

“I can’t understand why you’re writing scripts for Bugs Bunny,’ the old lady replied with some asperity. ‘He’s funny enough just as he is.’”

— **Chuck Jones**

Welcome to MADCAP!

**WE ARE SO GLAD
YOU COULD
JOIN US!**

The cleverest thing that cartoons do is seem anarchical when they’re actually following their own set of strict rules. Before restraint was introduced in cartoons, there was anarchy, chaos, cheap laughs. When cartoons became as much about what you can’t do as what you can do, that’s when they achieved the comedy gold we remember today.

A note about “rules”: the most important thing about Madcap, indeed any RPG, is the story that you and your friends tell together. If the rules are getting in the way of telling a good story, and especially a good laugh, then just go with it. Never use the rules as an excuse to make the story worse. That doesn’t mean everyone gets what they want all the time—there’s no drama in that. Good story, and especially good comedy, is the King, and the Queen, and their children, Jack and Ace. (And their nephew, Five of Clubs.)

Beginning with the advent of sound in films, and ending with the takeover of that infernal TV box, the Golden Age was an era of animation mastery. Whether the understated zaniness of Chuck Jones, the boldness of Tex Avery, or the legendary voices of Mel Blanc, and June Foray.

This is the backdrop of the world of **Madcap**. Dynamite, pies to the face, the laws of physics bending to the will of humor. It’s enough to put Isaac Newton in a strait jacket.

Golly, there sure are a lot of words in this book! I’m *Kurt*, and I’ll tell you *just what you need to know* to have fun!



If you have **NEVER** played a role-playing game before...

Madcap is a game of cooperative storytelling inspired by Golden Age cartoons. One player acts as the Director, and they will work with the other players to build their Characters that will make up your Cast. Players will tell the director what moves they will make – that is, what actions that they want their characters to be doing, in the fiction of the story. The Director will respond, to let you know if the move worked or not. (The Director may say yes or no, or they may ask you to roll some dice to make the game more random and exciting.) Together, you, the rest of your Cast, and the Director work to improvise a story about wacky cartoon characters in a silly world of your own imagination.

If you have played a **COMPUTER** role-playing game before...

Madcap is a cooperative multiplayer game for two or more players. One of you will be the Director, who moderates the play of the game. The rest of you will play Characters, your avatars in the game world. You make your characters using the pre-generated playbooks, customizing your appearance. You will get an add-on power called a Gimmick; some of these will be for all adventures, others are exclusive to certain storylines.

Most of the game will be simple poses, where you tell the Director what moves you want your Characters to make, and the Director responds. The Director has final authority on what moves will be allowed, but sometimes we'll roll dice instead, to make random processes.

Role-playing is the core of the experience. You and your fellow players are out to say funny things and to improvise wacky storylines. There's no leveling up (unless you mod the game, using the variant rules).

If you have played a **TABLETOP** role-playing game before...

The master of the game is the Director. Everyone else is the Cast of Characters. You generate characters using the stock playbooks, and you can customize your character using Gimmicks. Some Gimmicks will work for any game, but others will be exclusive to certain adventures.

Like all role-playing games, the Director says what goes and what doesn't. Your actions are called moves, and the Director has responses. There's no set turn order, you just act when you say you want to act. Only players roll dice, never the Director. All rolls are two dice plus modifiers. Usually, a total of 10 or better is a clear success, and 7-9 is a partial success.

You can spend story points to boost your rolls (laughs) and you can suffer damage points that take you out of action (lumps).

CREDITS

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It's time to get things started: The Rules of the Game

Okay. It's simple.
Roll two dice. Add them together. Add an attribute. Look at the result.

Madcap is a game of cooperative storytelling inspired by Golden Age cartoons. One player acts as the Director, the rest as Characters. Together, the characters form the Cast. Characters will make moves, and the Director will respond to the move, explaining whether the move was successful or not, and what exactly went down. Each character has different skills, motivations, and unique abilities. They also have ways of combining their skills with the other cast members. Together, the Cast and the Director work to tell a wacky adventure, the Director supplying the larger story beats, and the Cast the moment to moment actions.

The players tell the Director what *moves* they want to do. The Director *responds* to the moves. Sometimes, the Director may ask the players to roll two dice +adds. 10 or better is great. 7 to 9 is not so great.



What the players do: **DIRECTOR & CAST**

One of you is the **Director**. Just like a movie or TV show, the Director is the boss.

All of the other players will be members of the **cast**. You yourself are a player, and you'll be acting out the role of a **character** in the game. (Sometimes, we'll call the characters that you control "Player Characters" or PCs. That's industry talk, kid.)

Like any good cast of characters, you have your own qualities you bring to a scene, friendships, rivalries, begrudging co-operation and hand-in-glove teamwork. Bickering may break out, but somehow it always seems to serve the larger plot. (We say 'somehow'-- really, we mean because the Director is working very hard to make sure it does.)

Everyone in the cast is working towards the group's overall goal, no matter how they act. Some cast members are obviously good guys. Other cast members seem dastardly or sneaky, but they are performing a valuable service by setting themselves up to be the butt of the joke.

Being **IN CHARACTER** vs. **OUT OF CHARACTER**, and **DECLARING** stuff

Just like an actor, you'll have to worry about two things at once: what your fictional persona is doing in the game – **in character** – and what you and your fellow players are doing to roll dice, to adjust numbers and to play the game – **out of character**.

When you tell the Director that your character will do something in the fiction of the story, you're declaring that you'll do this thing in character. "I declare that my Abecrombie character will open the door!" ... is the awkward but technically-correct way you'd do this.

When you get used to the game, you'll probably be more comfortable implying that you're declaring stuff in character. It's understood that when you say "I open the door" that you mean that Abecrombie the character is doing it, not you.

Declaring something means that your character is doing it. After Abecrombie opens the door, he might set off a trap that dumps a bucket of glue on his head. Welp, you declared you'd do it, so now you gotta live with the consequences.

It keeps happening: **MOVES, RESPONSES, & ROUNDS**

When a player does something in character, it's called a move.

I walk across the room." "I disarm the bomb." "I enter to win the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes." "I ask the maitre d' if those legs go all the way up." "I re-arm the bomb." These are all examples of moves.

After you declare a move, the Director responds to you.

The director tells you what happens. "The bomb stops ticking." "Six to eight weeks pass before a limo pulls up and hands you a giant check." "You are given a withering glance, a cold shoulder, and the table that's right next to both the kitchen and the lavatory." "What, and quit show business?" Etc.

There's no hard limit on the number of moves you can take in a row

You can move, the Director responds, and then you can move again... but there may be reasons you don't want to do that.

If you take too many moves without giving your fellow players a turn, you may be pushing too far, and the responses may become worse.

When a character takes two moves in a row, it starts a new **round** of moves. (So in a single round, each player could make a single move.) Sometimes, you have all the time in the world, and you and yours can take as many moves as you want. ... But in some stories, time is a serious factor. Each time the players take a new round, the Director may "advance the clock", pushing the story forward, for good or for ill. More details on rounds, countdowns, and other time-related stuff are in the Director's chapter.

Don't just sit there! Put some sauce on it.

It's tempting to fall into a rut and just quote the rules, like some bureaucrat trying to get your forms filled out. That's not what **Madcap** role-play is about, friend! With even your most casual moves, get into character. Talk with a funny voice. Describe what your character does. Tell a joke. Do something. Sure, they're not all going to be winners, but it's not about wins, it's about fun!

Doing the exact same thing over and over again isn't good for laughs.

And speaking of fun, what's more boring than the same thing that didn't work last time? The Director might not let you get away with making the same move over and over.

Example play: Dizzy Dingo wants to hit an NPC in the head with a mallet for the third time in a row. The Director encourages Dizzy to use their Prop move in a different way. After they do some quick brainstorming, Dizzy decides to use a leaf blower. They roll high, and proceed to use the leaf blower to pelt the NPC with an array of debris, including leaves, sticks, logs, and home appliances.

Your playbook will tell you what moves you can use

Your playbook is unique

There's four kinds: common, unique, and grudge.

Anybody can do a common move...

We'll be listing the common moves later. These are things like look at things, yell at things, say nice things, etc. Standard stuff.

But your unique move is just for you !

You can't do a grudge move unless you have at least one lump to spend, or unless the mood is violent

You can't just use a grudge move. You've got to have a reason. Of course, this world is full of people who will just give you reasons.

You may or may not have a gimmick move. That stuff is optional.

Sometimes, you might have a special move, just for this game session. If today, you're the captain of the ship, then you might have a special move that lets you order people around, etc. Gimmicks are optional; they're not always in play.

What's the Mood?

Casual, Manic, or Grudge

Screwball cartoons can go back and forth from the calm before the storm... to frantic slapstick ... then back to a breather. We're going to call this the mood of the story.

The DIRECTOR CALLS THE MOODS, but don't get too hung up on it.

When you're playing the game, you and your fellow players will just improvise what your characters are doing. "We got to the store." "I get on the bus." "While she negotiates a lasting disarmament treaty between all nations of the world, I pick my nose." "He'll work the steering while I work the pedals." Etc.

When the mood is CASUAL, then we don't need to roll dice

When the mood is casual, we're not going to fuss with a lot of rules. We're not going to make you count every step, or enforce a fierce order of turns, or buff your THACO so your DPS meets the challenge level. Heck, we're not even going to make you roll dice for stuff! Just say what you do, and then do it.

If someone's not okay with that, then things get manic. See below.

G

When the mood is MANIC, get out your dice

Walking across a tightrope, lighting the fuse on the firecracker, or grifting some rube out of their ice cream are all things where the outcome is uncertain. And when things get dicey, we get out the dice.

You make the mood turn manic by doing something random and uncertain

Whenever you do something that the Director says you need to roll, the mood of the story switches to Manic. The mood will go back and forth from Casual to Manic at the drop of a hat. (It's madcap!) Don't worry. When you get used to the game, you'll be able to switch between "casual" and "manic" moods without even thinking about it.

PG

Describe what your character does. If the situation gets dicey, roll dice. Oh, and you can't use violence unless the Director says that it's time for a grudge match.



When the Director says it's a **GRUDGE**, get ready to roll with the punches

Violence is a thing in some cartoons... but it's not something we take



lightly. **Madcap** is a game about being funny, and it's not really that funny when you're the bully throwing the first punch.

You can only use your grudge move when there's a grudge going on

A grudge mood is even more stressful than a manic mood. Not only must you roll to see if your moves are successful, but you might also get hurt. (Even if you win!) We'll talk more about fighting stuff in the moves chapter, coming up.

Only the Director can tell us when it's a grudge mood

This probably isn't your first rodeo. You've played some other games before. And a lot of games have big, dramatic, smack-down, crack-up, run-and-gun Leeroy Jenkins kind of scene. And we're not knocking that, it's a lot of fun to kick around and get your hands dirty.

With this **Madcap** game, we're asking you to open with a joke, first. You can't just walk up to someone and smack them in the face. This is screwball comedy! Say a line, make a demand, squirt them in the face with your boutonniere, etc.

You can use your other moves to start a grudge

Everyone can use a provoke move to make someone mad at you. Or you could bully someone, to either get something you want, or just to call someone out. You could even persuade someone to give you something or to start a fight with you.

MADCAP TIMES

In a previous article, the Madcap Times failed to identify that the object that squirted the Dowager Princess in the face was a "boutonniere", a flower worn on the chest or the lapel for decoration. This particular flower was a disguise for a hidden spout. When an attached bulb is squeezed by the hand, water ejects from the hidden spout, eliciting surprise and laughter from onlookers.

The Madcap Times regrets any confusion that may have been caused by the use of the word "boutonniere".

Do you fancy your chances?

Rolling Dice

To make our game have some unexpected bits, we'll sometimes take little cubes and drop them on a surface. When the cubes stop moving, we look count the little dots on the tops. Trust me, this will all make sense one we start playing.

When the mood is CASUAL, we won't need to roll dice

We talked about mood in the last chapter. You'll only be rolling dice when things are a little hectic... that is, when the mood of the game is manic or grudge. You and your fellow players can just describe what your characters are doing if it's free and easy. If it's not interesting to roll the dice, then don't roll the dice.

Rolling dice means ANYTHING could happen !

If you're about to roll dice, you have to be ready to accept that something random is going to happen. Don't be the poor sport who gets a bad roll and then complains about the result. You wouldn't be complaining if you had rolled better, and we're not playing for money or anything serious. It's all in fun.

If you really, *really* don't think that what you're about to do should have any chance of going south, briefly make your case that you shouldn't have to roll. Your Director will listen to you, make a quick decision, and we can get on with the game. When the mood of the story is "manic", that means that hands are flailing, jaws are wagging, rain is falling, brakes are off, or other kinds of chaos are confounding the situation. So what was easy when it was "casual" can become a crapshoot now that it's "manic".

Madcap uses **two dice**.
(The regular six-sided kind.)

To keep things short and sweet, we'll just use the use the word "roll" when we want you to roll two dice. So when you see "**roll**", that means "roll two six-sided dice."

When you roll, it's two six-sided dice, plus another number. If the total is 10 or more, you get what you want. If it's 7-9, it gets complicated.



You'll almost always have a number to add or subtract to that roll. That's a modifier, which we'll usually write as **+mod**. "Mod" will be whatever you're adding. Like, if we say, "**roll +zany**", we mean "roll two dice and add your 'zany' number to the result."

This will give you a number. Rolling higher is usually better. We say "usually" because there can be too much of a good thing.

WHAT DIE ROLLING MEANS

Each move will have a simple scheme to follow when you roll. Each move is different, but most of them follow this method:

To do a move, roll +mod.

You might have some other modifiers to add or to subtract to this roll. Everybody's got something.

Up to 6: Miss

Rolling 6 or less means it didn't work. Ask the Director what the consequences are. If you're rolling, then the mood is manic... and if the mood is manic, something bad could happen.

7-9: It's Complicated.

Rolling 7-9 might get you what you want... kinda. You may be forced to take a **hard bargain**: either give it up, or get what you want but something bad happens.

10-12: Win

Good job! The Director will tell you what your reward. The 10-or-better result usually just gives you what you wanted.

13+: Too Much

If you roll this high, you'll get what you asked for... and more. A kind word gets you a friend for life who won't leave you alone. A mean remark makes someone faint dead away and gets the authorities involved. That machine you fixed cans all the peaches... and when it runs out of peaches, it starts canning everything and anything. Etc. It's a cartoon world!

OTHER MODIFIERS

There's some things that can affect rolls.

forward:

This means "take +1 to the next roll that you make." Like everything else in life, a forward might have a catch.

If we say, "+1 forward to the results", that means that whatever the move did, you get +1 to your next move, if and only if it's building on that last move.

If we say, "+1 forward for this scene", that means the bonus only lasts while we're doing this thing here. You can forget about it once we've moved on.

back:

This means "take whatever roll you just made before this one and add 1 to it."

For example, if you spend a laugh, you can take "+3 back" to your last roll. That means you can take your last roll and add 3 to it, which might turn a miss into a win.

Laughs and Lumps

Laughs are good to have. Lumps, not so much... though some characters can do special things only when they have lumps.

What's up, doc? CATCH-PHRASES

Catch-phrases are the thing that lets your character shine. They keep characters true to their motivations, let them use their talents, and expose their flaws. The effective use of Catch-phrases can take your storytelling from good to great.

Your character will start with 1-3 catchphrases, but feel free to add them, no more than once per session, up to a total of 5. As the story moves along, Characters will become more developed, it's only natural that more Catch-phrases will arise. Try to connect the addition of a new Catch-phrase to a move, treat it like citing an existing one. If you do this more than once per session, the Director might feel that you're abusing the privilege.

You can have up to five LAUGHS

Who doesn't like to laugh? To encourage the players to crack wise, the Director hands out **laughs** to each player.

We recommend using some kind of token for each laugh: pennies, poker chips, anvils, colored stones from your last card game, etc.

As a rule, you start each game with no laughs, and you can't carry more than three. You also don't keep them from game session to game session, so use 'em if you've got 'em.

You should get about ONE LAUGH PER SCENE

The Director hands out laughs to the players

Madcap is a game about having fun. You should find a way to work in some one-liner, set-up, or payoff each time a new scene is presented in the game.

You can get laughs with your catch-phrase

The most straightforward way to earn Laughs is letting a Catch-phrase

work against you. At some point, the Director may cite one of your Catch-phrases, explain why it's relevant to the current situation, and then offer you the option of accepting a negative consequence in exchange for a Laugh. That offer could come at any time during casual and rolled moves.

Example offers: I'll give you a laugh if...

You ignore the roll and accept failure for this move...

You agree to a slimmer chance of success on the roll...

You agree to let a casual move fail that could have succeeded...

...due to the following

Catch-phrase

Example Play: Niels the Newt wants to use one of his crazy contraptions to trap an enemy. He rolls successfully. The Director knows that one of Niels' Catch-phrases is, "That's what we call precision engineering!" The Director Cites this Catch-phrase, and explains how it could relate to the contraption going absolutely haywire. The Director offers Niels a Laugh point if they agree to

Laughs are good. Earn them by being funny. Spend them to add +3 to a bad roll or to make stuff happen.

Lumps are bad. Get them by getting beaten up or by failing rolls. Get 3 lumps and you're out (for a bit).



let this happen. After some negotiation, Niels agrees, earning them a Laugh point to use later. The contraption flies apart spectacularly.

You can get laughs with your comedic timing

You can also earn laughs by doing an excellent job of playing to your character. If you make a move that makes the other players (or at least the Director) laugh out loud, that could very well earn you a Laugh point. Likewise, making a move that seems really in-character, or calls back to earlier events in a way that makes the group go, “nice!” is also Laugh-point worthy.

Now here’s the thing: Directors don’t like giving Laughs just because they’ve been asked for, so leave it up to them to figure it out.

You can get laughs by giving a helping hand

If you can Cite a Catch-phrase during a support move, and the Director agrees that it makes sense, you earn a Laugh.

SPEND LAUGHS to change the game

You can spend a laugh to make a casual move when you couldn't, before

If you feel your Catch-phrase should make a casual move possible, and

the Director agrees, you can spend your Laugh to make things go your way.

Example play: Bobby Boulderson wants to punch through a wall to get into a building. The Director tells Bobby that the wall is too strong to punch through. Bobby points out that they have the Catch-phrase, “Who needs Doors?” The Director agrees that this makes sense, and decides to let Bobby cash in their Laugh, and punch a giant hole in the wall.

Take +3 back to a roll that you just made

Cash in a Laugh to add 3 to a roll at any time.

Example Play: Johnny Drybones rolls Zany to try and avoid falling down a cliff. The roll comes up just short of what they were hoping for. Johnny feels that making this roll is crucial, and they don’t have a catch-phrase that helps in this situation. They decide to give the Director one of their Laughs, bringing the roll total up to where they wanted it.

GETTING LUMPS

Lumps are what you get when you don’t get what you want. You will get most of your lumps from injury. (That is, when your character gets punched in a grudge match, when you drop an anvil on your foot,

when you connect positive to positive, etc.) But you can also get lumps just from bad misses, such as when

We’re going to use the word “lump” as a generic term for damage. So no, your character doesn’t have to have exactly 3 lumps on their head if they have 3 lump counters. Work with us, here!

The most common way to get a lump is when your character suffers some horrible injury... and that usually happens in manic situations when you’re not rolling all that great.

3 LUMPS AND YOU'RE OUT

If you have 3 lumps or more, you “fall down”. You are not allowed to participate in the rest of this scene, except as a punching bag.

Once you take a fall, your lumps reset back to zero

If you take too many lumps, you’ll have to wait until the next scene before you can get back in action again.

Your lump count resets to zero at the start of a new game session.

We mention this here because if we don’t say it, we’ll hear all about it on our social medias.

What is a character, but a miserable pile of numbers?

Attributes, and the Common Moves that use them

Anybody can do something! And to measure those somethings, we use numbers. This wouldn't be an arr-pee-gee if we didn't use numbers, after all. And we have all the numbers here. The best numbers.

Attributes have a range, from -2 to +2. Low attributes mean you're not particularly good at doing these things. Maybe you're hot-headed, maybe you're not the sharpest tool in the shed, or maybe you don't have the kind of sense of humor that people would describe as "zany."

Cool is for doing things when it's too manic to be casual about it.
Sharp is to know what's going on.
Sly is to persuade or to fool people.
Tough is to bully people or do physical stuff.
Zany is to do cartoony gags.



Cool

Use cool to keep your head while everyone else is losing theirs. You can use your cool to resist being roped into doing stupid things, to not let the chaos around you get to you, and to just display common sense. (Common sense is not a common thing in the world of cartoons.)

Roll +Cool to DO SOMETHING WHEN THE MOOD ISN'T CASUAL

This move is the catch-all for anything that isn't covered by the other moves. Normally, we don't sweat rolling dice when the mood is casual... but when things are flying around, people are screaming, it's raining cats and dogs, and whatnot, you can't just be expected to get things done.

You might also be asked to make this cool move if what you're about to do isn't cool. Picking pockets, cutting brake lines, setting traps, and all kinds of things that could go badly for you or someone else can call for a roll.

To do something while in a manic or grudge mood, roll +cool.

Up to 6: Miss. Ask the Director what the response is, and be prepared for the worst.

7-9: Good news & bad news.

You flinch, you stall, or you otherwise aren't at your best. The Director chooses one:

Worse outcome. You still do your thing, but something bad happens. (You drop the match next to the dynamite; you bump the throttle and the train speeds up; you leave the phone off the hook and your spouse hears everything, etc.)

Hard bargain. The Director gives you a choice: get your thing done and something bad automatically happens to you... or you just let this fail, with no immediate consequences.

Dramatic tension: Whatever you just tried to do fails... and gets even worse in the process. You can't try again until the next round. (That is, until everyone else has had a chance to do something, including the Director.)

10-12: Win. You do this thing. You even look good while doing it. Couldn't be easier.

13+: Too much! You get your thing done, but you set off a chain of events that will have more complications, later. (You throw the dynamite out the window... and next to the gas pumps at the motor pool; you pull the brake and the train slows down... but it slips and is now drifting down multiple tracks towards a gang of philosophers; you quickly answer the phone, say something stupid, and hang up, and the other party on the line thinks they need to call the cops, etc.).

Sharp

Use sharp to talk circles around someone, be clever, to notice things, and to know things. While being sharp will keep you out for obvious danger, others might appeal to your greed, your ego, or other parts of your personality to talk you into things against your better judgement.

Roll +Sharp to **READ** the situation

When the mood is cool, the Director will describe things that your characters see in plain view. If that's good enough for you, then we're cool.

If you're not satisfied with that, you can press the situation and get a little manic.

To read a situation, roll +sharp.

Up to 6: Miss. While you're sticking your neck out and ogling everyone with the hairy eyeball, someone else may take advantage or offense. Ask the Director what the response is, and be prepared for the worst.

7-9: ask one from the list below.

10-12: ask two from the list below.

13+: ask three from the list below.

- What's my escape route?
- Who is the biggest threat?
- Who do I threaten most?
- What's missing from here?
- Is there a trap here?
- Who's in charge here?
- How could I get the mood back to "casual"?

If your very next move acts on the answers the Director just gave you, take +1 forward.



There's a sucker born every minute, and you're on the lookout. Use sly to talk people into doing things for you, to sell ice cubes to penguins, and to tell lies while keeping your fingers crossed behind your back.

Roll +Sly to **PERSUADE** someone

Lie, cheat, schmooze, prevaricate, or even tell the truth. Whatever works.

Declare who are you are persuading and what you want. Role-play it. Then roll +sly.

Up to 6: Miss. Ask the Director what the response is.

7-9: Sweeten the deal. Your target goes along, but only if you offer something more. Some examples:

Give them some assurance that this can't fail.

Tell them your neck is on the line, too. Tell them you've got their back.

Offer more money, greater rewards, a bigger piece of the pie.

If your target accepts, they agree to do what you declared. Otherwise, they don't. You can't try to persuade them again unless the situation changes dramatically.

10-12: Fast-Talk. They go along with what you say. If this is an obvious con, they'll figure it out in a minute.

13+: Hook, Line, and Sinker. They totally buy into this.

Tough

Tough is all things corporeal. Any move that depends on your physicality in a straightforward way will depend on Tough. Think of Tough as strength, agility, speed, and fighting all rolled into one.

Now here's the thing: No director worth their salt is gonna make you roll just because you tried to pick up a glass to take a drink of water. They might, however, make you roll if that water glass has a pair of eyes and the gift of consciousness, and it doesn't want to be picked up. As long as your character is 0 or better, you can assume they have an average ability to run, jump, punch, squeeze, pinch, flick, finagle, poke, wiggle, jive, and wail.

Use Tough on moves requiring regular old physical strength. You can also use it when you need to be physically imposing.

Roll +Tough to BULLY someone

Some people are reasonable, and do what they're supposed to. And sometimes, you've got to push them around a little.

Declare who you are bossing around and what you want them to do. Then roll +tough.

Up to 6: Miss. Your target tells you where to go. Ask the Director what the response is, and be prepared for the worst.

7-9: Your target picks one:

- Give in to your demands.
- Offer you something else. Either you accept their offer, or you take +1 forward on your next move against them.
- Start a fight. You strike first. Take +1 forward.
- Flee. If they can get away they're gone. If they can't, they cower and you and yours take +1 forward on your next move against them.

10-12: Your target picks one:

- Give in to your demands.
- Start a fight. You strike first, with +2 forward.

13+: Your target picks one:

- Give in to your demands.
- Cross the line. Start a fight. You strike first, with +3 forward.

Too much! The target gives in to your demands

Zany

Zany concerns your character's ability to do ordinary impossible things, like clinging to a ceiling in terror, or hanging in the air after accidentally running over a ledge, things that would irk Isaac Newton. Be careful not to try and turn Zany is not a "do-anything" skill. Common Zany moves are for bending the laws of physics, not re-writing them. As for which aspects of physics you can mess with, stick to the ones we experience in everyday life; gravity, friction, mass, inertia, etc. But most importantly of all, try to have a comic justification for the move. Whatever you do must make sense in a cartoon-brained way.

Roll +Zany to DO SOMETHING ABSURD

Examples of absurd moves include:

You now have a prop, such as: a bucket of sand, an imitation painting of the Mona Lisa, an anvil, a giant mallet, fizzling bomb, wooden board, the genuine painting of the Mona Lisa, etc. You pull this prop from your trouser pocket, from your carpet bag, from out of frame, etc.

You figure-skate across the floor as if it were as smooth as ice.

You draw a door on a wall and then escape through it. To everyone else, it's a solid wall.

Running really fast, you look down, see that you're standing on thin air, and quickly run back to solid ground.

Hand your adversary a present, then walk off the scene. When they open the present, who is inside, but you!

You don't plug the lamp into an electrical socket, but into a water spigot. When someone else turns it on, they get a face full of water.

Manipulate the media!

Produce a newspaper out of nowhere, throw your voice into a radio, remove the back of a TV or computer monitor and pretend to be there, etc. This works, somehow.

Pretend to be someone else! You put on a ridiculous disguise and pretend to be someone you're not. Somehow, this works.

Or make something up!

To do something zany, describe a silly thing that you will do, and roll +zany.

Up to 6: Miss. Most of us are going to pretend that we didn't see you just try to do that. Ask the Director what the response is, and be prepared for the worst. Most likely, you'll take a lump for this.

7-9: Comedy is when something bad happens to somebody else. And you're the somebody.

You flinch, you stall, or you otherwise aren't at your best. The Director chooses one:

Worse outcome. You still do your thing, but something bad happens. (You drop the match next to the dynamite; you bump the throttle and the train speeds up; you leave the phone off the hook and your spouse hears everything, etc.)

Hard bargain. The Director gives you a choice: get your thing done and something bad automatically happens to you... or you just let this fail, with no immediate consequences.

Dramatic tension: whatever you just tried to do fails... and gets even worse in the process. You can't try again until the next round.

10-12: Wow, that was weird.

You do an incredibly silly thing. If it's funny, the Director might give you a Laugh.

13+: Too much! You get your thing done, but you also set off a chain of events that that will get even crazier.

Making Characters

Making a character in Madcap is easy. First, pick a template. Look them all over, see if any of them speaks to you. Maybe one of them is close, but it would fit you a lot better with a couple tweaks. In that case, feel free to discuss it with the director. The templates are only here to help, nothing is set in stone.

Once you've picked your template, you'll notice that each template gives you a few decisions to make regarding looks, and some special abilities such as props, costumes, impressions, etc. Circle the given options you like, or make up your own.

The final step in making your character is by far the most important, and deserves the most thought: your catch-phrase.

CATCH-PHRASE

A good catch-phrase fits a lot of situations. Things going well? Catch-phrase. Things going bad? Catch-phrase! A good catch phrase should give your character ways to both earn and spend laughs. It's easier than it sounds. Coming up with a character's catch-phrase is as simple as knowing what motivates your character.

One catch-phrase is plenty to start with, and for medium-length campaigns that could grow to three, but more than five is probably a bit much.

Choosing a Catch-Phrase (and don't worry, you can change your mind later)

Think about what your character is about.

What can your character not resist?

A pretty face – "He was the dreamiest villain I ever saw."

Money – "Did you say a billion dollars? Billion with a B?"

Cheesecake – "Of course I can go without... creamy... delicious... FORK IT OVER!"

Is your character confident? Scared? Aggressive?

Vanity – "What does Heidi Klum have that I don't have?"

Ready for a fight – "Put 'em up, put 'em up!"

Anxiety – "Doomed, I tell you, doomed!"

Does your character have any distinctive physical traits?

Prehensile Ears – "Just a little extra reach"

Singed Whiskers – "That was a bit too much dynamite"

Old and Cranky – "What are you smiling about?"

What does your character want out of life?

Glory – "I'm too big for this one-horse town!"

Victory Over a Rival – "I'll get that mouse if it's the last thing I do!"

To annoy people – "Looks like we made a friend!"

Does your character have any phobias?

Heights – “Is it dizzy up here you?”

Capture – “Hide me, hide me!”

Sappiness – “Anything but the Care Bear Stare!”

Does your character have any strange talents?

Driving – “Was that lamp-post there before?”

Music – “Wanna watch me burp the entire Tao Te Ching?”

Knitting – “I knit.”

Does your character have any Rivalries or friendships?

What can your character not resist?

Does your character have any Rivalries or friendships?

Does your character Subvert Expectations?

Small stature – “The smallest pepper hurts the most.”

Intelligence – “I’m not smart, I just wear glasses.”

Courage – “Just because I’m a chicken doesn’t make me some kind of chicken.”

CHOOSE A PLAYBOOK

Each character has a unique playbook that tells you you’re your grudge move and what your unique moves are.

MAYBE, IF YOU WANNA, CHOOSE A GIMMICK

A gimmick lets you customize your character a bit more.

Gimmicks add more stuff to your character, so they make the game more complicated. You don’t have to pick one if you don’t want to.

Each gimmick adds a unique move to your move set.

Unlike the unique moves of the playbooks, the gimmick moves can be applied to a variety of playstyles and characters.

Each gimmick also adds a down side

That’s the way of things, isn’t it? Each gimmick gives the Director license to do bad things to your character, whenever they feel like it. If you’re not comfortable with the down side, then don’t take the gimmick.

YOU START THE GAME WITH ONE LAUGH

What have you done for us lately? You start the game with exactly one laugh, no matter how many or how few you had from the last session..

YOU START THE GAME WITH ZERO LUMPS

It’s a new game session! Leave your worries on someone else’s doorstep.

Playbooks

These are the characters you play. You're welcome.

EARLY-ACCESS BETA

Blowhard, Lunkhead, and Scrapper are strong muscle. *Self-Aware, Snark, and Smartypants* are brainy thinkers. *Sweetheart, Trickster, and Vanity* are smooth talkers. *Grouch, Tagalong, and Wacko* play well with others.



Blowhard

You did right to choose this playbook, because any other kind of character would just hold you back. The best way to deal with any situation is to get tough. And if they're tough, you just gotta be tougher. That might be difficult for other people, but not for you. You like to let your fists do the talking, and you love to talk.

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: Hairy chest, tattoos, thick arms, or make something up!

Voice

Choose one or more: Fine speaking voice, all the best words, or make something up

EARLY-ACCESS

Name

Blowhard

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Set 'em Up

Unique Move

To remind everyone how great you are, **roll +tough**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication

10-12+: Choose one

As the Director who's in charge here, and how tough these mooks are. You take +1 forward to all grudge rolls until this scene ends.

Convince some people of your greatness. You'll take +1 forward on all your rolls with these people until you screw something up and ruin the mood.

Tell someone else to do something. If it's a player, they take +1 forward to do it. If it's a minor character, they try so hard to do it, and maybe they succeed.

Or make something up!

13+: As above, only you're even more awesome. For the rest of this game session, remind everyone how awesome you were.

Knock 'em Down

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +lumps**. (if you don't have any lumps, roll two dice and add nothing.). Remember that if you asked who was in charge first, you get +1 forward for grudges with that one character.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: You dish out damage. That should learn them.

10-12: You dish out damage, and it feels good. Before you or anyone makes a move, you may choose to drop your lump count to zero.

13+: Goodnight Irene! You dish out damage and then some. You can take out a bunch of targets, do a bunch of property damage, inflict the kind of carnage that won't soon be forgot. Then you strike a pose, because you're awesome, and your lump count drops back to zero.

Grouch

You have one nerve left, and everyone is constantly poking it. How these idiots haven't already offed themselves is a constant source of confusion for you. You may lack resources, you may lack skill, you may lack brains, but one thing you've got in spades is the stubbornness to never give up, never give up, never give up that ship. (Other people may confuse that emotion for "spite", "rage", or "homicidal insanity", but you prefer to say you're "persistent".)

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: Knit eyebrows, glower, dark clothes, or make things up!

Voice

Choose one or more: Deep, grating, gravelly, or make things up!

EARLY-ACCESS

Name

Grouch

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Grumping

Unique Move

To spread your misery around, **roll +tough**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication

10+: Choose one

Ignore a hazard, such as a burning house fire or a hail of bullets. Sigh and talk about how this happens all the time and you can't be bothered. Win an argument by being so stubborn that the other person does what you want just to get rid of you.

Solve a problem, but only after watching someone else fail to solve the same problem, because now it's funny to show them up. (The best way to do this is to point out the obvious door, machine, answer, etc. that's been in plain sight the whole time, but no one else in the context of the story even noticed it.)

Make someone's plan fail, by pointing out the holes in it.

Or something else that's all grouchy!

Huckleberry

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +cool**.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Don't lift a finger. Just stare. Just tell your target what kind of person you are, and how little you have left to lose. Your attacker must choose a different target or end the grudge match.

10-12: Whatever damage you do, it happens off screen and is left only to the imagination.

13+: As above, plus if your target was a minor character, they are never seen or heard from, again. (Our attorneys have advised us to say that this doesn't mean you actually murder them. You could just tie them up, stuff them in a box, and mail them to some far corner of the world, which is considered "better", for some reason.)

Lunkhead

When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade. You can't let minor things like ignorance, incompetence, and idiocy get you down. All that matters is that you keep your eyes on the stars and your heart in your hand. You don't know the meaning of the word "gullible", because you can't look it up, you were told it's not in the dictionary. Sure, sometimes other people forget themselves and take advantage of you... but you know that in a pinch, they will always show up to help you. You may not be very brave, very smart, or even good at anything at all... but you always know that at the end of the day, you can be an example to others.

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: Big smile, or make things up!

Voice

Choose one or more: monotone, malapropism, long guttural pauses, unidentifiable accent, or make things up!

EARLY-ACCESS

Name

Lunkhead

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Naivete

Unique Move

To do things no one told you that you can't do, **roll +laughs**. (If you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: Blurt out loud some embarrassing fact about another character, or just flat out confess to your past crimes. This is never good.

7-9: Suggest that a friend do something silly, ridiculous, or nonsensical. If they do it, they take +1 forward on a roll that has something to do with that.

10+: Choose one

Find the unlocked door, open window, lock combination, or other way in that everyone else was too busy over-thinking to notice.

Distract a character with your incredible obtuseness. You can even stall a villain or other authorities with your utter failure to understand what trouble you are in.

Or make up some other thing to do that no one told you that you couldn't do, yet!

Slapstick

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +zany**.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Your attacker misses you. If your very next move is Naivete, take +1 forward.

10-12: You hurt your attacker, but you feel really bad about it. If the grudge is still going on, you can't make any more Slapstick moves unless you spend one laugh, **or** if another character takes a move to order you to participate again... which makes that character take a lump from getting sucker-punched, while they were ordering you around!

13+: This ain't gonna be pretty. You set off some sort of chain reaction that knocks out all the minor characters and does some serious property damage. You feel really bad about it, too.

Scrapper

You'll never get adopted, because you're nobody's fool. You don't always start it, but you sure as sure are gonna end it. You're a small fry, which is fine, because they bigger they are, they harder they fall. Or you might be all that and then some, and really, it's their own fault when they ought to know better. You're not a monster. You're always kind enough to make sure the numbskulls land on their heads, so's they don't get hurt.

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: Bruises, torn clothes, or make something up!

Voice

Choose one or more: Let your fists to the talking, mumbling, or make something up!

EARLY-ACCESS

Name

Scrapper

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



-1

Cool



+2

Sharp



-2

Sly



+1

Tough



+1

Zany

Spunk

Unique Move

To take nothin' from nobody, **roll +lumps**. (If you don't have any lumps, roll two dice and add nothing.)

7+: Choose one:

Blow off a threat, scam, or other nonsense.

Tell someone to step off and to let you guys alone. If you get into a grudge with that person later in this game session, take +1 forward to deal with them.

Intimidate someone by performing some painful feat, like chewing on nails or breaking something over your head.

Walk through a gun fire barrage, firefight, or other dangerous situation while refusing to make eye contact with anyone or to even recognize that bad stuff is going down. You don't sweat small stuff.

Defeat a physical barrier with an impossible feat of strength.

Or make something up!

Scuffle

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +sharp**. (Remember that if you warned someone to step off, you take +1 to deal with them.)

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Give as good as you get. Either you're missed... or you take a lump and you dish out damage, too.

10-12: Choose one:

You dish out damage and avoid getting hurt.

Pick a friend. If someone attacks that friend before your next move, roll +lumps. On 7+, you save your friend from harm. On a 6 or less, you take the hit, instead.

13+: Total carnage! Dish out damage to a bunch of minor characters, trash the place, and look pretty scary doing it. This will end all but the most major of fights. (And it may have other lasting effects, such as bringing down the house.)

Self-Aware

You ever get the feeling that you're being watched? It's true! You're a cartoon character in a world of made-up nonsense. Just because there's a bunch of writers and artists creating everything you do and say doesn't mean you have to let them boss you around! Maybe you're wryly amused by all the shenanigans and chicaneries around you. Maybe you feel bleak and hopeless because free will is an illusion. Or maybe you just go for the cheap laugh, because why not.

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: Smirk, half-lidded eyes, rumpled clothes, garish colors, strong resemblance to persons living or dead, or make things up!

Voice

Choose one or more: guest actor, smooth delivery, fast, or make things up!

EARLY-ACCESS

Name

Self-Aware

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Genre Savvy

Unique Move

To break the fourth wall, **roll +laughs**. (if you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication

10+: Choose one

Pull a copy of the script out of nowhere, and describe what's going to happen in the next scene. The next three moves taken by anyone **but you** in that next scene take +1 forward.

Drop a name of some celebrity or other cartoon character. That character walks onto the scene, and they are played by the Director. The next character to act on that advice takes +1 forward. This new character may disappear, it may hang around, or it may do something else.

Disguise yourself as a different character for a one-shot gag, then describe how this would solve the situation. If it's funny enough, it works!

Meta

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +zany**.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Crack wise and avoid harm... this time.

10-12: Produce some ridiculous prop out of nowhere (anvil, shotgun, sputtering bomb, unabridged copy of *Dianetics*, phased-plasma rifle in the 40-watt range, etc.) and deal out damage to your target.

13+: As above, only you tear the fabric of cartoon reality. Film skips sprockets, digital coloring glitches out, and madness ensues.

Smartypants

If there's such a thing as knowing too much for your own good, you are it. Maybe you're too shy to talk to other people. Or maybe you're just too smart for own good, and other people get tired of your know-it-all-attitude. Sometimes you might have the brilliant idea that saves the day... other times, it was your untried theory that started this whole mess in the first place.

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: Large spectacles, bow tie, lab coat, pocket protector, clipboard, rubber gloves, plaid shirt, tape around glasses, canvas shoes, bug-eyes, abacus, wild hair, crazed grin, or make things up!

Voice

Choose one or more: Nasal, wheezy, adenoidal, lisp, snorting laugh, prep school diction, rapid-fire jargon, or make things up!

Name

Smartypants

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Scheming

Unique Move

To use that genius brain of yours, **roll +sharp**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication

10+: Choose one

- Pull some mundane item out of your pockets that can deal with this exact situation. You came prepared!
- Solve a complicated math problem.
- Fix a machine or computer.
- Sabotage a machine or computer.
- Solve a code, combination lock, or password.
- Given enough time, build an elaborate trap. You will need to find some bait. (Money, cheese, birdseed, dullard and his dog, etc.)
- Do research in a library to find the obscure clue.
- Know some obscure fact in science or the humanities
- Or something else that's all smarty!

Cringing

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +cool**.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Violence never solved anything! Ask one other player to take this hit for you. If they say yes, then they play out the grudge match instead of you. If they say no, take your lumps.

10-12: Not in the face! You avoid damage.

13+: Who knew your skinny arms could do this? You get a good punch in there, doing damage to your attacker.

Snark

In the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. While everyone else around you is chaotic, insane, passionate, and blind-crazy... you keep your wits about you. Maybe you're disillusioned with everything and you just can't be bothered to care. You might be clueless, too stupid to even know that you should be angry or scared. Maybe you're a good person who wants to keep everyone out of serious trouble. or maybe you just enjoy watching the house burn down around you. The fact that you don't put your hands in crazy keeps you safe from most kinds of harm, and your detachment gives you a perspective that the hotheads just can't manage.

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: Sneering expression, expensive clothes, or make something up!

Voice

Choose one or more: Snooty voice, three-dollar words, or make something up!

Name

Snark

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



=0

Cool



+1

Sharp



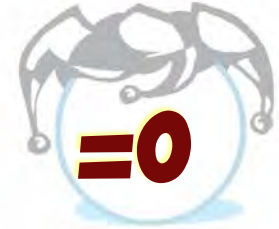
+2

Sly



-2

Tough



=0

Zany

Wisecrack

Unique Move

To make a clever remark, roll +sly.

7-9: Choose one:

Nothing. It's not like anyone listens to you anyway.

Choose one from the "10+" list, but the Director also adds a complication.

10+: Choose one:

After a fellow player fails to do something, tell them what they did wrong. If they do the task again, they automatically succeed.

Tell someone who is about to do something that they can't do it. They try anyway, and immediately fail.

Successfully explain to someone that it's in their best interests to just leave things well enough alone or for you to be on your way.

Ask the Director if there's anything any hidden dangers here. If the Director says yes, they **don't** tell you what they are. Instead, you take +3 forward on your next wisecrack.

Or make something up!

Pragmatic

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +laughs**. (If you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Choose one:

Run, hide, flee, etc. You avoid lumps, but earn the contempt and mockery of all present.

Defend yourself by blocking, throwing, or otherwise giving up some important prop or item. That item is destroyed, lost, or stolen, which will complicate things later in the story.

Take a lump but hurt your target, too.

10+: Choose one:

Hurt a single target, but you become dirty or disheveled in the process. Until you get cleaned up, everyone you meet will comment on your shabby appearance.

Crack wise to your target, who then injures themselves as they miss you.

Sweetheart

Some people are the real deal, and you're it. You've got looks, you've got charm, you've got guts... what you don't have a lot of is common sense. Just look at the company you keep! You're almost too good for this world, but someone has to do the right thing, sometimes. Even if you're not sure what the right thing is.

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: big doe eyes, big eyelashes, striking hair, fashions

Voice

Choose one or more: dulcet tones, stentorian, velvet fog, or make something up!

EARLY-ACCESS PREVIEW

Name

Sweetheart

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



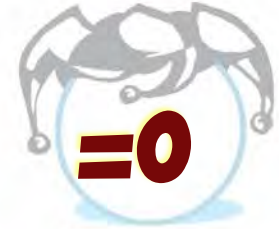
Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Appeal

Unique Move

To turn on the charm, **roll +laughs**. (If you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: Embarrass you and yours in the most horrible way possible. This ought to be good.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication. (A common complication is someone falling in love with you.)

10+: Choose one

Ask the Director who is in charge here, and what you can do to make things right. Take +1 forward by following through with the answers.

Show off your winning smile. Minor characters will swoon and major characters will take notice.

Convince someone to help you. Or at least, not to act against you for the time being.

Reveal some obscure fact about your history, where you were handsome and beautiful and everyone knew it

Or make up something else appealing!

Appease

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +lumps**. (If you don't have any lumps, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Remember that if you pleaded with someone earlier not to hurt you, you take +1 forward in a grudge against them.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: When will all this wickedness end! If your very next move is Appeal, take +1 forward.

10-12: Violence is not the answer! Tell your fellow combatants to get outta here. If their very next move is to ditch this pop stand, they take +3 forward. If it's anything else, they don't. (And yes, that +3 is for you, too.)

13+: You actually hurt someone, dishing out damage. After you do that, apologize profusely and make an Appeal move to end all of this, taking +3 forward.

Tagalong

Not everyone is here for the spotlight. Sometimes, you're just the straight face to make everyone look better. And that's fine, because it also means that whatever horrible stuff is happening, it's not your fault either.

Unlike some other characters, you're not mean-spirited. Sure, you can still get angry, but you're more of a detached observer or concerned friend.

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: plain clothes, thick glasses, poker face, or make something up!!

Voice

Choose one or more: monotone, nagging tone, pleasing language, straight lines, or make something up!

EARLY-ACCESS BETA

Name

Tagalong

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



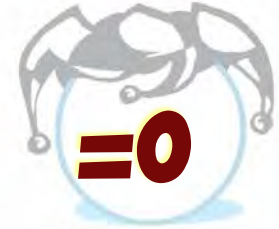
Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Helping

Unique Move

After another player declares a move, but before they roll any dice, you can move to assist and **roll +laughs**. (If you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: No bonus, and if something bad happens to your friend, it happens to you, too.

7-9: Your friend takes +1 forward.

10-12+: Your friend takes +1 forward. After they roll, you can spend one of your laughs to give them +3 back.

13+: Your friend takes +3 forward. After they roll, you can spend one of your laughs to give them +3 back.

Handy

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +lumps**. (If you don't have any lumps, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: You avoid getting hit, and you also avoid taking damage. You may choose to declare a friend: that friend takes +1 forward on their next grudge match; if they lose, you take the lump instead.

10-12: You avoid getting hit. You may ask a friend for help. If they agree, they immediately play out a grudge match vs. your attacker, with +3 forward. (If they lose, they suffer alone.)

13+: Wow, you actually had it in you to land a punch? You dish out damage. All your friends take +1 forward to their grudge matches until this fight ends.

Trickster

Ain't you a stinker? The world is full of people who need their come-uppance, and you have all the uppance you can pack. While you are seemingly capable of anything... you don't use your power for personal gain – you're always looking out for the greater good. Your response may not always be proportional the crime, but it's the thought that counts, neh?

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: Cotton gloves, backwards ball cap, sneakers, sarcastic expression, or make things up!

Voice

Choose one or more: Deadpan delivery, deep sarcasm, smooth and slick, audible eye-roll, voice like velvet, feigned innocence, or make things up!

EARLY-ACCESS

Name

Trickster

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Flim-Flam

Unique Move

To pull one over on these maroons, **roll +sly**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication

10+: Choose one

Declare a target and pilfer a small item from them.
Look out, it's a diversion! Confound one major character or a group of minor characters long enough for you and yours to get one thing done.
Change your outfit to look like random person off the street. Take +1 forward if your outfit fools the rubes.

When pursued, ditch them. (Pretend to be lamp, hide in a billboard, point at a distraction, etc.)

Do some shenanigans that put others in peril. (You only pretend to go over the edge, you switch signposts behind you, you change lanes, etc.)

Pretend to be a mirror image to convince another character to do something stupid.

Or something else that's all tricky!

Artful Dodge

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +laughs**. (If you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: You avoid getting the punch in the face you so richly deserve. If your very next move is Flim-Flam, you may take +1 forward.

10-12: It's a good idea to have friends. Choose one:

Think of a way out of this, and try a Flim-Flam move, taking +1 forward.

Ask a fellow player to deal with this palooka. If they say yes, they immediately play out a grudge, taking +1 forward. If they say no, you take a lump.

13+: Who knew your skinny arms could do this? You avoid harm and actually dish out some real damage.

Vanity

Enough about them, let's talk about you! Only you have the wits, the cunning, the strength, and (most importantly) the humility to see yourself all the way to the top! Why you're not already at the top is anyone's guess. You'd have succeeded already if you weren't surrounded by these idiots, who can never get one thing right. Or for the bad luck that follows you every where you go. But you keep at it. You're too great to sweat the small stuff. And compared to you, everything is small stuff.

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: Best clothes, best face, or make something up!

Voice

Choose one or more: Fine speaking voice, all the best words, or make something up!

Name

Vanity

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



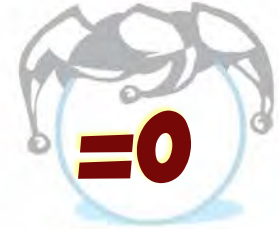
Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Grandstand

Unique Move

To remind everyone how great you are, **roll +sly**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication

10-12+: Choose one:

Ask the Director who is “important” here. Take +1 forward to deal with the important people this scene. (And ignore people who aren’t important.)

Before you do something, tell everyone a brief anecdote of how you’ve done this before, only someplace else and it was a lot more spectacular than it is, here. Then +1 forward to do that thing.

Ask someone to do something. If it’s a player, they take +1 forward, and then you take all the credit for the doing.

Or make something up!

13+: As above, only you’re even more awesome.

For the rest of this game session, remind everyone how awesome you were.

Showboat

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +laughs**. (if you don’t have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Remember that if you grandstanded to ask was important first, you’ll get +1 forward to deal with that person, including grudges.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps, then take a moment to fix your hair.

7-9: Really, everyone should go home, you’ve just outclassed them. You avoid damage and you look good doing it.

10-12: You dish out some damage, but (more importantly) everyone sees you do it.

13+: You dish out damage; describe a method of delivery that is worthy of your greatness. Issue a challenge to whoever’s in charge that they surrender this grudge right now because they don’t stand a chance against your superiority. Lesser characters will give it up right then and there, but major characters might keep at it.

Wacko

There might be some kind of logic to what you do... but if anyone was hard-pressed to figure it out, it would be that you like to have fun. You have no impulse control - you see something, you go after it. You're fun to visit, but I wouldn't want to live with you. You're easily fooled, but you're also easy to anger, and you never give up. You are capable of things others can't do, often because no one ever told you that you couldn't do it.

APPEARANCE

Looks

Choose one or more: Strange skin color, unknown species, or make something up!

Voice

Choose one or more: High pitched, alien sounding, or make something up!

EARLY-ACCESS

Name

Wacko

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Wackiness

Unique Move

To do something out of the ordinary, **roll +zany**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one and the Director gives you a complication. **10+:** Choose one.

Ask the Director a question about the current situation and include a thing that has no relation to the situation. Such as "Is there an escape route to Albuquerque?", "Who's the biggest threat who just needs a hug?", "Why isn't there a gift basket of fresh fruit here?", "Why isn't that bear-trap wheelchair accessible?" "Who's in charge here and why hasn't my soup arrived yet?" etc. If you or your friends act on the answer, they get +1 forward.

Set up a cut-away gag to something else, far away. Anyone who appears in this gag now has a grudge against you.

Quick change into some costume and do a bad impression of some other person, then ask someone to go along with your plan.

Or make something up!

Frantic

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +laughs**. (If you have no laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: You don't get hit, but you are a huge distraction. Everyone else gets +1 forward to their grudge matches for the rest of this scene.

10-12: You actually do some damage to your target.

13+: Too much! Not only do you some damage to your target, but you take a lump, yourself. (What, and quit show business?)

At the discretion of the Director, you also start a chain of events that escalates into something bizarre. (Your pants fall down, revealing the birthmark that proves you're the heir to the throne. You spill a glass of wine that causes a waiter to slip, fly out the window, and into a pillow factory scheduled for demolition. Your gesture inspires the rampaging monster to fall madly in love with you, then we smash cut to the wedding, etc.)

General Gimmicks

These are the moves that any character can have. You only get one.. and you don't have to take a General Gimmick if you don't want one.

Between games, you can swap out one of these Gimmicks for a different one.

A General Gimmick is optional. You don't have to have one.

Having a gimmick makes the game more complicated, and not everyone likes the game to be more complicated. Also, every gimmick has a **down side**, an extra complication that you'll have to deal with.

ADORABLE

D'aww. You're sweet and innocent. You couldn't possibly have done this. Roll +sharp. On a 10+, convince someone you're harmless and they leave you alone. On a 7-9, convince someone you're harmless, but only for this hot minute, so you better get out of here.

At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh. Someone falls madly in love with your puppy-dog eyes, sugary-sweetness, *je ne sais quoi*, etc. and thus complicates your life.

BAG OF JUNK

You have a bag that is full of useless crap. Roll +sharp. On a 10+, you have exactly what you need to deal with this situation, and you make take +1 forward. On a 7-9, you have something that's inappropriate and possibly dangerous.


At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh, and have something bad happen to your bag of junk. (The stuff spills out everywhere and you have to gather it up; police confuse you for the Garbage Thieves who plague this city; a piece of junk you have is actually the missing spy satellite that the CIA needs to recover, etc.)

BUMBLING

You can just get your way out of a situation. Even social ones.

When someone tries to make you do something or tries to hurt you, roll +zany. On a 10+, you avoid harm completely, but something strange happens. On a 7-9, something strange happens, and you blunder from this bad thing to a different thing.

At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh, and have you stumble into a bad situation.




CALM, COOL, AND COLLECTED

Whenever you make a roll that adds +cool, you never roll more than a single die.


Also, raise your cool by +3. This can raise your cool to as high as +6. (Die rolling is such a random drag, you dig? Why roll two dice+cool, when you could roll one die+cool+3 instead.)

Don't forget that you've got this gimmick. If you ever roll two or more dice and then add your cool, then you've blown your cool. The Director takes this gimmick away, your character takes a lump, and you go back to the normal rules (to whatever your cool was before, and now you're rolling two dice, again).



CHIP ON YOUR SHOULDER

Whenever you don't like the way a grudge match came out, you can demand that it be re-rolled. This second result stands, even if it's worse.



DISGUISE

You can pretend to be someone you're not. Roll +sly. On a 10+, you quick-change into someone else, and you can fool someone for a while. On a 7-9, you can quick change into someone else, but they won't be fooled for more than a minute, so act fast.

While disguised, you take +1 forward to moves that work with this disguise... and any move that violates the disguise ends this immediately.

While you're disguised, the Director can hand you a laugh. Someone or something else immediately appears, mistaking you for someone else (ex-spouse, Queen of France, the FBI's most wanted list, their long lost twin, etc.)

INVENTOR

You make stuff. Roll +zany. On 10+, you invent something useful. (A rocket ship, a killer app, a robot bodysuit of the president, etc.) and this thing really works, until something messes it up. On 7-9, the thing works but using it has terrible side effects.

While an invention is in play, at any time, the Director may have outside forces show up. They may be here to steal the invention... they may be here to arrest the inventor for making something illegal... they may have come from the future to stop this invention from enslaving the Earth, etc.

JACK/JILL OF ALL TRADES


You've worked a large variety of jobs. When you have to do something, make up a back history of the job you did, and roll +tough. On a 10+, you do this job just like a pro, as if you've done this for years. On a 7-9, you do this job, but not in the right way. (You do this job the way they did it back on the scullery ship... or you accidentally use industrial cleaner on the wedding dress... or you ship everything to the wrong address, etc.) This partial success may or may not still get you paid or get the job done, but it should be funny.

At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh. An old co-worker or boss shows up and gives you grief.

LAUGH RIOT

When you spend a laugh, it works different. You do not add +3 back to the last roll.


Instead, you re-roll the last roll, and you roll **three** dice this time, instead of two.



PUNCHING BAG

You can take **six** lumps before you are out of action. (Characters without this gimmick can only take three.)

If there's something dangerous to be done, and anyone else suggests that you do it, then you must take the first try at it, or you lose a laugh.




SHAKE IT OFF

When you're supposed to take a lump, roll +lumps. (That is, roll two dice and add the lumps you already have. If you have no lumps, roll two dice and add nothing.)

If you roll 7+, ignore that new lump you were just about to take. Walk off the pain!

If someone with a grudge tries to hurt you, and you shake it off, that someone will become enraged and will try to hurt you again.



EARLY-ACCESS

SHARP DETAIL

When you use +sharp to ask questions, you can take +2 forward when acting forward on the questions. (Characters without this gimmick only take +1 forward.)

Details that other characters could let go will seriously bother you. You must straighten crooked picture frames, re-alphabetize books on the shelf, clean up errant dust, etc. These complications could delay or distract you.

SHAPE SHIFTER

You can change your shape! Roll +zany. On 10+, you turn into something useful; take +1 forward to do things related to your shapeshifting. On a 7-9, you almost turn into something useful, which may give you unusual powers or agency.

At any time, the Director can have someone wander up to you, mistaking your shape-shifted form for something else, and then have something harmful, embarrassing, or worse happen to you.

SIDEKICK

You have someone that follows you around! They carry your bags, answer your mail, water your plants, bury your incriminating evidence, witness your mortgage signing, babysit your children, and – most importantly – they can take a lump for you, once per scene.

If your sidekick has any problems, such as a personal dilemma or being kidnapped and held for ransom, you have to go rescue them.

STINKING RICH

Screw the rules, you have money! Roll +sly. On 10+, solve a problem by throwing money at it. (Buy the rival business and fire everyone; everyone gets a car, send a cash advance to the game designer to edit the errata in your favor, etc.) On 7-9, either you don't solve the problem, or you can throw money at it to make it go away, but there will be complications later.

At any time, the Director can have your vast financial empire threatened, and you must do something about it or risk losing your gimmick for this session.

STRAIGHT FACE

Whenever the Director hands you a laugh, say this phrase aloud: "Anyone who has fewer laughs than me can take this laugh away."

At any time, if another player has fewer laughs than you, they can take 1 laugh from your count and add it to their own count.

You can spend 2 laughs to take +6 back. Or you can spend 3 laughs to take +9 back. (Characters without this gimmick can only spend a single laugh to take +3 back.)

UNKNOWABLE STRENGTH

Your character has the strength of at least half a superhero. You can lift trucks, throw anvils, open pickle jars, etc.

In casual situations, you can just be assumed to carry around giant weights and juggle boulders.

Before you make a move in the game, mention if you're using super-strength or not. Then roll.

If you roll doubles, your super strength kicks in.


If you succeed, it's amazing. You don't just punch someone, you send them into next week. You don't just open a door, you lift the entire wall and slide under it, etc.

If you fail, it's amazing, too. They dodge your punch and your punch hurtles you through the air. Or you toss a building over your shoulder and it collapses into rubble. There's no halfway about it.

UNPREDICTABLY ZANY

Reduce your Zany attribute by 3. This can drop you to as low as -5.

Whenever you make a roll that adds +zany, roll an extra die. (So yes, that's three dice instead of two. Who knows what's going to happen?)



YOU AND THEM FIGHT

You can just walk away from any fight. Roll +cool. On 10+, you can just leave any grudge-match or fight going on and nobody notices you're gone. And if they were fighting you, they're now in a cloud where they're wrestling with a coat rack or something. On a 7-9, it only takes them a minute to figure out you left, so start running.

EARLY-ACCESS BETA

Genre Gimmicks

These gimmicks are specific only to certain stories. When a Director is about to run a story, they might choose to give a Genre Gimmick to give to each player. For the duration of this session, the player gets to use the Genre Gimmick's unique move.

For example, the Director says that tonight's adventure is a flashback to the days of the founding of Prairieville. Everyone gets one "Wild West" Genre Gimmick.

Each Gimmick also comes with a role for the story today. You're expected to play up this role, so really sell it.

Genre Gimmicks each have a down side, just like General Gimmicks. That down side is tied to the role of that Gimmick.

You might want to wait until the second or third game before using these

Gimmicks make the game more complicated. If you haven't played at least one game of Madcap, you might want to hold off until your players are more familiar with the game before heaping more rules on them.

One Gimmick at a time

If a player has a general gimmick, then this Genre Gimmick replaces it for this session. Hey, they need to get into character.

YE OLDEN DAYS

When your story is set in the Middle Ages, or something that closely resembles the middle ages.

The Dashing Robber

You can be anywhere. Roll +sly. On a 7-9, you reveal yourself as being here the whole time. (This immediately starts a grudge.) On a 10+, you can show up, do a thing, and disappear without starting a grudge.

You are wanted by the corrupt sheriff and other forces of law.

The Cunning Spy

You can eavesdrop on any conversation, even if you weren't there, because your network informs you. Roll +sharp. On 10+, the Director reveals a scene you hadn't seen, and you may take +1 forward to deal with this. On a 7-9, the Director reveals a scene that's dangerous, and if you act on it, you suffer a lump.

You can't let the authorities find you, or they will punish you.

The Crazy Magician

You can cast spells! Roll +zany. On a 10+, your spell does something important, but it expires one minute later unless you spend a laugh. On a 7-9, your spell works but with weird side effects.

At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh, and then something bizarre and mystical happens to you and/or the ones you love. It's never good.

The Little Big One

You block for other people.

Roll +tough. On a 7+, you take a lump that was intended for someone else.

At any time, the Director can have someone appear and beg for your help! How could you refuse?

The Fortune Teller

You knew this would happen. Before somebody else makes a roll, roll +Cool. On 7+, they take +1 forward on your next roll. On 6 or less, they take -1 forward on their next roll. You can use this on people even if they don't want to... and if they refuse to take the roll, something even worse happens.

At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh... and a note with a spooky and secret prediction of the future. If you tell anyone what this note says, you lose *all* your laughs. But if you make that prediction come true, you may gloat to all the other players how you knew this would happen.

The Honorable Sir/Madam

Swear to do something on your honor. Lose *all* your laughs. For each laugh you lose, you take +1 forward to all rolls to do this thing you promised you'd do.

If you ever act dishonorably, you will be shamed for it.

The Heir to the Throne

Everyone else is the comic relief in your story. When something humiliating would happen to you, roll +cool. On a 7+, it doesn't happen to you, but you earn no laughs. On a 6, it happens to you even worse, but the director may give you a laugh for your trouble.

Evil people keep trying to prevent you from ascending to the throne. People keep saying you look just like this one peasant they saw, once.

The Put-Upon Peasant

Whenever you suffer a lump, for whatever reason, you also get a laugh.

No one takes you seriously and they make you do all the hard work. All the other players' characters out rank you. People keep saying that you look just like the heir to the throne, but you just don't see it.

The Worldly Clergy

Roll +sly. On a 7-9, you can reveal some item, money, or secret that a holy person would have no business knowing, thus shaming yourself in the process. On a 10+, you can get away with this thing without having your worldliness revealed.

People keep coming to you for help on religious matters, as if you're some kind of authority figure.

The Fantasy Dragon

Because of course. Roll +zany. On a 10+, you do some awesome dragon stuff (fly, breathe fire, kidnap a princess, etc.) On a 7-9, you almost pull off this dragon thing, but something goes awry, usually in an embarrassing way. (When the other dragons find out about your screw-up, it will be all they talk about, at the Moot Gathering of Wyrmkynnyng Upon the Nigh.)

Adventurers keep showing up to kill you and/or steal your hoard. Absolutely no one, anywhere, is afraid of you.

The Motley Fool

Whenever you or another player takes a lump, roll +laughs. If you roll 9 or less, you get another laugh.

You have no money, no resources, and no authority. But having no status means you have nothing to lose, either.

THE WILD WEST

For those horse operas.

The Spunky Kid

You can eavesdrop on any conversation, even if you weren't there, because your network informs you. Roll +sharp. On 10+, the Director reveals a scene you hadn't seen, and you may take +1 forward to deal with this. On a 7-9, the Director reveals a scene that's dangerous, and if you act on it, you suffer a lump.

No one takes you seriously and they keep telling you to leave this to the adults.

The City Slicker

Roll +sly. On a 10+, you cheat at a poker game, you produce a fake deed that says you own the place, or you otherwise play a trick on these rubes. On a 7-9, the trick still works, but only for the next minute or so when the trick is revealed.

Your face is up at the post office and several people are looking to arrest you for what you did back East.

The Tall Tale

Roll +tough. On a 10+, you perform some insane feat of strength. On a 7-9, you perform some insane feat of strength and then it goes bad for you.

You can tell people about the awesome things you did, but no one believes that you did it. That's just a myth.

The Bullet Magnet

If someone is about to take a lump, you can take that lump instead. Come up with some reason, the sillier the better.

No one believes that you just take damage unfairly like this, and they're really sick of hearing you whine about it all the time.

The White Hat

Swear to do something on your honor. Lose *all* your laughs. For each laugh you lose, you take +1 forward to all rolls to do this thing you promised you'd do.

People keep coming to you for help, for some reason.

The Grizzled Prospector

You've been alone in this wilderness too long. Roll +zany. On a 7-9, either produce an item that is marginally useful to what's going on... or produce some item or crazy phrase that is completely useless to what's going on and just ignore everyone. On a 10+, actually have some useful prop.

Claim jumpers are after your claim. It's worthless, but they still want it.

The Undertaker

You're not phased. When violence happens around you, roll +cool. On a 7-9, you can't act again until someone else does, first, but you are immune to all this wickedness. On a 10+, tip your hat, ignore this, and move on.

You depress people with a reminder of their own mortality. No one invites you to parties.

The Cartoon with No Name

Whenever you get in a gunfight, roll +tough. On a 7-9, you defeat one minor character. On a 10+, you defeat one major character or all the minor characters in this scene.

Everyone's really creeped out by you.

THE SPACE ADVENTURE

One step beyond!

The Captain

Make an impassioned, hammy speech and roll **oll** +tough. On a 10+, others are moved by your speech and they give in to your demands. On a 7-9, they have more demands before they'll listen to you.

Even though you're in charge, no one does what you say. Also, for some reason everyone expects you to go out and solve the problems yourself.

The Alien

You have alien powers. Make something up and roll **zany**. On a 10+, your alien power works and you don't have to explain it. On a 7-9, your alien power doesn't quite work right, and you still don't have to explain it.

Other people are freaked out by your alien ways. Also, they keep saying your ways are alien, no matter how normal you play your character.

The Engineer

When you have to work with technical stuff, roll **sharp**. On a 10+, you can push it way past its specs, but it can't take much more of this. On a 7-9, you push it past its specs but with side effects, usually involving the Director shaking the table and you have to fall out of your chair.

People keep breaking your stuff and then asking you to fix it.

The Veteran Officer

When you're asked to do something, say that this is against all regulations and experience, then roll **cool**. On a 10+, say that's not your job but still succeed at doing it anyway. On a 9 or less, say that's not your job, blow off doing the job entirely... and if anyone else succeeds at this job, they can take one laugh away from you.

Your other crew members complain about your stuck-up attitude, no matter how nice you are.

The Disreputable Scientist

Roll **sly**. On a 10+, produce some gadget that will solve this problem. On a 7-9, produce some gadget, but it needs something else to power it, which is a crime against nature (a being made of living crystal, the last sunflower, the tears of a child, etc.)

You did something in the past that was so horrible, everyone thinks you're evil. Even people who just met you will think you're evil.

The Medical Officer

At any time, spend 1 laugh to remove *all* lumps from one single character. You can also spend 1 laugh to do other weird medical miracles, too.

You keep telling people that's not your job, and that dammit, you're a doctor... but people keep asking you to do that job anyway.

The Red Shirt

If someone is about to take a lump, you can take that lump instead. Everybody knew this was coming.

If you do anything amazing, anyone who outranks you can take credit for that thing, and no one will believe that you did it. Everyone else outranks you.

The Director's Chair

BE FAIR, BUILD UP, HAVE FUN

The most important thing about Madcap, indeed any RPG, is the story that you and your friends tell together. If the rules are getting in the way of telling a good story, and especially a good laugh, then just go with it. Never use the rules as an excuse to make the story less interesting. That doesn't mean everyone gets what they want all the time—there's no drama in that. Good story, and especially good comedy, is the King, and the Queen, and their children, Jack and Ace. (And their nephew, Five of Clubs.) Don't be too obvious about this if you can help it; the illusion that the rules are being followed can make accomplishments all the more satisfying.

Why "Director"?

Being a Catacomb Lord might be good for a session of Tunnels and Trolls, where the spirit of the game requires someone to strategize on behalf of the world. But Madcap needs a Director, someone who challenges his Cast without working against them, who knows the Cast's capabilities and finds ways to utilize them, and who knows how to balance the big picture vision with the Cast's spontaneity. In short, the Director's in it for the sake of putting on a good show.

STORYTELLING

In role-playing games, stories are long and dense. In Golden Age cartoons, stories are short and to the point. Reconciling these two factors is the most important part of telling stories in Madcap. You have to have a story that lets your Cast behave as cartoon characters while also giving their actions stakes and having a through-line that will sustain longer play sessions. When seeking inspiration for stories, you can 'cheat' a bit by looking outside the Golden Age to the 90s revival, and even modern cartoons to achieve a mixture of the old and the new.

The Old

The characters should be allowed to solve problems and achieve things in cartoony ways. Players should be encouraged to give their characters clear, simple motivations. Your imagery should include puns, and things operating by cartoon-logic. Much of the moment to moment storytelling comes from the mixture of various characters motivations and personal rules of engagement.

Things have a way of refreshing themselves. Just because a player just got run over by a steam roller doesn't mean they're out of the game.

The New

Golden age cartoons tended to pit a single character against another. Sometimes it was because of an eternal feud, sometimes one character crossed another, sometimes it was out of pure spite. Look to the 1990s onward for cartoons that revived the lunacy of Golden Age cartoons with just a hint of drama to create more emotional involvement.

The ability to tell a story longer than “dog chases cat” will be greatly aided by the subtle use of persistence. Unlike Golden Age cartoons, characters should seem to remember encountering each other (barring any plot motivated memory loss caused by anvils to the noggin.) Some of your cast may have villainous tendencies, but they're good guys for the purposes of this story, united by a common cause.

SETTINGS

In order to facilitate denser stories, the setting of the story should have an identity. It should be more than simply a backdrop for the action. It should have consistent locations, NPC's, and conflicts which are larger than the Cast alone. Spend a little time—just a little—considering practical aspects of the setting. How are most people getting around? Where do people like to hang out? Do the police exist? Feel free to use the example setting as a reference.

Important: Remember that your setting can be a parody of a location, a movie setting, or historical civilization.

Although Madcap stories can take place at any time, Madcap exists in the present day and is shaped as much by modern sensibilities as by Golden Age style. The characters aren't going around pretending not to know what iPods are.

The Code

If a player tries to “attack” an NPC who hasn't crossed the line, don't have them roll. Remind them that the NPC hasn't provoked the cast yet, and if they insist on attacking at that point, explain how their character fails the action. There won't be any consequences for their failure the first time this happens, unless they want to use a relevant Catch-phrase, and accept a consequence in exchange for a Laugh. Be slightly stricter about the Catch-phrase making sense in these cases.

Important: It is not the Cast's job to guess when a character has crossed the line. Keep them informed.

Example Play: The cast needs to get past a security guard. Nina Fizzlesticks wants to pour a jar of ants into his trousers. The director decides that because the Guard hasn't really done anything to the cast yet, they should have to try something else before pulling out the big guns. Sammy the Screwy Parakeet tries using wordplay to confuse the guard and they get past him without ever having to come to blows.

IMPROV

However detailed your story outline is, the real storytelling begins when you and the Cast start playing. The story you tell together will naturally evolve as a function of the Cast's various motivations, strengths, and weaknesses. It will be up to you to provide scenarios, and to reveal the details of the larger story as things move along.

Moving things forward

Cartoon characters tend to luck into the things that move the story forward. If you're used to directing a party who are determined, observant, and cooperative, Directing your Cast may be an adjustment. You may have to take their undirected action and invent ways for it to move the story forward on the fly. What you don't want is a roving band of weirdos moving from place to place smashing up bars.

Important: Try to give your Cast a chance to figure things out on their own, having the entire story handed to them will start to feel cheap after a while.

Example Play: The cast haven't managed to hit the next milestone for some time. Larry the Lemur flies into a spinning whirlwind at a random NPC, seemingly without reason. As the director, you could say that through the whirlwind, Larry manages to get hold of some Bus Tickets to the next town over.

LISTENING

Listening is just as important for the Director as the individual members of the Cast. Paying attention to what grabs your Cast's interest will be crucial to a fun campaign and letting the cast use their Catch-phrases. How far you take this is up to you. Too little flexibility, and the Cast will feel they have no influence over things. Too much, and the story will be meandering and have no payoff.

Example Play: Niels the Newt hasn't managed to use his penchant for Rube-Goldberg machines for some time. You hadn't planned on creating a scheme-worthy situation, but Niels expresses interest in using this ability. You can re-work the situation to accommodate Niels.

CATCH-PHRASES

The cast have, hopefully, put some thought into their catch-phrases. Your job as director is to reward them for that work. Try to build situations that highlight your cast's unique qualities. Try to be prepared to respond to players using their Catch-phrases, as this is when their character is really shining.

Giving Laughs

Start of Campaign:
Players should start with 1-5 Laughs, depending on the length of a campaign. If you start with too few, the Catch-phrases will take too long to come into play and players will feel like they don't have influence in the story. Too many, and players won't be interested in earning more Laughs. A good rule of Thumb is to start the Cast with a Laugh for every two hours of play.

Fail + Catch-phrase:
Never force a player to take a laugh point in exchange for a Catch-phrase working against them. Getting a player to take a Laugh point will take more than just the allure of the Laugh. It'll have to feel right for the character. And if you get them to take it, they'll expect to be able to use the Laugh successfully.

Freebies: Players should earn a Laugh when they actually make the group Laugh through their actions, or if their actions just impress you or the rest of the group. Managing these is tricky, because you can have a large effect on the Laugh economy. Do your best to be fair.

Taking Laughs

Players should explain why the catch-phrase applies to the situation. It'll be up to you to decide if it makes sense, but remember what they agreed to in order to earn that Laugh.

Usage when rolling – the player may spend a laugh in order to roll twice, and the rolls are combined and added to the skill to create their final score.

Usage when not rolling – if you agree that it makes sense, a player may spend a laugh point to make a casual action succeed that would not have succeeded without the appropriate catch-phrase.

Example: Coocoo Gus wants to drive an NPC crazy. The Director does not think the NPC can be driven crazy casually. Gus points out that one of their Catch-phrases is "the gift of madness was meant to be shared." The Director agrees to let Gus spend a laugh point to make the move succeed.

FAILING FORWARD

If a Cast member rolls a common move between 7-9, often the most interesting outcome is for their character to "fail forward". They get what they want, or pretty close, but there's a complication.

Examples:

Premise: An NPC fires a shotgun (or any other projectile) at a Cast member. The Cast member uses Toon-Physics to dodge out of the way of the incoming swarm of lead shot. They roll an 8. They avoid getting turned into Swiss cheese for the moment, however:

Fail forward outcomes:

- The lead shot seems to act with a hive intelligence, they freeze in the air, then turn around and begin racing back at the Cast member, who must find another way to deal with the approaching shot.

- The shot takes out a support beam, and the building begins caving in

Premise: A Cast member wants to hide to escape an NPC. They

STORY IDEAS

A good story for Madcap should do three things: Stay within the theme, unite the cast, and give them a chance to shine.

Theme

Madcap is a game about cartoons characters being wacky. If your heart burns to tell a bone chilling horror story, Madcap is not the game to do it in. The story premise should be kinda funny all on its own. More often than not, that's really all you need.

A Common Cause

In order to be fun for everyone, the story should have stakes for the entire cast. It should not only provide opportunities for each of them to forward the plot, it should also provide their motivation for wanting to do so in the first place.

This is where it really helps to look beyond the Golden Age to more recent cartoons, which tend to a bit more going on, plot-wise.

A Chance to Shine

We highly recommend that you know who your cast are going to be before making major story decisions. If one of your cast is a demolitions expert, they won't have fun in a world where there's nothing to blow up.

Setups

A journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step (onto a banana peel).

The cast are entrusted with something important.

This can be something a precious belonging of an admired figure, something that Prairieville citizens rely on. Whatever it is, whoever it belonged to really should have known better than to let the cast look after it.

Potential conflicts:

Nefarious forces try to steal the item leading to a chase them across the. The cast will be thrown out of their comfort zone, see strange sights, and fend off the foes who always seem to be one step ahead. At some point during the story, they may succeed in stealing the item, at which point the cast must regroup and figure out how to get it back.

The cast break the item by playing with it irresponsibly. They must find a way to get it fixed or find a replacement. They track down someone who can get a replacement but they have demands of their own, leading to a cascading scavenger hunt across town.

Something threatens the cast's way of life

The citizens of Prairieville really have things figured out, which of course means that someone out there is determined to screw things up for them. Some people want to make a quick buck, some people want to bring their trouble with them, some people have a bridge to sell, and some people just don't understand Toon's way of looking at things.

Potential conflicts:

Some big business looks at Prairieville and gets dollar signs in their eyes, all they have to do is level a few beloved landmarks and put up a bunch of gaudy tourist traps. The cast have to disrupt construction efforts, and drive the big cheese absolutely bonkers until they leave.

Stodgy media watchdogs think the cast are a bad influence on today's kids and are determined to put an end to their antics once and for all. The only way to save humor is to either drive them out or bring them around to your way of thinking.

A Toon has gone rogue and is abusing their powers in 3D land. They've been robbing jewelry stores, boosting cars, and humiliating the police with ransom notes written on whoopee cushions. Now real life human beings have taken over Prairieville to catch this rogue Toon. It's up to the cast to expose the miscreant while evading the coppers—both the real-world ones and the toon ones, following Mayor McBovine's orders to cooperate.

The cast are transported to a strange land

With the exception of Satirist characters, the cast don't know much about the world beyond Prairieville. Try taking them to an unfamiliar place and introducing them to people not familiar with their way of doing things. If this is not your first session, have fun bringing back previously established NPC's as doppelgangers in this new setting.

Potential conflicts:

The cast find themselves in another era like Renaissance Italy. You can come up with an explanation for how they ended up there, like time travel, or you can just announce, "you are in Renaissance Italy." If they're good sports, they'll go along with it.

The cast are thrust into a movie or video game. Pick any movie or game that you and your fellow players are familiar with. Usually the more serious it is, the more fun it will be to pit its characters against the wacky cast members. Grim action heroes and sappy romantic leads will be especially fun for your cast to torment and ridicule.

A story takes the cast beyond their reality to mysterious realms where things are animated a bit differently. They will encounter strange beings, like the jittery creatures from stop motion land, the flat-affected cut-paperians, the botox-faced ghouls of limited animation-ville, and their incessantly bouncing black and white ancestors from The Old Days™.

The cast are challenged to a competition

This type of story makes it easy to give a varied cast opportunities to show their various strengths. In the run-up to a competition, there will be problems solved, gadgets invented, intelligence gathered, crosses—doubled, and sabos tagged. To give weight to the story, the competition should have some stakes to it, more than merely bruised egos.

Potential conflicts:

The cast decide to enter the Prairieville Five hundred and one. They have three days to get hold of a car, soup it up, and learn to drive it. But that would be too easy. There's a big cash prize in it for the winner, which means that teams from all over town are signing up, and they're not all planning to run an honest race. There's also the race manager who does not want his beloved race turned into a circus, and will do everything he can to keep the cast from being allowed to participate.

Example NPC actions and Responses

Last Straws

If you're stuck for ways to make NPC's cross the line, here are some ideas. An NPC might:

- Destroy one of the Cast members' possessions (they'll have it back in the next interval if they want)

- Punch a hole through a Cast members' hat, shred up a scarf, etc.

- Barrage the cast with insults, or yell in their faces so loud it blows their hair back.

- Go way too far in refusing a reasonable request. Beyond the mere, "sorry, I can't help." And into "what makes you think I'd stick my neck out for a bunch of weirdos like you?"

- Doing something cruel, deceitful, unkind, or rude to an innocent NPC, especially if said NPC is adorable.

Attempts to Intimidate

- NPC's might try to scare the cast. Cast member will have to roll Wits in order to keep their cool.

- intimidate cast members by brandishing a weapon
- intimidate by assuming an imposing stature with bloodshot eyes and a menacing growl

- Immobilizing moves

- NPC's may grab, grapple, or restrain Cast members. Cast members can roll Toon-Physics to dodge, or muscles to break free.

- grab a cast member by the throat, ears, scruff, collar, or ankles

- toss a net over the cast or cast members

- tie a cast member up with ropes, chains, or a burlap bag

- Slapstick (attacking moves)

- takes cast member and crumples them into a paper ball, then tosses them into a trash can to the sound of the basketball goal horn

- holds their fist out above a cast member's head, and in a single move, pounds them into the ground like a hammer

- grabs a cast member and stretches them out like a rubber band, then sends them flying

- takes a cast member and twirls them around like a sling and tosses them over the horizon

Building Settings

When you're just starting out, you can make it easy on yourself by sticking to the imagery and thematic content we're used to from Golden Age cartoons; old Hollywood, vaudeville, forests and quaint towns. Depending on your comfort level, you can push this rule pretty far. Just remember: the cast bring their rules and their logic with them when they travel.

Hot Spots

When making up the locations for your setting, it's best to adopt a utilitarian viewpoint. Your cast are going to need to meet new characters, to have slapstick, encounters, to travel from here to there, to learn things, and to relax and have fun. Is there a train station, a post office, a restaurant, a dance hall, a school, mountains, rivers, deserts?

THE SUPPORTING CAST (aka the NPCs)

It can help to start by establishing a general flavor of the people who live in your setting. Now, in the real world, not everybody in a given area acts the same way, and they shouldn't in your setting either. There should be both a mainstream, and those who swim against it.

Ask yourself: What would a tourist say about the citizens of your setting? What do the citizens themselves have to say in response to this? Do they agree, disagree, or maybe it depends what part of town you're from? Does anyone in your setting feel outcast, or are they an accepting bunch?

Background Players

Knowing the feel of your setting will help you invent citizens on the fly, but it also helps to know some of the folks your cast will meet in advance. An easy way to do this is to go back to your list of Hot Spots and figure out who hangs out there, who works there, who isn't welcome there. These residents can give a sense of persistence to stories, and they can also be used to add stakes. If a character is introduced for a new story just to have their life threatened, it can be hard to get invested in their well-being. But if a character that your players know and love over the course of many sessions is suddenly in danger, that can have a lot more meaning for them.

Minor and Major Characters

A minor character can be defeated by a single move.

A major character can take two, three, or more moves to defeat. (Or maybe one big amazing roll.)

NPC Archetypes

The lion's share of Prairieville citizens fall into this category. They're a good source of super basic information, and run most of the town's services and shops. It doesn't make sense to attack them or even to attempt to provoke them. They'll never cross the line, even with the most powerful unique move.

Friendly Townsfolk

Stubborn Jerk

The stubborn jerk serves as a story obstacle. They're rude, inconsiderate, and they stand between the cast and their goal. But they don't do anything too bad right away. They need to be provoked into yelling, or some kind of slapstick violence before the cast may engage them. Two good or one great mania move will provoke the Stubborn Jerk into crossing the line, which will usually take the form of some kind of insult.

In their attempts to get rid of the cast, they may try tie them up in ways ranging from a simple burlap bag to over-elaborate piles of chains and padlocks. The cast may roll Toon-physics to escape, or muscles to break out by force.

With enough trickery, pranksterism, and lunacy, the Stubborn Jerk will eventually either give up, become catatonic, or lose their marbles.

The stubborn jerk will rarely resort to violence.

Slimeball

This week only, this character's loyalty to the highest bidder! Also on sale, purloined information, a promise not to cooperate with your foes, fake ID's and more! A Slimeball might be useful to the cast, but as the name suggest, they're a complete skeez-lord who will roll over on them at the drop of a hat. They won't be easily swayed by minor acts of intimidation, but with just the right menacing glare (+10) they'll at least pretend to cooperate. Just because they're terrified doesn't mean they'll always tell the truth. The Slimeball will always run away from a fight. As soon as the Slimeball no longer sees the cast as a business opportunity, they won't hesitate to cross the line.

Guards

Guards are usually just doin' their job. They might be in the Cast's way, but it doesn't mean they're bad guys, just obstacles. Guards will give the cast's Toon-Physics ability a workout, as they're sure to try and catch them in a net, a box, or perhaps just their gorilla-like fists. Some guards may be swayed by an appeal (stagecraft) overcome by trickery (wits). But they're usually too gung ho to be driven to crossing the line (make exceptions for catch-phrases and powerful unique moves.)

Looks: Uniform, radio, night stick, name badge, shirt is either too large or too small, employee of the month badge, flash light, or make things up!

Goon

Goons are at the beck and call of a big bad or a gang. They don't have much motivation of their own. They don't require provocation, as they're usually out to get the main cast, and they'll try to get you if they see you. Goons are much more vulnerable to attack if their guard is down, say if they're distracted by some verbal trickery, a costume, or an impression.

Looks: Hat down over the eyes, cigarette, trench coat, dark circles around the eyes, skulking, hunched posture, forced toothy grin, bandage, scar, arm covered in phony watches, crooked bowler hat, stubble, jacket with the collar flipped up, or make things up!

Props: Billy club, six gun
Big Dumb Galoot
Meet the world's dumbest demolition equipment. This one min-maxed on brains and brawn. With fists like bank safes and a towering stature, they pack a major wallop when they hit. However, like his slightly smarter cousin the Goon, the galoot is prone to letting their guard down due to japery and deception.

Looks: Huge lug, suspenders, vacant expression, shirt a couple sizes too small, dunce cap, teensy little hat, top heavy, little bitty legs, or make things up!

Gang of Miscreants

There's no guarantee that any of the above characters will appear one at a time. They're bound to notice that they don't do so well on their own eventually. Groups of characters should be thought of as a single entity. The only difference is they're like a single entity that can do things a group can do, like surround, dogpile, block exits, and confer with each other. We don't recommend making these NPC groups splinter off, as it can be messy to keep track of. On that same note, keep social interactions with groups of NPC's especially simple. They'll act and think as a group. As you and your cast get more familiar, you can make things more dramatic by allowing a single member of an NPC group to splinter off in their thinking and actions.

A gang of characters tries to dogpile, advances on the cast in a straight line

EARLY-ACCESS BETA

Sample Challenges

Stuff to throw at players.

EARLY-ACCESS BETA

Campaigning

You can campaign!

There's no reason every story has to take place in Prairieville though. Your entire cast of characters can be transposed to, WWII Paris, Ancient Egypt, even a Galaxy Far, Far Away. Have fun figuring out how your cast could fit into the roles of these other settings. For even more fun, bring back NPC's from Prairieville. Hey, annoying security guard who always spoils our fun, you just got promoted to Pharaoh! (But you still have the same lisp, sorry bud. Nothing we could do about it.)

EARLY-ACCESS BETA

Series Pitch:

Prairieville

Prairieville is a sunny, laid back town. The streets are clean, the buildings smartly painted. Even the hustle and bustle of the downtown doesn't keep the citizens from tipping their hat to passers-by. Though at first glance it seems quaint, with its chrome-trimmed eateries, street cars, and friendly populace, citizens of Prairieville are citizens of modern times. There are townsfolk of all shapes and sizes, identities, and backgrounds. Some of these townsfolk have jobs they perform, but only because it's part of their character. Most of 'em are just there to do Toon things. There's a real "summer vacation" vibe.

Still, Prairieville is not without its seedy elements. There's the 17th street Kittens and their rivalry with the Soda Smuggling Poodle-dogs known only as "The Perms," neither of whom are big fans of Mayor McBovine, who promises to clean up the streets.

HOT SPOTS

Charles Martin Memorial Airfield

The Prairieville Municipal Airport and Charles Martin Memorial Airfield, or PMACMMA, is a small airstrip on the edge of town. It's dotted with small hangers and streamlined, sparkling clean small aircraft. Unfortunately for the cast, the only pilot available most of the time is Iggy Everest. Iggy is an Iguana and pilot for hire. His bravery and eagerness are matched only by his terrible eyesight. Oh, and the smoke from the engine is nothing to worry about, she does that from time to time. These days more or less

constantly. That old crate of his may not be much to look at, but it's also in atrocious condition.

June's Deli

Neighborhood Deli – Run by June, who can make a sandwich any which way you want. Unless you want something stupid like ketchup. In which case, get out.

Freddy's Bakery

At Freddy's, you'll find the classics for sure. Chocolate cupcakes, lemon tarts, flaky croissants. But never satisfied to leave well enough alone, that nutty squirrel is always working up something new. Angel food cake with ham, jalapeno eclairs, and would you care to try his new ginger snaps? (The secret ingredient is soy sauce.)

Street Car

Prairieville is the post-war south-west that only existed in cartoonists' imaginations. It's got petty rivalries and old Hollywood money.



MADCAP TIMES

PRAIRIEVILLE, US •
This Sunday marked the first day of Prairieville's new "blue laws" came into effect. The Mayor famously ran his campaign to improve city funds, mostly by "sin taxes" on adult consumables such as beer and tobacco.

After numerous protests by the café's patrons, Jacobian "Jarvis" O'Lope, of the Flaming Bongo Café, spoke out to grow awareness that the reduced portions at his café is a direct result of these laws. He went on to say that the Café is still the most popular restaurant in the Prairieville business district.

"I'm still big", said Jarvis, "it's the pitchers that got small."

If you ride the Prairieville Tram, you'll probably see the beaming face of Conductor MacNeille, and hear her window-shattering "Allllll aboooooaaarrd!" She's been running the Street Car for decades. She grew up in hard times, relying on the kindness of strangers more than she cares to talk about. As such, she's a well-known pushover among those citizens who can't afford the fare, which has gone up since Mayor McBovine got elected.

Flaming Bongo Cafe

A joint for hepcats and cool customers to get their bean juice. There you'll meet Jarvis, a mile a minute talking rabbit and beret wearing beatnik. Jarvis has bloodshot eyes, but it's only because he hasn't slept in years. His percussive speech bleeds into beat poetry mid-sentence, and if you stick around long enough he'll tell you about all the great horn players who have come through. You'll find locals there sipping weapons-grade espresso and snapping their fingers to the high-flying saxophone of Charlie Parakeet.

Prairieville City Hall

There are few who have returned from the perilous labyrinth known as city hall and still had the sanity to tell the tale. To reach Mayor McBovine's office, you must first brave the hostile jungle that is the first floor. Cut your way through nylon belts. Defeat or befriend the wild peoples that have been waiting in line so long they've devolved into primitive hunter-gatherers. Elude the sacred guardians. Fear the guardians above all others, for they have pepper spray.

If you do all this and still possess memory enough of your life before city hall to continue your quest, you will answer the three impossible riddles of the lady who stamps the forms. You will then ascend to the second floor, where you must have a 4114-G-9B in triplicate, two forms of ID, and the missing shard of the chalice of souls. Do this, and you might, just might be granted an audience with the Mayor. Or her secretary will take a message.

Prairieville Episode #1

THE TOGETHERNESS TROUPE

Newcomers have arrived in Prairieville! They seem a friendly enough bunch, if a little bland and poorly animated. Though you can't blame a toon for their budget. Anyways, they don't seem to be making much trouble, other than insisting that everyone agree, and always having those creepy, bug-eyed smiles on their faces.

The cast are enjoying themselves at the Flaming Bongo café. They are all sipping (or perhaps gulping) their drinks and bopping along to the music. Jarvis the beatnik rabbit comes by to take orders for another round.

Jarvis tells the cast that things are going fine, though there's a strange group seated at a table in the far corner. He explains that each time he asks for an order, they all get the same thing. Sometimes they ask for milk, sometimes apple juice, but always as a group.

If the cast goes and talks to the group, they have a conversation with Cindy Sugar. "We're the Togetherness Troupe!" she says, "we believe in friendship, and cooperation, and falling in line!"

If the cast asks what they're doing in Prairieville, Cindy says, "we all decided to go on a trip and see what folks from other towns do for fun!"

If the cast explains, or hopefully demonstrates what they do for fun, Cindy pours every ounce of strength into hiding how horrified she is. "Well... that was... nice. But I think we all have to go now."

The Togetherness Troupe leave. Together.

Cindy Sugar starts to enact her plan to re-educate the citizens of Prairieville. The cast should catch wind of this plan from a radio or television broadcast, or a flyer, or perhaps a well-informed citizen. If the cast shambles around for too long, have them encounter a brainwashed citizen.

When the cast first encounters the Togetherness Troupe, they don't yet know what they plan to do. Until that plan is revealed, the TT characters are never considered to have crossed the line. But once it becomes clear that the TT threaten the cast's very way of life, they can all be considered to have crossed the line. Something similar goes for the townsfolk they brainwash. They need the works for their own good, and for the cast's protection.

The cast should have at least one tussle with assorted Togetherness Troupe cast before they encounter Golly.

When the group encounters Golly, explain that they see a gopher, recognizable as a member of the Togetherness Troupe by their bug-like eyes and sappy features, but this one looks different somehow. They have a sullen expression and don't seem too excited to see you, they almost look scared.

If one of the cast chooses to attack Golly, do not ask for a roll. Golly shrugs their shoulders and says, "I guess this might as well happen." The cast is told that they're no longer so sure that Golly is crossing the line here. (The attack doesn't happen, but don't mention it directly. If the attacking cast member presses the point, work with them to figure out how they stop their attack, be it simply freezing in the air, or missing by a mile).

As the story nears its conclusion, describe how Togetherness Troupe imagery has been plastered all across Prairieville, with Cindy Sugar's face on every TV and billboard, TT music on every radio. Describe how townsfolk are acting agreeable in public to avoid being taken in for re-edutainment.

Townsfolk that the cast interact with should show caution, and should prefer to speak in private about all but the most trivial matters.

With the help of Golly Gopher, the cast learns that Cindy Sugar and two of her cohorts are on their way to City Hall where they plan to coerce Mayor McBovine into handing them control of Prairieville.

The cast bursts in on Cindy and Mayor McBovine right as the re-edutainment process was about to begin. The TT have set up an impromptu theater in McBovine's office. They've also strapped her to her chair with her eyelids taped open. Cindy firmly gripping her head so it faces the screen, and her two cohorts are futzing with the projector, trying to detangle an unspooled reel of film.

As Cindy nears defeat, her sweet façade decays. She begins to berate and browbeat her fellow characters. They all start to realize that the thing they most mutually agree on is that they are tired of being pushed around by Cindy. The lesser cast members of the Togetherness troupe all band against her, forming a human trampoline to bounce her into the stratosphere. They shake hands, and cooperatively agree to let each other be themselves. They look to Golly Gopher, the only one of them to ever run against the grain, for leadership as they start their new lives.

Golly now speaks for the Togetherness Troupe. There is a closing conversation with the cast, Golly thanks them for freeing them from the Grip of Cindy Sugar. Depending on how this conversation goes, the Togetherness troupe will either go back home, or keep living in Prairieville, or invite the one or all of the cast to follow them to back to their home of Unitopia.

After this outcome is decided, this story (or at least this chapter of it) is concluded.

Characters

Assorted TT Characters

The rest of the Togetherness Troupe share Cindy's ideas but they're even more zombie-like.

Assorted TT characters are defeated by:

Three good hits (7-9)

Two excellent hits (10-12)

One great hit(13+)

Example names:

Friendship Fox, Mellow Mouse, Kindly Crocodile, Big-heart Badger, Joy the Jay, Melody Muskrat, Group-Consensus the Mollusk.

Brainwashed Townsfolk

As the story goes on, the cast should encounter citizens of Prairieville who are feeling the effect of the TT's re-edutainment program. These can be the established citizens outlined above, or new characters you make up on the fly.

They might seem normal at first, but it won't be long before they start talking about friendship, teamwork, and thought-crimes. Not to worry, they can soon be put right. It might take a couple good knocks on the head, or maybe even an appeal to their former selves.

They can be brought to their senses by:

Two good hits (7-9)

One hit that's excellent or better (10+)

An appeal to their sense of self (7+, usually wits)

Cindy Sugar

Living teddy bear and De Facto leader of the togetherness troupe. She just loves friendship so much that she can't even blink! If the togetherness spirit ever starts to wane amongst the group, she'll always rile them up with a group chant of, "whoever disagrees is wrong!" or "let's be forgettable!"

Her happy little world of agreeable saps is all she's known. From the moment she enters the Madcap town of Prairieville. Violence, independent thought, and relatable conflicts make her oh so very sad. Well, she says "sad," because that's the only negative emotion she's ever heard of. What she's actually feeling is profound disgust, all around her is the most retched nightmarish filth she's ever encountered. All around her, the sum of a lifetime of nightmares singing and dancing and writhing like demonic snakes.

But no matter how sad one is, one mustn't complain, one mustn't show a frown. Just smile. Everyone will soon see things your way, dear Cindy.

Golly Gopher

Golly is the foil of the Togetherness troupe. Down-trodden, slow-moving, and sad-eyed, the years of playing the role of what not to be has clearly weighed her down. Still, she can't help it. Always wanting to make trouble, always wanting to change things. Let's paint the playroom a new color, let's all order what we want for dinner instead of all getting the same thing, let's acknowledge the existence of negative feelings and deal with them in a healthy way. Golly Gopher has been brow beaten into going along with the TT's plan, but they've never felt at home with them, and have never felt acceptance. The chance to finally be accepted for who they are might just sway them to join the cause of the cast.

Once Golly is working with the cast, they can tell them where to find Cindy, and will even help in slapstick.

Prairieville Episode #2

MAROON RACCOON'S SHLOSCAR

Length: Medium (5-7 hours)

Starting Laugh Points: 3 Each

You have all been entrusted to house sit for legendary Character Maroon Raccoon while he takes a long awaited three-day vacation. The house is a large, swanky estate. It features everything a hip Raccoon needs to host swanky parties.

Among his prize possessions is his Shloscar Award for Best Sight Gag. You and your friends are welcome to live it up in Maroon's Mansion, raid his fridge, claw the furniture, ride the ceiling fan, just as long as you don't take the Shloscar out of its case.

You all fall asleep after a day of intense rough housing, lazing, and playing video games until your brains have turned into mush.

One character awakens. To your utter horror you see the Shloscar case is open. A figure is silhouetted in the doorway.

outcomes:

In the ensuing slap fight, the Shloscar ends up in a passing mail truck.

Enemy gets hit by passing mail truck, shloscar gets sent up into the air and lands in the mail bag.

Then:

End up in the post office?

Big complicated assembly line - Fight with Gangsters

Cast wins, just as you're about to grab the Shloscar, it Gets put into a box

You board a train to the location

While on the train you notice the gangsters are on the train with you

You try to get them off the train

Train gets derailed

Plane crashes near where they end up - Meet Iggy

Have to get the plane working again

Fly to the location

Have to retrieve it from complete stranger's house

Shadowy second in command pick pockets them

Return Home

Big confrontation with 17th Street Kittens waiting for you at the place

Get home, shloscar back in case, phone rings, he's extending his vacation for the rest of the week.

JaNe'StOWN

Someone wants to come into town and build big gaudy resort or condo complex or something

NPC's house is in the way? Casts's house? Everybody loves the location as is

Mean Jane? Big Jane? (Ironic 'cuz she's super tiny? Harder for her to seem like a bully, not impossible.)
Keen Jane, Fiery Jane
Fancy Jane, Slick Jane

Jane Fontaine is a real estate magnate from out of town, beaming smile but flies into rage quickly

The cast are playing in Stalling park. They decide to play hide and seek. Get the players involved in the hide and seek.

Last character to roll runs into Jane.

Starts with rude introduction at the place where the thing is to be built. Rude stabbing of the sign into the dirt.

Helicopters, hard hats, blueprints

The cast tries to reason with her

In her rejection of their pleas, she reveals it's just part of a larger plan to make huge sweeping changes to the town

cooperate with locals?

One local resists? stands to benefit. Bastard wolf guy

Get her construction crew to quit

Make her look bad in front of her investors

Drive her insane

the cast shows up on a reality show?

survivor, amazing race, family feud,

Iron Chef

brass chef brass cook
steel cook

aluminum chef!!

Series pitch:

Route 88

Dodder's Folly is not so much a small town as it is an unincorporated cluster of houses and businesses in the middle of the desert along Route 88. The isolated community started as a lead mining town but then the mine failed and the miners packed. It saw resurgence when Highway Route 88 was built passing through it, but then the interstate was built and most traffic diverted that way. Now the town is home to a few colorful coots, a handful of friendly small town folk, and a bunch of backwater bumpkins.

Highway Route 88 does still bring the odd traveler and trucker passing through (emphasis on the word 'odd') that being said, this little town is far from sleepy. A lot of weird wacky and cartoony things happen this far out in the desert, away from civilization. Weird visitors and strange goings on are just a part of life along Route 88.

LOCATIONS

The Rusty Hubcap Truck Stop

The Rusty Hubcap is one of the only successful businesses in town, as it's the only place to stop for gas or automotive repairs for miles. It is owned and operated by Petrov; a man known for his thick accent, and his even thicker moustache. If you are unable to pay for his services Petrov also accepts hubcaps in trade, which he adds to the collection adorning the walls, which gives the rust hub cap its name. The rest of his collection was collected along Route 88. A surprising number

of cars seem to lose a hubcap while leaving town.

The convenience store portion of the truck stop is also the closest thing to a grocery store in town. As a result the locals have come up with some innovative recipes using pork rinds and jerky.

Petrov has a reputation for being fair and honest, but that might just be because he's the only game in town and people want to stay on his good side.

Roll Right Inn

The Roll Right is a roadside motel run by the sweet, if a bit peculiar, Mrs. O'Laydi. The rooms are outdated, but for the most part clean despite the motel being staffed by a single old woman. Mrs. O'Laydi is stout, bespectacled, and possible ancient. She is known to take her hospitality to the extreme, inviting anyone or anything that might be interested to stay the night at her motel, sometimes to the chagrin of the townsfolk or other guests when what she invites in is less than friendly.

Route 88 is inspired by teen-splotation movies of the 1950s. Stories here are about petty rivalries, dangerous racing, and the occasional mystery that only teens can solve.



This no-guest-turned-away policy has given the motel a reputation for being a hub of weird and supernatural goings on in the town. What's stranger is that no matter how malicious the thing she invites in is toward the town, they never seem to direct anything negative towards her. It's probably just because she gives every guest that stays at the Roll Right a plate of her famous Truck Stop Cookies, those things will sooth even the most savage beast.

Singer Sisters' Diner

Run by the eponymous Singer Sisters, the diner is the main stop in town for hot meal or a cool milkshake. Older sister Alice cooks, while younger sister Jenna waits tables. Singer is not just the sisters' surname, it's also their hobby. The sisters love to subject their diners to their singing which would be all fine and dandy if it was only Jenna singing, but tone-deaf Alice fancies herself the true star of the show. She gives out free headshots to anyone who orders the house special.

The diner is the de facto meeting place for locals, sometimes acting as a meeting hall, and on occasion as an emergency shelter, if you aren't put off by the sisters' bickering and possible singing in the face of a crisis.

Ugly Coyote Saloon

The Ugly Coyote is the place to go in town for a cool refreshing soda (what else would you get from a saloon?) The salon is tended by owner 'Coyote' Dave, who clearly named the place after himself. Dave loves to tell stories to his patrons, who have typically heard them all before as the only business he gets most of the time comes from the local regulars, although occasionally an outsider will stop in to sample the local libations.

The house specialty is Dave's homemade Cactus Fizz. For some reason only out-of-towners ever seem to order it, the locals can tell you why.

The Old Dodder Mine

Built by tycoon Thaddeus H. Dodder during a time known as 'The Lead Rush', Dodder mine was responsible for the area being settled in the first place. As it turned out, however, there are more sensible ways to mine lead than an isolated mine in the desert.

As operations costs started eclipsing profits and people stopped getting paid many of the miners moved on to greener pastures. Those who stayed named the remnants of the mining town Dodder's Folly.

In the many years since, operations have ceased completely and the mine lays abandoned. It has since garnered a reputation for being haunted, although it's also a popular hangout spot for local youths.

MADCAP TIMES

DODDER'S FOLLY, TD
— Bay Leaf Entertainment has acquired permits to film a motion picture along historic Route 88, including permits for stunts and vehicles.

Area man Jehosophat "Jed" Pootz uploaded photos of high-profile celebrities to his website one week ago, and now the town is enjoying a growth in tourist trade, as star-seekers flock to the sleepy town for the chance to glimpse of their personal idols.

While the name of the movie has not been released, many visitors speculate it may be an entry in a popular franchise about auto racing. At this time, it is clear that Dodder's Folly will be the next home for the cast and the curious.

SUPPORTING CAST

Leslie Anne Pootz

The entire Dodder's Folly police force consists of only Sheriff Leslie Anne Pootz. She can be found in the town's small police station most of the time when she's not out on a call or trying to sweep something under the rug (she even sleeps in the lock up at night if it's not being used) Sheriff Pootz was born and raised in Dodder's Folly and has taken it upon herself to make it welcoming to visitors. This manifests in her focusing more on covering up the weird goings on in town rather than doing anything about them. She is committed to maintain the illusion that everything is normal in her small town, at times it seems the only person she's managed to convince of this is herself.

Her extreme skepticism results in her coming up with wild explanations to explain away the weird goings on, and even wilder schemes to sweep any strangeness under the rug, lest outsiders get a negative impression of the small town.

Jed Pootz

Jed Pootz is the local conspiracy theorist and radio host. His station is the only one you can get on radio in town so most of the town listens to his show. Even though many of the claims he makes in his show sound rather crack-pot, he is often validated thanks to the odd going on in the town. Even so, he's only right about half of the time so many take what he says with a grain of salt until they see it with their own eyes.

Jed is often at odds with his sister, Sheriff Leslie Anne Pootz. Leslie Anne is constantly warning her brother off about riling the town up, while Jed maintains that his show does more to keep than town safe than she does. Their rivalry often sees Jed coming up with ridiculous schemes to prove his theories true, while Leslie Ann comes up with equally ridiculous schemes to foil her brother's plans. This has Jed convinced that his sister is part of some sort of secret conspiracy trying to stop him from sharing the truth.

When Jed isn't at the station he fills the dead air with recordings of himself playing the banjo. His station, WJED, doesn't exactly have a license to operate, but no one reports him because the town doesn't want to go from having one radio station to zero. Leslie Anne knows she can't do anything about the station either, because if she did her mother would stop inviting her to dinner.

Ma and Pa Pootz

Ma and Pa are the elderly parents of Jed and Leslie Anne. They live in creaky old farm house on the outskirts of town with their dog, Hunter. Pa tends the land and farms tumbleweeds, supplying most of the tumbleweeds for the county. Ma spends most of her time baking and knitting while pa tries to make something grow.

Ma regularly has Leslie Anne and Jed over for dinner in an attempt to keep her kids civil toward each other, but this often results in them fighting at the dinner table.

The Men with the Rose-tinted Glasses

One of the biggest mysteries around town is the many sightings of tall, official looking men in black suits with rose-tinted glasses around town. The weirder the happenings in town get, the more these men seem to show up.

Most of the town thinks they are a shadowy government entity. Jed thinks they are aliens wearing human suits. Leslie Anne maintains that they are just hooligans trying to stir up the populace and she has vowed to arrest the first one she gets her hands on for 'public nuisance'. (Granted, she's been after them for years and they always seem to disappear in thin air.) Still, it's certainly entertaining watching the sheriff's schemes and traps backfire on her in her quest to catch one of the men.

GIMMICKS FOR ROUTE 88

Skeptic

As a skeptic, you are very clear headed when dealing with things arcane or supernatural. You choose to try and explain away everything away through logic and reason. You have a thirst for the truth, and will science and logic to find it. You can take a step back and look at anything objectively; allowing you to see through tricks and illusions more easily than other players. You can willfully deny something is happening and put it on hold until you learn the truth.

Science and reason, unfortunately doesn't always have the answers, however. In this world not everything can be explained away through logic and reason. When you can't find the logical answer to something it can put at a loss and leave you on tilt.

Believer

As a believer you are the counter point to the sceptic. You also strive toward the truth, but your truth is that not everything has to make sense to be real. You want to prove there are things out there that can't be explained logically. You are open minded and are able comprehend the weird and esoteric better than other characters.

Unfortunately, being so eager to believe can leave you vulnerable to being fooled. You are more gullible than other characters by someone telling you what you want to hear.

If a party has a sceptic and a believer they should play of that dynamic. Either being at odds and becoming rivals or cooperating over a shared quest for the truth.

Coward

You scare really easily. Really, really easily. It's almost embarrassing. You are easily spooked and quick to run. Luckily this has made you good at running away. You don't feel a need to stick around when something scares you; you just gun it for the hills and don't look back.

As good as you are at running; it's sometimes hard to keep track of where you are going, and where you have been. This can result in you running right back into the thing that scared you in the first place.

Costumed Creepy

You have an elaborate costume and are great at using it to scare people. Beyond just a rubber mask you can implement all matter of special effect to make your costumed caper more convincing, be it pullies, fog machines, or projectors. (If it's something you could have set up in advance) Whatever your motivation for scaring folks you have done the extra mile to do it right.

The downside is no matter what you do someone will eventually show up and try to unmask you. Once unmasked all the power you had as a fake monster is useless until you've moved on to a new costume somewhere else.

Protector

There is someone you will go to the ends of the earth to keep safe. It has gotten to the point where you have a sixth sense about their safety and will always find out when they are in trouble. You spring into action and you always seem to manage to pull through and rescue them, even if that rescue comes with a price. Your wellbeing is secondary to theirs.

Unfortunately the character you have sworn to protect has really bad luck when it comes to staying out of trouble. They always seem to need rescuing or protecting, way more than anyone naturally should. At least they have you to keep them safe, right?

Motorhead

You love your vehicle, possibly more than anyone or anything else, and it treats you right in return. You are natural behind the wheel of your baby. Everyone else better watch out, the two of you together are unstoppable.

Naturally you also need to take care of your baby, keep it clean and safe. You'd be nothing without it, so make sure you keep it well maintained, clean, and accessible at all times.

SAMPLE EPISODES

Deputies for the day

Popular travel writer Nicholas Brackenridge is traveling down Route 88, and writing about the journey. Word makes it to Sheriff Lesley Anne Pootz that he is going to be stopping in Dodder's Folly, and SOON!

The sheriff is sent into a tizzy as she frantically tries to prepare for this high profile visitor who, in her estimation, can shape the future of Dodder's Folly if he writes positively about it.

Sheriff Leslie Anne approaches the cast and offers them deputy status if they will help her get the town ready for the visit. She is afraid the strange goings on in town will scare Brackenridge away and result in him portraying the town in a negative light. The sheriff wants the cast to help her sweep any weirdness under the rug for at least as long as Brackenridge is there.

Sheriff Pootz offers the cast a series of tasks that they can help with; letting them select the tasks they wish to do, stating she will handle the rest herself. Tasks the sheriff will offer the cast include:

Get Jed off the air for the day- The sheriff's brother Jed Pootz, the sheriff's brother, has the only radio show in town, and he loves ranting and raving about the goings on in town. Sheriff Leslie Anne doesn't want her brother's conspiracy spouting to be the first thing Brackenridge hears when he gets into town, so she wants the players to make sure he's occupied with something outside his trailer for the duration of the high profile visit. It will be up to the cast to figure out how to do this; Jed has things he will want to talk about, so it will take some convincing, or cunning to get him out of his studio. (As an interesting twist, if the cast let Jed find out about his sister's schemes he could offer them an alternate plan. He wants Brackenridge to see the true goings-on in town, and wants the players to steer the writer right into the strangeness so that he might write about it and get the truth out there.)

Keep Mrs. Olaydi's other guests at bay – Mrs. O'Laydi has a habit of welcoming alarming guests into her motel. The latest bunch is a group of short, pale, skinny creatures with small eyes and big claws. Mrs. O'Laydi insists that they are all perfect gentlemen, but the hissing noises they make at strangers are a bit concerning. The cast can either try and chase the critters off, or talk things out with them. If the cast manage to communicate with the critters they will learn that they are friendly and amenable to the cast's requests. (As GM you can change the creatures at the motel to whatever you like, feel free to have fun with it.)

Make sure Petrov doesn't blow anything up – Sheriff Leslie Anne noticed the sounds of small explosions at the Rusty Hubcap, which usually means Petrov is tinkering with something. She wants the cast to make sure he doesn't blow anything up while Brackenridge is in town. The cast has the option to either help Petrov complete his outlandish invention before the writer arrives, or to postpone his work on it until after Brackenridge leaves.

Chase off the men in rose colored glasses – Sightings of men in rose colored glasses have been on the rise. The sheriff proposes trying to catch one of the men in a trap, as they seem to get more scarce when she's trying to detain them. She offers the cast a special commendation if they actually catch one. (no matter what they do, the cast won't be able to catch one of the men, they will always seemingly vanish, even if trapped.)

GM makes up their own – Have fun with it, make up your own tasks that fit into this episode, if you like.

Once the players have met back up with the sheriff, they will see that she dealt with the tasks she took on herself by throwing the supporting cast involved into lock-up for the night. She will then announce that Brackenridge has checked into the motel, and asks the cast to give him a welcome to the town (and follow him around and make sure he doesn't run into trouble) while she finished up the paperwork on all the citizens she's arrested.

While the cast is following Brackenridge feel free to throw in curveballs for the cast to deal with, such as one of the cast's previous schemes turning out to have backfired, or a completely new weird occurrence coming up. Brackenridge is a gaunt balding man of few words, communicating non-verbally for the most part, and writing feverishly in a notebook he can pull out of seemingly nowhere every time something happens. If he is confronted with something weird happening he will take notes with keen interest.

There are several outcomes to this story depending on how the cast handles things:

A Sleepy Little Town - If the cast does a good job keeping the writer from experiencing the strange goings on around town then the Sheriff will show up with a copy of the article about Brackenridge's trip down Route 88. She will skip to the part mentioning Dodder's Folly which she will be disappointed to see is only a single paragraph. Brackenridge describes his time in the town as "unremarkable" and "pleasant enough, I suppose". The sheriff will lament that this probably won't be the boost for the town she was hoping for, but will thank the cast for their efforts.

A Curious Place – If the cast sided with the sheriff but Brackenridge still managed to experience the weirdness of the town on a smaller scale during his time there then the sheriff will show up with a copy of his article, and a slightly annoyed expression. The entry about Dodder's Folly in the article will be a fair length and will document his experiences with the peculiar goings on he ran into while there. The article will be quite positive, but Sheriff Leslie Anne will say it was "what she was trying to avoid". In the aftermath the town gets a slight boost in tourism, but many of the new guests have a keen interest in the weird and paranormal, much to Leslie Anne's chagrin.

I'VE SEEN IT WITH MY OWN TWO EYES! – If the cast sided with Jed and decided to steer Brackenridge toward the strange happenings then Jed will later approach the cast and explain that he received a letter from Brackenridge. He will state that Brackenridge's publisher refused to publish his writing on Dodder's Folly as the believed it to be the ravings of a man experiencing temporary psychosis after driving alone down a long desert road. He says that Brackenridge is adamant that what he saw really happened and that he wants to return to town to get proof. Jed is saddened that the truth is once again being censored by the media, but is pleased that he will have a new ally in his quest for the truth.

Elderberry Junction

“Welcome to Ruckerberg, the City of your Dreams!” reads the billboard that hangs over the Unique Memorial Bridge that is the only way into town. “If you lived here, you’d be one with us right now!” reads the tagline.

No one can agree on the history of Ruckerberg. It seemed to just appear out of the fog one day. The city overlooks Stillwater Bay, bracketed on all sides by the Ruckertoath Mountain Range, considered unclimbable by all but the

Most people live in Elderberry Junction, the neighborhood in the shadow of the city’s tall skyscrapers. And these skyscrapers are weird – they look like angry talons pointed up at the sky. The streets are laid out in odd patterns. Strange graffiti symbols are scrawled everywhere.

Rumors abound that Ruckerberg’s layout is because the city is secretly run by cultist who worship beings from beyond the furthest stars, and they’re trying to create a gate to bridge the illimitable gulf, so that their evil masters can destroy the world. This rumor is 100% correct.

SERIES PITCH

Elderberry Junction is a tribute to the “horror beyond the stars” genre. Each episode has the players confronting some unknowable horror and preventing it from doing something horrible.

Each episode, one local person (or player-character) should have some small problem that needs to be solved. No one else in the town is of any use to the players. They will always be incompetent, or suffering from some mental breakdown, or they will be an agent who is secretly in on the horror.

STORY LOCATIONS

Elderberry Junction Switching Yard

Trains constantly rumble through the yard, night and day. It’s also the site of the 6.6k Ruckerberg Marathon, which goes over the tracks and through a tunnel. (Some of the locals have been vocal about stopping train service during these runs, but the Mayor insists on keeping them running.)

Ruckerberg’s #1 source of revenue is accepting garbage and toxic waste from other cities. Trains are constantly rumbling through here, open-top tankers with glowing green ooze. (Some of the locals have been vocal about having some safety controls imposed, to prevent the frequent spills. The Mayor compromised by suspending toxic-waste shipping during the Marathon, and everyone was satisfied.)

Elderberry Junction is for spooky and supernatural adventures. Players can still lose to the monsters, but they’ll be fine for the next adventure.



Elderberry Community College

A ramshackle building by the train yards, this place is the only college in town, since the last one caught fire and was never rebuilt.

Elderberry College teaches HVAC, Computers, Janitorial, Nursing, and ... “Liberal Arts”, which is functional and practical magic. The staff always insist on calling it “liberal arts” and they will violently correct anyone who tries to call it magic, “or we’ll lose our government accreditation.”

A-Mart

There’s several of these large super-duper-markets in town. You can buy almost anything there, but it’s always weird. The apples taste like oranges. Shirts and pants have extra holes. All the goods have a gray and grimy look to them that makes them look both old and futuristic at the same time. (Flip phones with touch screens. Tablets with LCD displays that use cassette-reel tapes. Laser-sighting pistols that load from stripper clips. Automobiles with huge carburetors and built-in GPS, etc.). The locals complain about the bizarre and breakable stuff they buy from A-Mart, but “You can’t beat these prices.”

Mealmouth Bay

A long line of piers, Every house on the waterfront has at least one attic, and some have two or more.

Many people here have the “Mealmouth look”: wide eyes, snaggle teeth, and a fishy smell. The rumor is that the people here have been mingling with the monsters that live under the sea. These rumors are correct.

SUPPORTING CAST

Cattle-Car Carlie

A bull (of course) who is only seen at two places: the switching yard and the bingo parlor. He dresses in rags, and he has a tiny bindle on a stick that seems to be filled with whatever item he needs, especially his harmonica. He talks about the places he’s been and the things he’s seen, and he sometimes shows up **right behind you** out of nowhere, to dispense cryptic advice. Then he has to go.

Mayor Bob Zane (aka Edwardian Borborygmicus Zanithique)

Mayor Bob has been elected for 23 terms straight. He continues to win by a landslide on his tried-and-true platform, “Will not put out the stars and paint the land black.”

Mayor Bob resembles a human more than he resembles anything else. His skin is gray-green, but he wears a thick coat of some pink substance that slowly flakes off, the longer he is in public, so he’s always cutting meetings short. His mouth is a rictus smile of teeth, and his voice is pleasant and reassuring.

The Mayor will never openly attack or assist our players. “I can’t lose my status for re-election!” or something like that. He may ask the players to do some mysterious thing, for a purpose he never explains.

Professor Macta Latré, Mistress of the “Liberal Arts”

An old spider who runs the Ruckerberg Curio Shop, and who teaches “liberal arts” at the Elderberry Community College. Out-of-doors, she wears a wide-brimmed hat and carries a parasol, so that she is constantly in shadow. Indoors, she reveals her aged skin, wrinkled and leathery. Her eyeglasses are so thick, they magnify her eyeballs into giant bubbles. She speaks with a New Orleans patois that sounds so awful, it would get her kicked out of a community theater project

MADCAP TIMES

RUCKERBERG, LC •
Today the Mayor broke ground on the Abandoned Hospital. 'I'm pleased that we have finally completed this project of public works. From its tall unlit hallways to its tiny windows covered in grime, the construction this hospital has finally been brought into concrete reality by your purposeful hands.'

The Mayor went on to say that the Hospital will save the city money, as it requires no electricity, maintenance, or staff of any kind.

Philip Asset, owner of the A-Mart chain of super-stores, praised the project. 'We feel extremely validated that our mysterious dreams have come true. Our beds, curtains, and wheelchairs have been put inside the building in places chosen by the whispering voices in my head. We hope many visitors drawn to these halls, these basements, and ... what's below the basement.' Mr. Asset declined further comment.

While Miss Latré can offer advice to the players on how to proceed, she can never interfere directly. “It is my destiny that I must observe, never interfere.” That’s what she says, anyway. The truth is that she’s past caring and can’t really be bothered.

Philip “Flip” Asset, Owner of A-Mart

The richest man in town. Flip insists that people call him “Flip” since “Philip was my mother’s name.” He’s a tall weasel, dressed in ill-fitting clothes that look like he stole them from a corpse. He’s constantly fidgeting, and rubbing sweat from his neck with his handkerchief. He speaks like a desperate car salesman having a nervous breakdown right in front of you.

He can never stay long, as he says he needs to hop on a train/bus/plane/submarine to “get somewhere out of town for a thing before... well, I’m late, bye.” Despite his plans, Flip never successfully gets out of the city. He can often be found in some random place in town, staring into an empty glass while he sobs quietly.

Flip never attacks or assists the players directly. He may ask them for help – heck, he may beg them for help, getting on his hands and knees and pleading with tearful eyes. But he can’t speak coherently enough to vocalize what the real problem is. “You wouldn’t understand.”

Pollux “Lucky” Zane and Castor “Kass” Zane, the Mayor’s Adopted Brats

Twin dogs who can only be told apart because Lucky is missing his left eye, and Kass is missing his right. They wear designer eye-patches and dress in expensive clones.

They’re the heirs to the Damage Family Water Purifier Fortune. They’re obnoxious, they laugh at things that aren’t funny, and they hurt people for more laughs that aren’t funny.

Whatever the players are up to, the Damage Brothers will look for a way to ruin it. They can get away with almost anything, as the Mayor keeps pardoning them because “they have great things ahead of them.” (The Mayor is their legal guardian after their parents disappeared... because the mayor is **everyone’s** god-parent, by city ordinance.)

Goldman Whiskers, a Man of Ambition

Owner of the Parasols & Things Garment Factory, Goldman Whiskers is a creepy cat who wears dark glasses even at night, dresses in a business suit made of squeaky black vinyl, and speaks in a stilted monotone, with an accent no one can place. He used to work for the Mayor’s office, but now they’re bitter rivals. Mr. Whiskers is constantly buying up some property or building something new for some scheme that only he understands, which he always describes as “for creating the perfect” whatever.

GIMMICK ROLES

Practitioner of Liberal Arts

You can do magic! Say a bunch of fake Latin words, wave your hands, call upon the unknowable forces, and roll +zany. On 10+, your weird thing happens, but it goes away a minute later unless you spend a laugh. On 7-9, your weird thing happens but there’s some unfortunate side effects, or maybe the forces mishear you and give you something else.

Because you're touched by magic, complex machines don't work so great around you: cars break down, computers crash, etc. People think you're weird, and they only talk to you when they want help with weirdness.

Adopted

You're half monster! You are disfigured in some incredibly obvious way that no one seems to notice. Make something up: tentacles, claws and teeth, eyestalks, goo, etc. The more obvious, the better.

To do a thing with your monster powers, roll +zany. On 10+, it gets the job done. On 7-9, there's a complication. (You freak out a local who attacks you in horror; you exert yourself too hard and take a lump; a nearby fish falls in love with you, etc.)

No one is ever scared of your monstrous appearance. Sometimes, your "real parents" appear and make life difficult for you.

Occult Investigator

The scales have been pulled from your eyes!

You can also negate any other powers: if someone tries to do something weird, say different fake Latin words, pull some ancient tchotchke out of your pocket and roll +zany. On 7-9, you prevent the weird magic... this time. On 10+, you might protect you and your friends.

No matter how hard you try to convince other people that there's some occult evil brewing, the minor characters never believe you.

Gibbering Lunatic

You've seen things, you've seen them with your eyes, and you can't unsee them!

To call upon lunatic insight, roll + zany. On 10+, ask the Director any question you want. and the Director can give you any answer they want, even if it's not the correct answer. Take +1 forward on all rolls to act on that answer.

If the Director asks you to roll to avoid becoming scared, frightened, bullied, or otherwise mentally affected by a supernatural horror, remind the Director that you're a gibbering lunatic, and then ignore the mental effect. Physical effects work on you just fine.

Other people treat you like the gibbering lunatic that you are. When in character, you must speak in a dissociated and manic manner.

The Seeker of Lost Ones

You have lost your parent, your sibling, your spouse, your pet, etc. ... and all trails lead to Ruckerberg.

Once, during the game session, make a passionate speech about your lost one. (Recite a flashback to your salad days when they were still in your life. Or hold up some trinket and tell everyone what the memories are.) The more you chew the scenery, the better. The Director may award you a laugh for this.

After your speech, set all of your laughs aside. For the rest of this session, you get +laughs to all rolls made to recover your lost one.

If you find a strong lead on where your lost one is, you must follow up on it. You lost them once, you can't lose them again!

MADCAP TIMES

RUCKERBERG, LC •
In an effort to track the declining tourism of Mealymouth seaside hotels and businesses, Mayor "Bob" reached out to his fellow citizens to volunteer to poll tourists for an accurate census.

"I know my fellow Ruckerbergers will rally behind this effort", said the Mayor, "to provide a clear and accurate tally of our esteemed visitors to our coastline."

Critics of the plan claimed that such a volunteer effort was doomed to fail, but the Mayor remained firm in his position, claiming that it was common folk wisdom that 'bergers count beach users.

ADVENTURE EPISODES

The County Fair of Unspeakable Dread

It's the hallowed tradition of the Nameless County Fair! Crop circles are drawn, corporate sponsorship is pulled in, and music bands not good enough or too desperate are brought into the perform. (Flip begs each and every guest to take him with them as they leave, but they never do.)

Our heroes are roped in to participate. Maybe a friend needs them to help. Maybe they want the prize money themselves. Maybe they're just a ham who needs validation. The Elderberry Community College needs to raise money to replace the lightning rod, which has melted after being struck 370 times this summer. And the weathers service is reporting that a storm will hit in three days, just when the Ruckerberg Fair ends. (Because a lightning storm **always** hits after the Ruckerberg Fair ends.)

Prizes will be awarded for things like "best livestock", "biggest pumpkin", "best musical performance", "pie-eating contest", "boxing competition", and other things that you can think of.

Story points could include:

Cattle-Car Carlie shows up out of nowhere, to tell our heroes from 100 years ago, when "Large Lottie" died at the pie-eating contest when an elderberry bone got lodged in her throat and no one gave her the Heimlich Maneuver, on the count that it hadn't been invented yet. With her last dying breath, she swore she would come back a hundred years later to exact revenge. And this would be the day. Then Carl politely excuses himself and is gone.

Mister Whiskers sponsors a refreshment stand, but anyone who drinks the lemonade that he serves turns into a twisted tentacle monster that hungers for flesh. Whiskers keeps laughing about how this will make him rich and powerful. A livestock animal is inadvertently (or deliberately) subjected to strange chemicals turns into some horrible monster. The players will have to stop its rampage of terror. If they are successful, the monster will run against the mayor in the next election.

The local band "The R Typists" are going to perform this awesome song that Madeline says "came to her in a dream." The song drives people mad, summons a monster, or something else that's worse.

Kass and Lucky find out whatever competition our heroes are going to win, and then decide they must do it better. First, they spend lots of money to do it. If that doesn't work, they cheat.

The Skyscraper of No Human Shape

One of the characters has to go to Pnakotic Tower, one of the many weird and mostly-empty office buildings found in downtown Ruckerberg. Come up with a zany reason to be there. (They have a job interview. They have a lead that their lost one was last seen, there. They got a parking ticket and if they want to fight it, that's where they have to lodge a complaint. The widow of the Prime Minister of Nigeria says their embassy is there, and they need to sign the check for \$10 million in person, etc.) The players may be going there to support their friend... or they all mysteriously have a reason to go there on the same day. Spooky!

The visit starts off normal, but gets weirder as time goes on. People behave in weird ways, like they have scripts but are improving about being friendly. When the players turn their back, furniture and art objects and plants have moved, or wilted, or been defaced.

Whether the meeting happens or not, the players now have to leave the building... which proves to be no easy feat. The elevators keep malfunctioning, dropping people off at the wrong floors. The stairs are locked, or it's possible to go down a few flights but still wind up on a higher floor. Even just flinging yourself off the roof just throws you back inside.

Things gradually get weirder: lighting shifts in colors, the windows show some alien sky, and monsters patrol the corridors.

What is the deal here?:

Lucky and Kass are also trapped in the building... and something inside is hunting them. The players will eventually realize they're the key to getting out, because only they can open doors that have silver doorknobs. (Everyone else suffers some random humiliation.) But the twins are still obnoxious and they

refuse to cooperate with the players unless bullied or persuaded. They may even ask the players to humiliate themselves, for their amusement.

Mister Whiskers has designed this building as a test, and he's watching them from his secret control room. Sooner or later he can't resist laughing at their plight, from some speaker or phone or 2-way tv or something. Mister Whiskers will begin throwing "Perfect Beings" at our heroes, each monster "even more perfect than the last!", and if our heroes can't defeat them all before the timer runs out, Whiskers declares himself the "perfect winner." Whatever that means.

Our hero's Lost One is here! They have been trapped here to be the Watcher of the Wallflower

The Wallflower looks like a giant flower in a potted plant. It's the most innocuous thing ever. The Lost One has been staring at it for so long, that their eyes have dried out and they look terrible. They say they can't leave unless someone else takes

their place.

However, this is just a scam. The real monster is a tiny blob that hides behind the plant, and it's too shy to approach anyone if they can see it, so it waits for people to stop looking. If anyone thinks to talk to it, they might realize that it would be a lot happier if everyone just left.

As the Director, if you're running short on time, you could have this be a plot by the Mayor, who hates Wallflower and will conspire to keep the players here, to stare at it. If the players can help Wallflower escape, it will run for mayor in the next election, with a frighteningly effective campaign despite declining all interviews.

The Bunny Slope of Indescribable Horror

After a record 35 inches of snow falls in the middle of July, Ruckerberg is enjoying a wave of snow-based tourism on Mount Obtuse. Our heroes get roped into it somehow. Maybe they get a part-time job to work on the slopes. Or maybe they like to shred the powder. Perhaps a cell phone camera picture picked up a blurry picture of a lost loved one. Or maybe they're so bored that the prospect of an untimely death from high-impact sports is a blessed relief.

But oh no! The Ruckerberg Weather Service was going to issue a storm warning that another thirty-six inches of snow will fall again tonight! Sadly, they can't reach the radio station because the phones are jammed from people trying to be the 1,024th caller to win a ski vacation.

At first, our heroes can deal with cutesy clichés of stories set on resorts:

Lucky and Kass show up to be jerks. Because of course. One of them may spill someone's hot chocolate. Another might make a wager on who can ski the fastest.

Mister Whiskers explains how his new state-of-the-art snowboard wax is "the perfect frictionlessness", which he will now sell to "the highest bidder." Macta Latré is here to stare at the hills. She warns that the hills are full of "wendigos", the dark and hungry spirits of people that froze to death. (Latré isn't here to ski, she's here because she won an all-expenses-paid from a radio call in a contest, but accidentally left her land-line phone off the hook, tying up the radio's switchboard.)

Eventually, the tragic snowfall happens ... as a single, comical avalanche from one cloud. This deluge could happen while some characters are out on the slopes. (It's especially dramatic if it happens during the dramatic snowboarding competition, with an avalanche chasing our heroes down.)

Our heroes are trapped on a mountain top in a deluge of snow! Complications include:

One or more guests will immediately become concerned that rescue isn't coming and that they will have to resort to cannibalism. These guests are way, way too eager to resort to these measures this early. A violent grudge match ensues, where characters baste one another, try to shove each other into ovens, etc.

To escape the mountain, Mister Whiskers covers himself in the snowboard wax and becomes so fast and slippery, he moves faster than the human eye can see. Unfortunately, being frictionless also means he can't stop moving. For the rest of the adventure, Whiskers will constantly be zipping in and out of frame, bouncing off things.

Everyone is spooked by the terrible cries outside at night! Someone should investigate as it's creeping everyone out. Mz. Lacté insists that someone else do it, as she's on vacation.

It turns out that the horrible wailing in the woods isn't a wendigo. It's "Wendy's ghost." Centuries ago during the gold rush, Wendy froze to death and has been wandering around the woods, trying to get help. Because ghosts feel cold, too, and it sucks. If our players can help her off the mountain, she will run for mayor in the next election.

EARLY-ACCESS BETA

Variant Rules

When you sit down to play Madcap with your friends, your neighbors, your contemporaries, your associates, your enemies, your nemeses, your relatives, and what have you, you can assume that all the basic rules we described above are in play.

However, no two gaming groups are quite the same. Some of you may want more rules, to give you new ways to change the story. Others will crave freedom that comes with fewer restraints. To this end, we present the **Variant Rules**.

After every game session, we recommend having a debriefing, where you talk about what variants you want to use in the future... and about what variants you just used. Don't get us wrong: we like these rules. We just don't think they're for everybody. Each one adds a complication to the game that just might cause more trouble than fun. (They alter game balance. They're more numbers to track. They make greater demand on player's skill, etc.)

THE X-CARD

There are people of all walks of life who love Golden Age cartoons, and there's a lot to love, with countless legendary characters and short films. Unfortunately, some cartoons of the Golden Age reflect the ugly prejudices of time (the echoes of which are still with us today). This topic is not easy to talk about, but it's important to address.

Not everyone has seen the especially offensive cartoons, some players may not be aware that they exist. All the same, we want to clear up any uncertainty:

We want Madcap to be a game everyone feels comfortable playing. The old-school inspiration of Madcap is never an excuse for humor that makes your fellow players uncomfortable, nor is it an excuse to keep someone from expressing themselves through their character.

If you're not sure what your group will be comfortable with, discuss it openly and honestly. Establish an understanding, and everything will be gravy.

In a role-playing game, sometimes players will use their role "in character" to say things that someone might find hurtful. Role-playing games can create a dissociative effect, where what someone is saying "in game" is not considered to have any real-world consequences... while other players may not share the same sense of immersion.

It's never fun when someone's feelings get hurt. You and your fellow players may consider using the X-Card.

Each Player gets a card with a big X on it. A standard 3x5 or A7 index card with a big "X" drawn it works great, but any card will do: a playing card, a common trading card, a coaster, etc.

If something happens that makes you uncomfortable, throw your X-card onto the table. whatever is going on stops now.

The player who threw the card doesn't have to explain why they threw the card.

The game immediately pauses, while the players and the Director edit the last event in the game's fiction. After an X-Card is dropped, the Director should consider declaring a 5-minute break before play resumes.

So: short answer: if you feel it's getting too personal or too hurtful, throw the X-Card.

After using your x card to stop the game, pick it back up.

There's no limit to the number of times you can use it. If you're using your X-Card more than once per game, though, you should really be talking about that in the debriefing, because you're not having fun.

Some groups may find that the X-Card can serve as a quick and easy reminder of the boundaries of what can and cannot go on during your game. The safety net of the X-Card can empower a player to push the emotions a bit further than they normally would, because they trust their fellow players to let them know immediately if they've gone too far.

Other groups may find the X-Card to be too simplistic or formalized. The X-Card is to prevent feelings being hurt – it's not supposed to be used because you don't like how a die roll came up. If you use the X-Card variant, remember that it's about keeping the game fun and exciting as you push the limits of your imagination.

LAUGHS AS STORY POINTS

In the basic setup of the game, Laughs are just "spend this to change rolls." But you might want to get a little wilder.

With the **Story Point** rule, you can spend a Laugh to change the way the story is going.

Spend a laugh to change the story:

Add a new minor character, complete with backstory.

Add a new location, complete with backstory.

Produce a prop that you need, right here and now.

Use a unique or grudge move from a different playbook, this one time.

Or something else that you improvise.

Some players love the idea of being able to improv like this. Other players will think this kind of creativity is already covered by the basics of the game (especially the +zany absurdity move) and will find that laughs-as-story points gets too meta.

MAKE YOUR OWN PLAYBOOK

Don't like these character playbooks? Then make your own! You can make a new one from scratch, or just copy the ones we have and move a few things around.

Set your five attributes

No attribute can be less than -2.

No attribute can be greater than +2.

The total of all five attributes should be +1.

Set your moves

Write down your unique move. You can copy one of the unique moves that we've already made, or you can make up your own.

Write down your grudge move. You can copy one of the grudge moves we've already made, or you can make up your own.

The playbooks that we included are custom-made to work for almost all games. (And you can always add a gimmick, too.) Someone who makes their own playbook is often tempted to take moves that give their character lots of great things to do, even if those things aren't appropriate to a funny and consistent concept for a character.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Hey, this is a role-playing game, so we should be leveling up, right?

After completing any game session, your character earns 1 shiny experience point. Every time you earn 3 experience points, you can cash them in for one reward.

You can only buy each reward once. The rewards do stack nicely, though.

Spend 3 XP for...

- +1 cool (max +3)
- +1 sharp (max +3)
- +1 sly (max +3)
- +1 tough (max +3)
- +1 zany (max +3)
- +1 to any one attribute of your choice (max +3)
- +1 to any attribute that's below zero (max =0)
- Add a second unique move (that you copy from another playbook)
- Add a second grudge move (that you copy from another playbook)
- Raise your max lumps from 3 to 5
- Raise your max laughs from 3 to 5
- Retire this character to the Hall of Fame.

Adding a "leveling up" mechanic can take the game out of "screwball comedy" and into "meta-power-gaming" territory. This rule takes some of the free-wheeling spirit out of the game.

UNCERTAIN LUMPS

In the regular rules, it's three lumps and you're out. With this uncertainty rule, it gets complicated.

Whenever you take a lump, roll +lumps. If you roll 10+, you fall down and have to sit out this scene. When you finally recover, your lump count is reset to zero. (Yes, you can spend laughs to get +3 back to this roll.)

If you rolled 9 or less, you're fine... until the next time you take a lump.

With this rule in effect, you never know which lump will be the one that makes you take a dive. On the other hand, this can make moves that roll +lumps more powerful, and some players may not appreciate the randomness.

Other Funny Stuff

- Adventure Time – Jake the Dog and Finn the Human fight evil, say funny things, and meet weirdos. The earliest episodes have dialogue that might have been cribbed from an RPG.
- Angry Beavers – post-modern cartoon about forest creatures and their wacky adventures.
- Animaniacs – anthology show about various cartoon characters in various skits. Recommended.
- Bonkers – Strange attempt by Disney to merge cartoons with “realistic” humans. Wildly uneven in quality.
- Buddy Thunderstruck – Stop-motion animation of animal people and their obsessions with truck racing. Recommended.
- Buzz Lightyear of Star Command – Spinoff of “Toy Story”, as the cartoon show that inspired the toy.
- Cat City – Movie about cartoon mice trying to solve the cat problem once and for all. Uneven in tone and in humor.
- Courage the Cowardly Dog – our hero must keep his family safe from threats both terrifying and ridiculous. Highly recommended.
- Cow & Chicken – Strange cartoon about two animals interacting with bizarre characters.
- Duckman – oh-so-1990s cartoon about a private investigator and his dysfunctional family. Very strange.
- Ed, Edd, and Eddy – While it’s supposedly about suburban kids and their adventures, the animation frequently wanders into surreal extremes. Recommended.
- Earthworm Jim – cartoon that adapts a 1990s video game into a superhero comedy. The game is good, too.
- Eek the Cat – A cat just wants to help, but everything goes horribly wrong. Good source for parody. The first season is the best.
- Fairly Odd Parents – post-modern cartoon about a little boy and his wish-granting faeries. Great source material for “too much of a good thing”.
- Freakazoid – animated, superhero humor, more about one-liners than slapstick or parody.
- Invader Zim – dark themes and comic slapstick about an alien posing as an elementary-school student while he plans to conquer earth.
- Looney Tunes / Merrie Melodies – various Warner Brothers characters such as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Wile E. Coyote, Sylvester the Cat, Tweety Bird, Yosemite Sam, and many others. We highly recommend the 1940s-1950s short subjects.
- Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures – A 1987 reboot of the superhero rodent, with over-the-top screwball humor that would start a renaissance. Recommended.
- My Little Pony – long-running cartoon series about girl’s toys, which surged in popularity with the “Friendship is Magic” series.
- Rocko’s Modern Life – Surreal satire of the 1990s, done with talking animals. Highly recommended.

Sam & Max, Freelance Police
— There was a whole season of this, and it aired on network TV. Has to be seen.

Silly Symphonies – umbrella term for short subjects by the Disney studios. These cartoons tend to be more about technique and less about slapstick. You can also look for Goofy and Donald Duck shorts.

Sonic Boom – A hedgehog from a video game franchise hangs out with friends and goes on wacky sitcom adventures.

Spongebob Squarepants – long-running cartoon about marine life with mundane jobs, and their bizarre adventures.

The Tick – Parody of the super-hero genre, where silly people take silly things entirely too seriously. We're recommending the two seasons of the animated show.

Tiny Toons Adventures – reinventions of classic Looney Tunes characters, scripted for a younger audience.

Tom & Jerry – A cat chases a mouse; hijinks ensue. The original, unedited cartoons of the 1940s and 1950s are the funniest.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit – Mix of live action and animation as a hard-boiled private eye teams up with a zany rabbit to solve a murder. Highly recommended.