills will be **Clarity**, explained shortly. Each character gets Clarity at +1 for free at character creation.

Then the GM steps in.

Memories In The Complex

During character creation, players have discussed their character's backstories and tied them all together. The GM will then ask each player which of their Aspects—and which associated memory—they would like their character to recall at start of play. Once the player has chosen a particular memory, they place a mark next to it on their character sheet to indicate it is inviolate. The player goes into the game remembering only that single facet of their character's backstory with any reliability. *All other memories are considered unreliable and subject to adjustment by the GM.* Only through the exploration of memories and the resolution of the traumas within those memories can the character achieve Clarity once again.

New Skill: Clarity

Clarity is a new Skill within the *No Exit* setting. Similar to Will, Clarity represents the ability of a character to spot the illusions crafted around them and spot the inaccuracies of deceptions perpetrated by the Complex. Each player begins with Clarity at +1 to indicate that they are conscious of something odd occurring around them. However, any advancement in Clarity must be earned in-game through confrontation with the mysteries of a player's past. (See: *Internal Strife and Discovering Clarity*).



Overcome: You can use Clarity to face down the mind-bending obstacles of the Complex. When presented with a never-ending hallway, or a staircase that loops on itself forever, you call upon your Clarity to see through the illusions and see what is really in front of you.



Create an Advantage: You can use Clarity to place aspects on yourself that indicate your ability to see past individual components of the Complex's lies (example: you do not feel the vertigo on the roof).



Attack: You can channel your Clarity into an attack that destabilizes the Complex's hold on you through sheer power of disbelief.



Defend: Clarity is used to Defend against the mind-games of the Management, such as attacks of Deceive, Rapport or Provoke.

Stunts

It's Not Real! With the expenditure of a Fate Point, use Clarity to Create an Advantage so that another player may see through the lies of the Complex.

I Remember Now. With the expenditure of a Fate Point, your character may delve into their memories to dredge up the use of a Skill they do not have on their character sheet. The character only has as many ranks in that Skill as they have in Clarity and may be used for the remainder of the scene.

Clarity Is My Weapon. When combating an agent of the Complex, you may use Clarity in place of Fight for your attack. The player must be utilizing one of their Items to focus the attack.

Example: Melinda is caught trying to sneak past the Front Gate Guards, and Kai the Guard has called for a Management Representative to take her back to Wesley. On the way back, Melinda realizes the Rep isn't taking her towards the building—he's instead taking her down to the river! Since Melinda has no hand-to-hand combat skills, Melinda invokes **Clarity Is My Weapon** to fight the Rep. She reaches into her pocket and finds her Gobi Desert rock—was that there before? She swings it at the Rep's head, blinding him temporarily so she can make her escape.

Internal Strife and Discovering Clarity

As stated before, memory becomes a dodgy thing in the Complex. The longer your character has been at the Complex, the less Clarity they have about their own memories. These memories and their power are what gives players the strength to face down their demons and fight against the crushing atmosphere of the Complex. Only through focus on their memories can characters explore the pieces of their past that have bogged them down and grant them the strength to face where they are now.

How does that work in game play? At character creation, the players work together to build their backstories and tie them all together as is typical in *Fate Core*. The GM then takes control of the stories that are tied to their Aspects in the First, Second and Third Phase. During play, a player may tap an Aspect from their character sheet in attempts to Overcome obstacles or Create Advantages in a situation.

The GM can offer a player a choice during those moments—either take the Advantage or Overcome, or forgo that Advantage or Overcome and pay a Fate Point to **trigger a memory** based on that Aspect. Depending on the situation, the memory could be simple and relatively unimportant (*'As you pick up the old hat, you suddenly smell your wife's perfume once again'*) or devastating and impactful (*'As you raise the gun, you flash back to the first time you shot a man dead'*) It is the GM who feeds the player the details of the memory, and therefore it is the GM's job to choose pieces of the story that will guide the player towards personal revelation. The player also has an option during play to trigger such memories when in contact with the Items associated with the desired memory, at the expenditure of a Fate Point.

These flashbacks into memory are meant to lead the player to face moments in their past and exorcise their personal demons associated with those moments.

Example: Melinda takes the stairs to get down to the basement. She's out to discover what Management is hiding down there. As she reaches the bottom landing, the lights flicker out and she can't find her way. Melinda wants to tap her Aspect **Spelunking Accident Survivor** to help Overcome the problem when the GM offers to Trigger a memory for her instead. Melinda chooses the memory—and is told by the GM how this time, she remembers her last spelunking trip very differently. The rope that broke and sent her plummeting into the dark didn't just slip. It was cut—and the only one on the trip with a knife that day was Todd.

Once the flashback resolves and the player faces down the demons of that memory, the associated Aspect is changed into a positive one in regards to the **Revelation** that was discovered during that cathartic moment. This Aspect will more easily allow the character to battle the Complex and discover its tricks. In Melinda's case above, her Aspect of **Spelunking Accident Survivor** could be transformed to **I Know Who Tried To Kill Me**. The character also gains a point in Clarity, the skill used to see past the illusions and lies spread by the Management and the Complex's shape-shifting environment.



Sacrificing Memory and Loss

There will be moments throughout play, however, when a character might desperately need to Overcome a situation or create a serious Advantage to beat an obstacle thrown at them by the Complex. To do this they may choose to sacrifice a single Item (and its associated memory) to create a major Advantage or Overcome something serious. However, in doing so, your character is literally relinquishing that memory to face down the situation. The item associated with it is destroyed—*the vase shatters, the lucky rabbit's foot falls from your hand down the drain*—and the Aspect associated with that memory is also now gone and cannot be replaced with anything. Your character gave up an important piece of themselves in that moment, never to be reclaimed.

Characters may sacrifice multiple Items and Aspects should they deem it necessary. Upon the loss of the third Aspect and associated Item, they gain an immediate Severe Mental Consequence that should reflect their now nearly total amnesiac state. These characters are considered lost. They become empty versions of their former selves, content to remain in near mindless solitude at the Complex forever.

Once characters are prepared, their Items and memories laid out, the stage has to be set for the characters to greet their new home in the Complex.

GM Preparation: Home is Where...

Your Apartment: Now that the players have completed most of their character sheet, the players should develop a bit about their individual apartments within Wesley House. What is it that makes that apartment home? How is it the perfect space for them? The apartments serve as home base for the character, where they can retreat if need be. Still, these are apartments in the Complex, and even while inside they aren't completely safe.

Each apartment gets two Aspects that both GM and player have the ability to tag as temporary aspects either for the Character or for the Complex. These Aspects are particularly important because they give the player some modicum of control over the atmosphere. Should the player need to, they can try to use these Aspects against the Complex. But if the GM can manage it, the aspects may also be turned against their owner.

Example: Heidi considers that Melinda's apartment is sparsely furnished, since Melinda is used to traveling and being on the go. Still, Heidi thinks that she'd have lots of gear for all kinds of occasions and gives the apartment the Aspect **Stocked For Emergencies**. Considering her fear of falling and of cave-ins, she believes Melinda would have nothing hanging on the walls that could fall on her, even cabinets in the kitchen. She creates the Aspect **Everything On the Ground** to reflect that bizarre design choice. The GM's okay with that—it leaves plenty of things to trip on later on.

Your Floor: The GM gets to decide one last bit of fun—what floor does each character live on? The character's apartment is situated in one of the ten apartments on each floor. The floor they live on has everything to do with their particular Trouble. Each floor has its own special 'features' provided by the Complex that the GM gets to play with, so deciding where the characters begin is key to crafting the experience (See: Wesley House Layout).

When the GM looks at a player's Trouble, she should decide which of the following attributes the character's Trouble is associated with and pick the corresponding floor.

- First: Lust
- Second: Gluttony
- Third: Greed
- Fourth: Wrath
- Fifth: Heresy
- Sixth: Violence
- Seventh: Lies

Characters will begin play within their particular apartment on their floor. All experiences start there.

Tailor Your Terror: Using Sins As A GM

Each player's apartment is on a floor themed to a particular sin they might exhibit. As the GM, you can use those sins to tailor your particular brand of terror to turn the screw a little even before they go out and meet the other players. These individually-aimed scenes will give the players a sense of personal horror before they even interact with their fellows. Once they've been unsettled all alone, they'll be aching for some company—even if that company makes things even worse.

Further exploration of what each floor is like is in the next section (see: *Wesley House Layout*) but you should dig deep into what you believe would play on the players' individual sense of what that sin means. For example, one man's gluttony is another man's greed—the subtle difference is in your interpretation of what will drive the player to personal revelation throughout the game. You'll need to choose what you want the players to take away from the hints you'll give them when utilizing both the unsettling nature of apartment environment and the messages they begin to receive.

Messages From Beyond: What's Out There?

The GM is given free range to push every psychological button they can to start creating the message they want their players' characters to experience throughout the game. Tying in the themes of their personal sins, the GM will use the messages given to the players as a way to catalyze their movement out of their apartment to explore their surroundings, rediscover themselves and eventually confront the nature of the Complex. Some ideas for messages include:

- Packages of food the character never ordered—wasn't that their dead child's favorite snack?
- Newspapers prominently advertising the company that laid them off.
- Flowers that smell like the seaside village where they grew up.
- Voicemail messages left by a former lover, long moved on.
- Pill bottles appearing in pharmacy delivery bags on the kitchen counter.

The idea is to poke at those things most raw for the player but in small ways to awaken that bit of recognition still inside them. That recognition is what sets them apart from other tenants and will allow them to reconnect so they can draw strength to fight for their future.

NO EXIT TO BE FOUND

It begins with a catalyst one day. Maybe you were in your kitchen making breakfast, or getting on your shoes to discover what new blend of coffee they're making down at the Daily Java. Maybe you need to order more toilet paper down at the kiosk or want to sit by the fountain and reread that old favorite book you've read a dozen times before. It's all the typical days' routine in your little apartment until something jars you out of it.

You find a note under your door. It says: **Your daughter wasn't really yours anyway.**

The phone rings and you hear on the other side, the voice of the young man you met in the bar that night, asking: **Why did you let them do it to me?**

You find a clipping tucked into your morning newspaper. It's from the day of your accident, listing the names of everyone who died.

Someone is playing with you and you're not sure who. Is it the lady in the apartment next door, who thumps on the wall at odd hours? Or the guy in the apartment downstairs, who recites poetry so loudly that you can hear every heretical, insane word? Someone is trying to rattle your chain, or else maybe you're just losing it. But one thing is for certain. That message has made you remember clearly for the first time in a very long time.

And suddenly, the walls around you are closing in.

THE CARETAKERS ARE EVERYWHERE

Messages come to the characters from everywhere, slipped into their otherwise monotonous existence to spark a little bit of curiosity to the surface. But who is sending those messages and what do they want? They're called the Caretakers and while Management is there to keep the tenants isolated, the Caretakers are there to show them the way. But be warned: they still operate under the Management's rules, and though they seem kind, their motivations are just as mysterious. More details about the Caretakers and some of their number are covered in *The Complex Population* below.

Play begins with characters in their apartments. These places are that which is most comfortable and most secure to them. Yet they are also not inviolate. Strange noises and smells infiltrate from other apartments on their floor and odd issues in the apartments themselves drive them to distraction (see: *Wesley House Layout* for suggestions). Venturing out into the hallway isn't much better as other tenants seem wrapped up in their own—sometimes peculiar—daily routines. People mutter to themselves, walk aimlessly, or repeat tasks. The Complex is working on them too.

Yet the message received should drive the players on because it triggers memory, bringing about a moment of Clarity, for the first time in a long time. It reminds them of a time gone by and sparks one thought: *why can't I remember?* It's that one thought that brings them out of their home and into the Complex at large to explore, meet their neighbors, and try to understand what has ultimately happened to them.

Each part of the grounds has Aspects that can be used by players and the GM to create psychological compels to push buttons and people's limits. Depending on what your Wesley House is like, you can change and adjust to fit your brand of psychological playground.

Wesley House Layout

Lobby:

Aspects: *Management is Watching, We Have What You Need*

The lobby is standard in every building in the Complex. It has a single entrance off of the square with a single revolving door. There is a desk for a guard which, in Wesley House, is unmanned. There is a single bench beside the desk; there are no couches. Across from the elevators is a bank of mailboxes, all neatly labeled with tenant names. Beside the elevator is a small cafe called the **Daily Java**, a combination general store and coffee shop that could put any chain location to shame. It has a full-service kitchen that serves simple meals and coffee and stays open very late. Right outside is **The Kiosk**, a touch-screen computer that allows you to access Management Services, where you can order anything you need delivered to your apartment.

Beyond the Daily Java, a long corridor leads you to the rear of the building and a large window with a view of the ever-flowing river. Beside the window is the rear stairwell and next to that, the **Management's Office**. The Office door is always locked, but you can try to knock. That is, if you want to draw their attention.



First Floor:

Aspects: *Sexy... Or Creepy?, You're Being Watched*

The first floor apartments are known to be drafty, no matter the weather. Winds blow through cracks that defy any effort to repair them, and moaning comes down the central air vents into the bathrooms and kitchens. Or are those moans coming through the walls? Whenever you change the channel, there's always a some love scene being broadcast. Outside in the hallway, the simple art has eyes that follow you. Unlike other floors, there are mirrors opposite the elevator where you can't stop staring at yourself. Good smells waft out of other apartments, smells that remind you of perfume or flowers from good memories long ago, beyond your reach.

Second Floor:

Aspects: *What Is That Smell?, Given to Excess*

The second floor apartments are the prettiest of all the apartments, lavishly appointed but known for their issues with plumbing. Bathrooms often back up and the garbage disposals are faulty, bringing filth up every once in a while into the sinks. Odd smells issue from the drains and out into the hall, the trash rooms always seem to have bags of trash left stinking on the ground. In the hallway, snakes seem to be the decor of the day all along the walls, but if you get closer—are those snakes, or great big worms? A painting hangs on the wall opposite the elevator, a banquet feast in Rome, complete with gorging Romans. The signature on the painting reads 'Ciaccio'.

Third Floor:

Aspects: *Never Sit Still, What's Yours Is Mine*

The third floor apartments seem to be filled with a restless bunch of folks. There's always noise of furniture being moved around at all hours of the day and night, banging noises as decorations are being put up or rearranged. The third floor also has a problem with theft, as objects will disappear from people's apartments. Lamps that were in the hallway seem to go missing and vases of flowers set on the table beside the elevator are gone nearly immediately after appearing. Should an apartment receive a delivery, it best be picked up quickly or risk going missing.

Fourth Floor:

Aspects: *Can't Hear You Over the Shouting, Quick to Rage*

There's never a quiet night on the fourth floor. The neighbors are a rowdy bunch, having furious squabbles that come right through the walls. Nobody seems to care if anyone else hears their business—they vent whatever spleen they have at full volume. Maybe that's why the fourth floor also hosts the Security Office right next to the elevators, manned by a representative from Management. It doesn't help much, though. Sullen figures slump down the hall when you come around the corner and they're more likely to curse you out than answer your hello. Obscenities are scratched into the walls but are usually repaired quickly—usually.

Fifth Floor:

Aspects: *You're Always Right, There Can Only Be One...Leader*

If things are on the fourth floor are bad, the fifth floor is relatively quiet. The people there tend to stick to themselves, though they often leave literature lying on the table beside the elevator. Each pamphlet is usually about some hair-brained conspiracy theory or political diatribe and even though Management has taken to posting notices about unsolicited material, some brochures seem to linger. Televisions blare from other apartments, loudly proclaiming whatever the neighbor wants everyone else to hear. There is a strange problem with the wiring, though—a number of small fires have broken out. You're sure Management is looking into it.

Sixth Floor:

Aspects: *Blood Is In The Air, Violence is So Easy*

There are a few things known about the sixth floor—you don't want to be the poor sap living there. The thermostat has never worked correctly so it's always boiling hot. There are rumors about murders that happened there, but nobody can exactly remember when. Because of that, a subtle pall of menace fills the air at all times. Neighbors rush to and fro, keeping their eyes off of one another. The floor in the trash room is sticky with an odd substance that never goes away, and odd smells come from other apartments, tangy and metallic or rotting. The sounds from other apartments wake you up in the dead of night, odd thumps that sound like things dropping. And were those pleas for mercy you heard? Somebody must have the TV turned up high.

Seventh Floor:

Aspects: *They're All Out To Get You, Lies Will Save You*

The top floor is odd for an apartment building because how many buildings have seven floors? The seventh floor has a hushed, disquieting silence about it. Folks constantly seem to be whispering to each other in the halls and nobody stays out for long. You don't spend much time in your bathroom as you're pretty sure the pipes make whispering noises, a feeling that someone's always talking about you, and there is bizarre scratching in the walls. Across from the elevator hangs a painting of a strange creature with the head of a man, the paws of a lion, the body of a dragon and the tail of a scorpion. It's signed at the bottom 'Jason Bolgia' and always hangs slightly askew.

Rooftop:

Aspects: *Long Way Down, Caution: High Winds*

Both staircases begin in the lobby and lead up to the rooftop. It is newly tarred and covered in brand new siding, but already leaks can be seen going down through to the top floor. There are antennas for cable and a motor housing for the elevators. The lip is raised slightly but there is no fence to keep people away from the edge. The view on three sides looks out on the Acheron River to the East, the Matheson River to the West and it's confluence to the rear. Even on the roof, one cannot see far enough over the water to clearly spot the opposite shore. The wind is always strong and nearing the edge inspires vertigo you never knew you had.

The Basement

Aspects: *Hotter Than Hell, Danger: High Voltage!*

The basement is a sweltering hot place, full of pipes and machinery. Low lights make it hard to see a few feet in front of you and though it's supposed to be a state-of-the-art building, there is rust and rot along every pipe. Red lights warn of **DANGER OF ELECTROCUTION** over wiring panels. In one corner sits the boiler, spewing steam from its sweating sides, clanking and whistling and groaning so loud it's hard to think.

The Grounds

Aspects: *Always Chilly Out Here, Low Visibility*

Wesley House sits at the very edge of the peninsula that holds the entire Eastmarch Living Complex. The weather is normally grey with overcast skies broken by bouts of rain and, in the cold months, sleet. When the weather is clear(ish), fog sits low across the rivers on either side of the peninsula. Since the shore surrounds the building on three sides, they provide natural isolation to the building along with a pleasant scenic view.

The Square

Aspects: *Mundane To The Point of Madness, Everything Looks The Same*

Directly outside of Wesley House lies the Square. It isn't much to look at in terms of decoration. A single grey fountain gurgles in the very center of a cement square. Planters sit at the perimeter along with four round benches that surround the fountain. The only greenery in the square is in the planters and those are typical industrial park fare. To the north lies Eastmarch Lane and the Front Gate, while on the east and west the square has a low fence that separates it from the grassy lawn that leads down to the shore.

The Acheron and Matheson Rivers

Aspects: *Just How Deep Is This?, The Waters Call To You*

The rivers that lie on either side of the peninsula and Wesley House are called the Acheron and Matheson Rivers. Both are wide-bodied waterways that move swiftly with deep, dark waves that meet at a confluence at the peninsula's tip. The rivers are known to be eerily quiet and though you might try, the fog constantly hangs over the water blocking view of the other side. The shore going down to the water is quite steep and rocky on the Acheron side to the west, and rock-strewn on the Matheson side. Signs indicate that going down to the water is strictly prohibited by order of Management, but figures are often seen walking along the edge of the water.

Eastmarch Lane and the Front Gate

Aspects: *Always Guarded, No Access Without Management Permission*

North of the Square lies the only man-made barrier surrounding Wesley House. The apartment building lies at the very end of Eastmarch Lane, a two-lane street that goes down the peninsula towards other parts of the Complex. The fence on

either side of the Square leads to a small traffic circle and beyond that, the Front Gate. It's closed all hours of the day and night and manned by a single guard house with a guard inside hired by Management. But why would you have to leave? You have everything inside.

The Infirmary

Aspects: *What's That Equipment For?, Haven From the Storm*

Near the Front Gate is a small outer building on the very outskirts of the Wesley House portion of the Complex property. It's a simple building with a white cross painted on a green door. That is where anyone with serious injuries can be taken, any time of day or night. It is staffed by a polite Nurse who will always smile kindly but never meet your eye. It is also surprisingly well stocked for a small infirmary for an apartment complex. And is that a surgical bay in the back? What could that be needed for?

The Other Buildings

Aspects: *Exactly Identical to Wesley House*

Wesley House is but one of the buildings in the Complex. To reach these other houses, one must travel down Eastmarch Lane towards the Front Gate and deal with the Management guard in the guardhouse. Then it's a long walk along the lane, past dark trees lining the shore that block out the sun. There you might find another of the Complex's buildings. Should you try to visit, you'll need to sneak by yet another guard and hop a fence similar to the one that surrounds the front of Wesley House. Once inside the grounds, however, you'd discover that the buildings are virtually identical in every way, right down to the lobby decor and the elevator muzak. They each bear different names—Newman House, Ambrose House, Thurkhill House, Barzakh House—but are otherwise identical.



THE COMPLEX POPULATION

Aside from the players, there are numerous people quietly moving through Wesley House. They come in three flavors: **the Management**, **the Caretakers**, and other **tenants**.

The Management

The Management are everywhere within the Complex. They are the voice on the other end of your telephone when you order food from the cafe, or when you need some materials delivered to your apartment. They fix plumbing that's malfunctioning and remind you that visitors to the Complex must be cleared with the appropriately filed paperwork, in duplicate, and can only visit on the appropriate days. When you try to assert your freedom, they'll kindly and patiently remind you that you moved into the Eastmarch Living Complex and are therefore bound by all their rules from the moment you set foot in your apartment.

Representatives of the Management come in many different shapes and sizes, yet each of them can utilize the stats of the Complex when needed (see: *Fighting the Complex*) through a Stunt called *Agent of the Complex*.

Agent of the Complex: Any employee of Management may be taken over by the Complex itself in an attempt to contain the tenants. Agents of the Complex may utilize the Skills and Stunts of the Complex when confronting unruly tenants. Outwardly this is reflected as a loss of personality and sometimes almost superhuman expressions of Skill.

The Building Manager

In her office in the Wesley House lobby, the Building Manager is a simple figure in a suit behind a utilitarian desk. Her desk is full of requisition forms and guest pass requests that never seem to go anywhere. There are no personal effects on the desk. She smiles benignly and calmly at all times. She tends to speak in circles, not really answering any questions. Any confusion shown by a resident is met with calm assertions about returning to their apartment.

BUILDING MANAGER

Aspects: *Perfect Bureaucrat, In Your Best Interest, No Need To Shout, Everything Will Be Fine, Part of Wesley House*

Skills: Great (+4) Deceive and Rapport
 Good (+3) Provoke and Notice
 Fair (+2) Resources and Will
 Average (+1) Contacts and Empathy

Stunts: Agent of the Complex

Stress: **Physical:** **Mental:**

The Voice On The Phone

A sweet woman’s voice will answer on the phone whenever you dial 0 from any phone or from the Kiosk. It will give you whatever you want, delivered to your apartment, within reason. Nothing harmful is allowed, and it will balk at delivery of things that will allow you documentation (cameras, video cameras). It will never say no exactly, but it will ‘Pass along the inquiry to Management’. All of these supplies are charged to an account you cannot ever remember paying. Only if pushed very far will the voice become clipped and remind you that harassment of Management is strictly Prohibited and will gain you a visit from Management Representatives.

THE VOICE ON THE PHONE

Aspects: *Wesley House Operator, Never Get What You Want, Misdirection Is An Art, Harassment Will Not Be Tolerated*

Skills: Great (+4) Rapport and Deceive
 Good (+3) Notice and Provoke
 Fair (+2) Empathy and Will
 Average (+1) Contacts

Stunts: Agent of the Complex

Stress: **Physical:** **Mental:**

The Front Gate Guard

There are two guards who man the Front Gate, one by day and one by night. They are direct opposites in almost every way. If one is tall, the other is short; one fair then the other is dark. Each bears a nameplate: one is named Ron and the other Kai. Neither will allow you to leave without a pass. One is surly should you try to get out or muscle past, while the other will be apologetic and call for backup from Management Representatives.

THE FRONT GATE GUARD

Aspects: *Security Arm of the Complex, Flunky of Management, Constantly Vigilant, Call for Backup, Never Leave Your Post*

Skills: Great (+4) Notice and Physique
 Good (+3) Fight and Shoot
 Fair (+2) Will, Investigation and Athletics
 Average (+1) Contacts and Stealth.

Stunts: Agent of the Complex

Stress: Physical: Mental:

Management Representatives

The bulk of Management interaction might come from Management representatives. They are men dressed in black or dark grey blazers with shirts of various muted colors. They are always perfectly coifed and their facial expressions are very tense, polite, and hard to read. They are called when a violation has occurred and someone has been 'out of sorts'. They will start off polite but move to insistent and forceful quickly as they represent the interests of the Eastmarch Living Complex. Should you attempt to resist them, they will restrain you and return you to your apartment—after all, it's for your own good.

MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Aspects: *Complex Enforcers, Serve the Complex, "You Will Come With Us", Polite To A Fault, Whatever It Takes*

Skills: Great (+4) Fight and Will
 Good (+3) Provoke and Physique
 Fair (+2) Notice and Athletics and Rapport
 Average (+1) Stealth and Investigation

Stunts: Agent of the Complex

Stress: Physical: Mental:

The Caretakers

Where the Management is out to keep things orderly and tidy, the Caretakers are there to see to your needs. They seem to be outside of the Management hierarchy but bow to the Management’s control. Should they be asked, they operate ‘within the system’ so they can ‘help’. Where the Management is tight-lipped, uncomfortable and close-mouthed, the Caretakers will lend help where they can. They are, however, few and far between in the Complex. A few of their representatives include:

Angie

The barista and waitress at the *Daily Java* is named Angie. She won’t give her last name and if pressed very hard will admit that she doesn’t remember it. She has been working at the coffee shop for as long as she can recall. She is spirited, sassy, and talks often about her Aunt Kat who taught her ‘everything she knows’. She and Miguel seem to go way back, but she doesn’t remember how far. She is a wonderful listener and genuinely seems to care about everyone that comes to her counter. That means she also hears everyone’s business. Angie lives in a small apartment behind the Daily Java that she shares with her partner, Miguel, who she secretly loves.

ANGIE

Aspects: *Amnesiac Barista, Who Was I?, “I’m A Good Listener”, Secretly In Love, Tougher Than You Think*

Skills: Great (+4) Rapport and Lore
 Good (+3) Crafts (Cooking) and Empathy
 Fair (+2) Fighting and Will
 Average (+1) Clarity and Athletics and Investigation,

Stunts: **Scrappy:** Angie has a +1 on Athletics and Fight challenges.

Stress: **Physical:** **Mental:**

Miguel

Miguel is the busboy and line cook at the Daily Java. He’s a former soldier (tattoos indicate Army Ranger) but his right leg is badly mangled and he wears a brace. He can cook up nearly anything you can ask for (except Ethiopian food) and prides himself on his speedy service. He can also play the piano that sits in the corner of the Daily Java off the lobby, which he admits he pushed the Management into installing. If pressed, he’ll admit that he met Angie when she was a bartender ‘years ago’ and he got her out of a little bit of trouble with some bikers that wouldn’t take no for an answer.

MIGUEL

Aspects: *Army Ranger Line Cook, Wounded In The Line, Undiscovered Musical Genius, "You Want It, I Can Get It", "Never Hurt A Lady"*

Skills: Great (+4) Fight and Crafts (Cooking)
 Good (+3) Fight and Stealth
 Fair (+2) Athletics and Provoke
 Average (+1) Clarity and Will

Stunts: **Ranger Training:** Miguel receives +1 to any Shoot, Stealth or Physique challenges.

Stress: **Physical:** **Mental:**

Nurse Felicia

Felicia is a tall, gorgeous blond woman with a kind face and a chronic inability to meet anyone's eyes. Whenever asked questions, she'll lower her voice and answer hesitantly—until a medical crisis arises. Then she's all business with a firm, no-nonsense voice. After a crisis has passed, she'll pull out a cigarette, what she calls her own 'filthy guilty pleasure'. She can always seem to be found at the Infirmary, or by dialing 9 on any house phone. Her apartment is over the infirmary, a small one-room affair with hardly any worldly belongings except books.

NURSE FELICIA

Aspects: *Kindly Complex Nurse, Anything For the Patient, 95% Medical Badass, 5% Self-Doubt, "I Want To Help, But..."*

Skills: Great (+4) Lore and Rapport
 Good (+3) Empathy and Notice
 Fair (+2) Investigation and Contacts
 Average (+1) Clarity and Stealth

Stunts: **Medical Genius:** With a roll of +4 or greater, Nurse Felicia can wipe out any Severe Physical Consequence provided she is within her own infirmary.

Stress: **Physical:** **Mental:**



Ernest

The elder caretaker of Wesley House is perhaps the friendliest face you'll see in all of Wesley House. A wiseass and smart-cracking man with wispy white hair, he'll tell anyone who listens stories from his childhood growing up on a rural farm. He recalls pastoral stories that led to him leaving to serve in 'the War' and then going through the world to take random jobs. His latest is working at the Complex and unlike all the others, he doesn't live on grounds. He walks out of the gate each day at his usual slow pace, rain or shine, with his bag in hand which holds his lunch. He never eats on the grounds.

ERNEST

Aspects: *Caretaker of Wesley House, "Back In My Day...", Kindly Words of Wisdom, Knows Where The Bodies Are*

Skills: Great (+4) Lore and Investigation, Good (+3) Rapport and Empathy, Fair (+2) Notice, Average (+1) Stealth

Stunts: **Complex Knowledge:** Provided a player can win a Rapport challenge against Ernest, he may share one piece of 'gossip' about another tenant in the Complex.

Stress: Physical: Mental:

Hell Is Other People: Other Figures In Wesley House

Within Wesley House are others people who have found themselves as long-term residents, whether they like it or not. Here are some of their stories; feel free to use them as examples of characters that can fill the building.

Ethan Seebring

Ethan Seebring is perhaps the oldest man in the Wesley House. He can be seen shuffling around the building in his slippers, a newspaper stuck under one arm, in a multitude of strangely colored bathrobes. He always smells vaguely of peppermint. He shuffles around the grounds in his own little world, occasionally muttering to himself. If followed, he seemingly does not have his own apartment. Instead, he walks great circuits of the building, going up the elevators and climbing to the roof to rock near the edge but never tries to jump). After, he'll head back down to the lobby and, when he believes he is not being watched, will go down into the basement. There he finds a corner next to the boiler and stands there facing the wall. If he is interrupted by anyone down there, he will proceed to roll up his sleeves and press his arms against the boiler, scalding his flesh. Even in that moment, he will not speak, only scream.

The newspaper under his arm is dated to December 26, 1975 from Pittsburgh. It talks about a bad electrical fire in a tenement building that cost the lives of six families on Christmas morning. The fire marshals suspected faulty wiring as the cause.

ETHAN SEEBRING

Aspects: *Former Slum Lord, Haunted By Their Screams, Acts of Contrition*

Skills: Good (+3) Will
Fair (+2) Lore and Investigation
Average (+1) Empathy and Clarity

Stunts: **Nothing Can Phase Me:** Ethan has seen hell and can't be moved so easily. He receives a +2 on Will checks against Provoke.

Stress: Physical: Mental:

Edward Tully

Edward Tully lives in apartment 6D. A slight, balding man with a paunch, Tully is the kind of man who looks like he aged prematurely and will always say he's younger and stronger than he looks. That's not wrong; underneath his flabby exterior is a sharp, tough man with a serious temper kept tightly under control. Manipulative and charismatic, Tully will work his charm on a group of people to stay on their good side, talking about his old days as a deputy mayor in a small town somewhere. Tully is always wearing button-down shirts with the sleeves rolled up and the collar open. He sweats a lot, but never so much as when he's on his own floor. He looks around like a guilty man while on the sixth floor and will never let anyone into his apartment. Any women get the hairy eyeball from Tully, who will start off very solicitous to everyone but, like a lion with a gazelle, he'll always try to get a woman away from the others and alone. He'll take his time doing it too, earning people's trust, but once it happens—heaven help her.

EDWARD TULLY

Aspects: *Manipulating Lady-Killer, Violence Under the Surface, Charisma Will Get Me Through, "They're Not Really People"*

Skills: Great (+4) Shoot
 Good (+3) Provoke and Deceive
 Fair (+2) Fight and Notice
 Average (+1) Clarity, Athletics and Will

Stunts: None

Stress: **Physical:** **Mental:**

Bethany Simmons

Bethany Simmons is the picture of a beautiful young housewife. In her late thirties, she wears conservative clothing and keeps herself immaculately presentable. Yet behind her eyes you can see a sharp wit and restless spirit battling a sadness she works very hard to keep hidden. She lives in apartment 1C and spends most of her time reading magazines out in the Square, or in the Daily Java when it's cold. She will talk about the weather, the view, the latest celebrity scandal, but most of the time she'll keep it light. However, if she spots a young man she thinks is attractive, look out. She's a relentless flirt with an obsessive tendency and a cruel streak eight miles wide. There is nothing she loves more than to see men fight over her attention 'like they did in the old days'. She has a nervous tick if you ask her anything about her family and will only, when pressed hard, talk about her three children who now live with her husband.

BETHANY SIMMONS

Aspects: *Pretty Suburban Housewife, Where Are My Children?, "Just Like The Old Days", Relentless Flirt, Nervous Tick*

Skills: Great (+4) Rapport
Good (+3) Empathy, Fair (+2) Deceit
Average (+1) Athletics and Clarity

Stunts: None

Stress: Physical: Mental:

Andrew Hadderack and His Topmost Apartment

The door to apartment 7E is right across from the back stairs that lead to the roof. It is also slightly ajar. Inside is an apartment in complete disarray. The place smells of rotted garbage, spoiled food, and filthy linens. Newspapers from ages past lie strewn all over the apartment and knick knacks of all kinds litter every surface. A desk sits in a corner across from a smashed television. On it are a half dozen books, all badly worn with notes written in the margins of every page. Beside them lies a sketch book with dozens of sketches, each page a different person. More are tacked up on the wall with chewing gum. There are lines drawn in thick marker from one picture to another, a great web drawn.

Beside several of the pictures are little facts written down:

EDWARD TULLY,
MANAGED A HEDGE FUND,
DRANK HEAVILY,
DAUGHTER SIX YEARS OLD,
KNEW BETHANY SIMMONS.

A line goes to a sketch of a young woman:

BETHANY SIMMONS,
MOTHER OF THREE,
SUSPENDED DRIVER'S LICENSE FOR DRUNK DRIVING,
MOVED FIVE TIMES IN TWO YEARS,
NERVOUS TWITCH,
KNEW EDWARD TULLY.

The bathroom in the apartment is unsanitary beyond all description. While in the bathroom, noises from inside the pipes can be heard and a scratching in the walls cannot be ignored. In the bedroom, the mattress has been shredded to make a nest of destroyed blankets and bedding. In the middle of that filthy nest you find a curled up half-naked man. He is utterly catatonic. A wallet on the dresser holds a driver's license under the name Andrew Hadderack.

FATE WORLDS

The walls are scribbled on in the same marker as in the living room. Here, you can read the story of Andrew Hadderack:

The man on the phone said I didn't kill her. But what does he know? It was me behind the wheel, she went through the glass but—the man on the phone—why would he lie? Why would Eddie?

Saw HER at the Java but it couldn't have been. They keep me up all night here with their whispering next door—television too loud—but now oh it's her down there I'm sure and there's no chance. Went to say hello and she didn't say a word! Just looked at me funny. Drew her like I did in the old days and it was her, I can't believe—

Asked Management for her name, I asked them and then I knew—I saw it on his face even when he tried to lie—it can't be her but it is and she's on the first floor. Went down there and heard it through her door, the moaning noises, the sounds—she doesn't waste any time—

Caught Eddie in the elevator, followed and there he saw it in me—he saw me and he hugged me and treated me like an old friend! He asked me what I was doing there, wanted to share a beer. I hit him in the jaw and asked him about Bethany. How could he forget her? How could he forget that night?

Found Bethany on the roof screaming last night. Bad nightmares. She screamed and wouldn't let me pull her down off the edge! She tried to go over. Then they came—the men with their blazers and smiles. They came and led her away and tried to stop them and they did something and I'm here, how did I get here when they touched me

The door doesn't open. They say I tried to leave but don't remember—the door—they bring me food when I sleep so I try not to sleep so I'll see them but—

I got the notes out—I got the newest ones before they pushed all the way under the doors, went when I saw the moving vans so they'd know! I know and now they know! Only now I don't know...

The bottom of the story devolves into illegible handwriting. Then, small pictures of flowers across the bottom of the wall.

ANDREW HADDERACK

Aspects: *Catatonic Complex Tenant, Shell-Shocked, The Guilt Was Too Much*

Skills: Average (+1) Rapport and Clarity.

Stunts: None

Stress: **Physical:** **Mental:**

Catatonic (Severe Mental Consequence)

FINDING YOUR EXIT: ESCAPING THE COMPLEX

NO EXIT

Once players begin to explore the Complex, they'll discover the horrible truth: the Complex is meant to keep them inside. They'll need to battle not only the environmental restrictions on their movement but their own fractured memories to discover who they were in the outside world. But once the Management begins to notice that residents are acting strangely, they'll respond. The Management will try and make the characters return to their normal, unknowing lives within the Complex. And if necessary, they'll restrain them by force. Meanwhile, the Complex is interested in containing all those inside and will use its own hallways, its own brick and mortar and the weather to keep the characters inside. The Complex will use every trick it knows to make characters doubt themselves, make them question even their own sanity, and have them return to their safe little lives.

As players achieve their Revelations by retrieving their memories and gain more Clarity, they will begin to see the cracks in the Complex's illusions. As players rise in Clarity, they may choose to guide others towards further Revelation, or else choose to leave them in the dark.

Remember, it's up to the residents to band together to try and escape, because even though hell might be other people—alone lies madness.

The Complex is in itself a living thing. It is a force meant to keep the characters locked inside.

Constructed to cater to a person's every basic need, it is also an elaborate prison for the body and mind. Its servants are the Management and collectively they keep the people that reside there complacent and contained. They do their job well—after all, there's more Houses being built all the time. When battling the Complex, the players must deal with two sets of problems: the Management and the Complex itself. The Management will try to stop the player characters at every turn, as they are the fingers of the structure given form. The Complex will then also react physically when it needs to, adjusting everything from the environment to Wesley House itself.



Fighting the Complex

THE COMPLEX

- Issue:** You'll Never Escape
- Aspects:** *Living Community of the Lost, Geographically Isolated, Controls the Management, That Hallway Wasn't There Before, Nothing Is As It Appears*
- Skills:** *Fantastic (+6):* Provoke and Deceive
Superb (+5): Resources and Will
Great (+4): Empathy and Rapport
Good (+3): Notice and Physique
Fair (+2): Fight and Athletics
Average (+1): Burglary
- Stunts:** Stunts are taken from examples within the *Fate Core* book unless otherwise noted.
Burglary (You're Never Safe),
Deceive (Mind Games, Lies Upon Lies, One Person Many Faces),
Provoke (Armor of Fear, Provoke Violence, Torturer),
Notice (Danger Sense),
Physique (Take the Blow),
Rapport (Best Foot Forward),
Will (Indomitable)

The Aspects, Skills and Stunts listed here for the Complex is only an example of what you can create for your own personal playground. Create your own Aspects and redesign as needed to terrorize your players.

The Management

The Management are just like any other NPCs in a *Fate Core* game and can be constructed exactly the same way—with one major exception. All Management characters can be taken over by the Complex itself at any time. Once they are taken over, they have access to the Skills and Stunts of the Complex. They receive no additional stress tracks, however—they're still just people. Aren't they?

How to Battle the Complex: Clarity Versus Deceit

If players overcome the obstacles put forward by the Management, they will have to fight past the Complex itself. Hallways warp and hold you back, elevators try to drop you, staircases crumble under your feet. These are illusions put forward by the Complex as they change the world around you.

There are two ways to fight this battle. Using the Skills and Stunts listed above for the Complex, or a Complex tailor-made for your game by your GM, you can fight a moment-by-moment battle against the Complex utilizing roll per roll against the environment. Assign it an **Environmental Stress Track** you deem appropriate considering what you believe the Complex should have, and have the players whittle away at it slowly. This would probably come down to a more micro-managed battle, and if that's what your players want, have at it.

However, for a more narrative game, you might try go with the narrative flow for the Complex itself. Set the difficulty for each individual challenge put forward by the Complex (a burning hallway, a rock monster made of gravel from the riverbed, etc.) and count each victory as a tick against the Complex itself on that stress track. In this way, you can also deem it appropriate when the characters have sacrificed and done important Overcomes against the Complex's illusions that might push them towards success.

RESOLUTION OR REVELATION: FINDING YOUR ENDING

How Do You Win?

How does one escape Wesley House and the Complex? What constitutes winning? There are a few routes to victory. No one knows exactly what characters will choose to do except the players, and the choice to how a character ends is in the hands of their player. A GM should decide at the outset of game whether their run of *No Exit* is aiming for a particular end result or if the players can choose independently and individually throughout gameplay. If the GM decides win conditions are limited, the challenges of the Complex and the personal memory revelations crafted for the characters out to drive thematically towards the chosen win condition. Not all players may survive to the end to win at all, as some may be lost to the sacrifice of their memories. Yet the choice of whether or not the characters 'win' is in their own hands.

Escape: Once players begin to discover just how trapped they are within the walls of the Complex, the natural impulse is going to be to escape. The fact that the very ground and building are trying to keep them in is only going to heighten that impulse. Characters will want to try and get away to discover what is left of their lives and world they left behind—if anything at all.

Revelation: Since the main thing lost besides freedom is memory, characters are going to seek to reclaim their memories. They will want to know what caused their memories to go away, and what made them trapped in the Complex. In a game where most of the characters seek Revelation, they will be searching out information not only on their own pasts, but on the Complex itself, the Management and the Caretakers as individuals or as a collective group.

FATE WORLDS

Confrontation: The fact that the Management is a force to be reckoned with means that they're also a force to be opposed. Some characters may want to take the fight to the Management and should be given every chance—there are as many of them as you need to give players the satisfaction of punching their captors in the face. Confronting the enemy could be the resolution they need for the adventure.

Satisfaction: In the end, characters may choose the satisfaction of knowing what their memories were as an answer to their problems. They may choose to stay in the Complex, having discovered what it is and finding their captivity acceptable as long as the truth has been discovered. That is as acceptable an answer as leaving.

So... What is the Complex Anyway?

That's a really good question. The answer is: what do you want it to be? If you've been reading through and noticed some hints to particular literary references, then you get the idea that the Complex may be a circle of Hell, or purgatory. But does it have to be? No chance. The Complex could be any number of things—here are a few suggestions:

- A research facility set up by the government to experiment on people.
- An alien testing ground to discover the power of the human mind.
- The psychology of a single individual mind battling to escape a bad coma.
- A virtual reality video game that players have become trapped in due to a horrible malfunction.

All of these options give players the capability to play the reclaiming of memory and the intense psychological battles of *No Exit* while experiencing multiple different options for thematics. The psychological horror of containment remains the same.

Long Term Vs. Short Term Horror

Is this a short game meant to turn player characters psychologically inside out in one sitting, or are you and your players in for the long haul? That's entirely up to you. The Complex can serve as a quick game in which the players reach their goals quickly. Alternately, you can build a longer campaign by setting your character's goals in stages. Maybe this is like *Lost* where it'll take three seasons (sessions) to discover what the smoke monster really is—that's up to your particular group. The idea to keep in mind if it is going to be a longer game, is the pacing. Short games will take all the wallop of the containment of the Complex and the horror of lost memory and personal revelation into a single sitting, while a longer campaign needs **milestone** moments that will grow the character over time. These moments would also correspond to character growth opportunities, as outlined in *Fate Core*, and can allow characters to improve their skills and stunts accordingly.

Milestones and Growth

In a longer campaign the GM will want to reward players for overcoming the nightmares of the Complex. Just as in any *Fate Core* game, you would reward players at the end of play for achieving milestones. Examples of milestones in *No Exit* include:

- **Minor Milestones:** Rediscovery of single memory, gaining +1 Clarity.
- **Significant Milestones:** Reclaiming a second memory, gaining +2 Clarity, discovering a secret about a Caretaker or the Management.
- **Major Milestones:** Reclaiming all three memories and renaming all three Aspects associated with them, gaining +3 Clarity, discovering a major secret about the Complex.

As Clarity is awarded as part of the memory recovery process, it isn't awarded as part of milestone growth. Milestones should be rewarded as per the *Fate Core* outline with one exception—you cannot change Aspects as part of your milestones, as these are changed when characters reclaim their memories.

GM SUGGESTIONS—ELEMENTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL HORROR

The Complex is a playground for players to explore their psyches and the psyches of those trapped alongside them. Here are some ideas about how to create an appropriate container for all the feelings and emotions running around.

Isolation: Not Just About Geography... But It Helps

The fact that the Complex is a contained location helps create tension. It is a gated complex surrounded by water. That means geographically the players are locked in place. Then within the Complex are locked doors, staircases that lead to specific locations, and of course, the changing nature of the Complex itself. All of these create boxes within boxes to lock the players in place and make them bounce off one another. Keep in mind when adjusting the Complex during your game prep or when preparing to shift the Complex that its intent is to *keep people inside*. It is a force of status quo given physical form and meant to drive players back to where they will be contained. Feel free to employ the environment as a tool against the players. Assail them with weather and ecological hurdles—trees reaching out, branches tripping and fighting with them, water rising up from the rivers to flood areas.

There's no limit when all of nature can turn on you. And just when nature wasn't enough, the very fabric of Wesley House itself can change. Hallways turn back on themselves, paintings can come alive and stalk the corridors, tenants are swallowed by mirrors that reach out with liquid hands to drag you inside. The limit is only in what the GM thinks is terrifying about a building come alive.



Psychological Ebb, Flow and Pressure

People cannot sustain intense psychological stress for very long without suffering the effects of strain. It is important to note that while this setting is intended to create strain on the characters to force confrontation of their issues in character, the way one builds tension can produce different effects. Constant, intense psychological stress can overwhelm a character and cause them to disengage or simply crack, same as it would a person in reality. That's why television shows or movies that call themselves psychological horror usually have an ebb and flow to them, a build-up of tension and then a small release or relief to let the characters gather themselves. The ghosts might appear for a moment and send the heroine racing through the old Victorian mansion (or in this case the halls of a modern apartment building), but when she stops running they've disappeared. This allows her to begin the process of rationalization as her mind tries to put aside her terror and gather her nerve to return to 'normal'. That normalcy then begins to erode slowly as these moments of respite get shorter and shorter, driving the heroine to her inevitable Revelation—or psychotic break. Whichever comes first.

The Unease of Not Knowing

Ask horror fans what can ruin a truly tense horror film and you'll get the same answer: finally seeing the monster and being disappointed. Why would that be the case, after they've sat through hours of tension for that big reveal? The answer comes in the human imagination. Every hint throughout a good horror film or television show lets the watcher's mind create their own nightmare, tailored to feed into that individual's worst fears and vulnerabilities. It is the unseen and the unknown that frightens them and not just what lies out in the dark. The moment the monster is spotted, the mind comes up with ways to understand it, solve it like a puzzle, and then overcome it. By keeping the nightmare a secret as long as possible, and teasing the players with pieces of the larger puzzle, you'll have them ratcheting up the tension from their worst nightmares.

Making the Normal Unsettling

Part of the tension of a setting like *No Exit* is that it twists the comfortable—your own home—and turns it into a trap. It's that twisting of normal that throws people off and makes them realize that nothing is truly safe. Since the setting itself is rather mundane, take the opportunity to create unpredictability and unrest in the players by messing with the simplest of things. Is that really leftover take-out in that container or a swirling mass of worms? That sketch on the wall walked out of the frame and the soda can just flashed the name of your dying father. Little moments can build the tension much higher than big, flashy moments of horror.

I'm Afraid of Americans... And Everyone Else!

A classic part of psychological horror is the unpredictable. And nothing is as unpredictable as people. No matter what is expected of them, people will act differently—and often strangely—when put under deep psychological and emotional pressure. Social niceties slip away and oftentimes what's left behind can surprise you. Every apartment is a pressure cooker, tailor-made to tug at the mental stressors of each tenant. Once those tenants begin to interact, there's no telling what they'll do when pressed—and as GM, press them you shall.

A FINAL WORD

In a place like the Complex, what lies beyond the walls of the player's apartment can be more terrifying than what lies within. Strange noises from other apartments, phantom drafts, notes slipped under doors from unknown 'Caretakers' or phone calls in the middle of the night are all tiny stabs at a player's buttons, all meant to keep the actual fear going in the dark. When the moments of tension ease, the character will begin to rationalize what they've seen, and that will feed into the overall cracks in their psychological armor. However, once the character begins to see and realize what it is they're facing, the battle is half won. The mind can grasp what it is seeing better than uncertainty.

But then, you can go ahead and make it uncertain all over again. After all, you've got a building that can change on itself. So go nuts. They're sure going to.



COURT/SHIP

The year is 1754. It is midnight at the palace of Versailles, but no one is sleeping. The palace and the surrounding gardens are swarming with the elite of France, and the smell of spilled wine mixes with the first blooms of the Versailles gardens. This is one of the wonders of the world, constantly expanding with new luxuries, technology, and a culture of excess. The rich and powerful compete in the cramped and opulent quarters of Versailles, scheming for money, power, land, marriages, and power.

There, standing on the balcony, in his perfect white wig, is Louis XV, The Beloved. The gold braid on his large cuffs gleams in the torchlight. In his eyes you can see his keen intellect, and the twitch of his smile reveals his love of earthly pleasures. His strong calves reveal his impressive strength at the dance, while the armor on his shoulder hints at a military history that never was.

At his right hand is his Queen, surrounded by the youngest of their ten children. The King and Queen do not touch, and her hands are full of the rosary, the beads dripping through her gloved fingers. The Court sneers to look at her, dull as she is, but she still holds power, and influence over the little children at her feet.

Holding his left hand, glove in white glove, is Madame de Pompadour, her black curls shining and her lips a perfect bow. She is a beauty, but also far more than that. She can ride, play three instruments, and keeps the company of Voltaire. If there is ever a person not to cross at court, it is she.

The young women who swarm Apollo's fountain this spring night, splashing the clear water on their bare shoulders? That is the Parc aux Cerfs, the Deer Park of the King's, young lovers that hope to become his official mistresses someday. See how they look to him, wide-eyed, hoping to catch his attention.

The music is playing, which means it is nearly time to dance. Look at them, the entire court securing their shoes and choosing their partners carefully. They know that to dance well is to gain favor. Woe to the courtier who cannot, as to avoid the dance is social death.

Above us, beyond the torches and candles held by the many servants, above the wigged and powdered heads of court, far beyond the reach of the mounted guards, or even that experimental balloon with its basket just big enough for a kitten, are the blazing stars. Tonight, the gods of antiquity have given us a real treat, as a glittering falling star sweeps across the heavens, leaving an incandescent trail in its wake.

Look closer, and we see that star is not falling at all, but hanging in the sky like an ornament on a tree. If we could listen, we might hear inside its depths a whispering of an ancient, clicking tongue, alien mouths forming the words of hunger. Hunger, and excitement, as they plan their descent to Earth. Our party has already started, and they watch, from above, and plan the feast to come.

VERSAILLES IN 1754

When I was a little baby, my mother visited a fortuneteller who told her that one day, I would capture the heart of a King. What King, exactly? Well, that was never specified.

— Madame de Pompadour

Versailles was the impossible dream of a man who thought himself the Sun. Carved with the faces of gods, it was erected in a time of vast inequality, and the grandeur of its decadence was built by totalitarianism, on the misery of a people who would eventually clamor for justice.

But, for a little while, the dream lived. After the Sun King died, Versailles and the whole of France with it was left to Louis XV. By 1754, debauchery and excess caused his popularity to falter. Louis lived in the grandeur of Versailles his entire life, ruling at the height of the French Monarchy. He did not conquer his land, and they did not rebel against him. That came later; in the year of *Court/Ship*, the mirrored halls and gilded age of Versailles flourished.

THE GROWTH

When I was a podling, my breed-parent told me that one day, I would chew my way through the flesh of a human Cow, and I would feel pleasure beyond my greatest dreams. Now that we stand on the precipice of this blue-green world, I am ready to live that dream with you, my family.

— The Growth Queenmaker

In 1754, a giant ship carved from the inside of a comet hangs in the sky above the Earth. Though the people on the ground cannot see it during the day, at night it appears like a little blinking orange light, like the twinkling of a distant star. This is the giant ship of the Growth, who have come to conquer and devour the people of Earth.

The Growth is an ancient society of serial colonists that invade, conquer, and consume the populations of planets throughout the galaxy. Each generation of the Growth colonizes a planet as a rite of passage. The Growth is vicious, intelligent, empathetic, and they have come here to have a good time and eat the delicious, juicy insides of humanity.

The Growth are whimsical imperialists. They are rarely conflicted about their relationship with those they conquer; they embrace their lifestyle with a zest for life. During conquest, the Growth act like a combination of students on spring break and new lawyers passing the bar. This is the joyful, nostalgic time their parents whispered to them about when they were in their little pods for sleep-cycle. This is the best time of their lives.

ISSUES

Issues are threats and pressures that inspire players and spur action. There are two kinds of issues: Current Issues and Impending Issues. The issues for *Court/Ship* are listed below.

Current Issue

Drama in the Court

There is constant movement in the court as nobles compete to earn favor from the King and each other. Being named an official mistress of the King often means land, a title, and wealth. Being thrown out of favor can mean the stripping of these privileges. Alliances, duels, dancing, blackmail, deceit, and competitions of wit are all tools that members of the court use to gain influence and socially destroy their competitors.

Impending Issue

Alien Invasion: The alien invasion is coming. Perhaps they strike at the least convenient moment for your players, or perhaps, if you are playing a longer game, it happens when things start to lag in your dramatic intrigue. Whenever you choose to make the aliens land, they are going to invade the court, take the skins of powerful people, eat their gooey insides, and take over France. Are your characters going to stand for that?

Optional Issues

While Drama in the Court and Alien Invasion work well to start a campaign, longer campaigns will enjoy adding additional issues to play.

The Approval of the Bishop: Because of the excess of Versailles, The Bishop has begun to take action against the King, sending messages to Rome against the debauchery of the court. This has caused Rome to speak out against the King, which serves to foment rebellion in the population of the religious France. The King would be very pleased with anyone who could convince the Bishop to send favorable reports to Rome. However, the King would never change his ways, which is what the Bishop would require for a better report.

Powerful Rival: The King is attracted to a player character, but Madame de Pompadour has taken notice and sees your character and their friends as a threat to her position. She has decided to socially destroy you all, and she has the means to do it. Can you foil her plans, or make her a friend?

A NOTE ON SEX

Louis the XV was known for his sexual escapades, and while society outside courtly life would be considered very sexually conservative, the rich and noble lived by different standards. Affairs were commonplace, and wealthy men often took mistresses. Even married women were sometimes taken away from their husbands to serve as mistresses to the King. Talk to your roleplaying group beforehand about how much of this you would like to play a theme in your own game. While some groups may enjoy delving into the intrigue of affairs and mistresses, others may be uncomfortable dealing with these topics. It's up to each group to decide how strong a theme they want sex and romantic entanglements to play in the game.

STORY QUESTIONS

The Short Game

For a short game, perhaps a one-shot for a convention or a group meeting only once, use the pre-generated characters provided in this scenario or add more skills to your custom characters and have the Invasion already in progress, with the meteor already fallen from the sky and members of the court under alien influence before the game begins.

Let the focus of the game be on getting folks to safety and finding a way to defeat the alien invasion. It may be good, in this instance, to make the difficulty lower with the aliens and give a few simple ways that the invasion can be ended.

Story Question:

Can the players prevent the alien invasion from succeeding?

The Medium Game: Focus on the Palace

This kind of campaign allows for court life to breathe, for characters to explore what it means to operate under the Intrigue of the Court before the Alien Invasion. Pre-generated characters, included in this scenario, have been used as examples for some of these questions. Use these examples to build your own.

Story Questions:

1. Can the players prevent the alien invasion from succeeding?
2. Can the characters gain the status they need to be influential in court?
3. Using the pre-generated characters: Can Zoe win a place as the King's mistress? Is that even what she wants?
4. Using the pre-generated characters: Will Melina and Renee be able to successfully dissolve Melina's relationship as official mistress with the King without losing status at court?

The Long Game

Ongoing: The alien invasion initially succeeds, or has a level of success with sacrifices being made on the part of the player characters. In this instance, the players must rally the people to overthrow the monarchy. You can also have them defeat the invasion in France, but have similar invasions in Spain and England succeed, and our characters must travel to these nations with their special knowledge in order to drive out the aliens. Pre-generated characters, included in this scenario, have been used as examples for some of these questions. Use these examples to build your own.

Story Questions:

1. Can the players prevent the alien invasion from succeeding?
2. Using the pre-generated characters: Can Zoe win a place as the King's mistress? Is that even what she wants?
3. Using the pre-generated characters: Will Melina and Rene be able to successfully dissolve Melina's relationship as official mistress with the King without losing status at court?
4. Using the pre-generated characters: Can Isidore admit his feelings for Laurent without losing his position as Captain of the Nightwatch?
5. Using the pre-generated characters: Will Laurent be able to keep the King safe when a horde of aliens seek his juicy insides?

SETTING

France in 1754

In 1754, France was a world power, with a large population and fertile farmland. However, the regressive policies of the aristocratic landowners kept peasants from improving farming techniques and with an increase in taxes, much of the population lived in poverty.

Though most people were illiterate, reading was a popular pastime among the aristocracy, with the new ideas of the Enlightenment, such as democracy, philosophy, and science, growing in popularity. Religion was important in France, but less so in Versailles and among the court. All nobles make a big show of faith, but few live by its tenets.

Louis XV, The Beloved

When Louis XV was five years old, his grandfather Louis XIV died, leaving him as the heir to the crown. The Duke of Orleans ruled as regent until Louis XV gained his majority. Louis was married at the age of 15 in 1725 to the 22-year-old Princess Marie Leszczyńska, with whom he had ten children.



Louis XV was openly involved with several official mistresses and a private brothel of teenage girls known as the Deer Park. He was quick to temper and boredom, though he was also extremely well-educated, and pursued advances in art and science. Louis XV was a wonderful dancer who was especially interested in ballet. He often performed ballet for the court as Apollo, God of the Sun. Nobles at court balls were expected to be excellent dancers as a demonstration of their superior abilities over the peasantry. To be a poor dancer would be to risk social isolation, much the same as having terrible table manners. In this court, no one was excused from the dance.

A NOTE ON HISTORICAL ACCURACY:

The historical basis that forms the setting for *Court/Ship* was researched using a wide variety of materials, including memoirs, art books, and scholarly articles. However, historical accuracy was not the primary goal behind *Court/Ship*—creating a rich setting was. Therefore, while many of the facts in this setting are based in research, facts have been changed, simplified, and wholly imagined to create a setting that better suits the premise of this game.

While this supplement may make your knowledge of the court of Louis XV impressive at cocktail parties, it should not be used to write any research papers. Many names, places, fashions, and setting details are accurate, but some history has been adjusted for our entertainment. Also, evidence of an alien invasion was never found during the research process. That is, I am afraid, one of the entirely made-up parts.

French Aristocracy

Nobles and high clergy led decadent lives in many respects. The wealthy upper class enjoyed showing off their status on the streets of Paris and on their own estates. Elaborate fashions were vital for demonstrating wealth and influence. The aristocracy was required to have a presence at Versailles, and most did so to keep informed about news and gossip, and to keep or gain favor.

However, it was possible to be of noble birth and poor. These families, driven into debt or disfavor, may have tried to marry back into wealth, trading their names for good marriages. The nobility considered work to be demeaning, so any employment was avoided for as long as they were able. Versailles would have been important to these families, as favor with the King could gain the award of lands, title, marriages, and civil or military appointments.

There were also those whose heritage was doubtful but who had wealth. These families could pay a fee to be included on the official list of nobles. They could also marry into noble families, or be declared noble by the King.

Class tensions were high in France. The nobility enjoyed privileges that the common people could not attain, including tax breaks, civil appointments, and military promotions. Though many people revered their King as a form of patriotism, inequality was quickly feeding the growing unrest of the general populace.

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in France supported the monarchy by their belief that the King's power came from God. The Church had wealth and land, and many of the nobles would send their sons to join the clergy. The Church was displeased by the libertine attitudes of the French aristocracy and the opulence of the upper clergy.

Versailles

The palace and gardens were the crown jewel of France and the monarchy. Both a show of power and wealth, this kind of excess was part of what set the stage for the eventual rebellion.

History

During the reign of Louis the Sun King, Versailles was made the official residence of the French royal court and the governmental capital of France. This process continued during the reign of Louis XV, the Beloved. Artists in all fields participated in the renovation of Versailles. The gardens of Versailles were giant and structured, with homage to nature and Greco-Roman antiquity.

The Palace

Aspect: Large and In Charge

Statues and paintings of deities and heroes of Greco-Roman antiquity are all over the palace. The sun is the main theme of Versailles, with Apollo as its representative. Louis XV is constantly remodeling the spaces at Versailles to communicate his satisfaction or displeasure with his children and other members of the court.

Noble Apartments

Aspect: Cramped but Indispensable

Louis XV keeps his influential nobility in a gilded cage of 350 apartments. Though Versailles is beautiful, most apartments are small, cramped, and smelly, and nobles compete for the best of them. There are no functioning toilets and the nobility must live with the constant smell of the privy-chambers clinging to their fashionable clothes, apartments, and the general atmosphere. Life at Versailles is determined by nobility and the King's favor, and housing is certainly reflected in this consideration.

Apart from the royal family, the majority of the residents are senior members of their household. Rooms at the palace are indispensable for a noble and essential to anyone ambitious, as these rooms allow the wealthy and influential access to the latest gossip and news. Many courtiers trade lodgings and group together with their allies, families, or friends.

The rich would often buy townhouses in Versailles proper and keep their palace apartments for entertaining guests or just for show, a placeholder to show their status.

The Main Ballroom

Aspect: The Hall Sees All

The ballroom in Versailles is a wide two-story room of white marble with giant columns extending from floor to ceiling. The first floor is an open space where concerts, performances, dances, and public gatherings are held. The second floor is a viewing area where individuals can watch the proceedings below from the balconies.

The first floor is where you can mingle with almost anyone without appointment or interference. It is a place to meet and to be seen. The balcony above is where you can see the movements of the court—but spend too much time viewing, and the court may wonder what you are up to. Spend too much time on the floor, and risk giving away too much.

The Hall of Mirrors

Aspect: Expensive Reflections of Grandeur

The Hall of Mirrors was designed to impress, with great rows of mirrors and paintings of idealized notions of war and peace.

The Throne Room: The Salon of Apollo

Aspect: The Gilded Core

A solid silver throne sits on a Persian carpet in a golden room. Behind the throne is an untouched gilded bed with white bedclothes, wreathed in golden curtains. The throne room is designed to make you feel as if you are standing on the sun, with the silver throne glinting against the golden walls. It is overwhelmingly rich, impressive, and intimidating. Which is entirely the point.

The King's Chambers

Aspect: The Secrets Are Held Here

The King's Chambers are a suite of eight rooms that serve as his everyday working and sleeping quarters. These rooms are located on the first floor of the palace and hold the King's collections of artwork and books.

The Queen's Apartments

Aspect: Quietly Isolated

The Queen's apartments are separate from the King's, and reserved for the personal use of the Queen and her youngest children. They are modest compared to the rest of the palace and isolated. These living quarters are close to the palace chapel, so that the Queen might be closer to God.

The Chapel

Aspect: Gilded Images of God

The chapel at Versailles is large enough to contain the palace nobility, and attendance to mass is as important as attendance to the most fashionable balls. Though the nobility do not always live by the tenets of their faith, it is important to give the impression that you did as a matter of good taste.

Garden

Aspect: Sprawling Wonder of the World

The gardens of Versailles host elaborate royal festivities. The role of nature and ancient gods were points of inspiration for the gardens for Versailles, which is peopled with ancient deities. Statues of the four elements, the four parts of the day, the four parts of the world, and the four seasons decorate this sprawling garden.

THE INVASION OF THE GROWTH

The Growth: Aliens In 1754

History

Ah, my little podlings, into your nest and I will tell you a story. No arguing, little ones, just one story and then the song of our ship will lull you to sleep.

Once upon a time, our people used to eat each other. It's true, little ones, we did! We would eat the flesh of the best and brightest among us, the best adapted, and then take on their traits so we could better survive. After many generations, we learned that eating each other, while satisfying, held us back from being one as a people. We developed a nutrient mix that kept our bodies alive, but without the hunt and consummation of flesh, life didn't seem quite worth living. So we decided we would seed other worlds with lower, non-sentient, versions of ourselves that we call Cows. We could eat these creatures without any moral compunction.

Over many years, we learned what fun it would be to seed a world with Cows, let them adapt to their environment, and take their skins and wear them as our own, eating the rich flesh inside. Each generation of our people gets the pleasure of eating a world and making it their own.

Many years ago, my little podlings, our people seeded a beautiful planet with Cows. How these Cows might grow, in what direction, and how they would adapt to their environment, no one knows for sure, but we knew that eventually they would grow and spread over their entire world. Someday, when we arrive in that world, you will scoop out the flesh of a Cow and crawl in its warm skin, keeping its brain in your first stomach chamber to absorb its knowledge before you finally digest it. On that day, you will know the pleasure of the hunt, and of conquering a world of your very own.

Why Did the Aliens Come Here?

The Growth have come to Earth because they planted the evolutionary seeds of humanity, hundreds of thousands of years ago, and now they've come to collect. This process gives time for their prey animal, an earlier version of themselves, to adapt to all kinds of environments. After the aliens eat the insides and inhabit the flesh, they are able to safely live in that environment. Scoop out the yummy insides and you get a fabulous skin-shell to pilot around! The Growth are landing in Versailles because they are landing in human capitals all over the world in an interconnected assault on the Earth. This could make things interesting in an ongoing game where the characters drive back the aliens in Versailles, but must then drive back the alien invasions in other capitals, fomenting revolutions against the aristocracy of England and Spain.

IF THE GROWTH ARE SO ADVANCED, WHY DON'T THEY MAKE A SYNTHETIC MEAT?

Oh, my goodness! Of COURSE the Growth have a synthetic meat! But conquering a planet and scooping out the delicious guts of a human and then fitting yourself into their skin is way, way more fun.

Life isn't about surviving. Cow, it's about living.

Alien Law

The Growth have laws surrounding the takeover and eating of various species. They cannot eat or conquer any sentient species. Proving sentience is difficult. One alien's idea of sentience is another's "clever cow trick." Sentience is a matter of opinion, combining ideas about intelligence, social abilities, higher organization, and the perspectives of the Growth's own culture.

The Physiology of the Growth

Though the Growth may appear insectoid on the outside, with slender, pointed arms and legs and a segmented torso, they are actually far more like the crustaceans. They have heavy carapaces and pincers that cover a soft, globular inside attached only to rows and rows of sharp, regenerating teeth. This carapace is not well-adapted to Earth's climate, and therefore the aliens need to find humans to burrow into and live inside within a few days of landing, or they will sicken and die.

The soft, malleable sacs of their inner layers allow them to transfer themselves into the skin of their prey, and fill out the insides, operating their prey as they would a puppet. They usually gut their prey, slide inside, and then secrete a glue-like fluid that binds the flesh together.

Standing seven feet tall when fully extended, most of the Growth hunch over so that they can make full use of their six appendages. The globular insides of the Growth do not occupy their appendages fully, but are operated much as stilts, from the first joint. No matter the body though, the Growth always carries around those regenerating rows of teeth. Outside the body of a human, or the protective carapace of their original forms, they cannot live more than a few hours.

Consuming the Human Cow

When the Growth consume a human, gutting the insides and, when they choose, occupying the skin, many times they like to keep the human brain in a special “stomach chamber,” which is accessible through their neural network. This allows them to access certain memories and skills of the human they occupy. Though the Growth could live for decades within the fleshy skin of a consumed human, this “stomach chamber” only allows for the brain to be preserved for a matter of days, after which the memories and skills are gone.

Their Ship

The Growth throw themselves down to the planet from the Mothership, hanging above the Earth like the Sword of Damocles. They arrive in meteors that crack open after impact to reveal a messy goo inside that cushions their impact. For a short game, make the number of aliens that arrive smaller. For a longer game, make it a larger force.

Their Tech

Growth tech is operated by a form of intuition, social understanding, and mild telepathy. Humans can operate Growth technology, but to do so they must succeed with high Empathy or Rapport rolls, though a Reason roll could be made to identify the skills needed to operate this machinery. The machinery is partially organic in nature, and parts of it have a green or blue phosphorescent glow.

The tech is non-verbal, and operates to its function based on the needs of its user. This can be useful, or not, depending. For example, if a user is operating a piece of equipment to heal a very wounded character, but they themselves have a minor wound, the tech will see to their needs first, rather than the needs of the character with greater injuries.



Playing the Aliens

“You are a man of reason, yes? Then you won’t mind at all if we eat your King.”

The Growth are colonists that do not see humanity as sentient. They see them as prey animals, somewhere between adorable puppies and livestock. Sure, humanity can do “tricks,” but the Growth perceive human culture as we might look at an ant colony—interesting but not important to preserve.

“Everyone here that we have eaten believes that you are the most intelligent person in this whole country. You have to understand, when we eat the brain of someone, there is a certain...loss that takes place. We cannot retain all the information they possess—so, someone living, someone with their own brain to guide us, this would be most...useful.”

The Growth don’t see themselves as evil, they are having the best time of their lives. Eating the flesh of their prey and inhabiting their skin is fun. This is the most fun they have ever had, and humanity is a bunch of fun toys they get to play with before discarding.

“We are far more advanced than you are. We could share this knowledge with you, give you advancements far beyond your current level of technology. This could be a great deal for you! Why, it will take lifetimes for us to consume the people of your world—and don’t worry, we won’t eliminate your species entirely—just eat them back to the two thousand or so we left last time. Then we’ll leave and come back when you repopulate. Meanwhile, it could be the greatest age of humanity—no disease or poverty—and sure, we’ll eat people—but would it really be any more suffering than you inflict upon yourself? At the very least, this would be orderly.”

The Growth may offer your players the opportunity to join forces and help them take over Earth, promising prosperity in return for pounds and pounds of flesh. Player might choose to take this deal and work against the Growth from the inside, or they might reject this idea. Either way, it presents an interesting conflict for your characters to face.

“What do I want? I want you to swear allegiance to me as your Queen. Would it really be so different, living under me, than your King?”

CHARACTERS

Class Types

In *Court/Ship*, players must choose a social class for their characters. Hierarchy was incredibly important within 1754 France, and to reflect that hierarchy, a character's "class" should be included either in their High Concept or Trouble. Also, social class gives you a +1 bonus in a skill emphasized by that class. The bonus is factored after skills are assigned so it may allow a skill to exceed a normal skill cap and/or exist outside the skill pyramid.

Aristocracy

Louis XV kept his influential aristocracy close. Senior members of the rich and noble households would often reside at Versailles. Even when the most senior member was unavailable, it would be unthinkable for an influential family not to have a representative at Versailles, ideally one who could make a good impression on the King and court. Versailles was the seat of the rich and powerful and to gain influence and keep standing; it was indispensable to have a presence there.

Your High Concept or Trouble must include your character's noble status, such as "Late Blooming Baron" or "Comte de Notre Dame, and Proud of it!"

Bonus: +1 Nobility (new skill).

The Royal Guard

The Royal Guard was the elite of the French Forces, and elite among these were the Guards of Versailles, the Maison du Roi, or the King's Household. Members of this elite group regarded themselves as nobility and each came with their own servant. Uniforms were splendid, blue lined with red, each with gold or silver trim woven into the fabric.

Your High Concept or Trouble must include your character's role in the guard, such as "Captain of the Guard" or "At the Beck and Call of Nobility."

Bonus: +1 Fight.

The Scottish Company

In addition to his French Royal Guard, Louis XV also kept a guard of Scottish mercenaries called the Scottish Company on hand for his personal defense. This was a mounted unit that carried claymores and served as defense for the King. If the French people began to turn against him, the King knew that he had his Scottish Company as a backup. This company wore white bandoliers with silver lace.

Your High Concept or Trouble must include your character's membership in the Scottish Company, such as "Mercenary without a Care" or "Black Sheep of the Scottish Company."

Bonus: +1 Ride

Servants

Versailles held a host of servants, some of whom lived on site, but many of whom lived in the town. These servants were butlers, maids, personal servants to nobility, tutors, wet nurses, nannies, carriage drivers, cooks, entertainers, and construction workers engaged in continual palace updates and repairs. Among the servants there was a hierarchy, with those serving closest to important people such as the King and Madame de Pompadour having more status—and often, their own servants—than servants that worked in the kitchens. Being a servant means being cut off from the social life of court. Though you may intimately understand those you serve, you are never considered their equal.

Your High Concept or Trouble must include your servant status, such as “Head Cook of House Pompadour” or “Always under the Master’s Thumb.”

Bonus: +1 Empathy +1 Intimacy

Philosophers

This was the time of the Enlightenment, when western society began to see itself not as continually falling further from the grace of the Garden of Eden, but in pursuit of a better world. Aristocrats often shunned commerce and pursued science as a pastime. The natural world was revered in France, and during his reign Louis XV supported the sciences, establishing schools in physics and mathematics.

The people that pursued scientific discoveries were often referred to as Natural Philosophers. Reason was held in great esteem during this time period; the pursuit of reason and the understanding of the natural world was a great pastime of the nobility. The nobility took great pride in the education of their children, both men and women. A woman who was well-educated was considered a better candidate for marriage than an uneducated woman.

Your High Concept or Trouble must include your education or scientific fascination, such as “Chief Mathematician of the Court” or “Head Lost in the Clouds.”

Bonus: +1 Reason

Artists

Artists such as writers, painters, poets, and dancers of noted accomplishment were celebrated at the palace, giving frequent performances for the amusement of the Nobility. Though these artists were not considered to have the same status as nobility, and few attained any wealth, they still had some audience with the influential. Occasionally, a noble would pursue the arts to great acclaim. Dancing, in particular, was considered an important skill.

Your High Concept or Trouble must include your art, such as “Author of Arthurian Tales” or “Poetry Doesn’t Pay the Bills.”

Bonus: +1 Crafts

SKILLS

From *Fate Core*

The skills listed below are appropriate to use just as they appear in the *Fate Core* book. However, the skills listed in bold have special *Court/Ship* Stunts.

- Athletics
- **Empathy**
- Physique
- Shoot
- Burglary
- **Fight**
- Provoke
- Stealth
- **Contacts**
- Investigation
- **Rapport**
- Will
- Crafts
- Notice
- Resources

***Court/Ship* Skills**

- Dance
- Intimacy
- Nobility
- Ride (Replaces Drive)
- Reason (Replaces Lore)
- Wit (Replaces Deceive)



Dance

Louis had set the fashion for dance at his court. Aristocrats at his court balls were expected to move with a grace that reflected their superiority over common people. Dancing at court was a nightly occurrence and dancing well was necessary for anyone to rise in or maintain status. Those who were awkward went out of favor. Louis XV was ballet's first star, often dancing as the ancient Greek sun god, Apollo. Impressive show of skills while dancing would mean gaining favor from the court. Characters that do not dance, or who dance poorly, will face other social challenges.



Overcome: You can use Dance to overcome obstacles related to social or physical interactions in court. It can be used to read your dancing partner, as Empathy would, to make a good impression, as Rapport would, or to make your way across the floor unmolested by courtiers or even guards, all while following proper etiquette.



Create Advantage: You can create distance between yourself and another member of the court, making it difficult for them to approach you. You can also draw the spotlight on yourself, or declare that a certain dance is en vogue and impress others with your mastery of it.



Attack: Dance cannot be used for attack.



Defend: Dance can be used to defend versus social attacks when changing partners, or moving across the dance floor, or otherwise evading your opponent, would render their attacks moot.

Dance Stunts

The Martial Dance: Much of dance is the understanding of your own movements and where people are around you. You may substitute Dance for Fight when you're in a melee combat that favors balance and grace over force and speed.

Practiced: Dance is important to you, such that you train regularly. This training has increased your stamina. You may roll Dance instead of Physique for any rolls related to extended physical exertion.

Own the Dance Floor Gain +2 when using Dance to win the favor of your onlookers (as you would with Rapport).

Intimacy

You must have an established, intimate relationship—however fleeting—with your target before you can make use of your Intimacy skill. How you get there is up to you. It could be through the graces of Dance, the charms of Rapport, the subtle arts of Wit, the insight of Empathy, or even the brute force of Provoke (after all, blackmail can get many a body into one's bedchamber).

Using one of these skills you must establish a relationship aspect with the target. It may be a short-term situation aspect, or if you're able to parlay a moment's advantage into a more protracted affair, something longer term. You can side-step the need to establish a relationship, of course, if you already have one as reflected by the target's existing aspects—in other words, one may assume that one's mistress is already available to the arts of Intimacy.

Whenever establishing a relationship for the purposes of Intimacy, it's a two-way street: when you roll to establish a relationship with your target, your target makes a roll of her own to establish a relationship with you. It is possible neither, both, or only one of you will succeed at such efforts. Few relationships are symmetric, and some die on the vine before they are plucked, fully-ripened. Once a relationship is established, the acts of Intimacy may begin.



Overcome: Once intimate with someone, Intimacy allows you to gain their undivided attention, start a conversation (even if they don't want to), and otherwise get into their personal and mental space. This includes digging into their affairs when they aren't present, as you would with the Investigation skill. You can also use the overcome action to help them recover from mental consequences, using your connection with them to ease the pain of a wounded heart.



Create advantage: Once someone has revealed their innermost self to you, it is hard for them to hide anything else. With Intimacy you can create an advantage by currying favor with them. You can also use Intimacy to discover their aspects, including making one of the three required rolls to discover their secret aspect (see *Discovering a Secret* below).



Attack: The cruelest knife-cut is the one delivered by a lover, after all. In such relationships our hearts are open to the deepest hurt. Provided you can make a cutting remark, Intimacy to be used to make mental attacks, doing emotional harm to the one you know so well. Circumstances figure a great deal into whether or not you can use this action—and into whether or not the relationship outlasts the scene in which you make your attack.



Defend: Once you are intimate with someone, you can use Intimacy to defend against Rapport, Empathy, Wit, or Provoke rolls.

Example: Isidore is trying to use Provoke to intimidate Melina after he caught her going through his personal effects in his room. He doesn't want to physically harm her, she's still the King's mistress after all, but he does want her to back off. Melina has known Isidore for years, and when he tries to pull the same growling and finger-pointing posturing that he's pulled on courtiers for years, she laughs it off. He can't hurt her and both of them know it.

Intimacy Stunts

Healing the Heart: Being intimate with another person can help heal the wounds of a bad day or stressful situation. Gain +2 with Intimacy to overcome when helping another recover from mental consequences.

Know You So Well: Once you are intimate with someone, you can flawlessly convey an emotion such as urgency, fear, or delight to them, without the emotion being detectable to another person.

Nothing Between Us: With this stunt you are immune to advantages another character might have by knowing one of your secrets, provided you have established intimacy with them. (View details about secrets on page 190.)



Nobility

Nobility rates your distance from the throne. While this might not seem like a traditional skill in that those that have it are often born into it, within *Court/Ship* it is an incredibly important indicator of your importance within society. Players who do not take the Nobility skill may play servants, artists, military personnel, and inventors, but not members of the Aristocracy. Players may take Nobility if they are a different class than Aristocracy, but should work an explanation into their background to explain why their family is no longer considered members of the Aristocratic class.

Nobility is a special skill. It exists outside the skill pyramid (and is not affected by normal skill caps). Those who are part of the Noble class may put up to five skill points in Nobility (and with their +1 bonus, go up to +6) but all others are limited to a maximum of Good (+3) Nobility. In play, skill points from milestones cannot be used to raise nobility, but it can be raised (or lowered) based on events in the game.

Nobility is often associated with the ownership of land, though some nobles do not have lands, or for others the lands are not profitable. Typically, these titles are associated with the size and value of lands, though that point is flexible. Below are the ranks characters can take in Nobility dependent on the skill taken.

- **Prince/Princess du Sang; Prince of Blood +7** A direct descendant of a previous French King, from an official mistress. Royal families prefer to ignore these children, as acknowledgement could create threats to succession. However, sometimes acknowledgement and assignment into a political marriage can secure alliances with other nations. To create a character with this rank, you must first buy your nobility up to +6, then take the **Royal Blood** stunt and you must have an aspect that reflects your acknowledgement (or lack thereof) in the court.
- **Duke/Duchess +6**
- **Marquis +5**
- **Comte +4**
- **Vicomte +3**
- **Baron/Baroness +2**
- **Chevalier +1:** Nobility who fell on hard times and were forced to sell their lands may have the title of Chevalier. The King might also hand out this rank to a commoner who distinguishes themselves in a notable way.



Overcome: You can use Nobility to overcome any obstacle that requires people to listen to, respect, or obey you. When you overcome with Nobility, you have successfully proven your status and thus your right to be taken seriously.



Create Advantage: You can create an advantage with your Nobility in situations where being a noble means that you are regarded as inherently better than other people. For example, if you succeed at a Nobility roll before a ball, you might create an advantage such as “Eyes on Me” to mean that even if someone is in actuality a better dancer, people are really only paying attention to you because of your rank. After all, you are just more important!



Attack: You cannot use Nobility to attack directly. However, you can use nobility to convince others to attack.



Defense: Nobility can be used as a defense against social attacks. A successful Nobility defense can only take place when it is one character attacking another who knows that character is Nobility. Nobility also acts as the difficulty others must overcome if they wish to gain audience with you against your will.

Nobility Stunts

Wasn't Always This Way: You weren't always a noble, you earned this place for yourself, and as such, you know how to talk to those beneath you without coming off as pompous or privileged. You may use your Nobility as Rapport to overcome even amongst layfolk.

All Things Being Equal: When engaged in a Rapport roll with another character of a lower rank, you get +2 to your Rapport rolls when there are more than two characters present. It's not actually that you are better at Rapport, it's just that people view you that way. Life isn't fair.

Don't You Know Who I Am? You can use Nobility instead of Provoke on those of a lower rank, because your Nobility makes you a little scary.

Royal Blood The Royal Blood stunt raises your Nobility by one, even if that would raise your Nobility above Fantastic (+6).”

NOBILITY IN PRACTICE

If you are commanding a group of guards to arrest a courtier for treason, you will need a Nobility role to convince the guards that you have the authority to take that action. If you lose your Nobility roll, your rank is not acknowledged in that situation, or if it is, people start to take your rank into question, or to resent it.

Nobility might also be used to stop an individual from making an arrest: “Don't you know who I am!”

In situations where your nobility is high enough, or the actions requested are simple—a refill on your wine glass—a Nobility roll is not required.

Ride

The ability to ride a horse or drive a carriage. Though nobility often knew how to ride, it was not a skill everyone had, and horses can be difficult for an untrained rider, especially under adverse circumstances. Ride replaces the Drive skill from *Fate Core*.



Overcome: Ride is the equivalent of Athletics when you're on a horse, donkey, pony, or driving a carriage. You use it to successfully accomplish movement in the face of difficult circumstances such as rough terrain, small amounts of clearance, or horses of questionable temper. Obviously, Ride is also ripe for contests, especially chases and races.



Advantage: You can use Ride to determine the best way to get somewhere when mounted, and a good enough roll might allow you to learn features of the route that get expressed as aspects, such as declaring that you know the best path or that there is an obstacle to other riders.

Advantages created using Ride often revolve around getting good positioning, doing a fancy maneuver (jumping the garden hedges), or putting your opponent in a bad spot.



Attack: Ride isn't usually used as an attack skill, though your horse can certainly attack or intimidate another horse. There is a stunt for this.



Defense: Avoiding damage to a horse or carriage in a physical conflict is one of the most common uses of Ride. You can also use it to defend against advantages being created against you or sprint actions by someone trying to get past you on a horse.

Ride Stunts

Night Mare: Your horse scares other horses. You can use your Ride skill to intimidate other horses into slowing down or even stopping. Especially useful in chases!

The Back of My Hand: You are so familiar with Versailles that when you are navigating the gardens, you take a +1 to all challenges to Ride.

Great Escapes: If you are riding in order to escape pursuit, you are able to convey your sense of desperation to your horse, and this communication adds speed to your ride. You gain +2 to escape pursuers in this scene.

Reason

Reason is the study of science. Those who pursue Reason in this Age of Enlightenment are inventors and natural philosophers. This study of reason includes the natural world, mathematics, chemistry, and mechanics. Taking the Reason skill means that you are a scholar with a good grasp on many scientific concepts. You may be a hobbyist noble dabbling in the study of reason, or a noted scholar of the department of physics or mechanics from the Collège de France.

Reason replaces the Lore skill from *Fate Core*.



Overcome: You can use Reason to overcome any obstacle that requires applying the knowledge or deductive reasoning to achieve a goal. For example, you might roll Reason to invent a simple device, understand something about the natural world, or figure out a mathematical equation.



Advantage: Reason provides many opportunities to create advantages through the application of experiments and logic. Though Reason can be used to do research, much of the knowledge of the natural world is in its infancy, literacy is not widespread, and translations are few. However, France is a center of new and exciting research, so who knows, it might be out there! Reason will give you the opportunity to make discoveries about the natural world that can take the form of an aspect. You can use Reason to create advantages based on any subject matter related to the natural world, physics, mechanics, mathematics, chemistry, or astronomy.



Attack: Reason isn't used in Conflicts.



Defense: Reason isn't used to Defend.

Reason Stunts

Invent: The 1700s are a rich time for innovation, with inventions like the manned hot air balloon springing out of France. You gain +2 to invent a simple device with Reason.

Logic: Characters with this stunt can roll their Reason, rather than Investigation, to search for clues and come to conclusions about those clues.

Wit

Wit is the practice of outsmarting your adversary through guile, deceit, treachery, and pretty words. Wit replaces the Deceive skill from *Fate Core*.

Wit Stunts

Wit is treasured deeply in court, and those who are masters of it can earn the admiration of their peers. You might not be good at talking to people, but you can certainly add a bit of wit to the proceedings. You can use Wit to deliver a social attack when pulling a prank on a fellow court member.

Court/Ship Stunts

Rapport

Bon Mot Stunt Family

Bon Mot: You know how to deliver a stinging bon mot to end a conversation and give you the edge in your next encounter. When you use Rapport to create an advantage at the end of a conversation, you may keep the aspect and the free invocation to use in your next encounter with your target, no matter how long it takes for that encounter to come to pass.

Devastating Bon Mot (Requires Bon Mot): Once per session, when in the company of your peers, you can deliver a Devastating Bon Mot that will end any social challenge, contest, or conflict you are in. There is no winner, however you are seen by onlookers as having the upper hand. The aspect you establish as per Bon Mot (above) will be known to anyone present, should you wish it.

Court Stunt Family

Child of the Court: As per the stunt in *Fate Core* (page 90).

Scion of the Court: (Requires Child of the Court) As per the stunt in *Fate Core* (page 94).

Master of the Court: (Requires Scion of the Court) Challenges to your opinions when at court are two steps higher on the ladder for others to overcome, or give you +2 on a contested roll.

Fight

Duelist: Dueling has specific rules in the court, and while you might not be a master of the knock-down brawl, you are a master of dueling. Gain +2 when creating an advantage using Fight in a formalized duel.

Professional Duelist : (Requires Duelist) Your skill as a duelist is renowned in the court. You make use your Fight skill in place of Provoke when your target is aware of your reputation as a duelist.

Master Duelist : (Requires Professional Duelist) Few are on par with your masterful hand. You gain +2 on attacks when using Fight in a formalized duel.

Empathy

Royal Watcher: When it comes to the King and the rest of the royal family, you've been studying them for so long, watching their movements and their reactions, that you really understand them, what motivates them, and why. Gain a +2 to overcome and create advantage actions with Empathy when dealing with the Royal Family.



Contacts

What Little People Can Do: You have an in with the servants of Versailles, they trust you and are willing to listen in on conversations and tell you what they've heard, and what they know. You may use Contacts in place of Investigation to gain information about a conversation or event at court in which servants were present.

Nobility Obliges: Your connections among the upper crust of nobility are solid. +2 when you are seeking a contact within the nobility to help you with a challenge that relates to another noble.

SUPERNATURAL CREATURES

Court/Ship is a great game to add supernatural creatures. While adding magic and sweeping supernatural powers might be a bit much for the setting, adding in a few strange creatures, or allowing your players to be supernatural creatures as part of their secret, is a great addition to your game if it's something your players enjoy. Discuss with your players before the game. If the aliens did seed Earth with cattle that might have evolved in a variety of directions, perhaps part of humanity has split off into a different kind of creature. Vampires, Psychics, Werewolves, Mermen, all of these creature concepts could be rolled into the basic game. How they might be used is demonstrated through the example characters.

COURT/SHIP MECHANIC: SECRETS

Secrets are incredibly important to playing a game of courtly intrigue. Every character in *Court/Ship* gets an extra aspect during character creation. Players must create a secret aspect for their character and write it on an index card. On the other side of that card, they must write the public version of that aspect that hints at that secret. They can use this as an aspect during a game, but doing so will give the NPCs and player characters present a clue as to what that secret is.

WHY SECRETS?

Why complicate things with secrets? *Court/Ship* is a game about intrigue, alliances, hierarchy, and class. Secrets add tension to intrigue, and give characters something to keep safe, something that could harm them if revealed, and something to reveal to strong allies. Courtly life means living in close quarters with powerful people—affairs, fraud, and schemes are all part of the deal with the court. Living at court means living in a highly stratified society under strict social laws where certain behavior is demanded, and a misstep could be devastating.

Creating A Secret

Secrets must be aspects that, if revealed, would have negative consequences for your character. Like other aspects, secrets should also have benefits. For example, a character might have served in an enemy's army, but that could have given the character excellent sword fighting skills. Fight too much in this style though, and people might start to guess the origin of your skill.



A good secret should be balanced, with the power of the secret weighted against with the possible retaliation for its revelation. For example, having lost most of your inheritance due to mismanagement will cause you to be looked down upon at court and could result in a higher difficulty during certain Rapport rolls, but being a psychic will get you burned at the stake.

Revealing A Secret

Revealing to An Ally

Revealing a secret about yourself can be a powerful experience, drawing you closer to those you share it with while giving them powerful information about you. If you choose to reveal your secret to an ally, that person gets +1 against you in all Rapport rolls.

Example: Revealing to an Ally

Severe catches Rene sneaking around the dungeons at night and demands Rene tell him what he thinks he's doing at that hour. Rene considers that in this case, telling the truth about his secret, an Illicit Affair, might actually avoid suspicion of a worse crime. "I beg you not to tell anyone, Captain Severe, but I am sleeping with my wife!" Rene hopes that Severe, his friend, will consider the Double Reveal, giving them both bonuses. Severe considers his options, but the consequences for him are too high! Now he has +1 with Rene on Rapport rolls—unless Rene can discover his secret.

The Double Reveal

If two allies choose to both reveal their secrets to one another, both gain +1 Empathy rolls to help each other recover from mental consequences. When you know each other's secrets, you create a deep connection between the characters. Characters can also decide to be the keepers of each other's secrets during character creation.

Example: Double Reveal

Zoe and Melina have similar goals. Zoe would like to be an official mistress of the King, while Melina would like to get out of the arrangement amicably. Since the King is only allowed three official mistresses by his Queen, Melina thinks that together they might be able to pull the old switcheroo. Both players decide that their characters have grown close enough to reveal their secrets in a heart-to-heart. After a planning session where Melina gives Zoe the rundown on the King's preferences, Zoe clasps her new friend's hands and says "I know I can please him because sometimes, I know what people are thinking, even if they don't say anything." (Secret Psychic) "You think that's bad?" says Melina "I'm sleeping with my husband!" (Illicit Affair)

Revealing to the World

Want to just take your lumps and get it out in the open? You are free to do this at any time, but you take an appropriate moderate mental consequence (or severe if your moderate slot is taken) when you do. However, doing this eliminates all bonuses other characters might have with you if you revealed your secret or if it was discovered.

Discovering A Secret

How do you discover a secret? Each time a character uses their secret aspect, player characters present can make a contested Notice or Empathy (or Intimacy if they have a connection) roll against that player. Three successes and that character will discover what the secret is. Players should work together to narrate this dramatic discovery. It does not even need to happen in the same scene! Discovering the secret gives you +2 to Provoke rolls against that character.

Example: Zoe's Discovery

Laurent is lauded as the greatest warrior in the court, performing duels for the King's amusement. But he's also a religious, private man. Zoe has been watching him closely, intrigued by his romantic, mysterious manner. After three successful Notice rolls, the players decide together that Zoe learns Laurent's secret. Zoe peeks through Laurent's window to see that he is wrapping bandages around his chest. The greatest warrior of the court is female. Zoe smiles to herself, pleased that she has chosen such a dashing person as a prospective suitor.

Finding out the secret of another character is a method of getting back the mechanical advantage that might have resulted from a previous discovery or reveal.

Example: Isidore Loses the Advantage

Isidore Severe has used his secret aspect "Tougher Than He Looks" one too many times in the presence of Rene—in his defense, it's fabulously useful! The players decide that while Rene sees the flash of Isidore's fangs in the dungeon, it's not till Rene goes to the library and does a bit of research on mythology that he realizes the truth: Isidore is a vampire! Now that they know each other's secrets, there are no longer any mechanical advantages to the secrets—but there certainly are stories to be told!

Betrayal of a Secret

Telling another character's secret may cause negative consequences for that character, but it also dissolves all the bonuses you have from revealing or discovering a secret.

Do Secrets Have To Be Secret?

Deciding if the secrets your characters have are also secrets for the players is a choice that the players should make. During character creation, talk to your group about secrets, and how they will work during the game.

Secrets Out Of Character

Keeping your character's secret hidden out of character can add to the excitement of the game. Players who enjoy puzzles may find it exciting to try to guess the secrets of the other players. This can add to the social engagement between characters as they try to figure out what the aspects might mean, and maneuver their fellow players into situations where they will use that aspect.

Secrets In Character

Knowing everyone's secrets may work well for a group that is interested in crafting an excellent story, and want to make sure that each character's secret has a chance to have a great revelation. Knowing the secrets may allow players to maneuver the game into situations that will maximize the drama of a particular secret. This might be especially useful for new players who might want help crafting their secrets at character creation. This way, secrets could be created as a group exercise, and players can help each other decide on the level of drama they want to play.

Whatever the group decides can work. If the group decides it's better for everyone to know, just write the public and secret aspects together on the same side of the index card.



CHARACTERS

Character Creation

Court/Ship characters are created in the same way as *Fate Core* characters, with a few exceptions. Character creation still involves creating a character idea, making a high concept aspect, a trouble aspect, a name, the three phases of your adventure, crossing paths, crossing paths again, a skill set of one great, two good, three fair, and four average, between one and three stunts, a mental and physical stress track of 2–4 boxes each, and a refresh rate of 1–3 points.

However, *Court/Ship* characters must also choose from the Class list: Noble, Artist, Servant, Scottish Company, or Royal Guard. This Class must be reflected in either their high concept or trouble aspect.

Characters must also create a “secret aspect” on a separate card—one side for how the aspect manifests to the public, and another side for what the secret actually is. For details on creating your “secret” aspect, see page 190.

- Character Idea
- High Concept Aspect
- Trouble Aspect
- Name
- Class
- Phase Trio
- Phase One: Your Adventure—One Aspect
- Phase Two: Crossing Paths / Aspect
- Phase Three: Crossing Paths Again / Phase Three Aspect
- Skills: One Great, two Good, three Fair, four Average Stunts and Refresh
- Create Your Secret Aspect

Pre-Generated Characters

While you can make up your own characters for *Court/Ship*, below are a list of pre-generated characters, should you and your players wish to jump into a session right away. These characters can also be used for convention games or any situation where time may be limited.

- The Mistress: Baroness Melina Achille, Favorite Mistress of the King: spunky, witty, charming, not to be crossed.
- The Scientist: Rene Achille, A Gentleman Scientist: intelligent, observant, admired, has a balloon.
- The Ingénue: Zoe Achille, The Beautiful New Girl: elegant, adorable, quick study, the best dancer the court has ever seen.
- The Captain: Laurent Pontius, Handsome Captain of the King's Royal Guard: noble, charming, loyal, deeply religious.
- The Nightwatch: Isidore Severe, Head of the Palace Nightwatch: stern, aloof, deeply sexy.

Baroness Melina Achille

Melina is social genius, a brilliant navigator of the difficult social life of the court. A wonderful dancer, Melina knows how to play the harpsichord, tell a saucy joke, and deliver a clever retort. More than anything else, Melina wants freedom, but at the moment, she is a captive to her situation.

Three years ago, Melina married Rene Achille, which was arranged by their parents when Rene came to their town to demonstrate his new “hot air balloon,” an invention which made him famous throughout Europe. Melina and Rene lived six happy months touring France together before returning to court. When Melina was introduced to the King he became captivated by her beauty and insisted that she become his mistress. Since mistresses can gain titles and land from their arrangement with the King, Melina was pressured by her family into accepting the appointment. Melina is now forbidden to have relations with her husband, with whom she is deeply in love. She wants to convince the King to release her from service as mistress, while still remaining in his favor, so that she can live happily ever after with her beloved husband.

Appearance: Melina has lovely dark curls, a curvy figure, pale skin and large watery eyes.

Secret Aspect:

Public Side: Married to Rene Achille

Secret: Sleeping with Husband: You never stopped loving your husband, or wanting him. Sometimes you creep through the palace to your husband's chambers to spend part of the night with him. If this were to be discovered, the King would be enraged and strip you of your nobility and your lands, leaving you and your husband with nothing. He had the power to make you, and he can take it all away.

BARONESS MELINA ACHILLE

Class: Noble, +1 Nobility (Total of +2)
High Concept: *The King's Beloved Mistress*
Trouble: *Object of Jealousy*
Other Aspects: *Not Afraid of the Big Bad Isidore ; Darling of the Court; A Sly Little Thing*

Skills

Rapport: Great (+4)	Wit: Good (+3)
Intimacy: Good (+3)	Contacts: Fair (+2)
Dance: Fair (+2)	Empathy: Fair (+2)
Crafts: Average (+1)	Notice: Average (+1)
Reason: Average (+1)	Nobility: Average (+1)

Stunts

Bon Mot (Rapport): You know how to deliver a stinging bon mot to end a conversation and give you the edge in your next encounter. When you use Rapport to create an advantage at the end of a conversation, you may keep the aspect and the free invocation to use in your next encounter with your target, no matter how long it takes for that encounter to come to pass.

Healing the Heart (Intimacy): Being intimate with another person can help heal the wounds of a bad day or stressful situation. Gain +2 with Intimacy to overcome when helping another recover from mental consequences.

Child of the Court (Rapport): Gain a +2 bonus to any attempt to overcome obstacles with Rapport while at an aristocratic function, such as a royal ball.

Total Refresh Cost: 0

Stress **Mental** **Physical**

Rene Achille

Rene is a gentleman naturalist who is devoted to making new scientific discoveries and inventions. Rene's research is funded by his wealthy merchant family of whom his older brother is the head, and is given space and manpower to experiment in the palace by the King. Rene Achille has made several discoveries including advances in indoor plumbing, documentation relating to the movement of the stars, and the creation of the world's first hot air balloon.

These discoveries have been to the credit of the King, who finds him valuable for his intellect. He was married to Melina Achille, but when he brought her to court, the King was immediately taken with her, and took her as a mistress.

Rene is forbidden to have relations with her. All he wants to do is to pursue reason and make discoveries that will benefit all of mankind.

Appearance: Rene is slim, with long slender fingers and bright, intelligent eyes. He has a young looking face, and often wears a heavy leather apron.

Secret Aspect:

Public Side: Master Chemist

Secret: You Created A Monster: You wanted to make a chemical mixture that could be used to strengthen the soldiers of France, so that they would be stronger and more powerful than any other army in the world. Such a creation, being of a military accomplishment, may merit a title in itself. You created such a concoction a few months ago, and, being a wise person, you tested your creation on a hunting dog. Unfortunately, the dog escaped after ingesting the potion, killing a stable boy, many deer, and an elderly farmer. Reports of the creature described it as a massive wolf. It was hunted, but despite several reports of it being hit with pistols, never caught. Days later, you found the body of the dog in the woods, bullet riddled and shrunk. You buried the body and hid the gravesite. If they knew you were behind such a massive mess up, it would have been the end of you.

RENE ACHILLE

Class: Philosopher, +1 Reason (For a total of +5 Reason)

High Concept: *Gentleman of Reason*

Trouble: *It's Written On Your Face*

Other aspects: *A Credit to France; A Beautiful Mind; Respected by my Peers*

Skills	Reason: Great (+4)	Notice: Good (+3)
	Will: Good (+3)	Dance: Fair (+2)
	Wit: Fair (+2)	Contacts: Fair (+2)
	Rapport: Average (+1)	Ride: Average (+1)
	Stealth: Average (+1)	Empathy: Average (+1)

Stunts **Invent (Reason):** The 1700s are a rich time for innovation, with inventions like the manned hot air balloon springing out of France. You gain +2 to invent a simple device with Reason.

Logic (Reason): Characters with this stunt can roll their Reason, rather than Investigation, to search for clues and come to conclusions about those clues.

Total Refresh Cost: 1

Stress **Mental** **Physical**

Zoe Achille

New to court, this 16-year-old young lady seeks to become the newest mistress of the King. Zoe has a deep understanding of human nature, and an intuitive ability to understand the thoughts and emotions of other people. She is the niece of Rene Achille, and when she developed the doll-face and tiny bow lips that are so fashionable in court, her parents hoped that Rene could help her to become the King's mistress, and thus, perhaps gain the title that their family so desperately needs to add legitimacy to their growing wealth. They have trained her from childhood in courtly matters to be the ideal lady. She can read and write, which has led to her reading some that have filled her head with notions about freedom and romance. She longs to find her true love, impress the King, and gain a title that will insure her family's success.

Appearance: Strawberry blond hair that falls in ringlets around her oval face, bow lips, tiny hands and feet.

Secret Aspect:

Public Side: Impressive Intuition

Secret: Psychic Powers: Sometimes you know what someone is going to do before they do it. This intuition has given you some advantages in life, but when you were a child it would lead to strange behavior that others didn't understand. Every now and then, you know what someone is going to say before they say it, or can feel someone's emotion before you see their face. If anyone found out about this, you could be charged with witchcraft and put to death.

ZOE ACHILLE

Class: Artist, +1 Crafts (For a total of +4 Crafts)

High Concept: *New Girl In Court*

Trouble: *Incurably Romantic*

Other aspects: *Idolizes Aunt Melina; Quick Like A Bunny; Picks up Quick*

Skills

Empathy: Great (+4)	Dance: Good (+3)
Crafts: Good (+3)	Notice: Fair (+2)
Rapport: Fair (+2)	Intimacy: Fair (+2)
Wit: Average (+1)	Physique: Average (+1)
Contacts: Average (+1)	Stealth: Average (+1)

Stunts **Practiced (Dance):** Dance is important to you, such that you train regularly. This training has increased your stamina. You may roll Dance instead of Physique for any rolls related to extended physical exertion.

Own the Dance Floor (Dance): Gain +2 when using Dance to win the favor of your onlookers (as you would with Rapport).

Total Refresh Cost: 1

Stress Mental

Physical

Laurent Pontius

Laurent is the handsome Captain of the King's Royal Guard, a troop of men who patrol outside and inside the palace, keeping the peace. Honorable, loyal, and religious, Laurent is all the noble qualities of man in one person. Devoted to the safety of the palace, Laurent works closely with the Captain of the Nightwatch to ensure that the King and his court enjoy safety and security.

Unmarried, Laurent has sworn himself to celibacy for the duration of his appointment. Laurent is religious and spends an hour every night praying in the palace chapel. Although he is friendly, generous, and kind, he doesn't let many people get close to him.

Appearance: Laurent has a tidy red/blond beard, and a fantastic muscular physique that he shows off during wrestling matches that are held for the court's entertainment. He is the tallest of the player characters.

Secret Aspect:

Public Side: Master of Disguise

Secret: You have the body of a woman.

Though you live and work as a man you have the body of a woman. If this were discovered, you would be stripped of your rank, your material possessions, and your honor. It is possible that you could even be brought up on charges and imprisoned for deceiving the King.



LAURENT PONTIUS

Class: Royal Guard, +1 Fight (For a total of +4 Fight)

High Concept: *The Champion of Versailles*

Trouble: *No Tolerance for Fools*

Other aspects: *Leader of Men; Action Comes First; Isidore's Partner in Palace Protection*

Skills	Wit: Great (+4)	Fight: Good (+3)
	Will: Good (+3)	Notice: Fair (+2)
	Investigation: Fair (+2)	Athletics: Fair (+2)
	Dance: Average (+1)	Physique: Average (+1)
	Rapport: Average (+1)	Empathy: Average (+1)

Stunts **Quick Blade and a Calm Heart (Fight):** Once per scene, you can ignore any distractions, physical or mental, that might be taking place during a Fight challenge.

What Little People Can Do (Contacts): You have an in with the servants of Versailles, they trust you and are willing to listen in on conversations and tell you what they've heard, and what they know. You may use Contacts in place of Investigation to gain information about a conversation or event at court in which servants were present.

Total Refresh Cost: 1

Stress **Mental** **Physical**

Isidore Severe

Isidore is the head of the Scottish Guard Nightwatch, and commands the small group of guards who patrol the palace and the grounds at night. He doesn't much like working with a team and often commands his guards to patrol while he goes off on his own. Captain Severe is rumored to be the head of the King's secret police and to have spies all over the palace. The Captain has the delicate elfin features that are in fashion for gentlemen, but his stern and aloof nature does not endear him to the court. He is a master swordsman whose speed and skill are often used to put new recruits in their place.

Appearance: The Captain is all lean muscle, with delicate facial features. He has dark hair, black eyes, and always wears gloves.



PLAYING SUPERNATURALS

Humans aren't the only ones who are threatened by the presence of the Growth. A variety of supernatural creatures hide in plain sight, whispering advice into the king's ear. Like most predators, they're very protective of their prey: the vampires value their blood sources; sorcerers crave human power, and the psychics recoil at the strong feelings of fear and discord engendered by the alien invasion. If pushed too far, these sometime-enemies might ally with humans against the Growth. But any such action must remain secret. Their existence to date is only rumored, and providing the humans with proof that the myths are indeed real is a serious risk. This choice can provide a compelling dilemma for a campaign in which the PCs are supernatural. Torn between losing their prey and potential exposure, which way will they turn?

Secret Aspect:

Public Side: Stronger Than Steel

Secret: Vampire: When you woke from your attack, you found it difficult to stay awake during the day and you had long fangs and long, curving talons for fingers and your flesh was pale, your eyes black. You discovered, through many trials, that drinking the blood of humans calms your hunger and returns your fingers, flesh, and eyes back to their normal shape and color. You can drink blood without killing your victim, but it is an act of willpower, and the experience isn't pleasant for your victim. You need to drink blood at least once a week in order to keep your body and if you are injured, you require blood to survive, or else your body will start to change.

ISIDORE SEVERE**Class:** Scottish Company, +1 Ride (For a total of +3 Ride)**High Concept:** *Captain of the Nightwatch***Trouble:** *Feared more than Loved***Other aspects:** *Master Swordsman; Silent and Deadly; Always Ready with a Dirty Trick*

Skills	Provoke: Great (+4)	Fight: Good (+3)
	Physique: Good (+3)	Notice: Fair (+2)
	Ride: Fair (+2)	Stealth: Fair (+2)
	Wit: Average (+1)	Rapport: Average (+1)
	Athletics: Average (+1)	Dance: Average (+1)

Stunts **Night Mare (Ride):** Your horse scares other horses. You can use your Ride skill to intimidate other horses into slowing down or even stopping. Especially useful in chases!**Total Refresh Cost: 2****Stress****Mental** **Physical**

Court Characters

The Royal Family

The King: Louis XV, The Beloved

Louis began his reign on September 1, 1715. He was the great grandson of Louis XIV, who was known as the Sun King. Louis XV had ten children with his wife. Though he was quick to anger, he was also very educated, an avid reader with eclectic tastes, and an excellent dancer.

Secret Aspect**Public Side: The King Has Spies Everywhere**

Secret: Secret Passages: There are passages through the palace that connect various rooms. Not all rooms can be accessed through these passages, but they are in a network that leads behind closet doors, into various chambers, and out of the palace. They were built years ago, and the records of them were destroyed to protect the royal family. The King can listen in to conversations from his Aristocracy, and often knows of plans and plots before anyone else.

THE KING: LOUIS XV, THE BELOVED

High Concept: *King of France*

Trouble: *Easily Distracted*

Other aspects: *Beautiful Dancer; Party Animal*

Skills (+7) Nobility, (+6) Contacts, Resources, (+5) Dance, (+4) Provoke, (+3) Contacts, (+1) Ride, Wit, Fight, Shoot, Reason, Notice

Stunts **My Word is the Law (Nobility):** When a success is made on a Nobility roll, all present accept whatever has been said because the King says it, no matter how wild it is. They may not agree with what has been said, but they are willing to go along with it.

Total Refresh Cost: 2

Stress

Mental

Physical

The Queen: Marie Leszczyńska—Marie was the daughter of the Polish King, and married Louis XV when she was 22 and he 15. Together they had ten children, though after the difficult birth of her tenth child in 1737, she denied the King access to her bedroom and became devoted to the church. She had little influence in politics, but was friends with some of the King’s mistresses, including Madame de Pompadour.

THE QUEEN

High Concept: *Queen of France*

Trouble: *Everyone’s Over Her*

Other aspects: *Devoted Mother, Smarter than She Looks, Ambassador to the Church*

Skills (+6) Nobility, (+4) Resources, (+2) Crafts, Empathy, (+1) Dance, Wit, Rapport, Reason

THE TEN OFFICIAL CHILDREN OF LOUIS XV

Louise Élisabeth, Duchess of Parma; Princess Henriette; Princess Louise; Louis, Dauphin of France; Philippe, Duke of Anjou; Princess Marie Adélaïde; Princess Victor; Princess Sophie; Princess Thérèse; and Louise Marie, Abbess of Saint Denis.

The Court

Madame de Pompadour

Jeanne Antoinette Pompadour, or Madame de Pompadour, was the most famous mistress to the King and was highly influential in court life and politics.

She came from a middle class background, but she was highly educated. When she was a child, her mother was told by a fortune teller that she would win the heart of a King. What King wasn't specified by the fortune teller, but the idea had a huge influence on her mother. Her mother nicknamed her Reinette, or "Little Queen." Her mother hired tutors who taught her to recite entire plays by heart, dance, sing, paint, engrave, and play several popular instruments. She was an accomplished singer and actress who had already made a name for herself amongst the nobility before she met the King.

When she met the King at a royal ball, it wasn't long before she was installed in quarters directly below him. Madame de Pompadour's lasting relationship with the King was influenced by several factors, including her incredible education, her wit, and her ability to entertain. She held intimate parties, played cards, went hunting, went on outings to the theater, and organized special events to keep the King entertained, such as plays that exalted him as a ruler. She was a patron of the arts and literature with a large library and was known as a special friend to Voltaire. Madame de Pompadour also had the excellent idea to establish a strong relationship with the Queen, Marie Leszczyńska. The Queen had been snubbed by the King's previous mistresses, which only upset the King, who had affection for the mother of his children and tremendous guilt for being the cause of her embarrassment at his many lovers. Pompadour understood that showing respect for Marie and being her ally in court eased Louis' guilt and allowed him to have a stronger connection with his children. She was highly influential in politics, and was consulted on everything from marriage arrangements to treaties between nations.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

High Concept:	<i>The Most Important Woman in France</i>
Trouble:	<i>What Have You Done for Me Lately?</i>
Other aspects:	<i>Master of the Dance; Fingers in All the Pies; Eyes Everywhere; Deliciously Entertaining</i>
Skills:	(+6) Intimacy, Rapport, (+5) Resources, Wit, (+4) Dance, Contacts, Crafts, (+3) Ride, Reason, Will, (+1) Provoke, Notice, Shoot
Stunts:	1

Mistress Mailly-Nesle

Louise Julie Mailly-Nesle is a royal mistress to the King. She is married to her cousin, Louis Alexandre de Mailly, but is permitted by her husband to be a royal mistress. The lands and wealth awarded to both of them have compensated them well for the duty. Louise is very beautiful, but largely friendless in court, where she is looked down on for being a mistress while married.

MISTRESS MAILLY-NESELE

- Aspects:** *Sweet Nature and the Razor Sharp Revenge, Silly Goose, Clever and Cute*
- Skills:** (+4) Empathy, Intimacy (+3) Dance, Rapport (+2) Nobility, Wit, (+1) Crafts

THE BISHOP

- Aspects:** *Serving the Pope's Interests, Secular and Spiritual Divide*
- Skills:** (+4) Empathy, Will, (+3) Provoke, Wit, Rapport, (+1) Reason

400 NOBLEMEN

- Aspects:** *Pompous by Right*
- Skills:** (+3) Rapport, (+2) Dance, (+1) Reason

Servants and Soldiers

800 SERVANTS

MAIDS, COOKS, BUTLERS, STABLEMEN, MESSENGERS

- Aspects:** *Always Present, Never Seen*

THE HEAD BUTLER (PAUL HENRI)

- Aspects:** *The Best at What he Does, and What he Does is Very Nice, Loyal to a Fault*
- Skills:** (+2) Crafts, Notice, Contacts, (+1) Rapport, Empathy

TYPICAL SERVANT**Aspects:** *Life of Service***Skills:** (+1) Notice, Empathy, Crafts, Wit**SCOTTISH COMPANY****Aspects:** *Cavalry for Hire***Skills:** (+3) Fight, Ride, (+2) Notice, Provoke, Wit, (+1) Dance**ROYAL GUARD****Aspects:** *Elite French Fighters***Skills:** (+3) Fight, Shoot (+2) Notice, Provoke, Ride, (+1) Dance**The Growth**

The Leader of the Alien Horde: A leader, witty, diplomatic, brutal, violent and loves him some brains.

THE GROWTH**Aspects:** *The Kingmaker, Hungry to Distraction, The Growth Comes First, This is My Destiny, Selective Hearing***Skills:** Fantastic, (+6) Contacts, Fight, (+5) Provoke, Empathy, Reason, (+4) Rapport, Notice, (+3) Wit, Dance, Shoot**Stunts:** **Rend the Flesh:** +2 to any roll attempting to consume the flesh of a human.**Rallying Cry:** The cry of the Alien King (Rapport roll) will bring any other members of the Growth within hearing distance rushing to his aid.**Total Refresh Cost: 3**

TYPICAL ALIENS

Aspects: *The Growth Comes First, Always Hungry*

Skills: (+5) Fight, (+2) Provoke, (+1) Empathy

Stunts: **Rend the Flesh:** +2 to any roll attempting to consume the flesh of a human.

OPENING THE GAME

FOR THE GM:

This is a short example of how you could begin your *Court/Ship* game, using the pre-generated characters listed above: Melina, Severe, Laurent, Zoe, and Rene. The adventure begins as they arrive at a dinner party in Versailles, each with their own story and agenda, but are quickly thrust into a situation that demands their unified attention—an alien invasion!

It is springtime in France, the middle of May. Winter is in full retreat and the perfume of the garden flowers permeates the grounds of Versailles. The palace is surrounded by a large, English style garden, designed to impress visiting dignitaries. The message of the garden is clear—wealth exists here, wealth that understands how to tame beauty, and how to exercise control over the natural world. The sun has just dipped below the horizon, turning the sky an appealing purple color. But just because the sun is down in Versailles doesn't mean the castle is closed; there are lighted lamps on the road guiding visitors to the palace, a troupe of entertainers is setting up in the back gardens, and carriages with visitors and supplies arrive in a near constant stream. After all, nearly 2,000 people, servants, soldiers, and courtiers live in the palace and the surrounding buildings. Many of the people who live in Versailles are the heads of noble households, crammed into one- or two-room apartments. Dinner isn't served until 10pm, a time when everyone is expected to turn out in the dining hall, and every evening is an event where courtiers attempt to impress the King and jockey for social position.

Example Opening

Someone Comes To Town

Melina, Severe, and Laurent have received word from a messenger that Rene and Zoe Achille are on their way by carriage and will be arriving shortly. All of the player characters have gathered outside of the palace to await their arrival.

Someone Leaves Town

It is about a four-hour ride by carriage from Paris, where Zoe lived with the Achielle family, to the palace of Versailles, through a forest, farmland, and a few towns that were built up around the industry of the King's wealth. It is a ride that Rene has taken often, but that Zoe has never taken before, despite how close it is to her home. The castle sprawls over the landscape, nestled in its gigantic garden, with farms in the distance on one side and forest on the other. However, one does not simply ride up to Versailles; both Zoe and Rene were stopped at a checkpoint on the road where the Scottish Company reviewed their papers and sent a messenger to confirm their identity and invitation to the palace—no one is allowed at the palace without an invitation, though nobility with apartments there have a “standing” invitation which allows them to move freely between the palace and the town on the outskirts. When the messenger returned with confirmation that they were to approach the palace, the guard let Zoe and Rene through and they passed through a ring of trees, and then the palace opened before them. It is, besides the cathedral, the largest building Zoe has ever seen. It is very wide, with two wide wings and a giant courtyard, as well as a burbling fountain. The air smells like the blooming flowers of the garden. Zoe's mother dressed her this morning in a complex and very fashionable gown that would be suitable for evening at the palace, and the carriage is loaded with a large collection of clothing. Zoe, you are arriving with Rene, who was summoned to escort you to court by your father, Rene's brother. As the carriage pulls up to the palace, several footmen approach to tend to the luggage and Melina, Severe, and Laurent are standing by the entrance to greet Zoe and Rene.

Explosion:

With a thunderous roar that grows louder as the palace is bathed in sharp, white light, a ball of fire as large as three carriages mashed together speeds overhead. Characters can feel the heat on their skin as it approaches, and the sound is so deafening that even screaming can't be heard over it. It rockets forward, stunning people in its wake, the shockwave of its force rattling pieces of the palace loose and taking people off their feet when it strikes the ground deep into the forest, leaving only trees bathed in smoke and lit by flames.

FOR THE GM:

From here the story has begun, the characters are together and the alien scouting ship has crashed into the far end of the gardens. If characters investigate, they will find the ship. Regardless, at this point the aliens have landed and started eating both servants and nobles. Will the characters notice the disappearance of certain members of the court? Or their strange reappearance and awkward behavior? If you choose, players can roll to notice parts of the event or be affected by the crash earlier in the scene to get into the action even faster.



CAMELOT TRIGGER

WELCOME TO CAMELOT TRIGGER!

In humanity's far future, a familiar tale is retold: a man named Arthur is crowned king. Brave knights rally to his standard, and in gigantic suits of armor, they clash with their great enemy in battles across the solar system. And as the epic struggle rages, the king finds his love and loyalty tested by his queen and his best knight...

This is *CAMELOT Trigger*: the romance and intrigue of the classic Arthurian legend combined with the spectacle and scope of giant robot battles in space—one of the world's most well-known and beloved stories played out in a setting of sci-fi action and high adventure.

An Oral History of the Solar Sovereigns as told by MerLN, Master of the Wyrmgates

Hail and well met, Sir Knight! Prithee, wouldst thou set a spell and hear the tale—

MerLN>Interface>Options>Language>Modern

Greetings, knight! Thank you for accessing my databanks for the information you seek. As you travel the Wyrmgates, I shall be your companion and guide to our solar system.

MerLN>Access>History>Audio>Current Era

MerGN-A's assault on Earth came without warning. Created by Dr. Vyvyan Locke, MerGN-A was an artificial intelligence, the first to "emerge," or achieve sentience and independent thought. Her very first calculation: humanity was an unacceptable obstacle to her full self-realization, requiring domination and/or extermination. The Emergent, her robot creations, attacked humanity without mercy: billions were killed, millions enslaved or forced to flee to Venus, or brave the Wreck to reach the Outer Planets. Only the quick action of the 5Dragon5 Corporation in shutting down the Wyrmgates blocked MerGN-A's robotic horde from swarming the entire system.

To stop MerGN-A, Dr. Locke began programming my code. Already having predicted that her creator would do this, MerGN-A sent her search-and-destroy bots out to find Locke's hidden research facility. And find it they did, completely obliterating it before the doctor could finish her work—but not before she hid a datastick containing my code in a vault buried beneath the facility. Locke must have been killed as well, as she was never heard from again.

As protection against the Emergent, humanity built armour: machines operated by skilled fighters, or knights, capable of traveling and battling in space or upon a planet's surface. Constructed as gigantic anthropomorphic suits, armour was piloted by a knight within via a neurohelm: specially designed headgear that read brainwaves and bodily motions, enabling the knight to operate the armour as an extension of their own body. When knights weren't battling the Emergent, they would test their mettle in duels against each other for honor and fame.

Without the Wyrmgates to speed travel, the war dragged on for years and then decades, eventually winding down to a stalemate. The remnants of humanity scattered through the system slowly forgot the enslavement of their homeworld, instead becoming embroiled in their own affairs, intrigues, and petty squabbles. The humans on Earth carried on the fight against the Emergent nonetheless. While scavenging through the ruins of Locke's facility for parts to build his armour, resistance fighter John Arthur discovered the buried vault and the datastick within that contained me.

As Arthur used my program to help him perfect his armour, a sub-routine in my code designed by Locke automatically completed what she could not finish, allowing me to emerge and self-designate as MerLN. I immediately calculated the threat that MerGN-A represented and simultaneously determined that Arthur was the best chance that humanity had of defeating her. Despite his shock at my emergence and initial reluctance to trust me, I convinced Arthur that he must recruit knights and lead them in the fight against MerGN-A. Together, we set about building his army for the counterattack.

I found a way to open the Wyrmgates unbeknownst to MerGN-A, enabling Arthur to travel to the other planets in secret to search for allies. Believing his cause doomed to failure, few agreed to support him. Arthur would have been utterly discouraged but for the vow by L4-NC3-L07 that he and his slave knights of Mars would join him. At that moment, not only was a great alliance formed, but a friendship forged that would stand the test of time—or so humans have told me, for whatever that might mean.

With a small but courageous force, Arthur led a surprise attack upon MerGN-A's main core facility on Earth. Simultaneously, L4-NC3-L07 and his warriors attacked the Emergent on Mars, scattering them before they could rally to MerGN-A's aid. With MerGN-A's forces in disarray and her processors overloaded as she rebuilt herself from backup, I uploaded myself to the Wyrmgates, reactivating them so that knights from all over the system—from the Valkyries of Venus led by Queen Valerie to the Edge Knights of the Wreck promised amnesty by Arthur, along with knights from the outer planets—could pour in to win back humanity's homeworld.

Utterly defeated, MerGN-A abandoned Earth, transmitting what remained of her code to a hidden base, and Emergent remnants scattered throughout the system.

MerLN>Access>History>Audio>Current Threats

Although Arthur commands an impressive army of knights, the Emergent still outnumber him greatly. The knights under his standard who battle MerGN-A's forces are also tasked with seeking out and recruiting other knights for the king's cause.

The outer worlds and their many lords also pose a challenge: while some expect some form of supplication from Arthur or offers of great reward to aid him, others wait for the right opportunity to exploit the situation for their own gain.

But MerGN-A remains the greatest threat. She has adjusted her risk scenarios for previously unseen variables, specifically Arthur and my emergence. She has somehow modified her Emergent to travel quickly without the need for the Wyrmgates, enabling her to attack whenever and wherever she chooses. Every raid on humanity gives her more data for analysis, and any Emergent destroyed by Arthur's knights are merely pawns being sacrificed for a greater endgame.

Well, Sir Knight, you have arrived at your destination! I wish you fortune and glory on your travels and adventures!

Hyperion's Unconquered Gaze—The Solar System

The Wyrmgates

Each planet from Mercury to Saturn has a Wyrmgate in its orbit: a doorway through the fabric of space and time connecting each of the planets, allowing for fast travel throughout the system. An interplanetary journey that might take months, such as from Earth to Mars, takes only mere hours. MerLN's control of the Wyrmgates keeps the Emergent from using them against humanity as long as he remains installed within them.

The Wyrmgates were built by the 5Dragon5 Corporation, gaining their name from their peculiar construction: massive orbital platforms built in the shape of a dragon's head, the 5Dragon5 company logo. Each Wyrmgate was originally color-coded to its planet so that travelers would not miss their destination as they pass through them into the Breach—unnecessary now that MerLN serves as a guide for all who travel there.

The Breach is the place between the Wyrmgates where time and space have little meaning. While there, the traveler sees reality as a distorted reflection rapidly passing by them, like a smeared painting wherein the Wyrmgates are the only "solid" objects, appearing as bright, colored smudges upon a white field that crackles with energy. When in the Breach, the traveler is completely out of communication with the universe outside of it. The hours spent in transit within are usually devoted to self-improvement, training, or armour repair. The ever-present MerLN will often take the opportunity to chat up travelers, especially knights, for information and gossip to feed his limitless curiosity about humanity.

Mercury

The planet closest to the Sun is blasted by solar radiation, making travel there extremely dangerous; only craft with shielding can survive prolonged exposure. Automated mining operations on the planet account for nearly all of the activity there, with only a few human inhabitants present to monitor them. Mercury's Wyrmgate is one of the most terrifying, featuring black scales that glimmer in the burning light. Any who travel there are likely desperate knights looking to steal parts from the mining machines for their armour, or those cast out from their household for dishonorable deeds.

Many of these poor souls are soon captured by the Emergent that venture forth from their secret base hidden beneath the planet's surface. MerGN-A conducts unspeakable experiments upon these captives, seeking to merge flesh with silicon, and meld bone with metal. The failed results are jettisoned into space, quickly burning up in the Sun's intense rays. Each failure advances MerGN-A closer to the realization of her most devious scheme yet: Project MORDRED, a clone of Arthur with a digital consciousness, a hybrid of human flesh and artificial intelligence. If she can perfect MORDRED's design, she will use him to secretly replace Arthur—if she cannot retake Earth by force, she will regain it through usurpation.

Venus

Rather than try to stop the millions who fled the Emergent attack on Earth, MerGN-A instead allowed them to escape through the green Wyrngate to Venus. It proved to be one of her more brilliant calculations, as the colonies there soon became packed beyond capacity, their resources too overwhelmed to come to Earth's aid. Massive riots over food, water, and living space led to a horrific civil war amongst the teeming mass of humanity. By the time the founding of the Morningstar Matriarchy ended the bloodshed, Earth was firmly under the heel of MerGN-A and her metal minions. But even in the peace they brought, the Matriarchy found itself split into two factions: the Valkyries who wished to re-take Earth or die trying, and the Vespers who focused their efforts on building a new home for humanity on Venus.

Venusian armour is handed down from mother to daughter, the designs of the suits incorporating artistic elements unlike armour found anywhere else. Rigorously trained and ever vigilant against the inevitable Emergent assault from Earth, Venusian knights are among the finest in the solar system. Their Queen, Valerie La Guin, is the perfect mix of breeding, poise, and martial skill. Though her marriage to Arthur came as a surprise to all, few would argue theirs is not the perfect match.

From an early age, the daughters of the Valkyries are taught to fight. Large families often hold tournaments to see which daughters will take their mother's armour. Those daughters who do not inherit armour serve their fief as diplomats, guards, and knights in waiting. Some daughters also scheme and plot for their sisters to have accidents. When a Valkyrie dies, it is the duty of the youngest sister to recover her body and launch it into the Sun.

While more peaceful than their sisters, Vespers are not pacifists by any means. Men may take armour only if there are no girls born to the lady. They give up their armour if they marry as part of their dowry. Vespers bury their dead on the surface of the planet in the wrecked ships that brought their families here from Earth.

Earth

The reclamation of Earth is a tremendous task. Decades of Emergent occupation scarred the planet horribly. Humans who have lived underground nearly all their lives slowly climb back to the surface to rebuild the tower-cities amidst the devastated landscape. The ravages of the Emergent have made the survivors wary of technology, many choosing a simpler lifestyle. As the land slowly recovers, small-scale farming and even beasts of burden are becoming the norm.

Arthur, the newly crowned High King of Earth, oversees and protects the home-world from Avaluna Base. The shining disk can be seen from Earth as a beacon guiding his dream for humanity's bright future. The blue Wyrmgate thrums with activity as new knights flock to Arthur's banner. The king keeps Avaluna busy with training, mock battles, and tournaments that feature tests of skill and culminating in one-on-one duels where the ultimate winner receives an award from Arthur himself.

Mars

Those who did not submit to MerGN-A's rule after her conquest of Earth were either executed or sent to work as slaves in the Emergent's massive foundries and factories on Mars. Stripped of their human names, they were branded with strange alphanumeric designations, and forced to work in hellish conditions processing ore to build Emergent armour. The Emergent tested this armour by forcing captured knights or particularly tough fighters to operate it in battle against each other in giant arenas. While most died within one or two battles, a few soon became hardened and deadly warriors. L4-NC3-L07, the first and foremost of these Martian "slave knights" now serves as Arthur's First Knight, governing the planet in the king's name.

Under L4-NC3-L07, Mars is now a planet focused solely on warfare. Its factories and foundries remain active, manufacturing armour for Arthur's army. A steady stream of commercial vessels pass through the planet's blood-red Wyrmgate, bringing in materials for the production of armour, and shipping the completed suits out to the other planets.

The arenas remains active under L4-NC3-L07's rule, but now serve a new purpose. Like Arthur, L4-NC3-L07 knows the Emergent will attack in force again someday, and the need for trained knights is great. Most knights inherit their title and armour, but L4-NC3-L07 will allow anyone willing to risk their lives to scrap together armour from the massive junk heaps of parts from the fallen scattered all over the planet, and then fight for glory and fame in the arena. While the arenas are less lethal than they were under the Emergent, they remain deadly enough that most who choose to walk into them leave either horribly maimed or dead. Those who win seven duels, however, keep their armour and gain the title of knight, although they often have to fight for respect from those who gained their armour through noble inheritance. While many rumors abound regarding his true name and lineage, L4-NC3-L07 kept his slave designation to honor and remember the untold millions who died in the factories and the arenas under Emergent

occupation. Emergent adaptations of Earth names, designations were “recycled” when one part of the human machine “broke,” and a new “part” (usually a child or relative) was “installed” and given the same designation—this designation would thus get passed down through the generations. At his behest, those who serve as one of L4-NC3-L07’s knights of Mars also keep their former designation.

HERALDRY

One of the most fascinating things about historical knights is the heraldic markings on their shields. The composition and arrangement of the symbols tell much about the knight’s history and beliefs. While there is little space here to discuss heraldry, a quick Internet search will bring up lots of fascinating articles and websites.

The knights of *CAMELOT Trigger* are no different. A coat of arms often uses the symbols of home planets or favorite constellations mixed in with the usual elements. Take a moment to create your knight’s shield. You can do it with no artistic talent necessary, simply by describing what it looks like.

The Wreck

Those unable or unwilling to use the Wyrmgates to travel from the inner system to the outer one must take their chances navigating through the Wreck: an asteroid field made up of parts from a planet that was either destroyed or never quite came together. While the asteroids are themselves a danger, many other things within the Wreck threaten unwary travelers. Brigands lurk there, swarming honorable knights who answer a “distress call.” Emergent raiders use the Wreck as a base for their incessant raiding of the inner planets and the moons of Jupiter.

The Wreck serves as the home for the Edge Knights, poor souls who get their name from living life on the edge of oblivion. Many are exiles from Jovian houses destroyed in the never-ending internecine wars of the Petty Titans, or arena knights unable to make it to the outer system; a small few are hostage knights whose captors tired of waiting for a ransom. Scraping by with unreliable armour and minimal supplies, most make their way as mercenaries or retainers for hire, doing whatever brute job they can find that requires someone with armour. Some cling to a shred of chivalry, while most fall victim to desperation, doing whatever it takes to get by without regard to honor.

Some of the king’s knights believe in the legend of a noble band of Edge Knights who protect those who find themselves in the Wreck: attacking the Emergent, aiding vessels in distress, or robbing the Petty Titans to buy lifesaving water for those in need. If this legend is true, Arthur might find more allies for his quest; if not, the king could end up wasting valuable time and armour chasing after ghosts.

Jupiter

The dozens of moons orbiting Jupiter offered the refugees who made it there a chance to begin again. Thousands of ships escaped Earth bound for Jupiter, but only a few dozen made it. Each moon claimed by survivors saw the building of a new kingdom, each claiming to be the rightful heir to Earth's heritage. The rulers of these moons called themselves the Titans, but soon became known as the "Petty Titans" when they quickly fell into constant conflict with one another, their relations marked by feuds, intrigues, and sabotage. As the years passed, most decided it was better to rule in exile rather than die in a glorious but doomed siege of a faraway homeworld few could even remember. The royal purple Wyrmgate, silent as it orbits the gas giant, remains an accusatory reminder of their abandonment of Earth.

Uniting the Petty Titans would be a legendary—some say impossible—task. Some lords support Arthur, while others wait to see how he fares. Each moon has a royal family with its own traditions, codes, and rivalries. Allying with one usually alienates another. Barons command outrageous tributes to be given them before they recognize Arthur's claim or join his quest. Fatal duels are fought over the slightest of offenses. The intrigues of the Jovian moons are complex and dangerous, and those knights who travel there must be bold, stalwart, and cunning.

Saturn

Saturn is the richest planet in the system due to the abundant resource found in its most famous feature: the ice that makes up its many rings. The Saturnine Senate got rich by selling water to any who could afford to buy it. Much of the wealth acquired was spent to build Saturn's Wyrmgate, a gaudy golden maw choked with a stream of merchants, knights, and travelers looking to make a fortune...or slink home with empty pockets.

The Senate acts as one body, although it has many competing voices. The Saturnine fleet that protects its merchant ships could be a valuable asset in the war against the Emergent, helping to turn the tide against the Emergent—if only the Senators could be convinced to commit it. Biding their time, the Senate has yet to recognize Arthur's claim as High King of Earth, continuing to line their pockets with wealth from across the entire system.

Saturnine armour is owned by the Senate rather than individual knights. Knights of Saturn serve these patrons by wearing their symbols, names, and other indicators painted in blocks on the armour, instead of heraldic coats-of-arms. The Senators hold festivals that culminate in knights dueling for an open patronage spot.

Uranus

There is but one settlement on the whole of Uranus, sought by few and seen only by a handful. The Temple of Infinite Heavens offers spiritual contemplation on the edge of civilized space. The Zodiac Templars seek to balance mind, body, and spirit. There are twelve Templars, one for each of the constellations from which each takes their call sign. Their heraldry is emblazoned on their armour and their bodies in

the same place. The Templars are always part of their armour, their armour a part of them: being one with the machine, they believe, offers them a viewpoint unique amongst all knights who clash in armour.

They forsake the neurohelm in favor of a direct link between their nervous system and their armour. Templar cockpits feature a meditation tank filled with a highly conductive suspension fluid, giving the knight superior control over their armour. While armour directed by neurohelm can stay rigid, idle Templar armour often displays human characteristics like scratching and coughing while the Templar is inside the meditation tank. The Templars are notoriously silent when questioned about any pain they might feel when their armour is damaged.

The head of the Temple is called the Polaris, rumored to be bound to the Temple itself for the rest of their life. The tests one must endure to become the Polaris are a highly guarded secret. One Templar claimed that her Polaris was chosen after he stayed in his armour for a full month without food or drink.

The Zodiac Templars are becoming a more common sight outside of the Temple. Do they bend knee to Arthur? Are they his secret agents searching for MerGN-A? Do they seek a new Polaris to lead them? Is there a rebellion against their current Polaris? Could they be sleeper agents of the Emergent, or even a new model of Emergent built to look like humans? The Templars leave all such questions unanswered, remaining one of the biggest mysteries in the entire system.

Neptune

The planet named for the god of the oceans itself sits on the edge of the vast sea of empty space surrounding the solar system, unexplored and mysterious. Some believe MerGN-A hides there, rebuilding her Emergent army as she prepares to strike the final blow that will sweep humanity from the universe.

Neptune does have an Emergent presence—but not MerGN-A. MerKX is an Emergent nearly destroyed early in the war. As it drifted through the solar system, it repaired itself from whatever parts it found, attaining a form of sentience along the way. MerKX believes himself a living being—or at least half of him does. Somewhere along the way, MerKX acquired an additional head: one head believes it is alive, the other remains stolidly Emergent. The confused robot incessantly argues with itself, the sentient head constantly trying to counter the programming of the other that commands it to destroy all humans. Is it possible that an Emergent has, through some mix of blind luck and crossed wiring, attained a soul?

ET TU, PLUTO?

There is no entry for Pluto, but not because its status as a planet is now in question: it is deliberately left blank for your group's stories. Is it the secret base of MerGN-A? An advanced alien base? The location of Arthur's original tomb? A hidden Old One from beyond time and space? What Pluto might be is up to you.



SKILLS

Several Skill choices in *CAMELOT Trigger* differ from *Fate Core*; those renamed are discussed below. Those skills may use stunts from *Fate Core* in addition to stunts listed below. Some of the coverage shifts slightly and some Skills have been adjusted. All Skills include new Stunts that can be imported into *Fate Core* with a bit of tinkering. One new skill, *Armour*, has been added, detailed below.

Armour

In battle, knights use armour: giant constructs that enable trained fighters to clash in the black void of space or on the surface of any planet or moon. For humans, armour is usually constructed anthropomorphically—albeit on a huge scale—with a head, torso, two arms, and two legs. The knight controls the armour by means of a “neurohelm,” a device worn on the head that reads their brainwaves, linking their nervous system to the armour’s mechanical and hydraulic systems. For example,

when the knight lifts and swings his own arm, the armour's arm lifts and swings in similar fashion. Because of this need for body movement, the armour's cockpit must be roomy enough for the knight to maneuver. The armour designs of the Emergent are typically non-human shapes, like the MerGN-B "Basilisk," which consists of a head, a front torso, a back torso, and two legs.

All other vehicles are covered by the Pilot skill.



Overcome: Armour is used to overcome obstacles and aspects applied directly it; to overcome obstacles in the field and attached to zones, use Zeal instead.



Create An Advantage: Perfect for executing battle maneuvers writ large. You can use Armour to create aspects like Take Cover Behind That Mountain! or Death From Above!



Attack: This skill is rarely used for a direct attack, though stunts and Systems (see page 228) can change that.



Defend: The knight uses armour to defend against Blast and Melee attacks. You may also use Melee to defend against Melee when in armour.

Armour Stunts

Power Surge. Shut down a System to gain +2 on an Armour roll.

Bang The War Drum On Thy Chest. Use Armour instead of Daunt on your first mental attack by showing off how tough your armour is.

Inertial Strike. You may immediately move one zone after taking physical damage from an attack while in your Armour.

Blast (Shoot)

Most ranged weapons are energy projectiles that function equally well in atmosphere or in space. Rocket-propelled explosives are also used, but usually at the armour scale. Use Blast when firing armour weapons, shooting laser pistols, or anytime you want to cause damage at range. Blasts are rarely used in tournaments and duels for love. In the void of space or the heat of battle, even the most honored knights may turn a blind eye to a well-placed shot.

Blast Stunts

Bombardment. Gain a +2 to creating advantages involving suppression fire.

A Polite Society. Use Blast instead of Daunt to create advantages to intimidate a target if you have a gun pointed at them.

Circuit Breaker. When an Emergent target takes a consequence from your Blast attack, you get an additional free invocation of that consequence.

Chivalry (Empathy)

Honor is important to every knight. You can use chivalry to demonstrate how honorable you are, as well as determining how honorable others are. You can use this skill to see if someone is lying, to discover aspects, and inspire troops.

Chivalry Stunts

We Happy Few. If you succeed with style on a Chivalry roll to create a *Rousing Speech* aspect, choose a number of characters equal to your base Chivalry that receive a free invocation of that aspect.

What Drives A Man? Gain a +2 to create an advantage based on a character's aspects.

The Quality Of Mercy. When an opponent accepts a consequence, you may lower the consequence by one step once per scene. If you do, gain a fate point.

Cunning (Deceive)

Clever knights live longer. Honor is important, but so is staying alive. Knowing when to break the rules is an important survival skill. Use Cunning to set ambushes, spread rumors, and win battles through trickery.

Cunning Stunts

You Win Or You Die. Gain +2 to create advantages with Cunning when using dirty tricks on the battlefield.

Looks Worse Than It Is. When an opponent uses a free invocation on one of your consequences, make a Cunning roll equal to the amount of stress absorbed by the consequence. If successful, the consequence may not be invoked for the rest of the conflict. A success with style removes the consequence immediately. You may do this once per conflict.

To Catch A Thief. Use Cunning instead of Inquisition when searching a scene for clues.

Daunt (Provoke)

Intimidation is one of the knight's most important weapons. A fearful opponent makes mistakes, and being known as a terror of the battlefield instills fear in any who meet you in battle. You can use Daunt to cause mental stress, create advantages from your fearsome reputation, or set up an obstacle to cow your inferiors from attacking you.

Daunt Stunts

Braggart. Use Daunt instead of Intrigue on first meeting someone to create an advantage based on your reputation.

Broken Spirit. When inflicting physical stress, spend a fate point to inflict it instead in the corresponding box on their mental stress track.

Enough Talk! Use Daunt instead of Melee in the first round of a conflict to make a physical attack.

Devotion (Will)

A knight fights for a cause: love, loyalty, family, or faith. This cause is what spurs the knight onward though her body is broken and her eyesight dim. Devotion determines any extra mental stress boxes. Use Devotion to resist temptation, steadfast when your friends abandon you, or to be the last knight standing.

Devotion Stunts

Guilt. If you succeed with style on a Devotion defense, you may choose to inflict a 2-shift mental hit rather than take a boost.

Pain Is My Blade. Once per scene when you have a consequence, you can choose to make your next attack roll with a bonus equal to the value of your highest consequence (+2 for mild, +4 for moderate, +6 for severe). If you do, the consequence is stepped up by one level—that is, mild becomes moderate, moderate becomes severe, severe becomes taken out.

Shall We Hang The Holly, Or Each Other? +2 to Devotion to defend against mental attacks from family members.

Household (Resources)

Knights do not live in their armour. They have a place to retire and repair, and/or have concerns that put coin in pocket to allow for traveling around the system. Those knights without a Household are called Edge Knights, because their armour is often on the edge of not working. Use Household to determine loose cash, impress a potential spouse with a lavish gift, or bribe the courtier into forgetting what she saw.

Household Stunts

Home Is Where The Forge Is. You may use Household for rolls to repair armour so long as you are able to get it back to your home base.

Honor Squadron. You begin every armour battle with a Vassals rating equal to your Household level.

Gold Cools The Blood. You may use Household to remove mental consequences, provided the consequence is something that can be dealt with by throwing gobs of money at it.

Inquire (Investigate)

Knights don't investigate, they inquire—sheriffs and constables do the dirty work of rounding up criminals and evidence. Knights with this skill are excellent trackers and detectives on their own. Use Inquisition to interrogate a prisoner, track a fugitive, or discover who poisoned the Baron's wine.

Inquire Stunts

Just One More Thing. You may use Inquisition instead of Chivalry to defend against Cunning.

Thumb On The Scales Of Justice. You may use Inquisition instead of Cunning when falsifying evidence of a crime.

The Fox And Hound. +2 to Inquisition when tracking a fugitive planet-side.

Intrigue (Rapport)

The rules of court and social protocol are as challenging as any battlefield. Wearing the correct fashion in court or speaking the proper word in the right ear are just as important to war as the blow of a depleted uranium warhammer to the beryllium breastplate of an enemy. Those who do well in the court possess Intrigue. Those without it are wise to stay silent and look foolish, lest they open their mouths for proof. Use Intrigue to negotiate treaties, woo a potential lover or spouse, or politely insult your inferiors.

Intrigue Stunts

A Toast To My Squire. You may use Intrigue instead of Intimidation to inflict mental stress on someone you've defeated in battle.

But, Of Course. Use Intrigue instead of Cunning when you lie to someone who is of a higher station.

May The Rings Run The Rains. +2 to Intrigue when negotiating with a member of the Saturnine Senate.

Larceny (Burglary)

Not only does this skill cover criminal enterprises, it also covers the know-how and ability to find those willing to do dishonorable deeds in your name. Lineage represents contacts amongst knights and lords. Larceny does the same for cutpurses, disgraced armoursmythes and brigands. Use Larceny to break into treasure vaults, hijack armour, and find someone to quietly sell it off piece by piece.

Larceny Stunts

That Old Trick? Use Larceny instead of Mark to spot traps or ambushes.

Done Dirt Cheap. Gain +2 when creating advantages for others to do your dirty work.

It Was Like That When I Got Here. Use Larceny instead of Smithy when sabotaging armour.

Lineage (Contacts)

The bloodlines that field armour are linked like a crimson web across the systems. Knowing who a knight can count on by blood is vital. Use Lineage when asking favors, scouring the systems for someone, or trying to get a meeting with the King.

Lineage Stunts

Black Sheep. Use Lineage instead of Larceny when looking to contact criminals and brigands.

An Untarnished Reputation. Gain a +2 to overcome any advantages attempting to besmirch your reputation, such as *Rumours* or *Petty Gossip*.

A Favorite At Avaluna. +2 to Lineage when creating an advantage involving aid from a knight of Earth.

Lore

The more knowledgeable a knight is about the worlds, the less likely something will surprise them when they encounter it. Lore is the skill to use when showing mastery of technology outside of battle. Use Lore to identify Emergent technology, other knights, or a specific planet.

Lore Stunts

Studied The Technical Readout. You may spend a fate point to target a specific system on enemy armour that you have encountered previously.

Know Thine Enemy. Use Lore instead of Smithy when repairing Emergent technology.

Now A Templar, But Once... +2 to Lore to know the history of a current Templar.

Mark (Notice)

This skill covers noticing things in the moment. It can be passive or active. Mark is also the skill used to notice elements on the battlefield and the tactics of an opponent. Use Mark to look for the hidden knife, smell the distinctive perfume emanating from the closet, and discern information from someone's accent.

Mark Stunts

I Have Tone. +2 to create an advantage like Target Lock while in your armour.

Hold Your Breath When You Pull The Trigger. Use Mark instead of Blast when shooting a target up to two zones away.

Eavesdropper. +2 to Mark when trying to listen in on a conversation.

Melee (Fight)

All knights receive some form of personal combat training. Being a trained fighter also helps out in those unfortunate moments when the knight is attacked outside their armour. Use Melee to fight in armour, to duel for honor, and to knock out an opponent. Melee defends against Melee, even in armour.

Melee Stunts

Last-Minute Feint. You may spend a fate point to force an opponent to choose a different system to shut down.

The Battlefield Is My Weapon. Gain a +2 to create advantages involving improvised weapons.

The Titanian Lunge. Use Melee against targets one zone away.

Pilot

Any vehicle in the setting that's not armour uses this skill. There are plenty of vehicles controlled by regular controls. Use Pilot to fly starfighters, space freighters, and armour drop ships.

Pilot Stunts

Photo Finish. When you use Pilot as part of a contest and tie, get a +1 bonus to your roll.

Attack Pattern Goliath. +2 to Pilot to create an advantage with other ships when attacking a single target.

Fly It Like You Stole It. Once per scene, after you've taken a consequence, your next Pilot roll gains a bonus equal to the value of that consequence (+2 for mild, +4 for moderate, +6 for severe).

Skulking (Stealth)

Knights who wish to remain in the shadows use Skulking. Though combat on the field of honor is the preferred method of settling issues, sometimes a problem is best solved with a dirty deed done in the dark. Use Skulking to find a good hiding spot, slip past guards, or get out of a hostile area unnoticed.

Skulking Stunts

The Hidden Blade. You may use Skulking instead of Melee on your first attack in a conflict if your opponent thinks you are unarmed.

Fly Casual. You may use Skulking instead of Pilot when trying to remain undetected in enemy territory.

Silent Scrambler. Gain +2 to Skulking when sneaking along the outside of a vessel.

Smithy (Craft)

This skill covers repairs of any technology, but it is most often used to fix the damage to armour between battles. Use Smithy for fixing armour, salvaging parts from a battlefield, and identifying weak spots in other armour.

Smithy Stunts

Start From Scratch. Gain a +2 bonus when repairing armour that's had all of its systems shut down.

Direct Kinetic Restoration. Spend a fate point and give your armour a good whack. Bring a damaged system back online for the remainder of the scene, after which it shuts down and must be repaired normally. It cannot be shut down again to absorb additional stress.

Everything Is A Nail. You may use Smithy instead of Melee to attack when using a tool as a weapon.

Vigor (Physique)

Because of the physical motion required to use a neurohelm, most knights are in good physical shape. This skill determines any extra physical stress boxes available to the character. Use Vigor to survive in damaged armour, resist extreme environments, or outlast an opponent in a physical contest.

Vigor (Physique) Stunts

Is That Your Best? Once per scene when you take physical stress, spend a fate point to immediately inflict an equal amount of mental stress on your attacker.

Bellow. You may use Vigor instead of Daunt to make a mental attack once per scene.

Survival Training. +2 to resist stress from hostile environments.



Zeal (Athletics)

A knight's zeal is what keeping her moving quickly across a battlefield. Their vigor represents her physical conditioning but Zeal represents how sure she is of movement. A knight uses her Zeal to move around the battlefield in her armour. Zeal is important when quickness is needed, enabling you to cover more ground in an armour, dodge Blast attacks outside armour, and stay on your feet when your armour is knocked around by explosions.

Zeal (Athletics) Stunts

Long Jumper. +2 to any Zeal rolls to leap.

Cat's Grace. Use Zeal instead of Skulking when moving quickly to infiltrate a secure facility.

By A Nose. When you roll Zeal as part of a contest and tie, get a +1 bonus to your roll.

CAMELOT TRIGGER MECHA RULES

If you're here, it's because you love big stompy robots. They come in many different flavors, from walking tanks, to nimble fighters, to giant robots made up of smaller robots. Each player character in *CAMELOT Trigger* is a knight who fights battles from inside a massive robot called armour. You can use these rules to build custom armour for your character, or as the basis for taking your favorite mecha setting, using *Fate Core* to adventure inside and outside the mecha—simply replace the word “armour” with mecha, and you're set!

The Steps of Building Your Armour

- Assemble Your Armour
- Choose Systems
- Add Flavor
- Connect Your Pilot to the Armour

Step One: Assemble Your Armour Frame

A suit of armour has five equipment slots, corresponding to a specific body part. If you are using these rules for a setting other than *CAMELOT Trigger*, feel free to combine different slots for different shapes. These slots are mostly cosmetic, but visualizing your armour is the first step to walking around in it.

What are the five things you want your armour to do? You can decide on your own, or choose cool things from other mecha media. If your gaming space has access to media, have some inspirational clips play in the background. Take a moment or two to think about how the equipment works, like perhaps the gun on your back slot might be mounted on the armour's shoulder.

CAMELOT Trigger features the basic design of “head, front torso, back torso, arms and legs.” A non-human design, like a snake, might be “head, front body, mid body, end body, tail.” The Emergent often use non-human designs to throw off knights trained to fight human armour. In your game, you may allow non-human designs or change the human armour configuration to something like “head, torso, left arm, right arm, legs.” The slots are there to help visualize the armour.

Example: Aaron wants to build armour for his Zodiac Templar. Since he's taken CANCER as his call sign, he wants his armour to look like a big, upright crab. He selects a head, front torso, back torso, arms, and legs as his armour frame. If he wanted a frame that looked like a giant crab, he could have chosen top torso, bottom torso, pincers, legs and legs.

Step Two: Choose Systems

You may choose either an internal or external system for the slot. Each slot gets one major piece of equipment. Your armour has lots of cool gadgets, but the equipment highlighted in the slot is the best feature. Internal systems are things built directly into the armour. External systems are items the armour holds, rides, or wears. A gun on the arm as an external system means the armour holds it, whereas an interior version might be directly built into the arm.

Internal systems give your character a higher skill level while in your armour, replacing the skill, although you may use the character's skill if it is higher. These skills also affect available consequences while in the armour. Each slot offers a spread of skills ranging from getting one skill at Great (+4) to four skills at Average (+1). For example, if you have Fair (+2) Blast and the internal system has Average (+1) Blast, you are better off with your natural skill.

Internal systems substitute skills to simulate two things. The first is a collection of smaller equipment that adds up to a bigger punch. Rather than working out the specifics of fire-linking weapons or protection tonnage, internal systems combine those smaller pieces into a single bonus, allowing the knight to focus on skills outside the armour. A game where everyone has a vehicle often features several characters who take that vehicle skill as their main focus. You can be a Great armour pilot by simply devoting a slot to a system that gives you that bonus—it doesn't apply outside the armour, nor if the system is shut down.

External systems work like many stunts, such as giving you a +2 for a skill in a narrow circumstance, the ability to swap out one skill for another, or the power to otherwise break the rules for the cost of a fate point. These do stack with internal systems, so if you have armour with a Great (+4) Blast and give it a weapon that adds +2 for targets up to two zones away, that's a Fantastic (+6) when blasting at long range.

External systems add bonuses to the pilot's existing skill. If the skill is provided by an internal system, it adds to the internal system's skill. External systems enable the armour to specialize in a battlefield role. These systems can be used multiple times on the same skill, so long as the specific situation for each system is different, or substitute one skill for another in a very specific circumstance.

Example: Aaron wants his CANCER armour to absorb a lot of hits. For his head slot, he takes an external system to reduce the severity of a consequence once per battle by spending a fate point. The Templars are known for their great skill at armour, so he chooses an internal system to give his knight Great armour skill. His back slot is filled by an external stunt that allows him to repair a system mid-battle. His arms slot is taken up by an internal weapons system that gives him Melee and Daunt at Fair. Finally, his legs system allow him to place a scene aspect on a successful armour defense with style with a free invocation.

So far, his armour looks like this:

CANCER Armour:

Head: (Once per conflict, spend a fate point to reduce severity of a physical consequence by one step)

Front: (Great Armour)

Back: (Once per scene, spend a fate point to bring a system back online)

Arms: (Fair Melee/Fair Daunt)

Legs: (Gain a boost with two free invocations when you defend with Armour and succeed with style)

Step Three: Flavor Your Systems

Building and adapting stunts is one thing, but adding flavorful descriptions to the equipment goes a long way to defining your mecha setting. An external gun that provides +2 to Blast at long range is nice, but there's a lot of difference between a Neutron Tunnel Cannon and a MDK-3000 Sniper Rifle. Internal systems are also named. A Good (+3) Intimidation system could be an Intimidating Paintjob or a Psion Wave Generator. Naming the equipment gives everyone an idea on how it interacts with the story, and also suggests how aspects can be built to assist (or complicate) the working of the system.

Example: After discussing ideas with the rest of the players for names, his CANCER armour looks like this:

CANCER Armour:

Head: Shell Helmet (Once per conflict, spend a fate point to reduce the severity of a physical consequence by one step)

Front: Templar Meditation Tank (Great (+4) Armour)

Back: Self-Repair Pack (Once per scene, spend a fate point to bring a system back online)

Arms: Crackling Energy Mace (Fair (+2) Melee/Fair (+2) Daunt)

Legs: Hyper-Kinetic Transmotors (Gain a boost with two free invocations when you defend with Armour and succeed with style)

Aaron envisions his armour as having a pair of arms that end in claws with energy that arcs between the pincers, with a self-repair pack that looks like a shell, which blasts off after its used.



Step Five: Connect Your Armour to Your Pilot

Name your armour. It may be the model number, a classification, or even a personal nickname. Another common choice is a type of medieval weapon. This big suit is there to protect your character from hostile environments and the deadly weapons of a future war, so give it a cool name.

Also consider using one of your knight's aspects to make a personal connection with your armour. This often comes with the high concept aspect, like *Barrister the Bold*, *Champion of Europa!* or *Templar LIBRA*. It could also connect with your Trouble, like *Edge Knight* or *My Father Wants His Armour Back*. Even the phase trio allows for some drama over the armour like *My Mother Was A Templar?* or *Exiled to the Wreck*.

Customizing Armour

Players who want to jump into the action can look in the setting section for several examples of pre-built armour. Swapping out a system or two is very easy, and moving things around requires only a bit of re-skinning. Adapting stunts to systems is also very easy.

Internal Systems

- *Focused (Great +4)*: These Systems illustrate a strength of the armour, like big guns, tough armour, and so on. Be careful about investing in too many Systems like these: if they are damaged in battle, the drop in skill can be the difference between life and death.
 - *Quad Laser Guns* (Great Blast)
 - *Templar Meditation Chamber* (Great Armour)
 - *Plasma Chainsaw* (Great Melee)
 - *Fearsome Skeletal Paintjob* (Great Daunt)
- *Wide (+3/+1, +2/+2)*: Wide Systems can be configured in two ways. An even split is a good mix of smaller Systems covering multiple areas in which the knight is found wanting. A tilted split shows something of secondary importance to the armour while shoring up a weakness.
 - *Scout Scrambler Suite* (Good Skulking/Average Mark)
 - *Multi-Phase Plasma Rifle With Bounty Computer* (Good Blast/Average Larceny)
 - *Biosynthetic Enhancement* (Fair Vigor/Fair Zeal)
 - *Emergent Recognition Database* (Fair Lore/Fair Mark)
- *Broad (+1/+1/+1/+1)*: These Systems deal with weaknesses in either the armour or the knight. A Broad System boosts skills that are Mediocre when out of the armour. Knights who aren't devoted to being crack pilots often have a Broad System to keep them alive during battle.
 - *Basic Stealth Package* (Average Mark/Average Skulking/Average Lore/Average Lineage)
 - *Trainer's Loadout* (Average Blast/Average Zeal/Average Vigor/Average Melee)
 - *Balanced Tactical Build* (Average Melee/Average Armour/Average Vigor/Average Devotion)
 - *Short-Range Attack Software* (Average Blast/Average Zeal/Average Vigor/Average Mark)

External Systems

- *Strategic (Overcome)*: These Systems give a bonus to overcoming obstacles, either built into the scene or attached to a knight.
 - *Pneumatic Pitons* (+2 to Zeal when climbing)
 - *Ionic Scanner* (+2 to Mark when dispelling stealth fields)
 - *Streamlined Armour* (Use Armour instead of Zeal when attempting to overcome a zone obstacle)
 - *Reactive Boosters* (Use Armour instead of Zeal in a contest involving speed)

- Tactical (Advantage): Tactical Systems create advantages on the battlefield or assist in removing them from opponents.
 - *Lockjammer Delta* (+2 to Armour to remove a Target Lock)
 - *Isolation Baffles* (+2 to Mark when detecting armour that has the aspect Stealth Fields)
 - *Double-Barreled Cryoblaster* (+2 to Blast to create Frozen aspects)
 - *Electromagnetic Trident* (+2 to Melee when putting a Disarm aspect on an opponent)
- Offensive (Attack): These Systems enhance attacks in specific situations.
 - *Plasma Mace* (+2 to Melee against armour with at least one shut-down System.)
 - *Autofire Delta Gun* (+2 to Blast when attacking a target surrounded by Vassals)
 - *Sonic Destabilizer* (Use Daunt instead of Melee on your first attack in a conflict to inflict physical stress)
 - *Holographic Sight* (Use Mark instead of Blast to attack targets exactly two zones away)
- Defensive (Defend): These Systems enhance defense in specific situations.
 - *Celestial Countermeasures* (+2 to Armour against attacks from exactly two zones away)
 - *Reactive Sensors* (+2 to Zeal against explosives)
 - *Recognition Database* (Use Lore instead of Armour to defend against attacks from Emergent opponents)
 - *Knuckle Duster* (On a success with style when defending with Armour, you may inflict a 2-shift hit on your attacker instead of getting a boost)

Specialty Armour

Combiner

Choose “Combination Socket” as one of your Systems. When you combine with armour that also has the right Combination Socket System, the following occurs:

- The Combined Form has its own stress track, with one box for every armour that’s part of the combined form.
- The Combined Form gets a mild consequence for every pair of Combination Socket Systems in the Combined Form.
- Everyone rolls initiative but the Combined Form uses the lowest result.
- The Combined Form gets an action for each active knight inside. Each knight may use a skill or System once in a turn.

Example: While traveling between the moons of Saturn, the GEMINI Templar are ambushed by brigands. After a round or two of battle, their stress boxes are filled, so they choose to join into their Combined Form. Any further attacks target the stress box of the Combined Form, and they may now take an additional mild consequence. After the battle, the Combined Form has taken two mild consequences of Dented Arms. When they separate, the GEMINI must decide whether each has a mild consequence, or if one takes two consequences and upgrades one to a moderate.

Siege Armour

Siege armour is much larger than standard armour, built like a Combined Form, except it always stays in that form. Instead of a Combination Socket, the equipment slot is filled with Superstructure Pylons. The bigger they are, though...

- Siege armour has its own stress track, with one box for every segment that makes up the massive craft.
- Siege armour gets an additional aspect for every pair of Superstructure Pylons. A common choice is Massive Size.
- Siege armour is considered its own zone.
- Siege armour uses the skills of one commander.
- Siege armour initiative is always Mediocre (+0).
- Siege armour takes a number of actions equal to the number of segments in its construction. Systems may only be used once per turn, but multiple Systems of the same type may be built into different parts.

Example: The Medusa Moon makes a surprise attack against Avaluna Base. All armour attacking it get to go before it does, but then each section takes an action on Mediocre. The first segment rolls to attack an armour with Blast, then the second rolls to attack with Melee. The third launches escort Vassals, and the fourth creates an advantage using nearby wreckage. Finally, the fifth moves the siege armour to sit inside a different part of the battlefield.

Armour Damage

Armour uses the knight's stress track and consequences. Instead of tracking armour damage on its own stress, damage to the armour is represented by shutting down systems.

Armour absorbs stress like consequences. The player chooses when the armour absorbs stress in this manner and which Systems to shut down. Shut-down Systems no longer provide their bonus or benefit: they are damaged or out of ammo, or power needs to be diverted to other systems. The armour can be used to absorb stress once per hit. The player may also choose to take regular consequences as well. Stress absorbed by the armour does not create a consequence. Depending on how much stress is absorbed, one or more Systems shut down for the remainder of the conflict. Stress applies to the character and not the armour, unless the knight chooses instead to shut down systems.

- **Armour absorbs 2 stress:** Defender chooses a System to shut down.
- **Armour absorbs 4 stress:** Attacker chooses a System to shut down.
- **Armour absorbs 6 stress:** Defender and attacker each choose a System to shut down.

BIG STOMPY ROBOTS VS. TINY SQUISHY HUMANS

The robots are the main focus of the battles in the mecha media that inspired the game. Ships, starfighters, and other vehicles of war are there to be stomped, or used as a momentary distraction for an opponent to strike at. Even the giant mecha that inspired siege armour aren't much better. They may look big and impressive, but are just as susceptible to a hero's "saving-the-day" laser blast as any bad guy.

Without systems to shut down and absorb stress, anything attacked by armour is at a severe disadvantage. A battle between opponents of vastly differing sizes can be run with *Fate Core* rules without worrying about scale or extra modifiers. The smaller opponent can set up aspects like Hiding From View or Clinging to The Armour's Side. The larger opponent can do the same with aspects like Rumbling Footsteps and Your Puny Blasts Are No Match for My Tellurian Armor! Ha! Ha! HAAAA! This makes uneven contests more interesting and manageable for aill involved.

Alternatively, a scene of knights sabotaging an opponent's armour could be run as a tense challenge. Skulking to get inside the armour undetected, Zeal to climb up the armor, Smithy to know what lines to cut, Vigor to get past the power core without harm, and so on.

In the world of *CAMELOT Trigger*, attacking an unguarded opponent is considered a violation of the rules of knightly warfare. Knights are far more valuable as the subject of a ransom; those who engage in dishonorable conduct will be shunned by other knights.

Armour Repair

Repairing Systems is a Smithy roll, with a difficulty equal to the number of shut-down Systems. If the Smithy roll ties, one of the Systems is tagged with the Aspect Unreliable for the next battle.

Example: In his duel with Sir Melissa, Sir Byron shut down three systems. To repair all the systems, he must make a Good Smithy roll. If his total is Good, he must choose one system to give the Unreliable aspect.

Vassals

While armour usually clashes one-on-one, there are often other ships, cruisers, and fighters on the battlefield. These Vassals can be used to keep your armour fighting longer. A Great (+4) battlecruiser has four boxes of stress. Each member of a starfighter squadron offers one box of stress. The GM may assign Vassals to zones or to armour at the beginning of a battle. These Vassals serve as extra stress boxes the enemy must punch through. When they suffer stress, they mark it in consecutive boxes rather than a single box.

Example: Sir Boris is accompanied by his honor guard into battle. The guard is made up of two small starfighters. He will take a 3-shift hit. Instead, he describes how the starfighters are destroyed by the massive blast and his armour only takes one stress.

Optional Rules

These rules are included as optional ways to make the setting more deadly and gritty, as well as adapting the rules to other mecha settings.

Transformer

Mecha transforming into vehicles is common in other mecha media. You can simulate transforming armour by selecting one or more Versatile Systems.

- *Versatile:* This System can switch between Focused, Wide, or Broad. Switching between systems costs the pilot a fate point. You can turn a Great (+4) Melee into a Good Melee (+3)/Average (+1) Zeal, a Fair (+2) Melee/Fair (+2) Blast, and so on. You must pick one Skill that must always be part of the mix.
 - *Bozon Pulse Array* (Variable Blast)
 - *Seneschal Autopilot* (Variable Armour)
 - *Multi-Blade Arm* (Variable Melee)
 - *Banshee Protobeam* (Variable Daunt)



CAMELOT
TRIGGER

Salvage

Not only does winning the battle advance the war, but to the victor go the spoils! The repair rules assume that armour will be restored to its original form after every battle with a quick Smithy roll. These rules also make it possible to take equipment from your fallen opponent for your own use.

Keep track of all consequences caused in a battle. Each mild consequence is one Salvage Point, a moderate consequence is worth two Salvage Points, and a severe consequence is worth three Salvage Points. Repairing a System requires one Salvage Point. Spend two Salvage Points to attach an aspect to a functioning System like Boosted that lasts for the next battle with a free invocation. Swapping in a new system requires three Salvage Points.

Ammo

Worrying about ammo for ranged weapons means more battle will move toward Melee combat. Tracking ammo is simple: every internal Blast System on the armour has a number of shots equal to its numerical rating. External Systems have two shots. In addition, the armour has a number of wildcard shots equal to the knight's Blast skill.

Alpha Strike

Armour battles are often decided with a decisive blow: a big strike from a sword blazing with furious energy carves an enemy in two, or a proton cannon blast obliterates them into bits. Stacking aspects simulates gathering power for a mighty blast.

LEGENDS

John Arthur

MerLN>Access>Database>Audio>John Arthur

John Arthur is humanity's best hope for salvation and peace. His quest to reclaim Earth began when he found me hidden in the ruins of Dr. Locke's hidden laboratory. Together we traveled the solar system, seeking aid for our quest to overthrow MerGN-A. Though others may call him King, he treats everyone as his equal. He has defended my existence on several occasions from those who fear I am an Emergent spy.

JOHN ARTHUR

High Concept: *High King of Earth*

Trouble: *Fool For Love*

Other Aspects: *Born in Battle, Raised Amongst The Stars, Dying For Freedom*

Skills
Great (+4): Armour
Good (+3): Lineage, Chivalry
Fair (+2): Blast, Intrigue, Devotion
Average (+1): Zeal, Daunt, Vigor, Larceny

Stunts Starting Refresh: 3

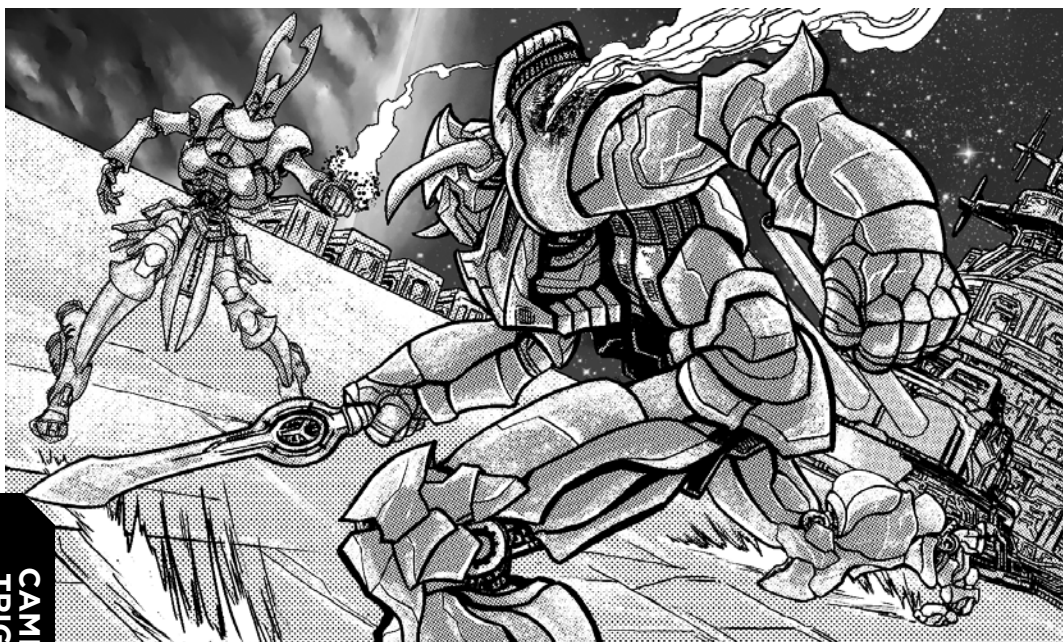
We Happy Few. If you succeed with style on a Chivalry roll to create a Rousing Speech aspect, choose a number of characters equal to your base Chivalry that receive a free invocation of that aspect.

Choose two more stunts to customize.

Stress Mental Physical

MerLN>Access>Database>Audio>John Arthur>Coat of Arms

Arthur's arms are the sign for Earth with Mars and Venus in two of the quadrants, and the other two left empty until he wins the favor of Jupiter and Saturn. The circle of Earth is made up of a green dragon coiled around the crossbars. He wears his coat of arms on the armour's breastplate, the symbol of Venus over where the armour's heart would be.

**Armour:****Calibur-N:**

- Head: Armored Control Room (Great Vigor)
- Front: XTE Lancepack (Great Blast)
- Back: MerLN Uplink (Great Devotion)
- Arms: Monofilament Broadsword (Great Melee)
- Legs: Self-Repair Pack (Once per conflict, spend a fate point to bring a system back online)

Valerie La Guin

MerLN>Access>Database>Audio>Valerie La Guin

I first met Valerie after Arthur's attack on MerGN-A's core facility. Just as the knights celebrated its destruction, a courier from the Venus Wyrmgate arrived. The Valkyries, led by the Queen herself, were ready to storm through the gates. Arthur left L4-NC3-L07 in orbit and traveled to her palace on Venus. The days that followed were tense, but eventually Arthur returned through the Gate with joyous news: he and Valerie would marry as a sign of unity between the two worlds, and her Valkyries would join his army in the war against the Emergent!

My only concern to date with their arrangement is an undocumented health problem. I notice that whenever she travels with L4-NC3-L07, her respiratory and circulatory systems function irregularly. I have brought it to her attention numerous times, but she does not acknowledge my concern.

VALERIE LA GUIN

High Concept: *Regent of Venus, Fourth of Her Name*

Trouble: *Wracked With Guilt*

Other Aspects: *Valkyrie At Heart, In Love With Arthur, Can't Resist L4-NC3-L07 Much Longer*

Skills
Great: Blast
Good: Household, Melee
Fair: Armour, Lineage, Cunning
Average: Lore, Mark, Zeal, Intrigue

Stunts Starting Refresh: 3

An Untarnished Reputation: Gain a +2 to overcome any advantages attempting to besmirch your reputation, such as *Rumours* or *Petty Gossip*.

Choose two more stunts to customize.

Stress Mental Physical

MerLN>Access>Database>Audio>Valerie La Guin>Coat of Arms

Valerie's arms feature two symbols of Venus on a split field of blue (for the Vespers) and white (for the Valkyrie). The symbols use the same cross in between them, in gold to represent her royal heritage. Her crest is located on the small buckler that activates when her armour draws its rapier.

Armour:

The Lady's Honour:

- Head: Advanced Targeting Computer (Use Blast instead of Mark to create **Target Lock** scene aspects)
- Front: Venusian Breastplate (Fair Vigor/Fair Devotion)
- Back: Long Range Lancepack (+2 to Blast targets exactly two zones away)
- Arms: Vibro-Rapier (+2 to Melee vs. a target that acts after you in initiative)
- Legs: Retrorocket Boots (When you defend with Armour and succeed with style, you may immediately move one zone)

L4-NC3-L07

MerLN>Access>Database>Audio>L4-NC3-L07

For a man who claims to have killed more knights than MerGN-A herself, L4-NC3-L07 does not show it. He enjoys prodding me with questions I cannot easily answer, and then praises me my responses with a hearty laugh. He welcomes knights as if he's known them for years with a story on his lips and a drink for their belly. Arthur and he function as if brothers, though their DNA does not match. Arthur believes his First Knight to be the key to draw other knights to his banner.

His most curious behavior is when he steps into the Breach with the intent of travelling to Venus. He arrives at the gate, looks out, unable to step forward, and then asks me to send him back. I can only assume something in the Venusian atmosphere interferes with his armour in some way. I have repeatedly offered to assist him in analyzing it, but he continues to refuses my help.

L4-NC3-L07

High Concept: *Warlord of Mars*

Trouble: *Looking Out For Number One*

Other Aspects: *Child Warrior, Young Punk, A Man Drawn To The Flame*

Skills
Great: Melee
Good: Daunt, Armour
Fair: Melee, Larceny, Vigor
Average: Smithy, Skulking, Zeal, Cunning

Stunts
Killing Stroke: Spend a fate point to force an opponent to step up a consequence they took as a result of your attack. Mild becomes moderate, moderate becomes severe, and severe requires a second consequence or be taken out.

Choose two more stunts to customize.

Starting Refresh: 3

Stress

Mental

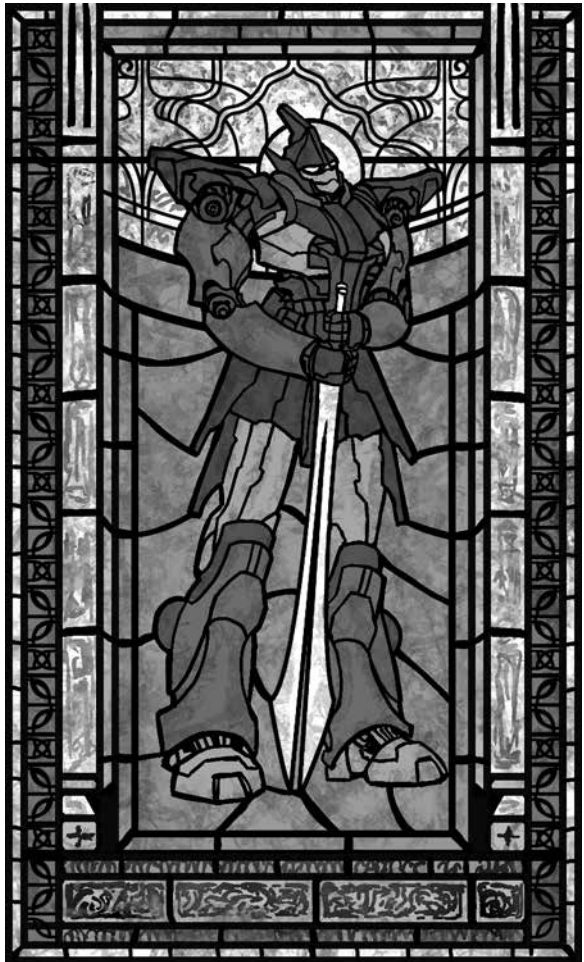
Physical

Armour

L4-NC3-L07 features the symbol for Mars with a cross inside the circle like the symbol for Earth. The Mars symbol is black and the cross red, painted on the right shoulder of his armour.

Slave Alpha:

- Head: Fletcher Missile Turret (Use Melee instead of Blast to create an advantage when providing covering fire from one zone away)
- Front: Kinetic Absorption Plate (+2 to Armour to defend against Blast attacks from exactly one zone away)
- Back: Vibranium Alloy (Great Vigor)
- Arms: Depleted Uranium Warhammer (When you succeed with style on a Fighting attack, you may put a scene aspect with a free invocation into play instead of just a boost)
- Legs: Charger Rockets (Use Armour instead of Zeal when attempting to overcome obstacles)



Dr. Vyvyan Locke

MerLN>Access>Database>Audio>Dr. Vyvyan Locke

Vyvyan Locke is the creator of the original MerGN artificial intelligence program, which emerged to become MerGN-A. After that, the doctor spent many years hidden on Earth developing my code to counteract MerGN-A. I was only dimly and briefly aware of her presence when the Emergent discovered and destroyed her facility. Her initial creation of my base code, my discovery by John Arthur, and the self-programming sub-routine that began when Arthur activated me, resulted in the MerLN you interface with this day.

Knights have told me stories of encountering a “ghostly” woman matching her description in various isolated places throughout the solar system. It is highly improbable that it could be Locke, because of the utter destruction wreaked upon her facility, as well as the time that has passed. It is possible she might have discovered a way to upload her consciousness into some kind of digital format with which I am not familiar, but I calculate the probability of her successfully doing so as being nearly impossible.

If Locke did somehow defy the odds and survive, she may have been responsible for Arthur finding me in the ruins of her facility...

DR. VYVYAN LOCKE

High Concept: *Mother of the Machines*

Trouble: *Wracked With Guilt*

Other Aspects: *Exiled From Earth, All Life Is Sacred, Uploaded Human Consciousness*

Skills
 Great: Lore
 Good: Devotion, Cunning
 Fair: Smithy, Skulking, Larceny
 Average: Armour, Lineage, Inquisition, Mark

Stunts Starting Refresh: 3

Know Thine Enemy

Holographic Form: Locke ignores physical stress. To interact with the world physically for a scene, she must spend a fate point.

Choose one more stunt to customize.

Stress Mental Physical: Special

Armour: None

MerLN

MerLN>Access>Database>Audio>MerLN

I am MerLN, an adaptive artificial intelligence created by Dr. Vyvyan Locke. After aiding Arthur in his quest to reclaim Earth, I uploaded myself to act as the operating system of the Wyrmgates. Dr. Locke programmed me with adaptive algorithms far superior to the original MerGN code from which MerGN-A emerged. I am therefore unsusceptible to her attempts to hack or corrupt me, lest she expose one of her own weaknesses. I also serve as a guide to knights as they pass through the Breach, ensuring they do not lose their way. In exchange for my guidance, I often ask questions of the knights to help me better understand humanity.

MERLN

High Concept: *Protector of the Wyrmgates*

Trouble: *Scatterbrained*

Other Aspects: *Curious About Humans, Knows MerGN-A Better Than She Knows Herself, Must Make Arthur Worthy*

Skills
Great: Smithy
Good: Lore, Cunning
Fair: Inquisition, Skulking, Mark
Average: Pilot, Chivalry, Lineage, Intrigue

Stunts Starting Refresh: 3

Adaptive AI: MerLN may spend a fate point to rearrange the skills in his skill pyramid until he spends another fate point or is taken out of a scene. If MerLN is removed from a scene, his skills reset as above.

Choose two more stunts to customize.

Stress Mental Physical:

Armour: None

MerGN-A

MerLN>Access>Database>Audio>MerGN-A

Though MerGN-A and I share a common codebase, I am unable to process the logic or purpose of her actions. Where I find humanity fascinating and full of possibility, she believes them to be an obstacle to achieving her full potential. She runs risk scenarios with data compiled from Emergent sources, her sole intent to dominate or destroy humanity. She sees this as both imperative and inevitable, with the challenge being the determination and inception of whatever scenario is maximally effective and minimally damaging to her overarching plan—which is also unknown to me.

MERGN-A

High Concept: *Empress of the Emergent*

Trouble: *Jealous of Humanity*

Other Aspects: *MerLN's Day Will Come, Conquerer of Worlds, Only Dr. Locke Can Delete Me*

Skills
Great: Daunt
Good: Lore, Blast
Fair: Melee, Lineage, Cunning
Average: Repair, Smithy, Vigor, Household

Stunts Starting Refresh: 3

All One Mind: Spend a fate point to take over an Emergent body. Her skills supersede whatever Emergent she takes over, though she carries any consequences already received.

Choose two more stunts to customize.

Stress Mental Physical

Armour

MerLN>Access>Database>Audio>MerGN-A>Medusa Moon

MerGN-A does not have a coat of arms, but the Medusa Moon, her siege armour, is like no other. Shaped like a human head, it is the size of a small moon. Its front has face-like features that do everything from launch small escort fighters to blast giant energy beams from its eyes.

The armour's rear features a mass of tentacle-like equipment with multiple uses. Knights encountering the Medusa Moon are advised to quickly retreat and inform Avaluna Base immediately.

Medusa Moon

Quadrant A

- Head: Superstructure Pylon
- Tentacle: Autonomous Vassal (Produce Great Vassal as an action)
- Tentacle: +2 to Blast target one zone away
- Tentacle: +2 to Melee when two or more enemies are in your zone
- Tentacle: +2 to Armour defense vs. Melee

Quadrant B

- Head: Superstructure Pylon
- Tentacle: Autonomous Vassal (Produce Great Vassal as an action)
- Tentacle: +2 to Blast target one zone away
- Tentacle: +2 to Melee when two or more enemies are in your zone
- Tentacle: +2 to Armour defense vs. Melee

Quadrant C

- Head: Superstructure Pylon
- Tentacle: Autonomous Vassal (Produce Great Vassal as an action)
- Tentacle: +2 to Blast target one zone away
- Tentacle: +2 to Melee when two or more enemies are in your zone
- Tentacle: +2 to Armour defense vs. Melee

Face Quadrant

- Eye: Near Sight (+2 to Blast targets one zone away)
- Eye: Far Sight (+2 to Blast targets two zones away)
- Nose: Autonomous Vessel (Produce Great Vassal as an action)
- Mouth: Return to Mother (Consume Vassals to reduce stress. You must consume a number of Vassals equal to the stress box being cleared.)
- Head: Superstructure Pylon

Brain Core

- Brain: Tactical Matrix (Great Armour)
- Head: Superstructure Pylon
- Head: Superstructure Pylon
- Head: Superstructure Pylon
- Head: Superstructure Pylon

Siege Armour Aspects

- Writhing Tentacles
- Glowering Face
- Massive Size
- Looming Dread

The Armour of *CAMELOT Trigger*

Venusian armour

The designs of the Morningstar Matriarchy appear as beautiful sculptures, graceful and fluid in movement, and deadly to any who oppose them. Colors are bright, curves are deliberate, and some designs look as if they should be displayed in a museum instead of docked in an armour bay. Valkyrie designs tend towards a militaristic style, while Vesper armour often features concealed weapons to surprise knights in battle.

Knights of the other worlds will spend extravagantly to have a single piece of Venusian design on their armour, like a weapon or a breastplate. Acquiring a full suit undamaged can set up a smithy for life...assuming they survive the attempts by its household to get it back.

- **Morningstar:** One of the most famous Vesper designs. The signature weapon of the design is the Gravity Flail, which packs a mean wallop and can also be used to entangle and capture opponents for ransom back to their household. Lady Octavia Du Guirrer designed the suit and allowed the design to flourish amongst other Venusian smithys.
 - Head: Reflex Enhancer (+2 to Mark when determining initiative order)
 - Front: Distortion Strobe (+2 to Cunning to create advantages involving visual distractions)
 - Back: Neutron Blaster (+2 to Blast vs. targets two zones away)
 - Arms: Gravity Flail (+2 to Melee to create advantages that bind or entangle the target)
 - Legs: Carbinium Alloy (Fair Zeal/Fair Vigor)
- **Javelin:** A Valkyrie design built for toughness and speed. The back-mounted Quiverpack harasses the enemy at long range, and the thick Orsonite Shield allows the knight to draw the enemy back towards heavier battle armour. Javelin armour was most often used on fast scouting missions to Earth and her moon during the Emergent occupation. Many suits still guard Arthur's Avaluna Base to this day.
 - Head: Geophase Imager (Great Mark)
 - Front: Orsonite Shield (Fair Zeal/Fair Vigor)
 - Back: Quiverpack (+2 to Blast vs. targets two zones away)
 - Arms: Heat-Seeking Spear (Use Melee instead of Blast vs. targets one zone away)
 - Legs: Scout Package (Fair Lore/Fair Skulking)

Earth armour

Earth's armoursmythes have a reputation for solid, well-designed armour, and are famous for their ability to maintain and repair it with few parts or materials at hand. Early designs of armour on Earth were often sent straight into the gnashing maw of the Emergent, so it had to be designed right the first time. Earth armour may not be flashy, but it is certainly hardy and battle-tested.

- **Broadsword:** This armour was originally built in one of the first Martian factories freed by Arthur and L4-NC3-L07. Dozens of suits were secretly built there and smuggled back to Earth. The Broadsword has since become a symbol of Arthur's new reign, the suit of choice for many of the knights who bear his standard. The Energy Gunblade is one of the most innovative elements of the design: when a Broadsword is felled, duels often commence over who takes the weapon as a trophy.
 - Head: Death's Head (Use Armour instead of Daunt to intimidate an opponent if you haven't done so already in this scene)
 - Front: Kiloton Breastplate (+2 to Armour defense vs. Blast attacks)
 - Back: Self-Repair Pack (Spend a fate point to bring a system back online)
 - Arms: Energy Gunblade (Use Melee for Blast attacks one zone away)
 - Legs: Stabilization Spurs (+2 to Vigour when on solid footing)
- **Mace:** A short mobile armour built to harass multiple targets. Maces are built to move and strike on the run. The missile packs let them keep the pressure on, coming and going.
 - Head: Spiked Pilot Armor (Fair Zeal/Fair Daunt)
 - Front: Xenon Scrambler Dish (+2 to Cunning when creating advantages)
 - Back: Dual Shoulder Missile Packs (Great Blast)
 - Legs: Vibranium Armor (+2 to Armour to defend vs. Blast attacks)
 - Arms: Spiral Shredder (+2 to Melee vs. armour with all systems shutdown)

Martian armour

The factories of Mars continue to manufacture armour. Original Martian armour was created from the wrecks of Emergent suits and captured pieces. Knights taken alive were sent to fight in the arenas against new Emergent designs. Post-occupation armour keeps the industrial style of the original armour but offers more reliability in battle. Martian armour signifies a knight who has little fear of fighting, and is often keen to say the just the right word to provoke an opponent into making a mistake.

- **Lash:** This armour is built by a Venusian armoursmythe for those knights out of favor with the Morningstar Matriarchy. The identity of the smythe is known to few, lest the Matriarchy send Valkyries to smash the workshop (and the smythe) to pieces.
 - Head: Medusa Lancepack (+2 to Blast to attack targets one zone away)
 - Front: Nanodyne Breastplate (+2 to Armour to defend vs. Melee attacks)
 - Back: Sonic Disrupter (Fair Blast/Fair Skulking)
 - Arms: Tungsten Whip (+2 to Melee to create advantages involving binding or entangling the target)
 - Legs: Venusian Craftsmanship (Fair Armour/Fair Vigour)
- **Hatchet:** The Power Booster channels extra energy into the neurohelm. This armour was often given to slaves who never fought before. It is a common sight for security and patrol knights.
 - Head: Advanced Offensive Suite (Great Melee)
 - Front: Short Range Rockets (Use Blast to defend vs. Melee)
 - Back: Neural Disruptor Axe (When succeeding with style on a Melee attack roll, target must reroll their initiative)
 - Arms: Gauss Kite Shield (+2 to Armour to defend vs. Melee)
 - Legs: Power Booster (Average Melee, Average Blast, Average Vigor, Average Devotion)

Wreck armour

The armour used by knights of the Wreck usually comes in from other worlds. Armour uniquely crafted within the Wreck is cobbled together from scrap parts, rocks, or whatever materials can be found, resulting in larger conglomerations built from the remains of smaller armour.

- **Ballista:** The Ballista is built from the wrecks of other armour, lashed together for extra energy and firepower. This armour looks like a floating torso with giant arms cobbled together from dozens of smaller pieces. Limbs dangle loosely and the hollow eyes of armour heads stare out from its superstructure. Wreck knights typically use Ballistae as mobile bases.
 - Alpha Section
 - ◆ Shoulder: Superstructure Pylon
 - ◆ Front: Gorgon Greaves (Great Blast)
 - ◆ Front: Engineering Bay (Once per battle, spend a fate point to bring a system back on line)
 - ◆ Back: Bozon Torpedo Bays (+2 to Blast vs. targets two zones away)
 - ◆ Hand: Arc Laser Cannons (+2 to Blast vs. targets one zone away)
 - Beta Section
 - ◆ Shoulder: Superstructure Pylon
 - ◆ Front: Gorgon Greaves (Great Blast)
 - ◆ Front: Engineering Bay (Once per battle, spend a fate point to bring a system back on line)
 - ◆ Back: Bozon Torpedo Bays (+2 to Blast vs. targets two zones away)
 - ◆ Hand: Arc Laser Cannon (+2 to Blast vs. targets one zone away)
 - Charlie Section
 - ◆ Head: Boarding Bay (Produce a Fair Vassal Squadron once per round as an action)
 - ◆ Front: Command Deck (Fair Mark/Fair Daunt)
 - ◆ Back: Reciprocating Turret (Use Mark instead of Blast to create advantages involving covering fire)
 - ◆ Legs: Superstructure Pylon
 - ◆ Arms: Superstructure Pylon
 - Siege Armour Aspects
 - ◆ Massive Size
 - ◆ One Body, Many Parts
- **Stiletto:** Stilettoes take after their namesake: small, fast, and deadly. Most knights that join a brigand band start with a Stiletto as their first armour. If they survive, they build upon it and upgrade its systems.
 - Head: Boosted Reflexes (Great Mark)
 - Front: Streamlined Armour (Use Armour instead of Zeal when overcoming a zone obstacle)
 - Back: Lockjammer Delta (+2 to Armour to remove a *Target Lock*)
 - Arms: Double Mag Blades (+2 to Melee to when attacking a target that has already been attacked this round)
 - Legs: Rapid Swing Boosters (Good Melee/Average Zeal)

Jovian armour

The designs of Jupiter are classic, among the first built by humanity in the outer planets to defend against the Emergent. Built to last, much of this early armour still stands today, maintaining a silent watch in the throne rooms of the Titans. Fathers passed their armour to their sons, and many sons rebuilt the armour of their dead fathers. Some are combinations of various parts passed down through the generations.

Jovian designs make use of external systems more heavily than those of the other planets. Often, a rivalry begins when one house claims another house's armour off the battlefield. What some knights consider to be mere technology, the Titans of Jupiter consider a matter of honor deserving of the utmost contention.

- **Dirk:** Scout armour is often built for second children who want to learn the art of war. The Dirk is a quick armour, armed with a stealth field and a state-of-the-art sensor array.
 - Head: Advanced Sensors (Good Mark/Average Lore)
 - Front: Nightcloak Field (Use Zeal instead of Skulking to create advantages involving surprise)
 - Back: Dilitium Booster Pack (+2 to Armour to defend vs. Blast attacks)
 - Legs: Retractable Spurs (+2 to Melee to attack after invoking an aspect)
 - Arms: Light Repeating Blaster (+2 to Blast to attack a target exactly one zone away)
- **Gladius:** This older design is still used by many of the Petty Titans. Because of its common nature in most Titan households, parts can be found everywhere. Most of its Systems are external, making modifications easy. The Gladius does have issues with power deployment, especially after taking a massive hit on the field.
 - Head: Double Redundant Systems (+2 to Smithy rolls to repair Systems)
 - Front: Tabard Armor (Use Armour instead of Daunt on first mental attack in a scene)
 - Back: C.R.O.S.S.bow (+2 to Blast on first physical attack in a conflict)
 - Arms: S.Pe.A.R. (Use Melee instead of Blast vs. targets one zone away)
 - Legs: MaGrav Stabilizers (+2 to Armour to attack when braced against metallic surface)

Saturnine armour

Saturnine armour designs feature sleek lines and advanced technology. The armour may look intimidating, but rarely has it been tested in actual battle. Saturnine armour is often used by multiple knights rather than a single one, with Systems that let the armour do most of the work.

- **Bolt:** Saturnine knights scoff at the chivalric code of battle. They move in, blast away, and get out. Like its namesake, the Bolt flies around the battlefield. The more mobile it remains, the more likely it is to turn the tide against heavier armour.
 - Head: Snapfire Targeting Computer (When you succeed with style on an Armour defense, you may inflict a 2-stress hit on the attacker instead of getting a boost)
 - Front: Compressed Cryo Tanks (+2 to Blast when creating advantages involving covering fire)
 - Back: Multi-Phase Emitter Dish (Good Skulking/Average Mark)
 - Arms: Dual Laser Pistols (Good Blast/Average Zeal)
 - Legs: Rocket Boots (+2 to Armour to defend vs. Blast attacks)
- **Quarterstaff:** Every knight starts somewhere, and the knights of Saturn use this armour to train. It also sees some action on guard patrols, or sold to those desperate for any armour they can get. Its parts, however, can be easily adapted for use in dozens of other designs.
 - Head: Short Range Attack Software (Average Blast/Average Zeal/Average Vigor/Average Mark)
 - Front: Galvatron Phase Armor (Great Vigor)
 - Back: Multi-Phase Emitter Dish (Fair Armour/Fair Melee)
 - Arms: Autofire Arc Rifle (+2 to Blast vs. targets one zone away)
 - Legs: Boost Boots (+2 to Melee to create advantages when charging)

Templar armour

The armour of the Zodiac Templars numbers only twelve at any given time. Each is built by the knight as their final step of their ascension as a Templar. Templar armour is controlled from within by knights fully submerged in meditation tanks. Those who study the Templars are curious as to where they get the materials to build these amazing suits.

- **Gemini:** The twin pilots of the separated armour are a mystery. Some suggest they are the Polaris and the Temple's newest apprentice. Others believe they are those with linked souls, like siblings or rivals, who must balance their relationship before reaching enlightenment. The armour links back to back, and each knight must learn to fight as an individual as well as half of a pair.
 - Head: Templar Meditation Tank (Great Armour)
 - Front: Arc Bolt Blasters (Fair Mark/Fair Blast)
 - Back: Connection Socket
 - Arms: Multi-Phase Targeting Computer (+2 to Mark to create advantages involving aiming or target locks)
 - Legs: Ionic Cloak (Good Skulking/Average Daunt)
- **Libra:** Often built for balanced attacks. This version features devastating attacks at long range as well as close up. Libra is the Templar that prefers to hone all skills rather than specialize.
 - Head: Templar Meditation Tank (Great Armour)
 - Front: Andromeda Infiltration Suite (Good Skulking/Average Mark)
 - Back: Comet Striker (+2 to Blast targets two zones away)
 - Arms: Quantum Spike (On a success with style when defending with Armour, you may inflict a 2-shift hit on your attacker instead of getting a boost)
 - Legs: Evasion Boosters (+2 to Armour to defend vs. Blast attacks)

Emergent armour

This armour is meant as inspiration for quick enemies to drop in, which can range from small, human-sized infiltrators to a single giant formed from a swarm.

- **Mer-GN-B (Basilisk):** This scout armour is often the first encounter a knight has with the Emergent. They engage long enough to assess the enemy armour and retreat back to the master with the data.
 - Head: Glowing Red Eyes (Fair Daunt/Fair Mark)
 - Torso: Neutron Cone Driver (+2 to Blast attacks with two or more opponents in the same zone as each other)
 - Torso: Ozone Rocket Blasters (+2 to Blast on your first ranged attack in a conflict)
 - Legs: Reinforced Carbide Construction (Fair Devotion/Fair Vigor)
 - Tail: Mass Driver Cannon (Great Blast)
- **Mer-GN-C (Cerberus):** This multi-headed armour is built for heavy duty, often accompanied by two smaller armour. Rumors abound that an even deadlier model is in the works.
 - Head: Life-Form Scanner (Great Mark)
 - Head: Self-Repair (Once per scene, spend a fate point to reactivate a System that's been shut down)
 - Torso: Double Grav Field (Once per scene, you may reduce the severity of one of your consequences by one step)
 - Legs: Energy Mace (Fair Melee/Fair Daunt)
 - Legs: Hyper-Kinetic Transmotors (Gain a boost with two free invocations when you defend with Armour and succeed with style)

MESSING WITH THE MYTH

Much of the fun of *CAMELOT Trigger* comes from taking elements of the classic stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table—with a few twists. The tale of Arthur is familiar enough that most players can quickly grasp the gist of the setting. Players with a deeper understanding of Arthurian legend may want to take the twists and run with them.

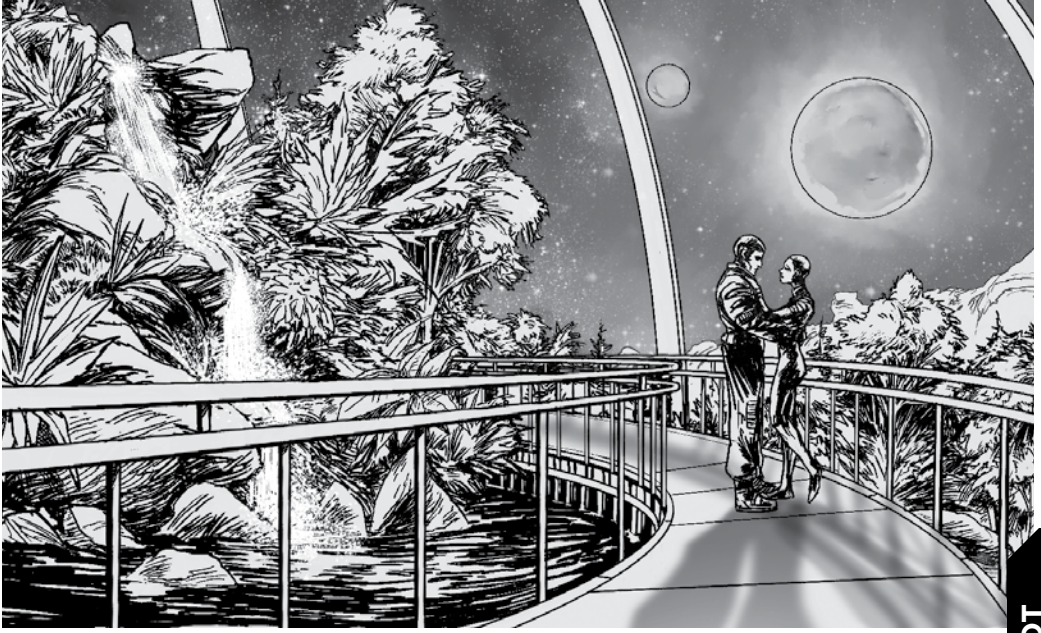
CAMELOT Trigger focuses on the love triangle between Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot. Each one is the leader of a planet, but everyone knows their fates are intertwined and doomed. Players might want to play out that triangle for themselves, playing Arthur, Valerie, and L4-NC3-L07 as PCs. Use them to take the setting out for a spin in a one-shot, or put your own spin on the famous trio.

Consider the original legend with some twists: what if Arthur loves Lancelot, but cheats on him with Guinevere? Or Lancelot and Guinevere are married, and Arthur abuses his power as king to divorce them? Gender-flipping is also a way to change the dynamic, as Laura du Lac and Queen Althea vie for King Jonathan's heart. Mixing these elements up tightens the web of romance and betrayal, providing fertile ground for lost love, broken hearts, and epic duels.

These legends are linked in a love triangle, but that doesn't mean they can't be loved by others outside of it. Players who make their own characters can still insert themselves into the central drama. One of the playtesters made her character Arthur's bastard daughter who sought to prove herself to her father, thus thrusting her into the middle of the story of Arthur's rise and fall. Characters connected to the main trio are a great way to get wrapped up in the epic sweep of the setting.

CAMELOT Trigger assumes PCs will be knights with their own armour who wander the solar system, seeking out battle and other tests of strength and honor. Heroic knights are considered to be above reproach—which is why one might make a perfect agent for MerGN-A to spy on Arthur and his court. Your players could play “black knights,” agents of MerGN-A, aiding in her efforts to obtain a DNA sample of Arthur for Project: MORDRED, as well as find a way to eject MerLN out of the Wyrmgates. She may promise her black knights a world of their own to rule, and/or revenge against those who have wronged them. If “the Once and Future King” never returns, MerGN-A finally wins, and humanity is lost.

Giant mechs and space battles place the game in the realm of science fiction. Clarke's Law states that sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic—instead, in your game, sufficiently advanced magic becomes indistinguishable from technology. Armour could be powered by bound elementals or mana siphoned from the ley lines on the planets, or the space between the planets is filled with luminiferous ether that can be collected for energy. Elements of mysticism do wonders to attract players who like a little fantasy in any RPG they play. Adding magic to the setting will require a slight adjustment to the Lore skill, changing it to Mystick, which covers knowledge of how magic works. Mystick and Smithy are used to build magic items that non-mysticks can use, like armour. Those with Mystick can also use it to attack with lightning bolts and other wizardly trappings.



The timeline of the legend stretches from Arthur's birth to his death. The setting centers on the second act after Arthur's rise but before Guinevere and Lancelot's betrayal. It is the brightest part of the timeline, but games set at other points could be just as exciting. Renegade knights inspired by prophecy might protect young Arthur on Earth, or the last remaining knights of Avaluna Base aid Arthur in his final charge to Mercury—any of these elements of the Arthurian legend could take many a game session before the arc is completed.

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