

# ♠♥ TEXAS HOLD UP ♣♦

*At the Mudbucket Saloon the whiskey tastes like kerosene and the girls do, too, but it's the only place in the world you can play a game of Texas Hold Up.*

Each player in Texas Hold Up takes on the role of a super-powered villain in the Old West. The game is played following the rules of Texas Hold 'Em poker, but an extra deck of cards is used to represent the villains' powers, which they can use to influence the cards on the table and the narrative of the game. Each hand of poker is a single heist, where the villains compete to see who can defeat the good-guys and get away with the loot. Suits in the powers deck represent different applications of power: destroying your environment, damaging your opponents, perceiving the hidden factors at play, or deceiving others. Each of these influences the poker hand in different ways. Every villain has different aptitudes for the various applications of power, allowing him to be more effective at some of these tasks than others. Everyone wants the same thing, though: to win the hand and make off with the loot from the heist.

## TURNING TO CRIME

*They call me Doc Nobody, because you'll be nobody by the time I'm through with you.*

Creating a villain to play is a simple affair. First, choose your powerset. You might exert control over the element of fire, summon demons from another dimension, or rely entirely upon your finely honed instinct; your powerset does not affect the mechanics of the game, but it is incredibly important for fleshing out who your villain is, and describing how your powers impact the world.

Once you have determined what your powers are, you must next determine how you use them in each of four applications: destroying the surrounding environment, damaging fellow villains or heroes, perceiving things that others would prefer to keep hidden, and fooling others so they play right into your hand. At this stage you should feel free to stretch the scope of the powerset a bit, or introduce secondary powers. For example, Doc Nobody controls the memories of those around him: he can destroy his environment by convincing others that it's what they were about to do anyway; he can damage enemies by directly assaulting their sense of self, leaving

them empty husks; he can perceive that which others would keep hidden by reading it straight out of their memories; he can deceive others by implanting whatever false memories are convenient.

The last step is to assign aptitudes. Your aptitudes represent how effective you are at each of the applications of power. Aptitudes range from 1-4, with 1 indicating great skill in an application and 4 representing little ability in it. To assign the aptitudes rank how effective you are at each application: destruction, damage, perception, and deception. The highest ranked gets a 1, the next a 2, then 3, and the application you are worst at is assigned a 4. Your powerset will often guide your aptitudes. Doc Nobody easily applies his powers to deceive, has little trouble using them to perceive, can destroy with some effort, and has a tough time damaging. Thus his aptitudes are deception (1), perception (2), destruction (3), and damage (4).

When starting a game of Texas Hold Up each villain is given 50 chips and dealt three cards, face down, from the powers deck. Chip totals carry over between sessions when playing the same villain, but power cards do not.

## THE DEAL

*I wasn't about to lose out on the next big score, so I hired the Sullivan boys to hench for me.*

Texas Hold Up is played much like Texas Hold 'Em poker; familiarity with the rules of hold 'em is recommended. During play villains take turns as dealer. The player to the dealer's left is the small blind and must bet one chip, the player to their left is the big blind and must bet two chips. Chips represent all of a villain's resources: his wealth, influence, and even physical health. Whenever players bet, even as a blind, it means they've committed some of their resources to the heist; they must describe what they are doing to put themselves on the line. Once the blinds have bet all players are dealt two cards face down from the play deck. These cards do not have a direct impact on the narrative, but abstractly represent the preparations a villain has made to ensure victory in the coming heist. The player to the left of the big blind starts a round of betting, in which the blinds are considered active bets.

## THE FLOP

*Do you remember the heist on the mail train? I hungered for that shipment of gold. If I recall, we all happened to catch up to it at high noon.*

After betting is complete, three cards, called the flop, are placed face up on the table (do not burn any cards when dealing, or it will interfere with powers). These cards are communal and can be used by any or all of the players to form their hand. The flop is when the narrative of the heist really begins to take shape. The first card of the flop determines the location of the heist, the second card determines the loot that is up for grabs, and the third card determines other important factors such as time of day or weather. The dealer looks up what each card of the flop means on the table of cards, and describes the scene to the other villains; he also places a number of chips equal to its face value on top of the loot card (face cards have a value of 10, and aces 11). Once the flop has been dealt and the setting of the heist described, another round of betting commences. As before, betting is tied directly to the narrative of the heist. A player who raises must describe how they dove headfirst through the plate glass window or sent their minions into the caboose, one who calls similarly describes how they redouble their efforts to keep up with the other villains, and one who folds describes how they rode into the sunset after seeing the preparations of their competition.

## THE TURN

*I punched you in the face and nearly had the box, but then Shining Marshall showed up.*

Following this round of betting another card is dealt face up for communal use. This card is called the turn, and represents law enforcement or heroes that arrive to thwart the villains. What form this resistance takes is described in the table of cards. In order to get the loot, and add the chips that have been placed on the loot card to the pot, the resistance must be defeated before the last round of betting ends. Players defeat the resistance by placing chips onto the turn card. These chips do not count as bets and do not need to be matched by other players; they are also not added to the pot, and are not claimed by the winner at the end of the hand, they are simply

removed from the table. The resistance is defeated when the turn card has a number of chips equal to its face value on it. After the turn is revealed there is another round of betting.

## THE RIVER

*After the whole thing was over and you took off with the loot, I jumped off the train before the next station. Twisted my ankle something fierce, though.*

After betting, one last card is played onto the table; it is called the river. The river represents how villains who lose the hand will make their escape. The winner always manages to get away clean, as do those who choose to fold, but everyone else might have a tough time. This is determined by the suit of the river card: clubs or diamonds and everyone manages to escape without additional cost, spades means the losers are exhausted trying to get away: they can regain only one power card before the next hand, hearts indicates that the losers were injured making their escape: they lose one chip (like those played onto the turn card, these chips are not gained by other players, but are removed from the table). After the river is played a final round of betting takes place. Following this, whoever has the best hand wins and takes the pot. It is the winner's privilege and responsibility to describe how they overcome their adversaries and make off with the loot (or cut their losses, if the resistance has not been defeated). Following resolution of the hand, each player draws up to three power cards, unless prevented from doing so by the river. The job of dealer moves to the next person clockwise around the table, and the next hand begins.

## GOING BUST

*Looks like I'm out of chips, but you're out of time! I captured your buddy a week ago, and now I've got you, too!*

When a player runs out of chips it is revealed that they have been a hero in disguise the whole game! The real villain has been captured, and now the hero has caught the other villains with their guards down. An epic fight ensues which is, unsurprisingly, resolved by a hand of poker. Five card straight: no betting, no powers, no-holds-barred, winner-takes-all. Each player is dealt five cards. Whichever player has the best hand wins. If a villain wins, the hero is defeated; the winner gets a ten chip

reward and the hero player can rejoin as a new villain (starting with 50 chips) or their newly released original (with only 25 chips). If the hero wins, all the villains are captured; each player may choose to rejoin as a new villain (starting with 50 chips) or their original who has just escaped from prison (with only 30 chips).

## POWERS

Villains begin play with three cards drawn from the powers deck. Which application of power the card can be used for is determined by its suit. The potency of the card is found by dividing its value (face cards = 10, aces = 11) by your aptitude in that application of power (round up). As with betting, all uses of power cards must be described in the narrative first, and then resolved mechanically.

**Destruction:** Spades represent destruction of the environment around you. At any point during play you may reveal a power card of spades to replace community cards with new ones from the top of the play deck. The number of cards you can replace is equal to the potency of the power card. The same card can be replaced more than once provided you have sufficient potency. When you replace cards in this way, describe how you have used your powers to reshape the battlefield; though this power does change the community cards it does not alter the setting of the heist as determined by the table of cards.

**Damage:** Hearts represent damage inflicted upon your enemies. At any point during play you may reveal a power card of hearts to force an enemy to add chips directly to the pot; chips added in this way do not count as a bet and do not need to be matched by other players. The number of chips added is determined by the potency of the power card. Alternately, a power card of hearts can be used to damage heroes described by the turn card. When used in this way the number of chips necessary to defeat the hero is reduced by the potency of the power card.

**Perception:** Clubs represent your ability to perceive that which is hidden around you. At any point during play you may reveal a power card of clubs and look at cards on the top of the play deck and/or in opponents' hands, then replace them. The number of cards you can reveal in this way is equal to the potency of the power card.

**Deception:** Diamonds represent your ability to manipulate others to your ends. At any point during play you may reveal a power card of diamonds to take chips you previously bet back from the pot. Only chips you bet,

and not those spent in other ways, may be taken back using deception. The number of chips you may take back is equal to the potency of the card.

TABLE OF CARDS				
	Flop 1	Flop 2	Flop 3	Turn
2	homestead	cattle	cattle drive	townsfolk
3	outpost	provisions	midnight	ranchers
4	general store	ammunition	thunder storm	deputies
5	courier	deeds	flash flood	bandits
6	Indian village	gems	Indian raid	Indians
7	stagecoach	heirlooms	dust storm	posse
8	river boat	liquor	poker tournament	sheriff
9	bank	cash	parade	Texas Rangers
10	train	gold	high noon	US Army
J♠	church	blessed cross	religious service	The Justice Brothers
Q♠	mineshaft	phlebotinum	falling debris	Dragon Commander
K♠	burned mission	holy relic	unstable footing	Silent Shot
A♠	Indian burial ground	cursed necklace	clouds of flies	zombies
J♥	mountain lake	magic sword	blizzard	Merlinus Lazarus
Q♥	secret lab	clockwork man	spider robots	The Professor
K♥	open desert	an entire train	blinding sun	The Red Bandito
A♥	Fort Valor	prototype weapons	bandit raid	Shining Marshall
J♣	art museum	Mona Lisa (on loan)	heightened security	Agent One
Q♣	deep woods	a rare bird	animal attack	Lumber Jack
K♣	cliff dwellings	ancient artifacts	thick fog	Rattler
A♣	Hero Society mansion	super soldier serum	automated turrets	Captain Sunshine
J♦	opera	famous singer	crowds of fans	The Fibrillator
Q♦	floating city	flying machine	dangerous winds	General Chaos
K♦	hidden valley	water of life	hallucinations	golem guardians
A♦	ghost town	haunted bloody axe	ghosts	The Butcher