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Greetings and welcome to the Strange Fate Slap-dash SRD!

Strange Fate was originally authored by Mike Olson and used as the rules engine for Arc Dream Publishings Victorian super-steampunk setting The Kerberos Club.

Though Kerberos Club is a fantastic setting, many of us fans felt it only scratched the surface of what the rules set was capable of. Strange Fate was a fast, flexible incarnation of the Fate engine that could be easily adapted to almost any genre.

To that end, I have created this SRD which caintains the open-content rules portion of the Kerberos Club game. I have attempted to remove all references to the setting of Kerberos, even going so far as to re-write one or two sentences to make the rules feel more generic.

With that said, my efforts are far from perfect. There are large gaps in the text that were left after deleting the copyrighted artwork and setting material. And occasionally an instance might pop up where the wording couldn't be redone without major alterations to the text, which is beyond the scope of this document. So if some of the phrasing seems a bit off, or the odd reference to the Kerberos club, Victorian England or superheroes pops up, that's why.

As far as I know these rules are open content and can be freely distributed. In no way does this document challenge the ownership of Strange Fate or the Kerberos Club. If you yourself have some skill with PDF editing, feel free to clean up or alter anything you find here in. I only ask you spread the love!

And finally, while you can play the game perfectly well with just the rules here, I highly reccomend you buy a copy of the original Kerberos Club Fate edition. It's a fantastic setting, very rich in detail and oozing with potential. Arc Dream Publishing's website: <http://arcdream.com/home/?p=790>

# How to Play FATE

This section will introduce you to how the rules of this game work and what all the number-bits in this book represent. You can read the rules in detail in Chapter 5: Playing the Game and in Chapter 7: Running the Game.

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## — The Basics —

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First and foremost, if you're asking yourself, "What is a roleplaying game, anyway?" go to [www.arcdream.com](http://www.arcdream.com) for an introduction. Back? Good!

In the FATE RPG, characters, vehicles, equipment, and even scenes and locations that are important to the story are defined by three key terms: aspects, skills, and Gifts.

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## — Rolling Dice —

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Many events in Fate - particularly the challenges that face the Heroes of Strange Fate - are resolved by rolling a few (usually four) special dice called Fudge dice. Each Fudge die gives you a +, -, or 0 result. Add one for each + and subtract one for each -. (The 0 are worth zero.) Get a high enough result and you rise to the challenge. Important characters and objects use skills to boost their rolls - and just about everything in the game can use



aspects.

Since Fudge dice can roll negative or positive, it's possible to get a result below zero. Therefore we always put either a plus sign or a minus sign in front of a roll's result to make clear whether it's above zero or below zero. A roll that's 6 above zero would be written as +6, not just as 6.

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## — Aspects —

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Aspects are one of the most important parts of FATE. They are short, descriptive phrases that describe characters, scenes, objects, places, or even the game world as a whole. The ones you'll probably use most often, though, are your character's personal aspects: they express your character's personality, background, appearance, beliefs, possessions, connections, and other parts of what makes him or her unique.

Aspects can be simple statements, nicknames, catchphrases, the names of associates or enemies, and so forth. When you see a character write-up in this book, the listed aspects give you a sense of who the character is. When you make your character, you decide what his or her aspects are.

If there's an aspect at hand - on your character, the scene, your opponent, whatever - and it's relevant to the task at hand in a positive way, you can use it to improve your result. This usually means spending a Fate Point (see the next page) for each aspect you use and adding a +2 bonus to your roll for each one - although no aspect can be used more than once on a single roll. Your opponent can do the same.

Of course, this aspect business isn't limited to turning failure into success. If you've

already succeeded without calling on an aspect, but you want to succeed by even more, you can use aspects to do that.

Unimportant characters, locations, events and objects can be handled just with aspects - leaving out skills and Gifts entirely - to speed things up.

You can find more information about aspects on page 184.

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## — Skills —

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Most things that player characters do in the game are done with skills (and of course if the skill isn't enough, you can augment it with an aspect). Skills are areas of training, experience, or sheer talent. When you want your character to do something risky or that has the potential to add to the story - something with an interesting consequence for failure - you'll use one of your character's skills.

Unlike aspects, skills are concrete and quantifiable - each skill has a numeric skill rating that measures how effective the character will be with it in play and how likely you are to succeed. Skills tell you what a character can do.

Every skill also has a Power Tier that indicates how effective it is in comparison with the efforts of an ordinary human being. Most skills are in the Mundane Tier, but supernatural powers, such as super-strength or telepathy, will frequently be in higher Power Tiers.

To see if you do well, roll Fudge dice and add your skill rating. That's your skill roll.

Compare the skill roll to a difficulty number set by the GM. If you beat the difficulty number, you succeed.

For more on skills see page 198.

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## — How Well Did I Do? —

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How well you succeed at a challenge is determined by three results of a skill or aspect roll: effort, shifts, and effect.

Add together your skill roll plus any aspect bonuses to get your effort.

(Other modifiers caused by the circumstances at hand may affect your effort, such as when trying to climb a particularly slippery wall or find a dropped earring in an especially cluttered room. That's up to the GM to determine, though. If she doesn't bring it up, don't worry about it.)

How well you succeed is measured in shifts. If your effort beats the difficulty number, you get a number of shifts equal to the margin of success. If the difficulty rating is +3 and your effort is +6, the margin is 3 so you get three shifts.

The number of shifts you get is called your effect. The higher your effect, the better you did.

Sometimes you'll want to spend some of these shifts to accomplish something special. In that case, reduce your effect by the number of shifts that you're spending. See page 320 for details. But usually you just use them to say how well you succeeded at the thing

you were trying to do.

And if you're competing against an opponent, it's easy. Best effect wins.

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## — Stress —

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When bad things happen to characters - such as injury, embarrassment, or fright - they take stress. If your objective is harming someone else (physically or otherwise), stress is how we represent it in the game.

Stress comes in three varieties: Health, Composure, and Reputation. The more points of stress you take, the worse off you are.

For example, let's say you're in a fistfight with a couple of goons. Your effort (the total of your roll, your skill rating, and any modifiers) is +6, while theirs is only +3. The GM tells you that you can spend a shift to knock one of them down a short flight of stairs and out of the immediate area. You decide to do that, and put the other two shifts toward dealing damage. The goon takes 2 points of Health stress and is knocked down the stairs.

If something has a Weapon rating (like "Weapon 1"), it does additional stress. If something has an Armor rating (like "Armor 1"), it absorbs stress.

Taking stress is bad. If you take enough of it, you're Taken Out, or removed from the story for at least a while. You could be dead, unconscious, disgraced, fleeing in panic, or whatever's appropriate for the attack that took you out. Within that context, the attacker gets to choose your fate.

Given a few minutes of respite, stress goes away on its own. When you don't have that luxury, there is another way to reduce stress: by taking consequences.

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## — Consequences —

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Consequences are longer-lasting effects that can be as insignificant as being winded or off-balance or as life-changing as losing a limb or being ostracized from polite society.

You can reduce incoming stress by taking a consequence. A Trifling consequence reduces stress by 2, a Middling consequence reduces stress by 4, and a Grievous consequence reduces stress by 6.

Consequences are like aspects that are negative (see the Aspects section for more on aspects). You don't want consequences, but sometimes they're your only chance to stay on your feet. But you can take only so many consequences.

You can also choose to make a concession instead of taking a consequence. This is essentially you taking yourself out, but according to your terms instead of your enemy's.

When you see a write-up for a person, animal, or vehicle in this book, the more stress boxes and consequences are listed, the more resilient that person, animal, or vehicle is.

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## — Gifts and Fate Points —

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Gifts bend the rules a little where your character is concerned. You might have a Gift that gives you a special piece of equipment or that makes one of your aspects more powerful or that provides a little boost to some of your skills in the right circumstances. They're sort of a halfway point between aspects and skills, in that they have concrete mechanical effects, but it's up to you to define the specifics within the guidelines provided. Every character has at least one Gift. We'll discuss them in the Gifts section on page 244.

Every player also has a store of Fate Points - sometimes a lot, sometimes a few, sometimes none! Spend Fate Points to affect the events of the story in your favor; earn Fate Points by acting in accordance with one of your character's aspects in a way that puts you at a disadvantage. This back and forth of Fate Points - the "Fate Point economy" - is, like aspects, central to Fate. More information on how this works is in the Aspects section, page 184.

And that's how you play the game.

## Chapter 5

This chapter deals with creating characters,

See page 18 for a summary of the basic Fate rules. The core mechanic is simple. Roll the Fudge dice - usually four of them, or "4dF." (The rules will tell you when it's not four.) Add bonuses or subtract penalties for skills, aspects and other modifiers. If you beat the difficulty number, you succeed. See Chapter 7 for detailed rules for character actions, conflicts and consequences.

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# — If You've Played Fate Before: Skills, Refresh and Gifts

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If you're familiar with the Fate system, here's a quick rundown on how we handle skills and Refresh. This is a point-based iteration of Fate. You'll use skill points to buy skills, and Refresh points to buy everything else. Characters start with 30 skill points, but a character's Refresh (the number of Fate Points he has at the start of each session) depends on the time period when the story takes place. Refresh starts at 6 in the Early Century, 8 in the Middle Century, or 10 in the Late Century. Refresh is also a currency in character creation - you'll spend it on Power Tiers (which we'll discuss later) and Gifts, which take the place of stunts found in many other FATE games.

## Character Creation

Creating a character for Strange Fate occurs in six basic steps:

- \* Pick an Archetype and Social Class, and define aspects for both those and your first Conviction.
- \* Answer the Five Questions.
- \* Buy Skills (Common, Unique, and Strange, as applicable).
- \* Define five other aspects based on your answers to the Five Questions.
- \* Buy Gifts (if desired; everyone gets one Gift for free).
- \* Finalize details (stress tracks, Adjusted Refresh, etc.).

Note that this is only a recommended order - you may find it useful to switch it up, if that feels more comfortable. You'll also find that some of these steps are interconnected. For example, Unique and Strange skills often constrain your aspect choices, which is why aspects are listed after skills above.

So then! Let's get into it.

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## — The Five Questions —

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**Humble Beginnings.** Everyone starts somewhere. Who were you before you became who you are? How did your early years mark and shape you?

**Follies of Youth.** Foolishness is a vice of the young and the fondest memory of the old. What did you get up to as you sought independence during your formative years, and with whom did you seek it?

**First Awakenings.** When did you begin to realize the world was not as it seemed? Consider including another PC in your answer to this question - it will help establish ties between the player characters. Perhaps that other PC was the first Stranger you'd ever seen, or the two of you witnessed something Strange back when you were childhood friends.

**Mysterious Origins.** When did you come into power of your own?

**Great Failing.** What is your greatest flaw, and how did it bring you near to ruin and disaster?



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## — Pick Archetype and Social Class —

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Your Archetype defines the broad outlines of your character concept, whether a master of the secrets of the Orient, a mad inventor, a deposed goddess, the last Martian, or anything in between. The available Archetypes are:

- Adept
- Alien
- Anachronist
- Artificial
- Faerie
- Godling
- Changed
- Magus
- Mutant
- Super-Normal

Each has a full description in the Archetypes chapter. Your choice of Archetype will guide one of your aspect choices later.

Your Social Class determines a great deal about your lifestyle and place in the social order. The four Social Classes are:

- Under Class
- Working Class
- Middle Class
- Upper Class

These are detailed in All Things Right and Proper. One of your aspects will derive from your Social Class.

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## — Buy Skills —

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Your character's skills are a measure of what she can do, from charming a stranger to piloting an aero ship and everything in between (and beyond). Skills are rated at Average (+1), Fair (+2), Good (+3), or Great (+4), and come in three varieties: Common skills, Unique skills, and Strange skills.

A character can't have more skills rated at one value than she has at the next lowest value. For example, if you have three Fair (+2) skills you can have no more than three Good (+3) skills, and you can't have a Great (+4) skill unless you already have at least one Good (+3) skill.

You start with 30 skill points. Common skills cost a number of points equal to their rating, so a Fair (+2) skill costs 2 points. As the name implies, Common skills are typical areas of training or experience for the average citizen, such as riding a horse, scouring a crime scene for clues, or throwing a punch. Any unrated Common skills are treated as if their rating were Mediocre (+0).

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## The Adjective Ladder

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|     |           |
|-----|-----------|
| +10 | Divine    |
| +9  | Mythic    |
| +8  | Legendary |
| +7  | Epic      |
| +6  | Fantastic |
| +5  | Superb    |
| +4  | Great     |
| +3  | Good      |
| +2  | Fair      |
| +1  | Average   |
| +0  | Mediocre  |
| -1  | Poor      |
| -2  | Terrible  |

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## Skills: How Good is Good?

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*Here's a general idea of what the five skill ranks can mean for your character:*

**Mediocre (+0):** *A lack of training or talent.*

**Average (+1):** *Apprentice training or considerable talent.*

**Fair (+2):** *Journeyman or “professional” training, or an incredible degree of talent.*

**Good (+3):** *Veteran or master-level training, or a combination of*

*impressive talent and extensive training.*

**Great (+4):** *Nearly unmatched ability.*

*These benchmarks only apply when comparing skills of the same Power Tier. See the Skills section for more detail.*

Unique and Strange skills - skills you design from the ground up - often cost quite a bit more than Common skills.

Unique skills can represent occupations, lifestyles, areas of training, or any other collection of thematically connected abilities a normal human being might acquire. They're more specialized than Common skills, and a more concrete way to further distinguish your character.

Strange skills, on the other hand, transcend the abilities of the common man.

Unique skills and Strange skills are detailed further in the Skills section.

All skills are ranked on one of five Power Tiers:

- Mundane
- Extraordinary
- Superhuman
- Ascendant
- Godlike

By default, every skill starts out in the Mundane Tier - the realm of the ordinary human being. All other Power Tiers represent commensurately greater increases in ability and effectiveness.

Player characters start with 30 skill points with which to buy skills. Improving a skill's

Power Tier is detailed further in the Skills section.

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## — Define Aspects —

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Skills are what your character can do, but aspects are who she is. In addition to an Archetype aspect, a Social Class aspect, and a Conviction aspect, your character has five other personal aspects that derive from the Five Questions.

Initially, these have no category or restrictions on their definition. We refer to them as Free aspects. However, your Unique or Strange skills may change one or more of these Free aspects into Complication or Conviction aspects. All sorts of aspects are explained further in the Aspects section.

To define your aspects, go back to your answers to the Five Questions. For each question, come up with an aspect related to the answer. If some of your Free aspects have been converted as part of any Unique or Strange skills you have, include these accordingly.

You'll get more out of your aspects if they cover many different facets of your character's life and personality, rather than focusing on just one or two. For example, if all of your aspects relate to your career as a scientist, they're unlikely to be of much use unless you're doing something with science. The Aspects section has more advice on creating effective aspects, along with some examples.

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## — Buy Gifts —

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Gifts are special little rules-bending features of your character, such as conferring a small bonus to a skill in a limited circumstance, giving you a special piece of equipment or sidekick, or letting you use one skill in place of another. There are six Gifts: Companion, Impact, Signature Aspect, Skilled, and Theme. Everyone starts with one Gift for free; buying more is purely optional. Gifts are described in more detail in the Gifts section, page 244.

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## — Refine Details —

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Every character has three stress tracks: Health, Composure, and Reputation. These represent how much physical, mental, or social abuse you can take before things start to get bad for you. By default, each of these stress tracks has three boxes. Certain skills can add more boxes to these stress tracks if the skills are rated high enough. The more boxes in the track, the more resilient to that type of stress you are. You can find out more about how stress tracks work on page 324 in the Conflict section.

Consequences are when things start to get bad for you. These come in three degrees of severity (Trifling, Middling, and Grievous) and three different scopes (Physical, Mental, and Social). By default, every character can take one consequence of each degree, regardless of its scope. Certain skills in a higher Power Tier can let a character take additional consequences, as discussed in the Skills section. See page 326 in the Conflict section for more on how consequences work.

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## — Aspects —

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Aspects are a major part of the FATE system. Odds are, anything of importance in the story is going to be described in terms of its aspects.

Potential aspects include relationships, backgrounds, beliefs, secrets, catchphrases, descriptions - anything that paints a picture of a character, a scene, a city or just about any other part of the story.

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## — Types of Aspects —

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The most frequently encountered are Personal aspects, Scene aspects and Campaign aspects, but there are other types as well.

These are aspects that belong to your character, most of which are defined during character creation. If skills are what you can do, then aspects are who you are. Personal aspects are divided into several different categories: Free, Archetype, Conviction, Complication, and Social Class.

By default, every character begins with eight aspects: one Archetype, one Conviction, one Social Class and five Free aspects. Some characters often have to replace one or more Free aspects with Complication or Conviction aspects.

- Free: Anything you want. Free aspects have no restrictions on how they're defined.
- Archetype: A brief phrase that describes your character's basic concept and relates to your Archetype. The Archetypes chapter has a list of example aspects for each Archetype.
- Conviction: A powerful driving force in the character's life: a sense of honor or duty, a tie to family or faith, a taste for debauchery, or uncovering forbidden

secrets. A Conviction can also be one in the rightness of a relationship: an absolute faith in one's True Love, or an unrelenting hatred of an enemy. Most of all, a Conviction must be driving. It must demand action. Compelling a Conviction aspect works a little differently than normal; see page 187, How Aspects Work, for a proper explanation. Every character has at least one Conviction aspect.

- **Complication:** A Drawback reflecting how a Unique or Strange skill has complicated the character's life, such as "Criminal Past," "Lonely At The Top," or "I'm not an animal - I'm a human being!" More information on Complication aspects can be found in Extras and Drawbacks.
- **Social Class:** A brief phrase that describes your role within your chosen Social Class. See All Things Right and Proper for a more thorough treatment of Social Class, including example aspects for each Social Class.

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## — Sample Aspects —

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FREE

Scientific Genius

"My word is my bond."

Torn Between Two Worlds

"Oh, I've seen it all, my dear boy."

"I believe I know a fellow who can be of some assistance."

Oxford-Educated, Newcastle-Bred

Secret Fighting Arts

Woman of Will

Man of Action

Catlike Reflexes

Iron-Willed Gentleman



Occult Conspirator  
The Mystical Amulet of Marcus Fontius  
Persuasive Speaker  
The Soul of a Poet and the Face of a Monster

## CONVICTIONS

Always Repay a Debt  
Never Take Charity  
“For Queen and Country!”  
Before Victory, Honor  
Cockney Pride  
Secrets to Keep  
Protect My Reputation  
Get the Proper Respect  
Defend The Innocent  
Loyal to the Kerberos Club  
Power at Any Price  
A Woman’s Vengeance

## COMPLICATIONS

Criminal Past... and Present  
Persona Non Grata  
Living Hand to Mouth  
Frightful Visage  
Lady Friend of the Week  
Fear of Heights, and Falling Therefrom  
“Seems I don’t know me own strength!”  
Member of Parliament  
Unreliable Inventions  
An Enemy in Every Port

Perfectly Arrogant  
Doesn't Play Well with Others

## CAMPAIGN

Teetering on the Brink of War  
A Lurking Strangeness  
O Brave New World, That Has Such Strangers In It Strangeness at Every Turn  
The Sun Never Sets on the British Empire  
A Bright Future  
The Wonders of Science!  
Heroes, Villains, and Us  
Weird Cults and Weirder Cultists  
A Suspicious Public London "Fog"  
A City of Secrets  
Crossroads of the World

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## Scene Aspects

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These are just what it says on the tin: aspects that describe a scene instead of a character. Unlike Personal aspects, there's no default number of aspects a scene must have. Locations the GM expects will be important to the story tend to have two or three, if not more, and it's usually pretty simple to come up with scene aspects on the fly. The GM might even solicit suggestions from the players. The GM should let the players know all of a scene's obvious aspects, and remain open to adding more as seems appropriate. Players can also create or discover scene aspects using skills. Scene aspects are free to use once per scene; see below for more information. Scene aspects can be thought of in four broad categories.

- Environment: Lighting, atmosphere, etc. - aspects that represent the (usually

diminished) ability of those within the scene to perceive things.

- Mood: Aspects that represent the attitudes of a crowd of people.
- Hazard: Conditions which are likely to damage or be a danger to people in the scene. This could be anything from “On Fire!” to “Poison Gas” to “Hidden Pit.”
- Scenery: Other features of the scene, such as “These Old Mansions Are Full of Secrets” or “Huge Chunks of Rubble.”

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## Campaign Aspects

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These aspects reflect campaign-spanning features of the chosen setting.

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## Other Types of Aspects

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- Objects: Tools, weapons, furniture, you name it - anything can have an aspect. Keep in mind, though, that aspects represent narrative importance. Don’t waste your time giving every piece of a silver tea service an aspect unless you expect them to be individually important to the story.
- People: NPCs often have aspects, whether planned or impromptu. Aspects are an easy way to make supporting players in a story distinctive without going through a lot of trouble, especially if you want those noticeable traits to be mechanically exploitable by the players. NPCs might even be represented wholly by an aspect, such as “Helpful Clerk” or “Angry Mob.”

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## — How Aspects Work —

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First, pick an aspect relevant to the situation at hand. Next, ask yourself how it’s

relevant. Is it helping you or hindering you? If it's helping, you'll invoke it: You'll spend a Fate Point and receive a benefit in return (or tag it to receive a benefit for free, if appropriate). If it's a hindrance, it's a compel: You'll receive a Fate Point from the GM in exchange for being saddled with some sort of setback or additional trouble. No aspect can be used (invoked, tagged, or compelled) more than once per exchange. For example, if you invoke an aspect for a roll, it can't also be tagged or compelled (or invoked again) until the exchange is over.

There are a couple other ways aspects can be used, as well; everything's covered in the summary below.

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## — Invoke —

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- What it means: Contradicting the dice using an aspect as justification. This could mean citing a personal aspect as a reason you must've done better than the dice indicated ("There's no way I failed to pick that lock; I'm 'London's Foremost Second-Story Man!'") or taking advantage of the terrain, the environment, another character's weakness, and so on. "He'll have a hard time shooting me through all these 'Crates and Boxes' I'm hiding behind. And he's going to have an even harder time shooting me with that 'Broken Hand' of his."
- When to do it: After the roll.
- How to do it: Work the aspect into the narrative, pay the cost, and choose your benefit. If your interpretation of the aspect crosses over into logical contortionism ("Clearly, the time I've spent as a 'Mud-Covered Pig Farmer' has meant spending a lot of time in pens and barns, which has given me an understanding of wooden structures deep enough to find a secret door in this hallway.") the GM may (and probably should) reject its use.

- Benefit: +2 bonus or reroll if invoking one of your personal aspects, or +2 bonus if invoking any other aspect.
- Cost: Fate Point.

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## — Tag —

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- What it means: Using an aspect that's been discovered or created within the scene. The aspect must have been discovered or created via a skill roll or the expenditure of a Fate Point. See Aspect Declarations, Assessments, and Maneuvers for more on how new aspects are created or discovered.
- When to do it: After the roll.
- How to do it: Work the aspect into the narrative, pay the cost, and receive the benefit. As with invoking, if your interpretation of the aspect strains credulity, the GM may reject it.
- Benefit: +2 bonus.
- Cost: None - the first time. If the aspect sticks around longer than that, subsequent invocations require a Fate Point.

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## — Compel —

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- What it means: Obeying your nature - you are literally “compelled” to roleplay one of your aspects in such a way that gets you in trouble (but see also external compels, below). This is key: If things aren't worse for your character after the compel than they were before it, it's not a valid compel. Running away from a fight

because you want to get back to your “Wife and Kids” isn’t worthy of a compel; rushing into a burning building to save your “Wife and Kids” definitely is. Aspects that are extrinsic to your character, such as scene or world aspects, can be compelled as well, in appropriate circumstances. For example, every game of Strange Fate may have a world aspect of “Malum Necessarium,” the motto of the Club, so it could be used to compel any Kerberan PC to, say, take action in a way that emphasizes their devotion to the Club’s ideals, or puts the Club’s needs above their own.

- When to compel: Either you or the GM can compel one of your character’s aspects whenever it’s dramatically or narratively appropriate.
- How to compel: As the GM, offer the player a Fate Point and suggest that the aspect you’re compelling should complicate their life right about now. Sometimes the compel suggests a clear course of action, such as compelling “I Can Take ‘Em!” when the player is debating whether to fight or run. Other times, the exact nature of the compel is left entirely up to the player - for example, compelling the aspect “Unpredictable Luck” in nearly any situation. In no event should the GM dictate to the player what the character is going to do. The player can either accept the Fate Point and go along with the compel, or pay a Fate Point to refuse it - the price of going against your own nature. Don’t look at it as being blackmailed by the GM, because that’s not what it is. It’s you, the player, making full use of the aspect, probably one you chose, to generate some Fate Points.
- Players compelling players: In addition, as a player you can suggest that the GM compel another PC’s aspect, but it’s the GM who gives that player a Fate Point, not you. (In general, we don’t want to foster the idea that one player is able to control another player’s character.) A player can, however, directly compel an NPC’s aspect, in which case they give the GM a Fate Point and the GM reserves it for later use by that NPC. The character must have knowledge of the aspect before it can be compelled (see Aspect Declarations, Assessments, and Maneuvers for details on how this works). The more Fate Points the NPC accrues - that is, the more interest the players show in them - the more “real” or important they become in the story.

A quick-thinking GM can use this to the story's advantage by turning an initially insignificant character into a major NPC - maybe even the villain of the story, or a valuable ally.

- The self-compel: Normally, there's a lot going on in the GM's head, which means that she might miss the opportunity to compel one of your aspects that you think ought to be compelled, or to notice that you've obeyed one of your aspects in a way that's worthy of a Fate Point. In these cases, feel free to hold out your open palm and say something along the lines of "I want to self-compel this aspect." or "Losing my quarry to chat up the ladies - isn't that just the sort of thing a 'Sucker for a Pretty Face' would do in this situation?" How blatant you might have to be about this depends on your GM and your group.

Regardless, don't shy away from the self-compel. You chose your aspects - you should be able to use them to your advantage. That includes milking them for Fate Points when the opportunity arises.

- The external compel: Sometimes a compel doesn't represent a choice your character is making in the story, but a choice the player makes to worsen the situation for the character in a way that's related to an aspect. It's not the character that's causing the problem - it's the world around him. For example, the GM could compel your "Repentant Ex-Convict" aspect to have your character picked up as part of a murder investigation. Your character isn't taking some sort of action something that's encouraging the police to interfere with his life, but it's happening to him all the same. External compels can be refused, just like any other compel, but this usually carries with it ramifications of some sort in terms of the story. Maybe the police still question you, only to release you soon after - but the murder they're investigating still took place and is potentially an important part of the story.
- Escalation: If a player refuses a compel, the GM can then up the stakes by offering a second Fate Point. If the player accepts, he gets two Fate Points instead of one; if he

refuses, he must now pay two Fate Points. In the latter case, the GM can offer a third Fate Point, but that's where it ends: Escalating a compel beyond three Fate Points is ill-advised. Escalation should be used sparingly, and only at times of high drama - compels that get right to the heart of a character's psyche, that put what matters most to that character on the line.

- **Compelling Convictions:** As discussed earlier, Conviction aspects represent a character's most dearly held beliefs and motivations. Because of this, a Conviction aspect compel starts out at two Fate Points instead of just one. Likewise, the player must pay two Fate Points to refuse the compel. The GM can then escalate to three Fate Points, but can go no further than that.
- **Compelling Major Complications:** Like Convictions, Major Complication aspect compels start at two Fate Points rather than just one; it costs two Fate Points to refuse the compel; and the GM can escalate up to 3.
- **Benefit:** Earn a Fate Point.
- **Cost:** Describe how the chosen aspect complicates the situation or gets you in trouble.

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## — Invoking/Tagging for Effect —

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- **What it means:** Invoking or tagging an aspect “for effect” skirts the usual mechanical benefits in favor of directly affecting the narrative in a manner consistent with the aspect. In a way, it's like the opposite of compelling an aspect: Instead of accepting a Fate Point in exchange for getting yourself into more trouble, you pay a Fate Point to make something beneficial happen. For example, you might invoke the aspect “A Friend in Every Port” for effect to say that even here in exotic Samarkand, you know a guy.
- **When to do it:** Because this use of an aspect isn't tied to a dice roll, the players or



the GM can invoke or tag for effect whenever it makes sense. Generally speaking, the GM won't be doing a lot of invoking or tagging for effect. If the GM wants something in the story to happen, she can usually just make it happen.

- How to do it: Explain the effect you want the aspect to provide and spend a Fate Point to make it happen. If the GM doesn't think that the desired effect can reasonably be had from the aspect in question, she can cancel the whole thing.
- Archetype: The character's Archetype aspect can be invoked for effect to expand what a skill can do. The player can either replace a Unique or Strange skill's trapping with another trapping or add a trapping or Extra to a Unique or Strange skill for one roll. This lets the character pull off stunts on the fly without having to pay characters points for every possible permutation of a given skill. You could suddenly throw your sword at an enemy, use your wings to make yourself look more menacing, or call on your social connections to round up some mercenaries. There are limitations on this use of the Archetype aspect, however. The affected skill must be connected to the Archetype aspect in some way, and it must make sense in the context of the aspect. For example, a character with the Archetype aspect "Mistress of Illumination" could add the Spray Extra to a trapping of her Light Projection skill to allow her to attack multiple targets at once.
- Benefit: Introduce a minor detail into the story or expand a Unique or Strange skill's capabilities.
- Cost: Fate Point.

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## — Aspect Declarations, Assessments, and Maneuvers

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Aspects on a character sheet or pre-determined by the GM are hardly the only ones

possible in a game. Players have the ability to create aspects during the course of play by using their characters' skills and abilities, thus introducing entirely new elements and ideas into the story. This is referred to as declaring an aspect. Likewise, players can discover aspects initially hidden from them, such as those belonging to an NPC. Sussing out aspects like this generally takes a fair bit of time. This is referred to as assessing an aspect. Players can also create aspects that represent temporary advantages resulting from positioning, finesse, or similar derring-do; these are referred to as aspect maneuvers.

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## — Aspect Declarations —

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Typically, this is a quick, in-the-moment affair achieved through a character's knowledge or powers of perception. Stumbling upon a secret door, noticing someone's telltale facial tic, and spotting a weak point in an automaton's armor are all good examples of aspect declaration. These may sound like they're simply finding something that already exists in the GM's notes, but in reality the players are coming up with these entirely on their own. You could easily replace the words "stumbling upon," "noticing," and "spotting" above with the phrase "creating in the story." If it's something the GM intended from the get-go, that's fine too - but the power of the declaration is that you, the player, get to add something new into the narrative.

- What it means: You've "discovered" something of note in the scene that you can use to your advantage.
- How to do it: There are two ways to declare an aspect. The first is to use an appropriate skill (see Skills), rolling either against a target number set by the GM or an opponent's skill roll. Nearly any skill can be used to declare an aspect, if it's within reason, and more than one skill might apply to the task at hand. For

example, you might use Marksmanship to determine where an unusual triple-barreled pistol was made (your knowledge of the pistol's origins derives from your hands-on experience with a wide variety of pistols), or you might use Academics (instead of practical experience with weaponry, you've read quite a bit about them), or maybe even Contacts (you don't have a clue, but you know a guy who's an expert). The skill you use should color the aspect you declare. The other way to declare an aspect is to spend a Fate Point - no roll required. This is more reliable, but obviously more costly.

- Difficulty: If no one's opposing the attempt to declare an aspect, then the difficulty of the task depends on the answers to three questions:
  - Is the aspect interesting?
  - Would it be even more interesting if the aspect is misleading?
  - Does the aspect provide a story hook or clear course of action?

Start with a difficulty of +0, and increase it by +2 for each time the answer to one of these questions is "No." Basically, we don't need aspects that are dull, shallow, and vague - the more entertaining the aspect will be for story purposes, the easier it is to declare. Of course, if the proposed aspect is just beyond the pale, like "All Things Colored Purple Are Alive," the GM's within her rights to deny it altogether. It may be interesting, interestingly misleading, and provide a weird direction for the story, but it also stretches the verisimilitude of the game world to the breaking point (for most groups, that is - there are certainly exceptions).

- Removing aspects: A declaration can also be made to remove an aspect that someone else has placed on someone or something in the scene. In this case, the difficulty of the roll is the effect on the skill roll that brought it into existence. (If you don't remember, or if the declaration was made by spending a Fate Point, set the difficulty at +3.)
- Duration: As long as circumstances make it reasonable for the aspect to stick around, it sticks around. This means other characters can take advantage of the

aspect later in the scene or in future scenes. For example, if you declare that a pier has “Weak Moorings,” that aspect persists as long as the pier does (or until someone fixes the moorings).

- Benefit: You create a new aspect, which can be used once for free. Think of the skill roll or the Fate Point you spent on it as paying up front for the cost of the first tag. Alternately, you remove an aspect that someone else has declared.
- Cost: A successful skill roll or a Fate Point.

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## — Aspect Assessments —

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Whereas declaring aspects can be as simple as merely noticing something unusual, assessments are more time-consuming. Instead of creating new aspects, they’re basically requests for the GM to tell you a pre-existing aspect that’s currently hidden from you. Examples of aspect assessment include conducting library research, engaging someone in a probing conversation, or casing a building.

- What it means: You’ve put sustained effort into uncovering an important and useful fact of some kind.
- How to do it: Roll an appropriate skill against a target number set by the GM, or by an opponent’s skill roll, if you’re assessing an aspect on another character.
- Difficulty: Under most circumstances, the difficulty for an assessment is +0 - as long as the skill being used is rated at +1 or better, the attempt is likely to succeed. If the assessment attempt is being opposed, the difficulty is the opposition’s skill roll. For example, trying to discover a character’s Conviction is a matter of your conversational skills pitted against their self-control and discretion.
- Duration: Because assessed aspects are pre-existing, once you discover them they stick around for the duration of the story, or until the person, place, or thing to

which they're attached is no longer part of it.

- Benefit: The GM tells you an existing aspect, which can be used once for free. As with a declaration, the skill roll you make is your up-front investment in the aspect.
- Cost: A successful skill roll.

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## — Aspect Maneuvers —

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An aspect maneuver is an attempt to change a conflict in your favor without directly damaging your opponent. You might knock your foe “Off-Balance,” position yourself for a “Sneak Attack,” flash a light in their eyes to render them “Momentarily Blinded,” lure them into getting “Lost in a Meandering Story” during a long conversation, flirt with their wife to make them “Enraged By Jealousy” - the list goes on. Just about anything you want to do in a conflict that doesn't result in dealing stress to your opponent is an aspect maneuver. The aspect created may be fleeting, or it may stick around for a while. For more information on aspect maneuvers, see Conflicts.

\* What it means: You've managed to gain a temporary advantage over the opposition.

\* How to do it: Make an opposed skill roll against your opponent. Any skill can be used to maneuver if the circumstances are right; it's up to you and the GM to decide what's appropriate.

\* Duration: Compare your roll against your opponent's.

At two or fewer shifts, the aspect is fragile - after one free tag, it goes away. At three or more, it lasts for the rest of the scene, or until the target removes it.

\* Removing aspects: A maneuver can remove an aspect the same way a declaration can; see Aspect Declarations for more.

\* Benefit: You get to put an aspect on your opponent or yourself to help turn the conflict in your favor. Alternately, you remove

\* Cost: A successful opposed skill roll.

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## — Archetypes —

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Each Strange character has an Archetype, as mentioned in the character creation guidelines. Archetypes are a way of focusing your character concept and guiding some of your choices, but the list below is hardly exhaustive. If you find you have an idea for a character that just doesn't fit the ones described here, use these as a guideline and work with your GM to come up with a new Archetype that does what you want it to do.

The Archetypes are displayed in the following format:

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### Archetype Name

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**Requirements:** Thematic constraints or mandatory Drawbacks for the Archetype's Strange skills.

**Description:** A broad outline of what the Archetype means and encompasses.

**Example Aspects:** Aspects that may fit the Archetype.

**Invoke when:** Some sample situations in which invoking the Archetype aspect would be appropriate.

**Compel to:** Some other sample situations in which the GM could reasonably compel the Archetype aspect.

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### Adept

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**Requirements:** Physical or mental ability.

**Description:** The world offers many possibilities for Adepts, those who transcend human limitations through the tireless study of one esoteric practice or another. The martial arts secrets of China and Japan, the yogic practices of India, the mystical meditations of Tibet - even without exoticism, the age is full of health advice, medical quacks and patent exercise regimes. With the touch of the Strange, superhuman ability might rise from even something prosaic.

**Example Aspects:** Om Mani Padme Hum, Trained by Wong Kei-Ying, Secrets of the Tiger Clan.

**Invoke when:** Calling on your training, recalling something obscure related to your chosen discipline, acting all mysterious and exotic.

**Compel to:** Defend the reputation of your school or master, obey the precepts of your traditions, fight with honor.

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## Alien

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**Requirements:** None.

**Description:** Unlike in the speculative fiction of the age, the ancient civilizations of the Moon, Mars, Venus, and further afield are all long dead and ashes by the 1800s - but that's not to say ancient remnants of those prehuman races might not be hiding out there, waiting to awaken. Closer to home there are the inhuman inhabitants of sunken Atlantis and Pacifica, the subhuman ape-men of the Congo, and the attenuated and ethereal winged men clinging to the slopes of the world's most forbidding peaks. Aliens in The Kerberos Club are unique, survivors of dead races, lost beings cut off from their homes. Finding a way to survive in the societies of Man is sometimes their greatest challenge.

**Example Aspects:** "My kingdom lies beneath the waves," Last Martian On Earth, Man of Steel.

**Invoke when:** Using an ability related to your extraterrestrial origin, deciphering an alien script, negotiating with another alien.

**Compel to:** Be unfamiliar with the nuances of contemporary society, come to the aid of one of your brethren, put yourself at a disadvantage in an effort to “fit in.”

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## Anachronist

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**Requirements:** Any Strange skills representing the Anachronist’s inventions must have the Focus Flaw.

**Description:** You are an inventor - one part Da Vinci’s brilliance, one part Tesla’s innovation, with a dash of Edison’s persistence for flavor. In your laboratory, you construct devices that beggar the imagination of the world’s greatest scientific minds. Mad vision and superhuman inspiration combine to do the impossible. Some Anachronists specialize in a single kind of miraculous innovation or a theme, such as steam, chemical formulations, electricity, or the invisible power of radium. Others are true polymaths, masters of all science, some totally unknown to man, some forbidden by God. Of all the Archetypes, those who use science to create miracles are among the most accepted by society, though they often betray a shocking lack of foresight when anticipating the consequences of their innovations.

**Example Aspects:** “I’m not a mad scientist - just an angry one,” The Wonders of This Age Are Born of Science, Curious Inventions of Every Kind.

**Invoke when:** Operating, repairing, or creating one of your inventions, figuring out a piece of advanced technology, impressing someone with your scientific prowess.

**Compel to:** Indulge in techno-babble when just talking like a normal person would be far preferable, prioritize scientific knowledge over people, create a ground-breaking technological wonder without any regard for things like “morals” or “ethics.”

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## Artificial

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**Requirements:** At least one Strange skill must have a Complication aspect related to your particular brand of artificiality.



**Description:** The creation of artificial life is something of an obsession for inventors and sorcerers alike. Men are sewn from the bodies of the dead like Mary Shelley's monster. Gods are served by living statues. Rabbi Judah Loew's Golem might still walk the Earth, perhaps granted a soul by the utterance of words; men of clockwork, ladies of brass, children with perfect porcelain faces. You are one of these unnatural beings, made in the image of your creator (more or less).

As an Artificial, damage you sustain cannot be healed by conventional medicine. Instead, you must be repaired like a machine using Craftsmanship (or any skill with the Repair trapping). This skill must equal or exceed the Power Tier of your Endurance (or other applicable skill with the Stress Capacity [Health] trapping).

**Example Aspects:** Self-Made Man, Clockwork Juggernaut, The Golem of Cheapside.

**Invoke when:** Sustaining damage from a physical attack, displaying machine-like stamina, frightening peasants.

**Compel to:** Have difficulty relating to human beings, hide your true nature from unfriendly eyes, flee from a torch-and-pitchfork-wielding mob of frightened peasants.

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## Changed

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**Requirements:** None, but at least one of your Strange skills must come with a Complication reflecting the nature of your alteration.

**Description:** You're a human modified by science, sorcery, or something else, to be something more - a natural consequence of having Anachronistic inventors making miracles with science and occultists channeling the powers of capricious otherworldly beings. Self-experimentation is also a favorite pursuit of over-extended inventors seeking validation of their ideas at any cost.

**Example Aspects:** Transformed by Rosicrucian Alchemy, England's Foremost Steamborg, Doctor Dorian's Hypertonic Treatments.

**Invoke when:** Using your modifications to exceed the limits of normal human ability,

know details about the processes that made you what you are.

**Compel to:** Run afoul of a scientist who'd like to dissect you in the name of Science, encounter difficulty relating to "natural" humans, have the sorcerous entity that changed you call on you to return the favor.

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## Faerie

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**Requirements:** At least one of your Strange skills must come with a Complication aspect, and you must take at least a Minor Weakness against iron. In addition, you must take the Faerie Glamour skill (see page 241) at any Power Tier.

**Description:** Notoriously capricious and casually cruel where mortals are concerned, the faerie race is one of infinite diversity of mind and body. Most are hardly more than beasts or specters of people, but some are sapient enough to rival or even exceed humanity. Regardless of their form or mind, all creatures of Faerie are inextricably bound by the three Laws: The Law of Oath, the Law of Form, and the Law of Self. See The Three Laws of Faerie for more information on playing this Archetype.

**Example Aspects:** Gossamer Wings and Sharp Teeth, Mercurial Changeling, Spirit of the Air.

**Invoke when:** Speaking with (or take more vigorous action against) others of Faerie origin, deceiving a mortal through tricks or illusion, putting yourself in danger in the course of fulfilling an oath.

**Compel to:** Obey one of the three Laws of Faerie, be discriminated against (in the later part of the century), chafe under Queen Victoria's authority.

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## Godling

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**Requirements:** Your Strange skills must be tied to your divine heritage or sphere of influence.

**Description:** You're not the God, but a god, surely; or perhaps you're related to a divine

entity of some sort and have been exiled to spend your unnaturally long life in the mortal realm. In truth, the British Empire is ruled by one such as this, but She is far from the only Divinity to walk the Earth. The smug certainty of English religion might dismiss the religions of non-Christian lands as superstition, but if one is not blinded by dogma, there is evidence of their providence walking among the milling crowds. Look to the world's religions, living and dead, and you will find thousands of fantastic characters.

**Example Aspects:** Son of Thor, The Eternal Energy of Kali, “Shu’Shub Tso’gorath! Shu’Shub Tso’gorath!”

**Invoke when:** Impressing the mortals with your divinity, consorting with others of your kind, recalling historical trivia from your long years on Earth (or beyond).

**Compel to:** Cross over from “impressive” to “arrogant,” be targeted by followers of an enemy deity (or the enemy deity itself), have to face one of the many enemies you’ve made during your long years on Earth (or beyond).

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## Human Oddity

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**Requirements:** Physical or mental ability. In addition, at least one of your Strange skills must come with a Major Complication aspect reflecting your particular brand of oddness.

**Description:** Some people are just born wrong. Some unfortunates have no compensation for their oddities, but others, such as John Merrick the Elephantine Man, gain awesome powers as recompense. These individuals are truly Strangers, set apart and marked out by a society that has quite strong opinions on how one should dress act, and look.

**Example Aspects:** “I’m not an animal - I’m a human being!”, The Great and Mysterious Human Pretzel, The Feejee Mermaid of the Pacific.

**Invoke when:** Scaring off the ignorant, using one of your oddity-derived abilities, relating with others of your cursed kind.

**Compel to:** Be subjected to the scorn, persecution and deep-seated prejudice of a frightened populace, accidentally frighten off a would-be friend, finally succumb to the rage that's been slowly building inside you your entire life.

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## Magus

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**Requirements:** One of your Conviction aspects becomes your Obsession (see sidebar). See Magic: Forbidden Lore and Hidden Secrets on page 234 for further details on the different requirements for Sacred and Profane magicians.

**Description:** Magical traditions are many and varied, but all demand one thing from those who find true powers amid the dross and lies and fantasies: dedication. To gain true sorcerous insight, one must put magic before all other things. One must shed attachments, like mystical gadgeteering - the Magus creates items of power, either temporary or permanent. Profane magic is fast and flexible; Sacred magic is time-consuming and potentially world-altering. Profane magicians are required to purchase the Profane Works skill, and Sacred magicians are required to purchase the Sacred Works skill. These are both detailed in Magic: Forbidden Lore and Hidden Secrets.

**Example Aspects:** Inheritor of Arcane Secrets Dark and Terrible, Occult Conspirator, The Sacrificial Blade of Amon-Tur

**Invoke when:** Working your magic, unworking someone else's magic, calling on your occult knowledge.

**Compel to:** Betray a friend in pursuit of power, face danger to deepen your understanding of magic, indulge in a distasteful and lurid ritual.

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## Mutant

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**Requirements:** At least one of your Strange skills must come with a Drawback related to your mutation.

**Description:** Some people are born with unnatural abilities which see them isolated

and alienated, often abandoned by terrified parents. That's you - the next phase of human evolution. Due to some aberration of science or genetics, you and your ilk are physiologically different from common men and women. By the late-middle century, gangs roam the streets made up almost entirely of juvenile Strangers who use their powers to thieve and war with each other.

**Example Aspects:** Built Like a Brick Workhouse, Three-Eyed Curiosity, Psychokinetic Crime-Fighter.

**Invoke when:** Proving to other Mutants you're "one of them," using your mutation(s) to your advantage.

**Compel to:** Be pursued by an angry crowd of anti-Mutant Londoners, be unmistakably revealed as a Mutant at an inopportune time, come up against a rival Mutant street gang.

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## Super-Normal

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**Requirements:** Physical or mental ability. At least one of your Strange skills must come with a Conviction aspect. **Description:** You're an exceptional member of the human race, driven by an unrelenting desire to exceed the accepted limits of human ability. Among the ranks of the Super-Normal are romantics exploring the dark corners of the world, great leaders of men, and unhinged megalomaniacs barely clinging to a semblance of sanity.

**Example Aspects:** Man of Action, Daring Explorer of the Congo, "I am as a lion among insects."

**Invoke when:** Impressing the common man, displaying a Super-Normal ability, pushing yourself beyond the bounds of humanity.

**Compel to:** Lose touch with the common man, rise to a challenge, grow overconfident in your abilities.

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# Skills

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Considered on the most basic level, skills represent what your character can do. Skills are rated on the Adjective Ladder or numerically (as you prefer - some people like words, some people like numbers), with higher ratings being better. When you roll dice, you'll almost always add a Skill rating to their total. Nearly every action that the character might undertake is covered by his skills. If he doesn't have a skill on his sheet, either because the player didn't take it or the skill itself doesn't exist, it is assumed to default to Mediocre (+0).

Skills are not a straight measure of "My guy's better than your guy." Rather, skills are methods of resolving conflicts and finding answers to problems. Your skills are a way of telling the GM, "This is the sort of thing I'd like to be doing in the game." The higher your rating with a particular skill is, the better your character will be at solving problems using that skill, and the more opportunities he'll have to use it. For example, say your character is a bare-knuckle boxing champion. If you give him Great (+4) Fisticuffs, he'll be very good at punching people in the face, and a lot of his scenes will center on physical conflicts. On the other hand, if you give him Average (+1) Fisticuffs and Great (+4) Deceit, he's no less a champion - but he's less defined by his boxing career and abilities than by his capacity to deceive others. You can expect him to do a lot more talking than fighting

Skills are made up of bundles of skill applications we call trappings. A trapping is something you can do with a skill, such as using your Marksmanship skill to shoot someone or leaping from rooftop to rooftop with Athletics. In most FATE games, these trappings are often more implicit than explicit, but in The Kerberos Club they're treated more concretely and take on additional importance. Here, skills are defined by their trappings, for reasons that will soon become apparent. For a full list of trappings, see the

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## — Common, Unique, and Strange —

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Skills come in three basic varieties: Common skills, Unique skills, and Strange skills.

The Common skill list is a group of pre-defined skills, such as Seamanship, Academics, or Occultism. Their trappings are set and immutable: All instances of Academics, from character to character, have the same trappings and work the same way, as do all instances of Empathy, Stealth, Contacting, and every other Common skill. In other words, this is more or less the skill list you might find in any game powered by FATE.

At 28 Common skills, this list might seem a bit overwrought at first, but many are highly contextual. Odds are your character can safely dismiss several of them out of hand right away. Never set foot on a boat? Don't even look at Seamanship. Is your game set in the Early Century? You can safely disregard Drive and Pilot - tractor carriages and Aero Ships don't even exist yet. Street urchin? Resources and Science probably aren't your thing. And so on.

Unique skills are designed and named by the player - collections of hand-picked trappings grouped together to represent an occupation, a lifestyle, a broad area of training or aptitude, or some other thematically linked set of abilities. Every trapping within a Unique skill must fit its theme. For example, a Unique skill called Royal Surgeon could encompass medical training and knowledge, connections within the medical community, and personal wealth, but not riding a horse, dodging bullets, or punching guys in the face. That's not to say that the character can't do those things - only that since they aren't reasonably part of being a Royal Surgeon, they can't be

included in that particular Unique skill. Taking a Unique skill lets you turn one of your Free aspects into an associated Complication aspect, to reflect how the part of the character's life represented by the skill has complicated her life, or a Conviction aspect, to reflect how it has informed or affected her beliefs. These aspects are a way of reinforcing the connection between who your character is and what your character can do. Plus, they lower the Unique skill's cost. A Unique skill's Power Tier can be either Mundane or Extraordinary; see below for more on Power Tiers.

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## — The Common Skills —

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*Academics*

*Alertness*

*Arms*

*Art*

*Athletics*

*Brawn*

*Bureaucracy*

*Burglary*

*Contacting*

*Craftsmanship*

*Deceit*

*Drive*

*Empathy*

*Endurance*

*Fisticuffs*

*Horsemanship*

*Intimidation*



*Investigation*  
*Marksmanship*  
*Occultism*  
*Pilot*  
*Presence*  
*Resolve*  
*Resources*  
*Science*  
*Seamanship*  
*Stealth*  
*Survival*

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## — A World Without Common Skills? —

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*It's entirely possible to drop Common skills altogether and just have players build every skill from scratch by default. But fair warning: There are some serious pitfalls here, not the least of which is the extra time and effort involved. In addition, when the majority of a character's skills are Common, he's more likely to have his bases covered. Using Unique skills for everything requires a little more care and system mastery, plus some additional player buy-in to ensure that things don't get out of hand.*

*However, if you're fine with all of that, to start you'll want to up starting skill points from 30 to 45. You may find it useful to name Unique skills after aspects (or vice-versa) to help narrow down the character's areas of competence. Even more so than usual, the GM*

*and players should keep a close eye on how well a skill's trappings fitting its themes. The danger here is that every skill might end up too broad, which may make characters a little one-note. If a Unique skill ends up with more than five or six trappings, that's probably a sign that it should be split in two (or even three).*

Strange skills, unlike Common skills and Unique skills, confer powers and abilities beyond those of normal human beings. Like Unique skills, most Strange skills are composed of trappings selected by the player, but generally themed around some sort of capability manifested by the Strangeness. What makes a Strange skill? Strange skills let you do things far beyond the ken of ordinary mortals, such as shooting energy beams out of your eyes, throwing a locomotive engine through the Parliament Building, reading a barkeep's mind, summoning otherworldly allies - in other words, superpowers. Anyone can have a Unique skill, but only Strangers can have Strange skills. This includes any Common skill of Superhuman Tier or greater. Every Strange skill must come with at least one Drawback, which imposes a limitation of sort in exchange for a skill point discount; see Extras and Drawbacks for more on these.

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## — Combining Skills —

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Sometimes the character needs to perform a task that really requires using two or more skills at once. You never know when a character is going to need to throw a knife while balancing on a spinning log or pilot an airship while cracking a cipher.

In those situations, the GM calls for a roll based on the main skill being used (the primary thrust of the action), but modified by a second skill. If the second skill is of greater value than the first, it grants a +1 bonus to the roll; if the second skill is of a lesser

value, it applies a -1 penalty to the roll.

When the second skill can only help the first, which is to say it can only provide a bonus, it complements the skill. A complementing skill never applies a -1, even if it's lower than the primary skill. This usually happens when the character has the option of using the secondary skill, but doesn't have to bring it to bear.

If the secondary skill comes into play only to hold the primary skill back, it limits the skill, meaning it can only provide a penalty or nothing at all. A limiting skill never applies a +1, even if it's higher than the primary skill. Often skills like Endurance or Resolve are limiting skills - as you get more tired, you won't get better, but if you're resolute, you may not get worse.

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## — Power Tiers —

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The significant differences in scale between the effectiveness of the ordinary Londoner's abilities and those of the most powerful Strangers are represented by Power Tiers.

A skill in the Mundane Tier is as effective as the efforts of an ordinary human being. In this Tier, a Great (+4) Athletics rating puts you among the ranks of the finest real-world athletes. A magical, Mundane Tier ability to conceal your identity will give you a disguise as convincing as one that could be achieved through conventional means.

If a skill's Tier surpasses the Mundane Tier, so does its effectiveness relative to the realm of "normal" human ability. This could be due to a lifetime of intense focus, or an uncanny talent. With an Athletics skill of Great (+4) in the Extraordinary Tier, you are a suspiciously exceptional athlete. You routinely run, jump, and climb with an ease and

agility that the common man simply can't match, and even your worst efforts often exceed those of professional athletes whose skills rank in the Mundane Tier. A sorcerous disguise in the Extraordinary Tier is often convincing enough to fool the target's spouse for weeks on end.

Above the Extraordinary Tier - through the Superhuman, Ascendant, and Godlike Tiers - these increases in effectiveness only become more pronounced. If you possess an Athletics skill in the Godlike Tier, running up one side of Everest and down the other, or leaping across the Atlantic, is routine business. If you can cloak yourself in a Godlike Tier disguise, odds are good that you're descended from (or are) one of the world's trickster gods.

The Tier of a skill, if not Mundane, is indicated by an initial in parentheses after the skill's name - (E) for Extraordinary, (S) for Superhuman, and so on. If a skill - any skill, including Common skills - is in the Superhuman, Ascendant, or Godlike Tiers, it's automatically a Strange skill.

When you face off against an opponent, first compare the Tiers of the skills you're using. If they're the same, such as Mundane vs. Mundane or Superhuman vs. Superhuman, each of you rolls 4dF and adds your skill rating, as normal. If they're different, whoever has the higher-Tier skill replaces one Fudge die with a six-sided die for each Tier of difference. For example, if you're attacking with Good (+3) Fisticuffs (E) and your opponent is defending with Fair (+2) Athletics, you'll roll 3dF+1d6+3 and your opponent will roll 4dF+2. If your Fisticuffs were Superhuman instead of Extraordinary, you'd roll 2dF+2d6+3, while your opponent would still roll 4dF+2. If both of you were using skills of the same Tier, regardless of what that Tier were, you'd both roll 4dF and add your skill rating.

### *The Power Tiers*

#### *Godlike (G)*

*Ascendant (A)*  
*Superhuman (S)*  
*Extraordinary (E)*  
*Mundane*

This method naturally gives the upper hand to whoever has the higher-Tier skill, but if there's only one Tier of difference, it's not an overwhelming advantage. There's still the very real possibility of rolling  $-+1$  on  $3dF+1d6$ , after all. Anything greater than a single Tier of difference and the higher-Tier skill is virtually guaranteed to win. Consider that rolling  $2dF+2d6$  yields a minimum result of  $+0$ , and that's not even taking into account the skill rating itself - in the worst-case scenario, a Superhuman skill pitted against a Mundane skill will always achieve a positive result. And that Mundane skill has no chance whatsoever against a Godlike skill. As it should be.

If a skill's Power Tier measures its effectiveness relative to that of the common man, your skill rating measures how it ranks against comparable skills in that Tier. For example, if you have Average ( $+1$ ) Brawn (S), you're far stronger than the average person, but compared to others with Brawn (S), you're on the lower end of the scale.

Each Power Tier reduces your Refresh. See Power Tier and Refresh, page 206.

*But I Don't Like Fudge Dice!*

*Some versions of FATE eschew Fudge dice in favor of  $d6-d6$  (a positive  $d6$  roll minus a negative  $d6$  roll). If you prefer that, instead of replacing a Fudge die with a  $d6$  for a Power Tier, roll an extra  $d6$ . For example, an Extraordinary Tier skill vs. a Mundane Tier skill would mean rolling  $2d6-d6$  instead of  $3dF+1d6$ .*

*Be warned, though: Despite the fact that  $3dF+1d6$  and  $2d6-1d6$  have the same average (3.5), their high and low ranges vary significantly.*

*The worst you can roll on 3dF+1d6 is -2 and the best is +9, while the worst you can roll with 2d6-d6 is -4 and the best is +11. This discrepancy only becomes more pronounced as the difference between Power Tiers increases. You should be aware of the tendency of the dice to become increasingly dominant if you're rolling regular dice rather than Fudge dice.*

*Another option is to use d6-d6 and just add +3 for each Tier of difference. This lacks a bit of the random factor and puts even more emphasis on Power Tiers if that's what you prefer.*

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## — Invulnerability and Weakness —

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Some characters are especially resistant to certain types of attacks, like those mindless Automechanicals that don't scare easily, or are especially vulnerable to certain other types of attacks, such as a werewolf's vulnerability to silver. These are handled in the game with limited Power Tier adjustments called Invulnerability and Weakness.

An Invulnerability improves your defenses against a narrow category of attacks by upgrading the effective Power Tier of your defense. This applies to any defensive skill you might bring to bear against the specified attack. A Minor Invulnerability provides a two-Tier upgrade (from Mundane to Superhuman, Extraordinary to Ascendant, Superhuman to Godlike, and so on), while a Major Invulnerability grants a four-Tier upgrade. Acceptable "narrow categories" must be consistent with the character's Archetype, and include things like fire (for a creature composed of volcanic rock), bludgeons (for a fellow with an especially stretchy body), and mind-affecting attacks (for an especially disciplined mentalist).

Alternately, the Invulnerability can be more broad, covering all physical attacks or all mental attacks, but this comes with certain repercussions. For one, it doubles the cost of the Invulnerability (see below). Secondly, the player has to decide if the Invulnerability is constantly active or must be consciously activated by the character. If the latter, it requires an Action on the character's turn (see the Conflicts section in Chapter 7: Running The Game) to activate or deactivate. This effectively means that it can't be switched on as an immediate reaction to a threat, but is a matter of conscious effort on the part of the character. Thirdly, while the Invulnerability is active, the character loses the ability to interact with the world within the bounds of the Invulnerability's scope. For example, a ghostly character with an Invulnerability to all physical attacks isn't able to physically affect the world - he can't move or pick up objects, deal Health stress to corporeal enemies, and so on. A character with an Invulnerability to all mental attacks lacks the capacity to reason or think independently. He's less a "character" than one of those mindless Automechanicals mentioned above. Obviously, this is incongruous with being a player character, which demands independent reasoning and decision-making. Likewise, the only creatures Invulnerable to social attacks don't get invited to parties anyway, so this too is inappropriate for PCs.

A Weakness is just the opposite: a category of attacks against which the effective Power Tier of the character's defenses is downgraded by two Tiers (a Minor Weakness) or four Tiers (a Major Weakness). Werewolves are weak against silver. The Human Dynamo, the last Argonian on Earth, is Weak against argonite. Vampires have a Major Weakness against sunlight. However, instead of carrying a cost, in exchange for this chink in your armor your Weakness provides a cost rebate, as indicated on page 207. Note that the rebate provided isn't a function of how common or rare your Weakness is - it's just about how much you want it to affect you. A GM who constantly presents antagonists with a knowledge of your Weakness and the means to exploit it is doing both you and the story a disservice. It's not that it should never come up - of course it should - but a hero facing an identical challenge time and again makes for a dull narrative.

As the GM, be judicious with how regularly you bring a character's Weakness into play. It should be a spice, not the main course. As the player, don't give your character a Weakness if you don't want to see your character trounced now and then by someone with the means, opportunity, and knowledge to exploit it.

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## — Tier Benefits —

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Many trappings can confer an additional benefit if their skill is in the Extraordinary Tier or above. This is called a Tier Benefit. For example, the Stress Capacity trapping's Tier Benefit in the Extraordinary Tier is Armor 1 against stress of the trapping's scope (Health, Composure, or Reputation). The number of Tier Benefits a single skill provides cannot exceed its skill rating. These Tier Benefits are chosen when the skill's Power Tier is determined, and remain "locked in" thereafter. For instance, the Physical Force, Stress Capacity, and Leap trappings all come with Tier Benefits. If you put all three of them in a Fair (+2) skill, you'll have to pick which two Tier Benefits the character will actually receive and be able to use. Later on, if you're able to increase that skill's rating to Good (+3), you can add the third Tier Benefit to the character.

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## — Trappings —

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Here is a list of all the skill trappings, each with a brief description. They're grouped into loose categories - Offense, Defense, etc. - according to the basic function they serve. (Trappings marked with a + symbol have Tier Benefits.)



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## Offense

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*Causing harm.*

**Influence:** Libel, slander, and public defamation. Deals Reputation stress and Social consequences.

**Menace:** Frighten and threaten. Deals Composure stress and Mental consequences.

**Shoot:** Attack at range (defaults to 1 zone). Deals Health stress and Physical consequences.

**Strike:** Attack in melee. Deals Health stress and Physical consequences.

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## Defense

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*Denying them the satisfaction.*

**Dodge:** Avoid melee or ranged attacks.

**Esteem:** Defend against social attacks.

**Parry:** Defend against melee attacks.

Resist Damage: Defense against Physical attacks through sheer toughness.

**Stress Capacity [Scope]++:** Adds boxes to the chosen scope's stress track (Health, Mental, or Reputation).

**Willpower:** Defense against Mental attacks such as fear or psychic domination.

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## Mobility

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*Getting from here to there.*

**Climb:** Move on vertical surfaces.

**Leap++:** Jump.

**Move++:** Cover ground (on foot, by default).

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## Social

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*War by other means.*

**Conversation:** Improve someone's attitude toward you.

**Convince:** Talk someone into (or out of) a course of action. **Inspire:** Alter the mood of a group of people in a manner consistent with the skill's theme.

**Networking+:** Making use of your social circles to glean information and separate rumors from fact.

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## Perception

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*Making sense of it all.*

**Examine:** Prolonged, active perception of an area.

**Initiative [Scope]:** Determines order of actions in the chosen scope (Physical, Mental, or Social).

**Insight+:** Assess someone's aspects.

**Notice+:** Quick, passive perception of your surroundings.

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## Technical

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*Applying what you know.*

**Craft+:** Create permanent works of art or technology.

**Dismantle:** Take apart machines or other technological devices using your own scientific or mechanical know-how.

**Information:** Call on expert knowledge appropriate to the skill's theme.

**Languages+:** Read and write additional languages. **Repair:** Fix things of a mechanical or technological nature. **Research:** Make use of a Workspace to deepen your understanding of a topic.

**Treatment [Scope]±:** Clear stress and remove consequences in the chosen scope (Physical, Mental, or Social).

**Workspace±:** A physical location to conduct research, experiments, or similar work, such as a library, workshop, or laboratory.

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## Subterfuge

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*Acting with secrecy.*

**Dexterity±:** Sleight of hand and manual finesse.

**Disguise±:** Look and sound like someone else.

**Guile:** Lie, misdirect, and mislead people, and get away with it.

**Hide±:** Remain unseen.

**Security:** Bypass security measures such as tripwires and locks.

**Skulk:** Move silently.

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## General

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*Collecting a miscellany of trappings.*

**Environment [Type]:** Survive and thrive in the chosen environment type.

**Minions:** Gain access to servitors, underlings, henchmen, or some other type of faceless helpers.

**Physical Force±:** Apply force to objects in a manner appropriate to the skill's theme.

**Transport:** Ride animals or operate vehicles.

**Variable [Frequency]:** A trapping that can be defined as any other trapping once per scene or once per session.

**Wealth:** Access to personal assets.

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## Putting It Together

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Skills of all stripes are purchased using skill points. A common skill's cost in skill points is equal to its rating (+1 to +4), regardless of how many trappings it might have.

To figure out the cost of a Unique or Strange skill, you'll use the Skill Trapping Diagram on page 207.

As you can see, the diagram consists of boxes and lines. Each box is labeled with a trapping name, with either solid or dotted borders. Many of these boxes are connected by lines, whether thin, thick, or dotted. We'll refer to these connected boxes as chains.

Start by choosing a trapping for the skill. This can be anywhere in the diagram. If the trapping has a solid border, it costs 1 skill point; if it's dotted, it's 2 skill points.

Then find the next trapping you want to include in the skill. If it's in a chain with the first trapping, you'll have to cross one or more lines and possibly skip over some boxes to get to it. A thin line costs 1 point to cross and a dotted line costs 2 points to cross, but crossing a thick line is free. If there's a box in the way for a trapping you don't want to add to the skill, you can skip it for free. If getting to a trapping would mean crossing four or more points' worth of lines, just pay four points plus the cost of the new trapping. For example, if you're starting with Physical Force, crossing the three thin lines and one dotted line between it and Dexterity would only cost 4 skill points, not 5. Likewise, skipping the trappings in between - Leap, Move, and Skulk - wouldn't cost anything. Crossing the same line multiple times doesn't cost additional points.

If the additional trapping isn't chained to a trapping the skill already has, you'll just pay for the trapping itself. For example, adding the Languages trapping to a skill always costs only 1 point.

The only exceptions are with Unique skills. If you're building a Unique skill, the Information and Networking trappings are free to add. You'll still have to pay for

crossing lines in the chain, if any, but the trappings themselves are complimentary.

Extras increase this total; Drawbacks reduce it. See Extras and Drawbacks for details.

Add up all the skill points you've spent on lines and boxes, then subtract any discounts from Drawbacks. That's the Unique or Strange skill's total cost.

For example, let's say you're creating a Unique skill rated at Good (+3) called Oxford Professor, with the following trappings: Information, Research, Languages, Wealth, Esteem, and Networking. This means that you can use Oxford Professor to be well-educated, know how to use a library, speak multiple languages, draw an income, defend your public reputation, and leverage your Oxford connections to your advantage. Looking at the Skill Trapping Diagram, you decide to start with Networking. It's chained to Wealth by a thin line, which will cost 1 point to cross, and Wealth has a solid border, which will cost 1 point to add. It's the same story with Esteem: 1 point to cross the thin line, and another point to add it to the skill. Languages isn't connected to anything, so it'll only cost 1 point to add. Information is free to add, since this is a Unique skill, but it's connected to Research (a solid box) by a thin line, so crossing to and adding it will cost 2 more points. So far that's a total of 6 skill points (not including Networking, which, like Information, is free to add). To reduce the cost a bit, you choose to throw in a Minor Complication aspect of "Too Smart for His Own Good," which lowers the skill point cost for the trappings down to 5. Adding that to the skill's rating of Good (+3) gives you a total of cost you 8 points:  $6 + 3 - 1 = 8$ .

There's only one universal restriction on how Unique and Strange skills are built: All trappings in the skill must fit the skill's theme. No exceptions.

## — Skill Trapping Diagram —

---

[TODO]

**How to Use This:** Pick a trapping for the skill to use as a starting point, and pay skill points to add it to the skill. Follow the lines to get to other trappings. The more lines you have to cross to get to the next trapping, the more expensive it is. A thin line costs 1 skill point to cross, a dotted line costs 2 skill points, and a thick line costs no points. A trapping with a solid border costs 1 point to add to a skill, while one with a dotted border costs 2 points to add. If adding a trapping would mean spending 4 or more skill points on crossing lines, it only costs 4 points to get there, plus the cost of adding the trapping itself (e. g., to go from Physical Force to Dexterity costs 4 points, but you still have to pay another point to actually add Dexterity to the skill). If a trapping isn't connected by lines to any other trappings already in the skill, it doesn't cost anything extra to add. For example, Languages and Environment always only cost 1 point each, regardless of what other trappings the skill already has. Add the skill rating and apply Extras and Drawbacks for the total cost.

---

## — Power Tier and Refresh —

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The skill's Power Tier reduces your Refresh, as indicated below.

- Mundane Tier: -0 Refresh
- Extraordinary Tier: -1 Refresh
- Superhuman Tier: -2 Refresh
- Ascendant Tier: -4 Refresh
- Godlike Tier: -6 Refresh

Again, if the skill doesn't derive from a character's Strangeness, it can't exceed the Extraordinary Tier.

Returning to the Oxford Professor example above, let's make the character one of the greatest professors in the annals of Oxford's long and storied history. Instead of a Mundane Tier skill, it's now an Extraordinary Tier skill (-1 Refresh). Assuming the game is set in the Middle Century, the character's Refresh would be reduced from its default starting value of 8 down to 7.

Let's try a Strange skill now. Maybe our bespectacled academic also happens to have the strength of a hundred men, with a bulletproof body to match. Judging by the trapping summaries, this sounds like Physical Force, Resist Damage, and Stress Capacity [Health]. On the diagram, we'll start with Resist Damage, for 2 skill points. That's chained to Stress Capacity [Health] by a thin line, which means 1 point to cross; Stress Capacity [Health] has a dotted border, so it'll cost another 2 points to add. So far we're at 5 skill points. Crossing the dotted line to Physical Force costs 2 points, and then adding it costs one more, so our new total is 8 skill points.

We need a Drawback to go with that. Maybe accessing this ability means the good professor has transform from his usual 11 stone to a massive brute - that sounds fun. We give him a Drawback of Minor Transform, which lowers the cost of the skill by 1 point (it also means he has to replace one of his aspects with something more appropriate when he transforms, like swapping out "Respected Oxford Professor" for "Terrifying Hulking Brute"). Add to that the skill's rating of Good (+3), and the total skill point cost is 10. To

make his strength and toughness truly impressive, we spend 2 Refresh to put that skill in the Superhuman Tier.

Invulnerabilities and Weaknesses also affect your Refresh:

- Minor Invulnerability [NarrowCategory]: -1 Refresh
- Major Invulnerability [Narrow Category]: -2 Refresh
- Minor Invulnerability [Broad Category]: -2 Refresh
- Major Invulnerability [Broad Category]: -4 Refresh
- Minor Weakness: +1 Refresh
- Major Weakness: +2 Refresh

## Skill Summary

1. What do you want the skill to do? This is the skill's theme.
2. Does the skill represent some sort of supernatural power?
3. Yes: It's a Strange skill. Continue to step 3.
4. No: It's not a Strange skill. Continue to step 3.
5. Is what you want the skill to do adequately represented by a common skill?
6. Yes: Just use the common skill instead of building one. Skip to step 5.
7. No: You'll build a skill from scratch. Continue to step 4.
8. Go to the Skill Trapping Diagram. Follow the instructions given earlier to add trappings to the skill.
9. Every trapping you add to the skill must be appropriate to its theme.
10. If it's a Unique skill, Information and Networking are free to add (except for crossing lines).
11. Apply Extras to the skill's trappings, as desired.
12. Extras increase the skill's cost.
13. Apply Drawbacks to the skill, as desired.
14. Drawbacks decrease the skill's cost. The minimum cost of a skill is its rating.



15. Every Strange skill has to have at least one Drawback. (See step 8.)
16. Common skills in the Mundane Tier cannot have Drawbacks.
17. Unique skills in the Extraordinary Tier or above must have either a Conviction aspect or a Complication aspect. This is optional for Unique skills in the Mundane Tier. (See step 8.)
18. Determine the new total cost of the skill and pay skill points for it.
19. Set the skill's Power Tier and pay Refresh for it accordingly.
20. If the skill's Power Tier is Superhuman or higher, it's automatically a Strange skill. Go back to step 6, if necessary.
21. If it's a Strange skill, the Power Tier can be as high as Godlike.
22. If it's a Unique skill, the Power Tier can be either Mundane or Extraordinary.

---

## — One Unique Skill vs. Three Common Skills —

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*When considering whether or not to create a Unique skill for your character, you may run the numbers and come to the conclusion that it'd be cheaper to take a few common skills - and get more trappings in the bargain. You're certainly welcome to go that route, but first take the following practical considerations into account:*

1. If you aren't able to take all of those common skills at the same skill rating, not all of them will be rated as high as you might like. With a Unique skill, you'll be equally effective with all the trappings you wanted in the first place.
2. If you want those skills to be in the Extraordinary Tier (see below), it'll cost you 3 Refresh. With a single Unique skill, it'll only cost 1 Refresh.

3. Run those numbers again - remember, Unique skills get Networking and Information cheap.
4. Perhaps most importantly, it's more fun to say "I'm rolling Archbishop of York" than "I'm rolling Bureaucracy."

---

## — The Common Skills —

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Here's how the common skills are defined using this method. Beneath the name of each is its theme(s) (in italics) and associated trappings. The skill point cost of a common skill is always equal to its skill rating.

---

### ACADEMICS

---

*Broad-based formal education*

Information, Research, Languages

---

### ALERTNESS

---

*Reflexive awareness*

Notice, Initiative [Physical]

---

### ARMS

---

*Proficiency with hand-to-hand weapons of all kinds*

Strike, Strike + Range, Parry, Information

---

## ART

---

*Artistic knowledge and ability*

Craft, Repair, Information, Inspire, Networking

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---

## ATHLETICS

---

*Physical fitness and mobility*

Climb, Dodge, Leap, Move, Move + Unusual: Swimming

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---

## BRAWN

---

*Muscular strength*

Physical Force

---

---

## BUREAUCRACY

---

*Corporate and political etiquette and finesse*

Networking, Information, Convince, Influence, Esteem

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---

## FISTICUFFS

---

*Unarmed combat*

Strike, Parry, Information

---

---

## HORSEMANSHIP

---

*Riding and knowledge of horses*

Transport, Information, Treatment [Physical, Mental]

---

## **BURGLARY**

---

*Breaking and entering*

Examine, Security, Information

---

## **CONTACTING**

---

*Social circles, rumors and gossip*

Esteem, Networking, Influence, Initiative [Social], Treatment [Social]

---

## **CRAFTSMANSHIP**

---

*Practical arts, mechanics*

Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Information

---

## **DECEIT**

---

*Deceptive speech or appearance, sleight of hand*

Guile, Disguise, Dexterity

---

## **DRIVE**

---

*Mechanical ground vehicle operation and knowledge*

Transport, Information

---

## EMPATHY

---

*Ability to assess and understand people*

Insight, Initiative [Mental], Treatment [Mental]

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---

## ENDURANCE

---

*Physical stamina and toughness*

Stress Capacity [Health]

---

---

## PRESENCE

---

*Charisma, friendly persuasion, force of personality*

Conversation, Convince, Inspire, Stress Capacity [Reputation]

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---

## RESOLVE

---

*Mental fortitude, self-discipline*

Willpower, Stress Capacity [Composure], Initiative [Mental]

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---

## INTIMIDATION

---

*Forceful persuasion*

Menace, Initiative [Mental]

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---

## INVESTIGATION

---

*Active perception*

Examine, Information

---

## MARKSMANSHIP

---

*Proficiency with firearms and projectile weapons*

Shoot + Range, Information

---

## OCCULTISM

---

*Knowledge of and proficiency with occult practices*

Information, Networking, Research

---

## PILOT

---

*Flying vehicle operation and knowledge*

Transport, Information

---

## RESOURCES

---

*Access to personal assets*

Wealth

---

## SCIENCE

---

*Formal education in theoretical and applied sciences*

Craft, Information, Research, Treatment [Physical]

---

## SEAMANSHIP

---

*Watercraft operation and knowledge*

Transport, Environment, Information

---

## STEALTH

---

*Moving silently, hiding*

Hide, Skulk

---

## SURVIVAL

---

*Outdoorsiness*

Information, Environment [Wilderness], Treatment [Physical]

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---

## — Trapping Descriptions —

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The trappings listed below are in the following format:

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### NAME

---

Description and rules.

**Theme:** The trapping must be appropriate to this theme.

Tier Benefits: Special benefits available if the skill's Power Tier is above Mundane. A single skill can confer a number of these, chosen when the skill's Power Tier is purchased, equal to its skill rating.

---

## CLIMB

---

Use Climb to determine how quickly or well a character can navigate movement on a vertical surface. However, not every encounter with a wall, tree, or fence is going to necessitate a skill roll. If failure isn't interesting, don't bother: Either the character can climb it, if that's what would make the story more interesting, or he can't, if it's just impossible.

Generally speaking, physical barriers are fairly meaningless, story-wise, unless another conflict is imminent (or ongoing). The barrier itself should be something that complicates the scene, but usually shouldn't be its focus. Instead of requiring a skill roll, assign the barrier a border value to increase the cost of passing from one zone (the bottom) to another (the top). If the border value is equal to or less than the rating of the skill with this trapping, the character can cross it freely. Otherwise, the character takes the difference as a penalty to his next action.

For example, a character needs to climb a wall to disable a ticking time-bomb on the roof. The character's Athletic skill (which includes the Climb trapping) is Good (+3), while the border value of the wall is 4. This means the character will take a -1 penalty to his bomb-disabling skill roll.

In the event that a roll is necessary - that is, if failing to make the climb would be just as interesting as making it - then the base difficulty depends on the height of the climb. This is further complicated by factors such as visibility, slipperiness, and distractions, which penalize the roll.



## — Climbing Modifiers —

| MOD | SLIPPERINESS      | VISIBILITY     | DISTRACTIONS    |
|-----|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| -1  | Wet, slick        | Darkness, rain | Non-threatening |
| -2  | Completely smooth | Pitch black    | Threatening     |

These modifiers are cumulative by category. For example, climbing a 15' wall (+2 difficulty) at night (-1) in the rain (-1) while being shot at from below (-2) would have a total difficulty of Fair (+2) but a penalty of -4 to the roll. The interesting consequence of failure here, obviously, would be having to engage with those unpleasant gunmen below.

Shifts can also be spent to climb faster at a rate of 1 shift per step on the Time Table (see Time and Space), to a maximum of 4 steps.

**Theme:** Movement or athleticism.

| HEIGHT  | DIFFICULTY     | NOTES            |
|---------|----------------|------------------|
| Short   | Fair (+2)      | 10' to 20'       |
| Medium  | Great (+4)     | 20' to 40'       |
| Long    | Great (+4) (E) | 40' to 100'      |
| Extreme | Great (+4) (S) | Is that a house? |

## CONVERSATION

The Conversation trapping covers friendly social interaction, especially if that interaction involves making a good impression on someone else. It's also the "default" social trapping, for those times when whatever the player's trying to do doesn't fall neatly into any other trapping. The primary function of Conversation is to make a good first impression on someone else, improve their attitude toward you, or gain a temporary social advantage over them with an aspect maneuver.

By default, an NPC's initial reaction toward a character will be mildly negative, neutral, or mildly positive. Stronger attitudes, such as love, hate, friendliness, respect, and so on, generally result from deeper, pre-existing knowledge of the character, and are unlikely to change dramatically in a first meeting. If the GM's uncertain about which of these applies, roll a Fudge die: - for mildly negative, o for neutral, and + for mildly positive.

If the player doesn't want to accept this reaction roll, she can attempt to turn on the charm and improve upon it. Make an opposed skill roll; if the rating of the NPC's relevant skill is unknown, it defaults to Mediocre. A successful roll in either the character's favor or the NPC's favor adjusts the NPC's attitude; a successful roll with spin adjusts it even further, as shown below.

**Hostile:** The NPC actively wants to harm the character, physically, socially, or otherwise.

**Negative:** The NPC is suspicious of the character and will not help him.

**Neutral:** If offered an incentive, the NPC can be convinced to help the character.

**Positive:** The NPC will go slightly out of his way to help the character. With incentive, the NPC may risk himself to help in a passive manner, such as "forgetting" to have the character sign in, turning a blind eye at an important moment, or the like.

**Friendly:** The NPC will inconvenience himself to help the character. With incentive, the

NPC may risk himself to help in an active manner, such as distracting a pursuer, discreetly slipping the character a sought-after key, and so on.

**Aspect:** The winner gets to declare a sticky aspect on the NPC to emphasize his super-Friendly or ultra-Hostile attitude, as appropriate.

It's important to consider the potential consequences of an NPC's reactions to characters. Maybe they'll give them a little extra help that could translate into a bonus on a skill check, or maybe, if their reaction is Hostile, they'll turn up later as an enemy - possibly a significant one.

**Theme:** Social prowess, deception, persuasion, diplomacy.

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## CONVINCE

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A skill with the Convince trapping can be used to talk someone else into (or out of) taking action. This is essentially a Mental conflict, but it shouldn't be a poor man's mind control (though with the Psychic Extra, it can be used for actual mind control; see the Psychic Extra description for details). With a solid argument or proper incentive, a person can be convinced to do something they might do anyway, but successful use of the skill can't make someone, say, leap off a cliff to their death, or give the character all of their worldly possessions, or suddenly turn on their master after a lifetime of unwaveringly loyal servitude. However, convincing someone to talk instead of fight, to part with a few pounds, or grant you an audience with the Queen are all within reason, given the right circumstances.

The skill can be used as part of a quick contest to sway the opinion of a minor NPC, or an extended contest, complete with Composure stress and Mental consequences, until one party acquiesces by being Taken Out or making a concession. If the contest is

actually two parties trying to influence a third party, such as a public debate, it could be an extended contest (see the Doing Things section in Chapter 7: Running The Game). It's up to the GM and players to frame the conflict in whatever way makes the most sense.

Compare this trapping with both Conversation and Guile. If the skill is about being well-liked and making friends everywhere you go, take the Conversation trapping. If it's about tricking people into liking or believing you based on half-truths (or worse), the Guile trapping is your best bet. But if the skill's theme involves being diplomatic or persuasive, use this trapping.

**Theme:** Force of personality, diplomacy, articulate speech.

|                  | CHARACTER'S FAVOR |          | NPC'S FAVOR |          |
|------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| INITIAL ATTITUDE | SUCCESS           | SPIN     | SUCCESS     | SPIN     |
| Hostile          | Negative          | Neutral  | -           | Aspect   |
| Negative         | Neutral           | Positive | Hostile     | Aspect   |
| Neutral          | Positive          | Friendly | Negative    | Hostile  |
| Positive         | Friendly          | Aspect   | Neutral     | Negative |
| Friendly         | -                 | Aspect   | -           | -        |

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## CRAFT+

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With this trapping, the skill can be used to create permanent, physical works consistent with the skill's theme. This includes building mechanical devices, painting portraits, writing poetry, constructing a violin, and any other task whose end result is the creation of something new. Most of the time, this is something that requires the proper tools, materials, and time more than it does a skill roll, simply because sitting around in a

workshop or studio creating stuff generally lacks tension and conflict. You set that workshop on fire, though, or surround that studio with two-dozen angry Frenchmen, and it's a whole other story.

“The proper tools and materials” usually means having access to a proper facility (see the Workspace trapping). The rating of the facility needed is based on the quality of the work to be created or the cost of its materials (see the Wealth trapping), as appropriate to the work. For example, crafting an intricate piece of Strange technology like an electrostatic discharge cannon would be an expensive endeavor requiring costly tools and materials, so the quality of the Workspace would be commensurate with its cost. Composing a soul-shattering poem, however, has no appreciable cost in materials, so the difficulty would be judged according to its desired quality (which, one would hope, would be high). A character who needs but lacks a sufficient facility to complete his work must either acquire one or borrow one from someone else.

The default time required is A Day (see the Time Table in Time and Space, page 318), plus a number of steps up on the Time Table equal to the device's quality. If the rating of the skill with this trapping is less than the device's quality, increase the time required by +1 step on the Time Table for every point of difference.

Of course, this process can be sped up with a skill roll, at a rate of 1 step on the Time Table per shift spent, to a maximum of 4 steps for 4 shifts.

Technological devices present some special challenges. Unless the device is a Strange skill with the Focus Flaw (see Extras and Drawbacks, page 230), its quality is equal to twice the number of its improvements; see the Equipment Gift.

The quality of a device represented by a skill is equal to the skill's total cost in skill points (skill rating plus total trapping value, less Drawbacks), and its Power Tier is the same as the skill's. For example, crafting a Fair (+2) Personal Aero-Platform (E) with the

Move trapping (1 point), an Extra of Unusual: Flight (+1 point), and the Minor Focus Drawback (-1 point) would be a task with a Good (+3) difficulty ( $2 + 1 + 1 - 1$ ) in the Extraordinary Tier, which would require an Extraordinary Tier Workspace to attempt.

If the device is represented by multiple skills, make a separate roll for each one. For example, creating a suit of steam-powered armor represented by the Strange skills Good (+3) Exoskeleton (S) (4 points in trappings) and Fair (+2) Wings (E) (3 points in trappings) would be a task requiring two skill rolls: one with a difficulty of Epic (+7) (S) and another with a difficulty of Superb (+5) (E).

Improvements made to an existing device generally don't last from session to session, so if you want to start play with a device, make it a Strange skill with the Focus Flaw, or buy one or more Equipment Gifts to reflect it. With that in mind, if the pacing of the game is such that the players have time to hang out in a workshop for a few days, that's probably a sign that the threat facing them isn't urgent enough.

When taking this trapping to represent artistic ability, consider whether the Inspire trapping would be more accurate. If the primary function of works you want to create is to impress onlookers, readers, or listeners, Inspire is probably a better choice. This trapping is best for artistic works whose utility goes beyond aesthetics, such as a clever forgery of a "lost" Michelangelo.

If the skill is in the Extraordinary Tier or above, it can be used, along with a sufficient Workspace (if appropriate), to craft works of the same Power Tier. The character must pay Fate Points equal to the Power Tier's Refresh cost - 1 Fate Point for an Extraordinary Tier work, 2 for a Superhuman Tier work, and so on - in addition to whatever Fate Points the character might spend on invoking aspects as part of the crafting process. If the work comprises multiple skills, the Fate Point cost must be paid for each skill's Power Tier separately. These works last for the duration of the story or until destroyed or dismantled.

**Theme:** Any sort of creativity, such as artistic or mechanical aptitude.

**Extraordinary Tier:** Once per story, the player may spend a Fate Point to have the character spontaneously reveal a previously undisclosed work appropriate to the skill's theme or add an improvement to an existing piece of equipment for one scene. Treat this work as a piece of Equipment with two improvements (see Gifts, page 244).

**Superhuman Tier:** Once per session, the player may spend a Fate Point to give the character a theme-appropriate work (a piece of Equipment with two improvements, as above) or add two improvements to an existing piece of Equipment that last for one scene.

**Ascendant Tier:** The player may spend a Fate Point once per session to give the character a theme-appropriate work (a piece of equipment with three improvements) or add two improvements to an existing piece of Equipment that last for the rest of the session.

### *Attention, Control Freaks*

*You may notice there's no trapping called Control or Manipulate Elements or anything like that. So how do you make your fire-control guy? It's simple: Most "control" functions are just messing with aspects, and any skill can be used for an aspect declaration or maneuver. Want to create fire? Use your Fire Control skill to declare an aspect of "On Fire." Want to make it bigger? An aspect maneuver will turn "On Fire" into "Raging Inferno." Want to put it out? Another aspect maneuver will remove it altogether. Mind control works similarly; see the Psychic Extra description for details.*

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A skill with the Dexterity trapping reflects the character's ability to pick pockets, palm small objects, perform magic tricks, and do nearly anything else that requires fine manual control. This makes Dexterity a pretty broad trapping, but enough of its applications are similar that it's just easier to collect them all under the same umbrella.

Attempting to pick a target's pocket, or steal something from the target without being noticed by the target, is an opposed skill roll. You suffer a -2 penalty on this roll.

Most other applications of Dexterity will entail rolling the skill, with the result setting the difficulty for an onlooker's skill roll to see where the key went, how the card trick works, what you did with his pocket watch, and so on.

**Theme:** Subterfuge, thievery, coordination.

**Extraordinary Tier (or better):** You may pay a Fate Point to use the Dexterity trapping of this skill as a free action.

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## DISGUISE+

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A skill with the Disguise trapping lets the character appear to be someone other than herself. Use this skill in an opposed roll (usually using the Examine trapping) against any active attempts to penetrate the disguise. The extent of this trapping's effects is dependent upon what props are available, and won't normally hold up to intense scrutiny using investigation. In these cases, obtaining shifts on the opposing skill roll mean that the attempt at Disguise has failed. This takes time, though - generally a few minutes by default, and only once per scene. Casual inspection uses the Notice trapping against a target number equal to this skill's rating, but can be attempted as a free action once per scene.



Disguises generally hold up until the worst possible moment. The trick when dealing with disguises is less about when the opposition wins a roll and more about when the opposition is going to get close enough, and for long enough, to take a closer look with the Examine trapping. That's the trump card, and the way to play out tension in a scene with disguises is by making it clear such a roll may be lying in wait.

If the character is disguised as a particular person, the GM may assign some hefty bonuses (+1 to +4) to an attempt to penetrate the disguise by someone who actually knows the person he appears to be.

If it's appropriate to the skill's theme, this trapping can instead be applied to things other than people, such as disguising a machine as some other sort of machine, or creating an illusion out of thin air. See the Range and Unusual descriptions in Extras, page 230.

**Theme:** Deception, illusion, social artistry.

**Extraordinary Tier:** When disguised as someone else, you gain an additional aspect to represent the veracity of your performance. If the disguise isn't of anyone in particular - for example, a policeman, tradesman, or some other face in the crowd - choose an appropriate aspect that might be obvious to a casual onlooker. If the disguise is of a specific subject, and you've successfully assessed one of the subject's aspects, you gain that aspect (or one of them, if you've assessed more than one of their aspects) as long as you're disguised.

**Superhuman Tier:** As Extraordinary Tier, except you gain as many as two aspects.

**Ascendant Tier:** As Extraordinary Tier, except you gain as many as three aspects.

**Godlike Tier:** As Extraordinary Tier, except you gain as many as four aspects.

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# DISMANTLE

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The opposite of the Craft trapping, the Dismantle trapping allows a skill to be used to “unmake” mechanical or technological devices. Given time and tools, the skill can also topple virtually any building or structure. In those circumstances, the character can use this trapping to deal damage to the target. By default, a device has 2 Health stress boxes; modify this by its quality as if it were a skill with the Stress Capacity trapping. A device “defends” against attacks using either its quality or the appropriate skill used by whoever is holding it, in the highest applicable Power Tier. See the Focus Flaw for more on this.

The Dismantle trapping can also be used to make assessments or declarations (see Aspects) about a device or structure. These can be offensive or defensive, depending on what the character is trying to accomplish. An especially well-built or unusually designed device or structure can mean an increased difficulty number.

Indirect attacks against people are also possible, such as setting up a bridge to collapse when someone walks across it (in which case the targets take damage from the resulting fall - see Falling in Chapter 7: Running The Game). Large or complex devices or structures, such as buildings or safes, are more accurately treated as consequential or extended contests (see Chapter 7), especially if such a task is the focus of a scene, session, or story.

All of the above applies to a relatively methodical approach to destroying inanimate objects. For a quicker, brute-force approach, see the Physical Force trapping.

**Theme:** Mechanical aptitude.

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## DODGE

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The skill offers defense against any physical attack, whether a punch, a sword, or a bullet.

**Theme:** Movement or perception.

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## ENVIRONMENT [TYPE]

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A skill with the Environment trapping can be used to navigate and survive in the specified type of environment. Types can vary widely, but the most common are Wilderness (generally a temperate wilderness), for outdoorsy types, and Urban, for your average street urchin. As a Strange skill, the limits are even broader - things like Environment (Space) and Environment (Subterranean) aren't out of the question.

The skill is typically rolled against a difficulty number set by the GM to forage for food, hunt game, withstand hostile conditions, or scrounge for useful items such as herbs or the cast-off detritus of an uncaring metropolitan society. The difficulty for finding something is based off how likely it is to be found and how interesting it will be to use. The base likelihood depends on the environment and what's being looked for.

EACH QUALIFYING CRITERION INCREASES THE DIFFICULTY BY +1.

| DIFFICULTY | LIKELIHOOD | EXAMPLE   |
|------------|------------|---|
| +0         | Likely     | Wood or vine in a forest, a discarded crust of bread in the streets of London |
| +3         | Possible   | Strong wood in a swamp, a shilling in the street                              |
| +5         | Unlikely   | Wood in a desert, a secret cache of liquor behind a loose brick               |
| Add'l +1   | -          | Each additional search criterion  |

Thus, if a character needs sticks in a forest, the difficulty is Mediocre (+0), but if he needs sticks of a certain size and strength (two criteria) the difficulty is Fair (+2). Trying to build something in the environment, like a trap, is a use of the Craft trapping, but is modified by this skill.

**Theme:** Expertise in, experience with, or knowledge of the chosen environment.

**Extraordinary Tier:** The chosen Environment may be any type found on Earth that stretches the bounds of reality, such as the Earth's core or the Lost World of Roraima.

**Superhuman Tier (or better):** The chosen Environment may be completely disconnected from Earth altogether, such as Mars, outer space, or an alternate plane of existence.

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## ESTEEM

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The skill defends against social attacks, from slanderous rumors to embarrassing truths.

**Theme:** Popularity, standing in society.

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## EXAMINE

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Examine is the trapping of sustained, intense study of a place, person, or thing. When searching for something specific, the difficulty of the skill roll should be kept at Mediocre (+0), with the shifts on the result being used as a yardstick for how long it takes to find the thing. The only exception to this is if the GM has a reason the thing in question shouldn't be found. In those situations, it's often better to just make the thing unfindable due to a critical missing piece that would "unlock" access to the otherwise unfindable objective. In these cases, don't even bother with the roll - rather, the GM should just put the character on the path to discovering that missing piece. This missing piece could be equipment, like a key, or the utterance of a magic password. Once that's in place, the difficulty should drop back to the usual level.

If characters are just searching an area for clues, the guidelines for Notice apply. Set the base difficulty at Mediocre (+0), and make sure that characters can find something. Once they do, the burden is on the GM to make sure that whatever they find suggests a distinct course of action.

As the GM, when in doubt about how difficult a piece of information should be to find, aim low. The players' failure to find a clue should never derail the game. It may seem like it makes life less interesting if there is no challenge in the skill roll, but this is one of those odd situations where that is not the case. A lack of information is clearly frustrating to players, and if you have a player who really savors the challenge of figuring out clues, the challenge is usually less in finding the clues than in figuring out what they mean once they're found. And there's the rub: Clues don't come with explanations baked right in. Position your mystery in the clues they find, not in the clues they don't. Remember, unless there's something actually there to be found, no roll

is necessary.

The specifics of how this trapping works is highly dependent on context and the skill's theme. Regardless, a skill with the Examine trapping is especially well-suited to making declarations appropriate to its theme. For example, as part of a skill themed around detective work, the character could assert minor details about a crime scene, then back them up with a successful roll. Similarly, as part of a skill with an outdoor-survival theme, Examine could be used to track footprints. As a trapping in a skill called Mental Telepathy, it could be used in an opposed roll to read the subject's surface thoughts. And so on.

**Theme:** Sensory or extra-sensory perception.

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## GUILE

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Use the Guile trapping to tell lies without getting caught. For simple deceptions, such as bluffing one's way past a guard, a simple opposed skill roll is all that is necessary. For deeper deceptions, like convincing someone of something they believe to be false, a mental conflict is appropriate, complete with attacks and Mental consequences that reflect the falsehood the target now believes.

Even the most persuasive lie can only suggest a course of action, not compel one. At best, a character can suggest that a given course of action is in the target's best interest, but even if that's convincing, some people still won't take the bait if it violates their convictions. A skill with this trapping should never create behavior that is at odds with the basic nature of the target - an honest man won't be tricked into stealing, for example, though he may be tricked into holding stolen goods if he has no reason to think they're stolen.

A successful lie puts the target in a position where his own nature forces the decision that the liar wanted him to make. Mechanically, this works by compelling or tagging the associated consequence. A pacifist won't kill, unless he feels he has to do so to protect something more important than his pacifism. As such, a skill with the Insight trapping is a natural complement to a skill with this trapping, to give the character an idea of how to spin things.

In any case, this is not a huge problem when the Guile trapping is used on NPCs, though under no circumstances should it become a poor man's mind control. When player characters are taken out by a Guile attack, however, it's important to remember that though they may believe something false to be true now, it should not change their essential nature.

**Theme:** Deception, subterfuge, social artistry.

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## HIDE+

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A skill with the Hide trapping is one of not being seen. When a character is hiding, she's remaining perfectly still and (hopefully) out of sight. Lighting, obstacles, and other environmental factors can affect the player's roll, and the result of the skill roll is the difficulty for the searcher to find her (using a skill with either the Notice trapping or the Examine trapping). When someone is searching you can usually assume they'll do logical things like turn on the lights and check behind the curtains. Assuming such action is possible, the searcher receives a +2 bonus to his skill roll. This means that if a stealthy character is ever in a position where people are actively searching for her, she's in a lot of trouble. That usually requires that the character was spotted or somehow set off an alarm - which, if she's doing her job, she wasn't, and didn't.

For example, consider a character hiding in a storeroom. If a guard opens the door,

shines a lantern in, and looks around, it's just a quick skill roll (reason, perhaps, but not time), and the character can probably stay hidden. If the guard brings in several other lantern-bearing guards and they all start methodically going through the room, hiding is much, much more difficult - they've imposed some penalties, and they have both reason and time.

The good news is that this sort of searching is usually obvious, so when the guards start looking, it's the player's cue to act now or give up her chance at surprise.

Environmental conditions can have a significant effect on a character's ability to hide and remain hidden, as shown on the table below.

| MOD. | ENVIRONMENT   |
|------|---|
| +4   | Pitch black, no visibility                            |
| +2   | Darkness, smoke, thick fog, no clear line of sight    |
| +1   | Noisy distractions                                    |
| +0   | Dim lighting, cluttered line of sight, moderate noise |
| -1   | Complete silence                                      |
| -2   | Good lighting, clear line of sight                    |
| -4   | Bright lighting, clear area                           |

If you're not certain how to handle something, treat it as a half step. For example, if a character is hiding in the dark from guards holding torches, reduce the bonus to only +1.

**Theme:** Stealth, subterfuge, environmental familiarity.

**Extraordinary Tier:** Normally, moving and Hiding don't mix, but if the skill is in this



Tier the character may move 1 additional zone without automatically giving herself away.

**Superhuman Tier (or better):** The character may move any number of zones without affecting her ability to remain unseen.

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## INFLUENCE

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Putting the Influence trapping on a skill enables it to be used for public attacks on a person's character - slander, libel, and all other modes of reputation-ruining. Influence attacks deal Reputation stress and Social consequences.

In some respects, this trapping is very similar to the Networking trapping, in that both make use of rumors, gossip, and public perception to accomplish something. However, while Networking can be used to gather information and declare details and aspects, a skill with the Influence trapping is the character's ability to leverage her social connections to directly harm someone else's public image.

**Theme:** Social influence, status.

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## INFORMATION

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This trapping lets the character answer questions related to the skill's theme. Sometimes this will mean making a skill roll to see how much information the GM is able to impart, but having the skill at all means the character is at least relatively well-versed enough in the subject matter to know something. For example, the Academics skill has this trapping, which lets a character use it to learn information that could be gained from a formal education; a Unique skill called Underworld with this trapping could be used to gain information about people, places, things, or events related to the Under Class.

When setting a difficulty for a Knowledge roll, the best yardstick is the obscurity of the knowledge sought as it relates to the relevant circle of society (i.e., if Academics, the circle will be scholars; in the case of the Underworld example above, the circle would be the Under Class).

**Theme:** Anything related to academia, the intellect, any sort of science, expertise, or formal education.

| DIFFICULTY                  | DEGREE OF OBSCURITY  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Mediocre (+0)               | Common knowledge (“The Tower Gang are criminals.”)                   |
| Average (+1)                | Widespread knowledge (“The Tower Gang are all Strangers.”)           |
| Fair (+2)                   | Specialized knowledge (“Big Hand and Little Hand are related.”)      |
| Good (+3)                   | Esoteric knowledge (“Ben Bell is smarter than he looks.”)            |
| Great (+4)                  | Very esoteric knowledge (“Little Hand is really Big Hand’s sister.”) |
| Fantastic (+6)              | Secret knowledge (“Ben Bell is the real brains of the Tower Gang.”)  |
| Legendary (+8)<br>(E)       | Private knowledge (The origins of each member of the Tower Gang.)    |
| Divine (+10) (S)<br>or more | Lost knowledge (The true face of The Face.)                          |

Note that despite these suggested difficulties and examples, if the GM decides that a piece of information simply can’t be known, because it was never recorded or for whatever reason, not even a Divine (+10) Academics effort can uncover it. That’s what

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## — Wait, What's to Stop Me From Gaming This System? —

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*Not a thing. If you want to produce the most effective character for the least number of points, then inventing a Unique or Strange skill with a vaguely broad theme and stuffing it with as many trappings as possible - or just 20 Variable trappings - is a good way to do it.*

*The goals of this system are threefold. First, it's intended to let you get exactly the character you want to play by letting you define the precise areas of expertise, influence, and experience your character has. Second, it is intended to make skills and mundane experiences really, really interesting. Superpowers are fantastic, but leading your own cult, knowing how to mix herbal remedies, or holding public office can be fantastic, too. Finally, it's intended to allow you to indulge your creativity in the same way that aspects do. Even with no Strange skills at all, this system should allow you to really put your mark on a character.*

*And what kind of boor would want to spoil such a marvelous bit of starry-eyed game-design idealism? Not you, I say!*

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### INITIATIVE [SCOPE]

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A skill with the Initiative trapping is used to determine order of actions in a conflict of the appropriate scope. When this trapping is purchased, choose one scope: Physical, Mental, or Social.

The highest-Tier skill with the Initiative trapping automatically acts first in a conflict of its scope. For example, if the conflict involves three characters with Initiative trappings in the Mundane Tier and one with an Initiative trapping in the Superhuman Tier, the Superhuman-Tier character will act first. In the case of multiple characters with an Initiative-trapping skill in the same Tier, make an opposed skill roll between them to determine who acts first.

**Theme:** Sensory or extra-sensory perception of the appropriate scope.

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## INSIGHT+

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Adding Insight to a skill lets the character use it to assess another character's aspects. This is an opposed roll vs. the Willpower trapping. Before the roll, the "attacker" states what sort of aspect she's looking for, usually by subject matter (an emotion, a relationship, the character's past, etc.). If the "attacker" gets 2 shifts or fewer, she learns an aspect of the defender's choice. If she gets 3 shifts or more, she learns the aspect that most closely matches the information she seeks. This process usually takes about Half an Hour (see the Time Table in Time and Space, page 318); by spending excess shifts, the character can reduce the time required at a rate of 1 step per shift spent (to a minimum of One Minute).

**Theme:** Social prowess, psychic ability.

Extraordinary Tier (or above): Mental attacks that would benefit from this skill's Insight trapping deal additional Composure stress - Weapon 1 [Composure] at Extraordinary

Tier, Weapon 2 [Composure] at Superhuman Tier, and so on. This skill and the skill used to attack must be thematically related to receive this benefit. For example, a character with Empathy (S) would deal +2 Composure stress when using Intimidation.

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## INSPIRE

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With this trapping, the skill can be used to have an emotional effect on a group of listeners. Examples include an actor delivering a soliloquy, a commander barking a speech at his troops before battle, and a satirical poet performing in Hyde Park. With a successful roll, the character can declare a scene aspect limited to the mood and emotional impact of his speech. The difficulty of the task starts at Good (+3) by default, and certain existing circumstances can act as penalties to the skill roll, as indicated on the table below.

These penalties are cumulative, so trying to change the mood of two armies engaged in a pitched battle would carry a total penalty of -8 to the skill roll.

An aspect put on a scene using the Inspire trapping describes its general mood, which is important to keep in mind for more than just invocations and compels. For instance, if the mood of a scene is “Somber,” then that’s likely to have a general effect on NPC behavior, just like a scene with a “Dark” aspect would obscure vision.

It’s also worth remembering that the mood of a group offers a secondary opportunity for compels and other complications. If the mood of the room is somber, and a player fails to act in accordance with the mood, others will probably respond badly to them - for example, reading The Illustrated Police News during a funeral. This is one of the few instances when it might be reasonable to compel a character using a scene aspect instead of a character aspect.

**Theme:** Performance, wit, speechifying.

| CIRCUMSTANCE       | NOTES   | MOD. |
|--------------------|---|------|
| Existing mood      | The room has an existing mood, and you're trying to add another.  | -1   |
| Changing a mood    | The room has an existing mood, and you're trying to change it (either by design, or because it's actively contradictory to the desired mood). | -3   |
| Distractions       | A noisy room or other activities that make it hard to focus on the performance.   | -1   |
| Major Distractions | A large, active area with many distractions that requires active effort to pay attention to the performance, such as a busy marketplace.      | -3   |
| Total Distractions | There's no reason for anyone to be paying attention to the performance, such as on a battlefield.   | -5   |

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## LANGUAGES+

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The character knows a number of languages (in addition to his own) equal to the skill's rating. These languages can be currently spoken, such as German or Mongolian, or dead languages, such as Sanskrit or spoken Archaic Egyptian. Normally, these languages must be from Earth, but if it suits the character's background more "exotic" languages can be chosen instead. For example, the Lost Jupiterian, from Jupiter, knows Jupiterian. The player can decide on these all at once, or define them as needed during the course of play.

**Theme:** Intellect, formal education, or general wordliness.

**Extraordinary Tier:** The character knows an additional five languages as described

above. These can be defined during play or chosen in advance.

**Superhuman Tier:** As the Extraordinary Tier, plus a number of “exotic” languages, such as High Aklo, Atlantean, or Venusian, equal to the skill rating.

**Ascendant Tier:** The character knows all languages used on Earth, mortal or otherwise, living or dead, plus a number of exotic languages equal to the skill rating. In addition, the character may spend a Fate Point to add any language which she could’ve reasonably encountered to her list of known languages.

**Godlike Tier:** As Ascendant Tier, plus the character may spend a Fate Point to add any language to her list of known languages, even if there’s no way she could’ve ever encountered it before.

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## LEAP+

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A skill with the Leap trapping can be used to determine how far the character can jump. For most characters, of course, this is closely associated with the Move trapping, but it’s been split off here to account for characters whose jumping prowess has nothing to do with how quickly they can cover ground. For example, a super-strong character might not be able to sprint quickly, but his prodigious muscles might enable him to leap Big Ben in a single bound.

Adjudicating such leaps, though, is an odd proposition. The act of jumping itself should be a complication to some other task, not the focus itself. Generally speaking, whether a jump “succeeds” should not be a binary pass/fail affair, unless there’s an interesting consequence attached to failure. “Plummeting to one’s death” doesn’t really fall in that category - immediate, unforgiving death-by-dumb luck isn’t especially interesting for

the player or the story. Instead, it often makes more sense to assign that pit, chasm, or cliff a high border value to increase the cost of passing from one zone (this side) to another (that side). If the border value is equal to or less than the rating of the skill with this trapping, the character can cross it freely. Otherwise, the character takes the difference as a penalty to her next action. See Time and Space, page 318, for more on zones and border values.

For example, let's say the character wants to jump from one rooftop to another to flying-kick her quarry. Her Athletics skill (which includes the Leap trapping) is +3, but the border value between her zone (one rooftop) and her enemy's (the other rooftop) is 4. Instead of rolling Athletics to see if she can jump, she just takes an additional -1 to her attack once she gets there.

Alternately, a "failed" skill roll can be interpreted as the character's sudden realization that she just can't jump that far, so she doesn't even attempt it. In this case, a failure just means having to find another way to the other side, especially if that's where the story is.

Naturally, it's entirely possible that there's something worth seeing at the bottom of that pit, in which case it makes total sense to roll. Here, you're rolling to see which of two possibilities the character encounters: Do they leap across the alley, or do they fall through the secret trapdoor in the street below?

**Theme:** Movement, athleticism, or physical strength.

**Extraordinary Tier (or better):** The character's ability to Leap is so impressive that he can cover great distances in the blink of an eye. For each Power Tier above Mundane, the character can move 1 zone as a Free Action, or ignore the equivalent border value between zones (border value of 1 at Extraordinary, 2 at Superhuman, etc.).



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## MENACE

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The Menace trapping covers mental attacks, such as fear or intimidation. This is usually done as an opposed skill roll (versus a skill with the Willpower trapping). However, these things don't occur in a vacuum - the target must have a reason to believe that the character is capable of harming them. If this isn't the case, and the attacker is outnumbered, imprisoned, bound to a chair, or at a similar disadvantage, the defender receives a +2 bonus to his skill roll.

As an attack, successful use of the Menace trapping inflicts Composure stress and Mental consequences. The trapping can also be used to perform an aspect maneuver on the defender.

**Theme:** Fear, intimidation, appropriate brands of social prowess.

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## MINIONS+

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A skill with this trapping can be used to call forth allies of some kind - functionaries, bodyguards, supernatural entities, or whatever else is appropriate to the skill's theme. By default, these allies must be contacted by ordinary means, such as a messenger or a telegram, and arrive under their own power by conventional means. In some cases, this may preclude their arrival altogether, such as if you're trapped in a prison with no way to contact the outside world. To alter any of these parameters, take the Unusual Extra, once for each alteration (see Extras and Drawbacks). With a Fate Point and proper justification, the Minions can arrive more quickly than would otherwise be considered reasonable. Perhaps your operatives were already on the scene, blending with the crowd until needed, or maybe that crate over there just happens to contain a half-dozen of your Automechanical Arachnoids, waiting to be shipped out. Regardless, Minions cannot be called more than once per scene, and the allies generated by it disperse or disappear, as

appropriate, once the scene is through.

Roll the skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0), and spend the shifts obtained to produce your Minions. An Average-quality Minion ally costs 1 shift, a Fair-quality Minion ally costs 3 shifts, and a Good-quality Minion ally costs 5 shifts. All Minions must be of the same quality.

For 2 skill points, you get Simple Minions. Instead of giving them skills, simply assign scopes, Physical, Mental, or Social, according to their intended purpose within the scene. Treat the scope as a broad skill that covers a variety of mundane functions. An Average Minion has one scope at +1, a Fair Minion has one scope at +2 and one scope at +1, and a Good Minion has one scope at +3, one at +2, and one at +1. For twice the cost, 4 skill points, the character can call on Advanced Minions. These Minions can have full skill pyramids of one, three, or six skills: one Average (+1) skill for Average-quality Minions, two Average (+1) skills and one Fair (+2) skill for Fair-quality Minions, and so on, using skills instead of scopes. Advanced Minions are more customizable, but also require more attention from the player to implement.

See Playing the Opposition in Chapter 7: Running the Game for more information on Minions.

Minions cannot take consequences - once their stress track is exceeded, they're Taken Out. For a specific ally, such as an assistant or valet, use the Companion Gift (see Gifts).

A specialized form of this trapping, Duplicates, can be used to create clones or identical copies of oneself. See the sidebar for details.

**Theme:** Authority within an organization, social connections, sorcery.

**Superhuman Tier:** By rolling the skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0) (S), one of

the Minions' scopes or skills can be upgraded to the Extraordinary Tier.

**Ascendant Tier:** As Superhuman Tier, but roll against a difficulty of Mediocre (+o) (A) to upgrade one of the Minions' scopes or skills to the Superhuman Tier, or two scopes or skills to the Extraordinary Tier.

**Godlike Tier:** As Superhuman Tier, but roll against a difficulty of Mediocre (+o) (G) to upgrade one of the Minions' scopes or skills to the Ascendant Tier, one scope or skill to the Superhuman Tier and one other to the Extraordinary Tier, or three scopes or skills to the Extraordinary Tier.

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## — Duplicates —

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*This is a specialized form of the Minions trapping, one that can only be used to create copies of the character. The duplicates arrive instantly, however they're created; for "slower" duplicates, take a Flaw to that effect. Roll the skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+o), and spend shifts obtained to create duplicates. An Average-quality duplicate costs 1 shift, a Fair-quality duplicate costs 3 shifts, and a Good-quality duplicate costs 5 shifts. All duplicates must be of the same quality. The duplicates have one skill per rating available, as per their quality (for example, a Fair duplicate has one +2 skill and one +1 skill). Only Strange skills can have this trapping, and no duplicate can have a skill with the Duplicates trapping.*

*A duplicate's skills are limited to those belonging to the character, and no duplicate can have a skill rated higher than the character's*

*equivalent skill. For duplicates that are radically different from the character, such as past and future versions of the same person, or duplicates called forth from alternate dimensions, use the Minions trapping instead.*

**Theme:** *Duplication, super-mitosis, space-time control.*

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## MOVE+

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Use Move to determine how quickly or well a character can cover ground. By default, the mode of movement is walking or running. To change that to some other, weirder form of movement - flying, tunneling, etc. - use the Unusual Extra (see Extras and Drawbacks). Under normal circumstances, a character can move 1 zone as a supplemental action. See the Climb and Leap trappings for details on negotiating border values between zones.

Alternately, the skill can reflect the character's ability to operate a vehicle, such as a carriage, aero ship, tractor carriage, or automotive, or ride an animal, such as a horse or camel. Though these modes of transport obviously offer some advantages over walking or running, they're balanced (more or less) by the fact that they require specialized, expensive equipment, and/or animals, to use. A character who takes the Move trapping as part of such a skill automatically has (or has access to) an appropriate vehicle, as long as that vehicle's cost (see Money, page 72) is equal to or less than the skill's rating.

**Theme:** Movement, obviously - although how that movement is achieved, whether via muscle power or telekinetic flight or a vehicle, is wide open.

**Extraordinary Tier (or better):** The character's ability to Move is so impressive that he can cover great distances in the blink of an eye. For each Power Tier above Mundane,

the character can move 1 zone as a Free Action (1 zone at Extraordinary, 2 at Superhuman, etc.).

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## NETWORKING+

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With the Networking trapping, the skill can be used to take advantage of a character's social contacts for the purposes of gathering information and spreading rumors. The extent of this, however, is limited by the character's aspects. Before rolling the skill, the player must cite (but not invoke) an aspect related to his social contacts. At the bare minimum, every character should be able to cite his Social Class aspect to rely on people he may know in his immediate social circle, or the World aspect "Malum Necessarium" to rely on other members of the Kerberos Club (assuming the character in question is a Kerberan). The aspect chosen will color the information received and limit its extent. For example, using this trapping with the Working Class aspect is unlikely to be useful (or at least reliable) if attempting to learn information or rumors about the aristocracy. In a way, Networking is the social equivalent of the Information trapping.

The process begins with a question - say, "Who's trying to kill me?" The player then describes where her character is going to talk to folks (usually "the street" or "the local tavern" or something else appropriate to the cited aspect), the GM sets the difficulty, and the player rolls her skill. If the skill roll fails, then the player can retroactively improve her roll by taking more time (see the Time Table, page 318). This takes an afternoon by default, and a +1 can be added to the roll for every additional step taken on the Time Table, up to +4 for four steps.

Regardless, a successful roll should always result in a clear course of action. If the character is being "shut out" for one reason or another, no amount of dogged persistence through time investment is going to help. When that happens, it usually means there's another problem the character needs to solve first.

Note that being the most informed guy and knowing all the latest gossip aren't necessarily one and the same.

Networking finds out what people know - and people always have their own biases and misconceptions. It rarely indicates the veracity of the information provided, save by the discovery that contradictory answers are coming from different sources. If a character wants to separate truth from lies, that's a more in-depth conversation, and may involve other skills.

Networking also keeps the character apprised of the general state of things, and acts as a sort of social Notice. It's far from foolproof, and the GM is usually the one to call for a roll. A player can't generally go out looking for a tip off, though he can tell the GM he's going out talking to his contacts "just to check" on what's up, which is a good hint that he'd like a tip off. If the resulting skill roll is at least a +0, the character catches wind of an interesting rumor. At +3, and every two shifts over that, the character learns an additional rumor, or more information on a previous rumor. For example, at +0 the character may learn that some upper-class toff has been asking questions about him; at +3, the character may also learn that the toff in question had a strong German accent.

This trapping is also useful for planting rumors in addition to ferreting them out. The player simply tells the GM what rumor he wants to plant and rolls the skill with the Networking trapping. If the subject of the rumor is a person, it's an opposed roll between the rumor-spreader and the target. If the subject of the rumor is something more general, such as "I hear the beer at the Ten Bells is poisonous," then the GM can use the standard declaration rules (see Aspects).

The pervasiveness of the rumor depends on how many shifts are obtained on the roll, according to the table below.

The final effort is also the target for someone else's Networking roll to find out who's been spreading rumors, refute a rumor, or replace a rumor with another. When a player plants a rumor, the GM should consider it a mental bookmark. Assuming anything but a terrible roll, that rumor should resurface later in the game. What form it takes depends on the player's roll.

**Theme:** Social connections or politics, as per at least one of the character's aspects.

Extraordinary Tier (or above): Social attacks that would benefit from this skill's Networking trapping deal additional Reputation stress - Weapon 1 [Reputation] at Extraordinary Tier, Weapon 2 [Reputation] at Superhuman Tier, and so on. This skill and the skill used to attack must be thematically related to receive this benefit. For example, a character with Contacting (S) would deal +2 Reputation stress when using a skill with the Influence trapping.

| ## Rumor Planting Table ||

| Shifts Obtained | Result |

| 0-2 | The rumor earns passing mention (a fragile aspect). |

| 3-5 | Other people are passing around the rumor, maybe even back to the original character (a sticky aspect). |

| 6-7 | The rumor has spread far enough that someone (presumably the target) will do something in response to it. |

| 8+ | The rumor has spawned a number of alternate or embellished versions as well, all with the same thread running through them. Additional shifts may be used to speed up the rate at which the rumor spreads or help conceal who started it in the first place. |

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## NOTICE+

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This trapping measures the character's passive level of perception. This includes

spotting things without actively looking for them, such as a concealed door, an easily missed clue, or an assassin about to strike. (If the character is actively looking for something, use the Examine trapping.) The GM usually sets a difficulty for the Notice roll, and should provide an additional piece of information for every two shifts achieved. Whenever ambushed (see the Hide and Skulk trappings), a character may make one last Notice roll opposed by the attacker's Hide or Skulk trapping, whichever is appropriate, to see if he's actually surprised. If the roll succeeds, the character may use a skill to defend, with a -2 penalty on the roll. If the Notice roll fails, the character's defense is +0.

**Theme:** Sensory or extra-sensory perception.

**Extraordinary Tier (or better):** The character's senses are so keen that she can defend normally even when surprised.

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## PARRY

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The skill offers defense against hand-to-hand attacks.

**Theme:** Fighting ability, defense, or perception.

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## PHYSICAL FORCE+

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The skill measures the character's ability to exert physical force on an object. The source could be sheer muscle power, an exo-skeletal suit of armor, telekinesis, or whatever else makes sense with the skill's theme.

Characters have a default amount of weight they can lift or carry. Find the Power Tier of the skill with Physical Force, then compare that to the skill's rating. That's the



maximum the character can lift and carefully handle or, if the skill's theme is related to the character's actual physical capability, move slowly with. If purely lifting without moving, treat the skill as if it were 2 steps higher. A character carrying something 4 steps below their listed maximum can move freely, but suffers a -1 to all physical actions for every weight increment over that. If the weight of the object is listed in a Tier below that of the character's skill, it can be carried freely and without penalty. If aided by equipment such as a pulley system, the character's Physical Force can be improved by as much as one Tier, at the GM's discretion.

This may seem like an awfully numbers-heavy approach for a game that generally shies away from such things, but when it comes to character strength, people generally like to have benchmarks. Plus, the weight a character can lift is a pretty accessible way to get a feel for how strong they are. At a +0 difficulty, a character can lift a medium-sized adult in the Mundane Tier, a large Siberian tiger in the Extraordinary Tier, a killer whale in the Superhuman Tier, a brachiosaurus - one of Her Majesty's, perhaps - in the Ascendant Tier, and a paddle-wheel steamship in the Godlike Tier. (Obviously, things get a little ridiculous for Physical Force in the Godlike Tier, but that's why it's called Godlike.)

To determine how far a character can throw something (or someone), roll your Physical Force against the rating (in the left-most column of the table below) of the object's weight. Successfully throwing the object 1 zone requires spending 1 shift plus a number of shifts equal to the object's Weight Factor (WF). The WF of a row remains the same regardless of the Tier. In other words, a 400-pound object has a WF of 3, as does a 1,500-pound object and a 32-ton object. (The difference is that throwing an object of a lower Tier lets the player swap out Fudge dice for d6s.) Every additional zone costs as many shifts as the previous one did, plus one, so it gets progressively harder to throw an object multiple zones. In no case can a character lift, carry, or throw an object whose weight is above the maximum for the skill's Tier.

If throwing an object whose weight is in the Mundane column using a skill whose Power Tier is higher than Mundane, treat it as if you were rolling against an opponent's Mundane skill.

For example, a character with Good (+3) Physical Force (Mundane) can lift and carry a 50-pound object without penalty, or a medium-sized adult (150 pounds) at a -1 penalty to his physical actions. He can lift and stagger around with a 300-pound object at a -4 penalty to physical actions, and if he's just lifting something without moving (for instance, lifting a heavy gate), his maximum lift is 400 pounds, but he can't maintain that for long. He can try to lift something heavier by making a Physical Force roll, but under no circumstances can he even attempt to lift something heavier than 800 pounds unaided. If he wanted to throw a 50-pound sack of flour 2 zones, he'd need to make a Physical Force roll against a difficulty of -1 and get at least 4 shifts (1 for the object's weight, +1 for the first zone, and +2 for the second zone) - a total of +3.

If the character's Physical Force were instead Good (+3) (E), carrying 400 pounds would be only a -1 penalty to his physical actions. Throwing that sack of flour two zones would still require at least a +3, but now he gets to roll 3dF+1d6 instead of just 4dF. Needless to say, if he wants to throw it a little farther, odds are good that he can do it.

**Theme:** Strength or physicality. If a Strange skill, themes like psychic ability or elemental control are also options.

Extraordinary Tier (or above): Physical attacks, armed or unarmed, that would benefit from this skill's Physical Force trapping have Weapon 1 per Tier over Mundane - Weapon 1 [Health] at Extraordinary Tier, Weapon 2 [Health] at Superhuman Tier, and so on. This skill and the skill used to attack must be thematically related to receive this benefit. For example, a character with Brawn (S) would deal +2 Health stress when using Fisticuffs, but not Firearms or Strange skills such as Telekinesis or Earth Control.

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## REPAIR

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A skill with the Repair trapping can be used to fix mechanical devices, given the right tools and enough time. For devices with stress tracks, the difficulty is equal to the quality of the device. It takes a Few Hours to remove stress or a Trifling consequence, a Day for a Middling consequence, and a Week for a Grievous consequence. For devices that don't have stress tracks or consequences, the difficulty is based on the monetary value of the device (see the Wealth trapping) or its quality (see the Craft trapping), whichever is higher.

Failure on a repair roll can be made up in a few ways, retroactively. First, each additional step longer on the Time Table (page 318) gives a retroactive +1 to the player's roll, up to a maximum of +4 for four steps on the table. Second, the device can be repaired within the usual timeframe, but the quality drops by one for every point shy of the target. Both methods may be combined; for example, a character can get a retroactive +3 to take two steps longer and drop the quality of the item by one. Degradation in item quality may mean that some of its special abilities are lost, if it has any. Subsequent efforts may be made to restore the item to its original quality, but those face a difficulty equal to the target quality, +1 for every two steps the current quality is below the target. Missing a restoration roll can only be made up by investing time, and the starting length of time on such efforts is usually a week.

If the GM agrees to it, a player may make a partial repair when falling just short of the target. In these cases, the consequence on the device being repaired is downgraded in severity, rather than being entirely removed. If the character misses the roll by one, he may opt to downgrade the consequence, regardless of its severity, to Trifling.

If the character misses the roll by two, he may opt to downgrade the consequence one step, taking Grievous to Middling and Middling to Trifling. If the consequence is Trifling in any of these cases, it is removed, but the device's appropriate stress track is

filled.

Given a sufficient Workspace, the skill can be used to Repair devices whose Power Tier is at or below its own. For example, a Superhuman Tier skill with this trapping could fix Extraordinary or Superhuman Tier devices.

**Theme:** Mechanical aptitude.

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## RESEARCH

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Used in conjunction with Information, this trapping lets the character take advantage of an appropriate Workspace, such as a library or laboratory, to aid in a skill roll to learn about the topic at hand. Where Information represents immediately accessible knowledge stored in the character's head, Research is knowledge gained from a more methodical approach. To use Research, take the margin of failure on an unsuccessful Information roll. This is the number of steps up on the Time Table (page 318) the character may take to turn that failure into a success. It's up to the GM to determine the default time required to conduct Research, but a good rule of thumb is Half an Hour.

The maximum obscurity of the information that can be obtained from a Workspace trapping is equal to its quality. See the Workspace trapping for more detail.

**Theme:** Anything related to academia, the intellect, any sort of science, expertise, or formal education.

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## RESIST DAMAGE

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The Resist Damage trapping allows the skill to be used to defend against a physical attack not by avoiding the blow, but by being tough enough to just take it. However, this

is only effective if the attacker's intent is to deal Health stress to the defender. Otherwise, treat the skill as if it had a rating +0 in the Mundane Tier. For example, if the attacker throws a dart at the defender, Resist Damage can be used to negate taking damage from the hit, but not to avoid the hit. If the dart actually conceals a homing beacon or a hallucinogenic poison, this trapping will not prevent the dart from finding its mark, or the poison from taking effect.

**Theme:** Physical toughness or strength.

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## SECURITY

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The Security trapping is used to overcome or evaluate security systems, such as locks, tripwire alarms, or a deadfall triggered by a spring-loaded pressure plate. If multiple obstacles of this nature are encountered in the course of an infiltration attempt, all of them can be rolled into a single skill roll, or, if the infiltration itself is an important part of the story, they can each be treated individually, requiring a series of skill rolls to defeat. The difficulty of any such roll can be estimated according to the table below, or set by the skill roll of whoever set up the security measures in the first place, as the GM desires.

Most security measures require tools of some kind to disable, from ordinary lockpicks to more exotic implements for sophisticated safes or mechanical traps. Improvised tools, such as picking a lock with a bent piece of found wire, imposes a -2 penalty. Lacking any such tools doubles that penalty to -4, assuming the task can even be attempted at all.

As a rule of thumb, the default time required to defeat a Fair (+2) security measure is Half an Hour (see the Time Table, page 318), stepped up or down depending on the difficulty of the task. For example, the default time required to pick a lock of Average (+1) difficulty would be 15 Minutes, while cracking a safe of Good (+3) difficulty would

default to An Hour. Shifts obtained on the roll can be spent to speed the process up at a rate of one step down on the Time Table per shift spent, to a maximum of 4 steps. Likewise, a failed roll can be mitigated by taking more time than the default, to a maximum for +4 to the result for 4 steps up on the Time Table.

The Security trapping is a good one to use for declarations and assessments when casing a potential target or anticipating the strengths or weaknesses of a security system.

**Theme:** Crime or law enforcement.

| DIFFICULTY     | EXAMPLE  |
|----------------|--|
| Mediocre (+0)  | A locked desk drawer, a petty thief's repository                     |
| Average (+1)   | A securely-locked working-class home                                 |
| Fair (+2)      | The door of a middle-class shopkeeper                                |
| Good (+3)      | The door of a jail cell  |
| Great (+4)     | The front door of an MP, a typical safe                              |
| Fantastic (+6) | The safe of an upper-class home, the front door of the Kerberos Club |
| Legendary (+8) | The vault of Queen Victoria's treasury                               |

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## SHOOT

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As Strike, but with the advantage of range - by default, the skill can be used against targets one zone away. For more distant attacks, use the Range Extra (see Extras and Drawbacks).

**Theme:** Offense.

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## SKULK

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This trapping has a great deal in common with the Hide trapping, but is concerned with remaining silent while moving instead of remaining out of sight while stationary. Otherwise, the rules and modifiers presented in that trapping's description all apply here.

**Theme:** Stealth, subterfuge, environmental familiarity.

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## STRESS CAPACITY [SCOPE]+

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The Stress Capacity trapping modifies one of a character's stress tracks. Pick one when this trapping is chosen: Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure], or Stress Capacity [Reputation]. The effect of the trapping depends on the rating of the skill: one additional stress box if the skill's rating is Average (+1), two additional boxes if it's Fair (+2) or Good (+3), and three more boxes if the skill's rating is Great (+4).

A skill with this trapping can also act as a limiting skill for long-term activity within its scope. See Chapter 7: Running The Game for more on limiting, modifying, and complementary skills.

**Theme:** Toughness, hardiness, or resilience appropriate to the scope of the trapping.

**Extraordinary Tier:** The skill provides Armor 1 for the chosen scope.

**Superhuman Tier:** The skill provides Armor 2 for the chosen scope. Additionally, the character can withstand an additional Trifling consequence of the chosen scope.

**Ascendant Tier:** The skill provides Armor 3 for the chosen scope. Moreover, the character can withstand an additional Trifling consequence of the chosen scope, and once per scene the character may clear a Trifling Consequence of the chosen scope as a free action.

**Godlike Tier:** As Ascendant Tier, but the skill provides Armor 4 for the chosen scope. The character also receives one additional Middling Consequence slot of the chosen scope.

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## STRIKE

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The skill can be used to cause physical harm to others in a manner consistent with its theme. For example, as part of the Common skill Arms, the Strike trapping is used to attack with weaponry, while as part of the Fists Common skill it's about slugging your foe with your bare mitts. Strike can only be used against individuals in the same zone as the character. For ranged offense, see Shoot.

**Theme:** Offense.

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## TRANSPORT

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A skill with this trapping is used to operate a mode of transportation, such as a horse, carriage, boat, or airship. The exact form of transportation this applies to depends on the skill's theme, but in general it should fall into one (and only one) of five broad categories: animal riding, animalpowered ground transportation, mechanical ground transportation, watercraft, or aircraft.

Normally, the skill only needs to be rolled when taking a risk, such as driving at top speed through a crowded street, engaging in a chase, attempting a dangerous maneuver,



running someone down, and so on. Otherwise, merely having a rated skill with this trapping is enough for competent, safe operation.

When a skill roll is required, however, it's generally made in conjunction with one of the animal's or vehicle's skills, such as Gallop or Handling. If rolling against a static difficulty number, look at each skill roll individually. If both succeed, the action is a success. If only the character's roll succeeds, the animal or vehicle takes Health stress equal to its margin of failure. If both rolls fail, things are bad; see About the Town, About the Globe on page 97 for more detailed information.

When using this skill to cover ground, a successful roll only indicates safe operation. Use the animal or vehicle's roll to determine how many zones are moved. No matter how good the rider, driver, or pilot, an animal or vehicle can only move as fast as it can move. To simulate pushing beyond its normal limits, put an aspect on the animal or vehicle using an aspect maneuver.

In a conflict, this trapping can be used to both attack and defend, although the animal's or vehicle's skills may have an effect as well, as described in About the Town, About the Globe.

**Theme:** Animal riding, vehicle operation.

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## TREATMENT [SCOPE]+

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Treatment is the trapping of making things better - the “meat” version of the Repair trapping. Depending on the scope chosen, the skill can be used in a medical capacity to treat injury, disease, poison, and so forth (the Physical scope), or it can be used to alleviate fear and restore confidence (the Mental scope), or repair a damaged reputation (the Social scope). In game terms, this means clearing stress boxes and consequences.

The difficulty involved depends on the severity of the situation. To clear stress boxes, roll this skill against a difficulty equal to the highest stress box filled; for every 2 shifts obtained, clear one stress box. Removing a Trifling consequence has a difficulty of Fair (+2). Reducing (not removing) a Middling consequence to Trifling, assuming the “patient” has a Trifling consequence slot to spare, has a difficulty of Great (+4). If this roll obtains spin, the consequence is removed altogether. Grievous consequences cannot be removed with Treatment - only time.

This trapping should generally represent a “downtime” use of the skill, as opposed to something the character can do in the heat of the moment or the press of battle. Clearing stress and Trifling consequences is the exception to this - think of it as the first aid equivalent of the chosen scope - but this cannot be attempted more than once per character per scene.

Treating a Middling consequence may, depending on circumstance, require a Workspace, or at least the proper environment. For example, removing a Middling Physical consequence may necessitate medical equipment, while a couple hours down at the local may be just the thing to clear a Middling Mental consequence.

**Theme:** Varies widely, depending on the chosen scope, but in general the theme should be able to comfortably cover reducing trauma or injury in yourself or others.

**Extraordinary Tier:** Ordinarily, attempting to reduce or remove a Middling consequence is something that has to take place outside of a conflict situation. For you, this is not the case. If the consequence is within the scope of this trapping, you may make a roll against an Extraordinary Tier target of Great (+4). On a success, the consequence is reduced to Trifling (assuming the character has an open Trifling consequence slot of the appropriate scope). If the roll obtains spin, the consequence is removed altogether.

**Superhuman Tier:** As Extraordinary Tier, plus you can also attempt to clear a Grievous consequence within the trapping's scope. If it's a Physical consequence, the patient's body must be intact. Make a skill roll against a Superhuman Tier target of Fantastic (+6). On a success, the consequence is reduced one degree of severity, and with spin it's reduced by two degrees of severity. Regardless, the patient must immediately change one of his Personal aspects to reflect the indelible mark the trauma has left on him.

**Ascendant Tier:** As Superhuman Tier, except you can also reattach limbs, restore organs, and the like if the trapping's scope is Physical. Make a skill roll against an Ascendant Tier target of Legendary (+8). On a success, the consequence is reduced one degree of severity, and with spin it's reduced by two degrees of severity. Again, the patient must still immediately change one of his Personal aspects as a reminder of the experience.

**Godlike Tier:** As Ascendant Tier, plus you can attempt to revive the dead - that is, a character whose Taken Out condition was death. Make a skill roll against a Godlike Tier target of Divine (+10). On a success, the patient is immediately brought back to life, but must rewrite a Conviction or Complication aspect to reflect the profundity of the experience. On a failure, the patient is still dead, and another revivification cannot be attempted until sufficient time has passed. (The default is A Day, plus one step on the Time Table for every point by which the roll failed.) This process does not remove any of the patient's consequences or stress he may have had when he died. Normally, this requires that the patient's complete corpse be present (though not necessarily intact). If the GM deems the circumstances appropriate - for example, if the character has a Godling aspect of "Goddess of Life" - an attempt may be made without the body at a -4 penalty to the roll. Treat a success as described above, but the character's body arrives (somehow) naked as the day he was born.

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## VARIABLE [FREQUENCY]

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Some skills are just so broad that they defy precise definition, such as Profane Sorcery or Shapeshifting. For these skills, there's the Variable trapping. A Variable trapping can be used to replicate any other trapping or Extra on the fly, as decided by the player during the course of play. The specifics, however, must fit within the skill's theme. For example, a Variable trapping in a Strange skill called Psychic Constructs could be used to create a psychic sword (the Strike trapping) or shield (the Parry trapping), or even a psychic velocipede (the Move trapping). But it couldn't be used to duplicate the effects of the Conversation trapping, or the Willpower trapping, because those trappings simply don't make sense in the context of the skill's theme.

A Variable trapping that can be defined anew once per scene costs 4 skill points to add to a skill, while one that can only be defined once per session only costs 2 skill points. When replicating another trapping or Extra, the number of skill points it would cost to add the trapping or Extra to the skill is the number of Variable trappings you'll need for the job. For example, duplicating the effects of the Shoot trapping (2 skill points) would require two Variable trappings; tacking on the Zone Extra (also 2 skill points) would require another two Variable trappings. Once a Variable trapping is committed to creating an effect, it can't be used to create anything else until the next scene or session.

Variable is not a when-in-doubt trapping - it's a there's-no-other-way trapping.

**Theme:** Versatility, such as shapeshifting, magic, or impressively eclectic training.

**Extraordinary Tier (or better):** If the Variable trapping is duplicating a skill with a Tier-dependent benefit, such as Physical Force, then the Variable trapping provides that benefit as well.

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## WEALTH

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The Wealth trapping measures the character's available funds, whether that's a few shillings in her pocket, a chest full of crowns at home, or the family silver mine. Usually, a skill with this trapping serves to passively inform the GM about what the character has at her disposal, but may still be rolled for large expenditures, like purchases and bribes. Some large-scale conflicts may be about trying to out-spend the other guy; here, the skill can be used to attack or defend. Wealth-based attacks deal Reputation stress and Social consequences.

In terms of social class and the Wealth trapping, members of the Under Class have a Mediocre (+0) income, while the Working Class is at Average (+1), the Middle Class is at Fair (+2), and the lifestyle of the Upper Class is at least Good (+3), if not somewhere in the Extraordinary Tier.

A general guide to what things cost in the Victorian era (rated on the Adjective Ladder) can be found in the section entitled Money (page 72). A character can easily afford anything with a rating 2 steps below his skill, and anything 1 step below his skill with a minimum of fuss. Anything with a rating equal to or greater than your skill, however, will require a roll. If successful, the item is obtained; if not, it isn't. Only one such skill roll can be made per scene. Note, however, that this trapping is less about buying things than it is about leveraging your personal assets to solve problems. If the players are spending a bunch of time shopping, things aren't dangerous enough.

If knowledge of the character's wealth would affect a situation, the skill with this trapping may modify whatever other skill is being used, either positive or negative. (And if you don't believe that having a lot of money can negatively affect a situation, you've never applied for a student loan.)

**Theme:** Status, social connections, livelihood.

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Use a skill with the Willpower trapping to defend against attempts to get inside the character's head. This includes fear, intimidation, and mesmerism, and efforts to assess the character's aspects. In addition, this trapping is also used to resist supernatural attacks against the character's psyche, such as mind control.

**Theme:** Discipline, self-control, social prowess.

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## WORKSPACE

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Workspaces are environments where a character can perform a certain type of work, such as a library, laboratory, manufactory, mechanical workshop, and so forth. Attaching the Workspace trapping to a skill provides the character with such a facility of a quality equal to the skill's rating. This trapping isn't so much about a character's ability to use such a facility - that's better represented by the Research, Craft, and Repair trappings - but about his easy access to, and the utility of, such a facility. If coupled with the Wealth trapping, the workspace in question is likely owned by the character; otherwise, it's probably just one that he can reliably use.

The quality of a workspace limits the obscurity of information that can be found there (see the Information trapping), or the quality of devices that can be made or fixed there (see the Craft and Repair trappings), depending on the skill's theme. Also see the Device Flaw for more on skills-as-equipment.

**Theme:** Academia, expertise, formal education, mechanical or scientific aptitude, personal wealth.

**Extraordinary Tier (or better):** The workspace can be used to make, fix, or improve

works equal to or less than the skill’s Power Tier, and relevant to its theme. For example, an Extraordinary Tier laboratory can be used to make or repair Mundane or Extraordinary Tier scientific devices.

# Extras and Drawbacks

Trappings paint a Unique skill in broad strokes, but Extras and Drawbacks fill in the details and help bring it to life. Extras are a trapping’s refinements and add to its total value.

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## — Extras —

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|                         |      |  |
|-------------------------|------|--|
| ## Extras Summary Table |      |  |
| Name                    | Cost | Description  |
| Psychic                 | +1   | The trapping operates through supernatural mental ability.                             |
| Range                   | +1   | The trapping’s effective range increases.  |
| Spray                   | +1   | The trapping affects multiple targets in the same zone simultaneously.                 |
| Unusual                 | +1   | The trapping operates by some non-standard principle appropriate to the skill’s theme. |
| Zone                    | +2   | The trapping affects all targets in a zone simultaneously (and indiscriminately).      |

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## Psychic (+1 skill point)

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The trapping works through sheer Strange mental ability. With this Extra, Social trappings don't require any actual interaction between the character and the target as long as they're in range, and Perception trappings don't rely on ordinary human senses. For example, a clairvoyancethemed Strange skill with Examine + Psychic would ignore any penalties due to poor visibility, but still be subject to whatever "psychic" penalties due to environment or circumstance the GM might see fit to impose. (This is highly dependent on context, though: If the skill's theme were telepathy instead of clairvoyance, Examine + Psychic would let the character read minds, not view an area remotely.)

The Psychic Extra removes the need for physical exertion implicitly required by trappings such as Dismantle or Physical Force. Even a character restrained by chains and a padlock could use Security + Psychic, for example, to pick the lock and free himself. When attached to trappings like Disguise and Hide, Psychic represents a forcible change in the observer's perception as opposed to a physical transformation. Observers without "minds," such as clockwork automatons, would therefore remain unaffected.

A skill with Convince + Psychic can be used to simulate mind control. Make an aspect maneuver against the target, using the standard rules for aspect maneuvers. If successful, put an aspect like "Under My Control" on the target. Your total effort on this roll is the difficulty for the target to remove the aspect (with an aspect maneuver of their own) and break free of your control. Until then, you can invoke the aspect for effect to control the target. The first tag's free, as usual, but after that it'll cost a Fate Point each time - paid to the target. This is expensive, of course, but no one ever said controlling minds would be easy.



It's up to the GM and player to determine what narrative effect the Psychic Extra might have as part of any other trappings. For instance, Minions + Psychic could mean servile psychokinetic constructs, or it could simply remove the need to contact your Minions by conventional means: Instead of sending a messenger, you send a telepathic message.

If one of a skill's trappings has the Psychic Extra, every trapping under that skill must also have it. In other words, a skill can't be just partially Psychic - it's all or nothing.

EXAMPLES: Telepathy (Conversation + Psychic), Mind Reading (Insight + Psychic), Psychic Persuasion (Convince + Psychic), Mind Blast (Menace + Psychic), Mental Illusions (Disguise + Unusual: Illusion + Range + Psychic).

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## Range (+1 skill point)

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The trapping's effective range increases. If it's a trapping that normally only affects the user, like Disguise, the Range Extra turns the skill into one that affects other targets, as long as they're in the same zone as the character. If the trapping normally only affects the character who uses it, such as Disguise, it can be applied to a target within the same zone. If the trapping is normally used against other targets but has no inherent range, such as Strike, it gains a range of 1 zone. If it already has range of 1 zone or more, such as Shoot, increase its range by +2 zones. Range can be taken more than once on a single trapping.

EXAMPLES: Stretching (Physical Force + Range), Telekinesis (Physical Force + Range + Psychic), Clairvoyance (Examine + Range x2 + Psychic), Keen Eyesight (Notice + Range x2)

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## Spray (+1 skill point)

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With this Extra, a trapping can be applied against multiple targets in a single exchange. If the trapping is used offensively, roll your skill as normal, then take a penalty of -1 per target, if you have two or more targets. For example, if you have three targets and your total effort is +6, each target only has to get a +3 or better to avoid taking stress. Otherwise, spend 1 shift per additional target affected. All targets must be in the same zone.

EXAMPLES: Mystical Armor (Parry + Spray), Machine Gun (Shoot + Spray), Miniature Aero-Platforms (Move + Unusual: Flight + Spray)

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## Unusual (+1 skill point)

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The trapping operates by some non-standard principle appropriate to the theme of the skill, or gains some minor additional functionality. This is kind of a catch-all Extra for a trapping that can do a weird thing that is hard to peg down. If an effect doesn't fit neatly into any other category of Extra, make it Unusual.

The Unusual Extra can be added to a trapping to eliminate any gear or preparation it might require, such as Disguise + Unusual: Illusion to cloak the character in a magical disguise, or Craft + Unusual: Instant assembly to create a machine from its component parts without using any tools to put them together.

EXAMPLES: Shield (Parry + Unusual: Affects ranged attacks), Flight (Move + Unusual: Flight), X-Ray Vision (Examine + Unusual: Through walls), Invisibility (Hide + Unusual: Invisibility), Instantaneous Teleportation (Leap + Unusual: Doesn't pass through intervening space), Create Illusion (Disguise + Unusual: Illusion + Range)

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## Zone (+2 skill points)

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The trapping affects everyone in a zone. If used as an attack, roll your skill once; each target in the zone defends against your total effort. Otherwise, roll your skill and apply it to all targets in the zone. If the trapping doesn't work at range, it automatically affects everyone in your zone. If it would make sense for the skill to affect yourself as well, such as a swarm of clockwork locusts that attack everything in the area indiscriminately, then it does. To avoid such a fate in these circumstances, take the Unusual Extra.

EXAMPLES: Fireball (Shoot + Zone), Aero-Platform (Move + Unusual: Flight + Zone), Force Bubble (Resist Damage + Zone), Fear Aura (Menace + Zone)

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## — Drawbacks —

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Drawbacks come in two main categories. One is aspectrelated Drawbacks, which involve sacrificing your Free aspects in exchange for Complications and Convictions. The other is Flaws (Minor and Major), which define a skill's boundaries and can reduce its total value. Every Unique skill in the Extraordinary Tier must have an accompanying Complication or Conviction aspect, while every Strange skill (of any Power Tier) requires a Drawback of any kind. Drawbacks on a skill provide a 1-point discount if a Minor Drawback or a 2-point discount if a Major Drawback. The final cost of a skill can never be reduced below its rating. If a Drawback on a Unique or Strange skill isn't genuinely disadvantageous or doesn't fit with the skill's theme, it's not a Drawback.

| ## Drawbacks Summary Table ||

| Aspect | Description |

| Complication | A nuisance (Minor) or recurring problem (Major) in the character's life |

| Conviction | An additional Conviction aspect |

| Flaw Description | |

| Charges | Skill can be used a limited number of times per scene (Minor) or session (Major) |

| Delay | Skill takes time or effort (Minor) or both (Major) to activate |

| Focus | Character needs a device (Minor), possibly breakable (Major), to use the skill |

| Snag | Skill's functionality is reduced occasionally (Minor) or frequently (Major) |

| Taxing | Player must spend a Fate Point each time the skill is used |

| Transform | Skill requires a brief (Minor) or lengthy (Major) transformation before it can be used |

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## **Aspect: Complication (Minor or Major)**

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One of the character's Free aspects becomes a Complication aspect. Complications come in two degrees of severity, Minor and Major. A Minor Complication is a persistent nuisance, something that crops up now and then to cause trouble for the character. A Major Complication, however, is just what it sounds like: a serious problem in the character's life, and a source of constant struggle. When a Major Complication is compelled, the compel starts at two Fate Points.

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## **Aspect: Conviction (Major)**

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One of the character's Free aspects becomes another Conviction aspect.

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## **Flaw: Charges (Minor or Major)**

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A Strange skill with Charges can only be used a limited number of times before being replenished. Examples include a ghostly revolver, an elixir with limited doses, or a magical incantation that gradually disappears from the speaker's mind each time it's

uttered. A skill with Minor Charges can be used a number of times per scene equal to its rating, so a Fair (+2) skill with the Charges Flaw could be used twice in a scene. As a Major Flaw, the skill's uses are limited per session instead of per scene. To reflect a skill that requires lengthy preparation or delays between uses, use Delay. For example, if that ghostly revolver has Minor Charges, but some sort of occult ritual is required to load it with ectoplasm first, the ritual is a form of the Delay Flaw.

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## **Flaw: Delay (Minor or Major)**

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A Strange skill with the Delay Flaw requires additional time to activate or be made available to use. This could be a technological device that needs to be charged, a potion that requires lengthy preparation before it can be consumed, or a skill that can't be used unless the character meditates for a while first. A Delay time of A Full Action/A Few Moments is a Minor Flaw. The character has to essentially lose a Turn to activating the skill, and can't take any other actions, such as using a secondary skill, in the interim. A Delay of Two Rounds/Half a Minute or longer is a Major Flaw. (See the Time Table in Time and Space.)

If the Delay requires an action that can be interrupted, such as cranking an electro-static discharge cannon, then doing so also requires the Delay to start all over again.

By default, Delay's meant for "constant" abilities that, once turned on, stay on. If the skill instead requires A Few Moments or more every time it's used, that's a Major Flaw. If it requires more than A Few Moments to Activate, and then once it's on the character still requires A Few Moments per use, that's two Activation Flaws: one to turn it on, and one for each use.

Compare this with Charges, which limits the number of times a skill can be used on a per-scene basis. Combining these two Flaws can create an ability which, for example,

takes a long time to prepare, and once it's available can only be used a certain number of times, such as that electro-static discharge cannon. First it has to be cranked for A Few Minutes (a Major Delay), and then once that's been done there's only so much electro-static energy available (Major Charges).

---

## **Flaw: Focus (Minor or Major)**

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The Focus Flaw means that the skill is external to the character. Without the Focus, the character can't use the skill. Taken as a Major Flaw, the skill must have an accompanying aspect, such as "Steam-Powered Armor," "Utility Belt," "Scientific Gadgetry," or "The Eye of Obodobo." As a Minor Flaw, Focus has no affect on the character's aspects.

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## **Flaw: Snag (Minor or Major)**

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A Snag is a limitation of some kind, although that limitation can be just about anything (as long as it's actually limiting, of course). These aren't aspects - just boundaries around the skill's utility. For example:

- Only works during the day (Minor)
- Only works at night (Minor)
- Only works on ferrous metal (Minor)
- Only works on animals (Minor)
- Only works on gold (Major)
- Can't consciously activate (alternately, deactivate) (Major)
- No access to normal senses while using the skill (Major)
- Only works during a full moon (Major)
- Can't use any other Strange skills while this one is active (Major)
- Can't move while this skill is active (Minor for a defensive physical skill or Major)

for an offensive physical skill, but probably isn't worth anything otherwise)

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## **Flaw: Taxing (Major)**

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The Taxing Flaw is for a skill that requires a great investment of effort, is of limited use, or that just isn't especially reliable - when it works, it's a big deal for the character's story. In mechanical terms, the skill requires a Fate Point to activate each time it's used. Taxing always counts as a Major Drawback.

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## **Flaw: Transform (Minor or Major)**

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A skill with this Flaw is only available to the character after he undergoes some sort of dramatic physical or mental transformation. This process takes time - Full Action/A Few Moments for a Minor Transform, or longer for a Major Transform. Examples include drinking an elixir that turns you into a monster, metamorphosing into an animal, or manifesting an ectoplasmic aura.

Once the transformation is complete, the player replaces one of the character's Free aspects to reflect the nature of the character's change. For example, a Strange skill called Fire Giant with the Transform Flaw might replace the character's "Gregarious and Outgoing" aspect with "Towering Inferno."

Ordinarily, the Free aspect to be replaced is chosen and the replacement aspect defined when this Flaw is taken. The character always loses access to the same Free aspect and gains the same replacement aspect whenever he Transforms. The exception is if the Strange skill has the Variable trapping, in which case the player may define the replacement aspect each time the transformation occurs. If multiple Strange skills have this Flaw, they can share the same transformation, but each one replaces an additional Free aspect.

If the Transform can be interrupted or prevented, or relies on a condition that isn't fully under the character's control (such as losing one's temper in an unseemly manner), that's a Snag in addition to the Transform.

# Sample Unique Skills

Because Unique skills so often derive from a character's occupation or lifestyle, the examples provided below are organized by Social Class. In parentheses following each skill's name is its total trapping cost; add that to its rating to determine its total cost in skill points. Below that are its trappings and Extras (and the value of each), one lifestyle-appropriate Complication or Conviction aspect, and some italicized explanatory notes.

While all of these Unique skills are in the Mundane Tier, there's nothing stopping you from elevating them to the Extraordinary Tier. Also keep in mind that this is hardly an exhaustive list, nor are these the definitive versions of these Unique skills.

For a detailed treatment of these Social Classes, including example aspects for each one, see *All Things Right and Proper*.

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## — Under Class —

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### Beggar (7)

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Networking, Information, Conversation, Guile, Inspire, Environment [Urban]

Minor Complication (-1): Living Hand to Mouth

Your prospects of eating today rest on your ability to make a good impression, sincere or otherwise. At times you address entire crowds of passers-by, hoping to soften their hearts and loosen their purse strings. And when all that fails, you can find a crust of bread in the dustbin.

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## Pickpocket (5)

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Networking, Information, Dexterity, Hide (2), Skulk (2), Notice (1)

Minor Complication (-1): Artfully Dodging the Law

You make your living on the streets, relieving others of their excess coinage, watches, silk scarves, and whatever else you can purloin when they're not paying attention. Thanks to others of your kind, you usually have a pretty good idea what the word on the street is - and when they can't help you can probably see it coming.

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## Lady of the Night (3)

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Networking, Information, Conversation, Convince, Insight, Environment [Urban]

Conviction (-2): Whatever It Takes to Survive

The world's oldest profession is alive and well on the streets of Whitechapel. To earn your keep, you've learned to be persuasive and size up potential clientele quickly. It's a harsh life, but you aren't left with many options.

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# — Working Class —

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## Police Officer (3)

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Networking, Information, Environment [Urban], Examine, Notice, Menace (1)

Minor Complication (-1): Answers to Superiors in the Department

You can rely on your training to investigate crime scenes, spot clues, navigate the streets of London, stare down a criminal, and gather information from your contacts on the street.

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## Servant (2)

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Networking, Information, Notice, Conversation, Insight

Minor Complication (-1): My Master's Bidding

Yours is a life of servitude. Like any good servant, you're adept at anticipating your master's needs, sometimes before he's even aware of them himself. You've also learned the fine art of sycophancy and regularly gossip with others of your station about the goings-on upstairs.

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## Carpenter (4)

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Networking, Information, Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Physical Force

Minor Complication (-1): A Life of Sweat and Toil

You're an adept craftsman, and your daily labors have left you with bulging muscles and a keen eye for detail. You also have connections in the Worshipful Company of Carpenters.

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## — Middle Class —

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### Physician (4)

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Networking, Information, Examine, Research, Treatment [Physical], Workspace

Conviction (-2): The Hippocratic Oath

As a practicing physician, you know a great deal about the workings of the human body and have a proper facility at which to treat your patients.

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### Barrister (4)

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Networking, Information, Convince, Inspire, Insight

Conviction (-2): My Client's Interests

Your courtroom experience makes you a persuasive speaker with a ready knowledge of the law. You're also a good judge of character, and more than capable of confounding your opposition in a debate.

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## Clergyman (6)

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Networking, Information, Inspire, Convince, Conversation, Treatment [Mental]

Conviction (-2): Doing the Lord's Work

You've given your life - or most of it - in service to the Church and God. You have both a strong theological education and a talent for preaching to the masses, and many in your flock come to you for counsel.

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## — Upper Class —

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### Knight of the Realm (13)

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Networking, Information, Willpower, Wealth, Influence, Esteem, Stress Capacity [Reputation], Minions

Conviction (-2): Rule, Britannia!

You've distinguished yourself in service to the Queen - or you've paid to make it seem as if you have. Regardless, you are a respected member of society, capable of damaging reputations and protecting your own. As part of your title, you have an estate, money, and a bevy of servants at your beck and call.

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### Wealthy Socialite (17)

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Networking, Information, Wealth, Influence + Spray (+1), Stress Capacity [Reputation], Esteem, Guile, Initiative [Social], Treatment [Social]

Minor Complication (-1): What Goes Around, Comes Around

You're among the idle rich, possessed of wealth and status but little in the way of professional ambition beyond being the center of attention at parties. Whatever gossip may be circulating in your social circles, you've either heard it first or started it yourself - sometimes several rumors at once, if you're in the mood.

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## Archbishop of York (26)

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Networking, Information, Influence, Inspire, Minions, Wealth, Initiative [Social], Initiative [Mental], Esteem, Stress Capacity [Reputation], Stress Capacity [Composure], Willpower

Minor Complication (-1): A Trail of Enemies in my Wake

For you, the clergy long ago stopped being about serving God. As an Archbishop, you wield impressive political power and command a personal retinue of underlings. Your status enables you to make or break careers with a few carefully chosen words to the right people while remaining above the fray yourself.

# Sample Strange Skills

The Strange skills below are organized by Archetype. As with the example Unique skills, these are merely illustrations of a few Strange skills that may be appropriate for any given Archetype. Obviously, there's a lot of room for your own ideas, and few of the skills listed below are necessarily exclusive to the Archetype under which they appear.

Unlike the Unique skills, each of these Strange skills includes a Power Tier, but only to provide an example. None of these Tiers is mandatory in the slightest.

For a detailed treatment of these Archetypes, including example aspects for each one, see Archetypes.

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## — Adept —

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### IRON ROBE STYLE (2)

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Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Resist Damage, Willpower

Minor Delay (-1): A Full Action/A Few Moments

As part of your studies in the Orient, you mastered an esoteric breathing technique that renders your flesh as resilient as iron.

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### FLYING CRANE TECHNIQUE (8)

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Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Leap, Strike, Dodge, Initiative [Physical]

Minor Complication (-1): Enemies of the Flying Crane Clan

This Oriental boxing style emphasizes flying kicks, movement, and speed.

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## THE VOICE OF RA (8)

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Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Shoot + Unusual: Sonic (+1), Convince + Zone (+2), Inspire + Zone (+2)

Minor Complication (-1): Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely

This mystical discipline of ancient Egypt gives you supernatural powers of persuasion and command - and when that doesn't work, you can level a building with a single shout.

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## — Alien —

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## ARGONIAN VISION (8)

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Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Examine + Unusual: See through solid objects (+1), Shoot + Unusual: Invisible (+1)

Minor Snag (-1): Examine can't see through lead

The high nitrogen content of Earth's atmosphere has wrought many changes in your Argonian physiology, including the ability to see through solid objects or cause them to burst into flame.

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## MARTIAN METAMORPHOSIS (7)

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Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Disguise + Unusual: Shapeshift (+1), Skulk, Hide, Variable [Session] x2

Minor Snag (-1): Variable trappings limited to form taken

Like all Martians, you are able to alter your appearance, assume other forms, and turn invisible.

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## JUPITERIAN BODY (15)

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Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)

Stress Capacity [Physical], Resist Damage, Physical Force, Strike + Zone (+2), Move + Unusual: Flight (+1)

Minor Complication (-1): Freakishly Gigantic Being From Another World

Your enormous alien form - roughly the size of a hot-air balloon, with a similar form of



locomotion - may shock onlookers, but the low gravity of this planet makes you a physical powerhouse capable of profound destruction.

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## — Anachronist —

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### ELECTRO-STATIC DISCHARGE CANNON (1)

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Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Shoot + Unusual: Ignores metallic and other conductive forms of protection (+1), Menace + Range + Zone (+3) Minor Focus (-1)

Major Delay (-2): Takes A Few Minutes to prepare skill for use between scenes

Minor Charges (-1): Use a number of times per scene equal to skill rating

This unusual weapon consists of a large oak-shielded metallic tube connected by cables to a backpack, which features a hand crank and an internal mechanism for building up a static-electric charge. When fully charged, the cannon can fire a few bolts of electricity in a terrifying display before requiring another round of cranking.

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### SCIENTIFIC GENIUS (9)

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Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Workspace, Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Information, Research, Treatment [Physical]

Conviction (-2): “And to think those fools laughed at me in Vienna!”

You are an expert in various scientific disciplines, from mechanics to chemistry to medicine.

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## CLOCKWORK WINGS (3)

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Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh) Move + Unusual: Flight (+1), Dodge, Parry Minor Focus (-1)

Major Delay (-2): Takes A Few Minutes to wind up before skill can be used

Minor Snag (-1): Dodge can only be used if airborne

Once wound, this device enables the wearer to fly with remarkable speed and agility, and they're durable enough to deflect blows (should it come to that).

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## — Artificial —

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## MAN OF IRON (9)

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Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Physical Force, Resist Damage, Menace, Willpower

Minor Complication (-1): Heavy Iron Body

As an animate construct of iron, you possess incredible strength and resilience to damage. Although you're sentient, your wondrous mechanical brain is so radically different from the human mind that it's virtually impervious to psychic effects such as illusion or mind reading.

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## **E UNUM PLURIBUS (0)**

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Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh) Minions + Unusual: Arrive immediately (+1)

Major Snag (-2): Skill can only yield a maximum of two Minions

Minor Transform (-1): Replace an aspect with "One-Armed" if one Minion and "Dis-Armed" if two

Your automechanical arms have their own computational brains and can be detached to operate remotely.

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## **AUTOMECHANICAL PROGRAMMING (8)**

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Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh) Variable [Session] x2, Variable [Scene] x2

Minor Focus (-1): Babbage Computational punch-card deck

Major Delay (-2): Each Variable trapping takes A Few Minutes to be defined

Minor Snag (-1): Variable trappings limited to capabilities of chassis

Given the right punch-card deck and a few minutes to spare, your Babbage Computational Brain can be reprogrammed to suit the situation at hand.

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# — Faerie —

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## FAERIE SWARM (11)

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Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Minions + Unusual: Arrive immediately (+1), Physical Force + Range (+1), Menace + Spray (+1), Strike

Major Complication (-2): Faerie Mischief

You command a small army of tiny faeries that are eager to do your bidding, especially where mortals are involved. They can lift objects, frighten or harm your enemies, or just show up and be useful. If given the opportunity, however, they'll find opportunities to cause trouble, just for fun.

---

## GOSSAMER WINGS (3)

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Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Move + Unusual: Flight (+1), Dodge

Minor Snag (-1): Dodge can only be used when airborne

You have a pair of beautiful, shimmering wings resembling those of a dragonfly. In defiance of physics and reason, they allow you to flit about effortlessly.

---

## CHANGELING DECEIT (2)

---

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Disguise + Unusual: Shapeshift (+1), Guile

Minor Snag (-1): Does not work against other faeries

Minor Snag (-1): Disguise vanishes for rest of scene if touched by iron

You are able to change your appearance at will and lie with perfect sincerity.

---

## Faerie Glamour (10)

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*Power Tier: Any*

*Menace + Range + Unusual: Deals Physical consequences (+2), > Parry + Unusual: Illusion (+1), Disguise + Range + Unusual: Illusion (+2)*

*Minor Snag (-1): Doesn't work against the Fae*

*Minor Snag (-1): Trappings with Unusual: Illusion Extra instantly dispelled by the touch of iron*

*The Fae may attack and defend with frightening and grotesque illusions, which, as long as the victim fails to recognize them as real, inflict very real wounds, injuries which are unaffected by any normal defense. (In mechanical terms, the Menace trapping deals Composure stress but Physical consequences.) The faerie can also raise illusory disguises, changing appearance for a time, and they can create wild or*

*prosaic illusions to confuse mortal senses, but these melt away if they come into contact with iron.*

---

## — Godling —

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### GOD OF STRENGTH (9)

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Power Tier: Godlike (-6 Refresh)

Physical Force, Leap, Resist Damage [Physical], Stress Capacity [Health], Willpower

Conviction (-2): Might Makes Right

Your divine physical prowess is matched only by your equally divine toughness. Few, if any, on Earth can challenge you when it comes to feats of strength.

---

### DIVINE LUCK (11)

---

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Dodge, Environment [Wilderness], Environment [Urban], Notice, Resist Damage

Conviction (-2): Laughing in the Face of Danger

Things just seem to have a way of working out for you. Bullets and blows often miss you by a hair's breadth, and when they do connect they usually deal only minor injuries.

Whether lost in the woods or the city, you always manage to find your way without starving or getting lost, and you often find yourself in the right place at the right time to spot what others miss.

---

## COMMANDING PRESENCE (11)

---

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)

Conversation + Zone (+2), Convince + Zone (+2), Menace + Zone (+2), Willpower

Conviction (-2): “Look upon me, ye mortals, and despair!”

As a Godling, your mere presence is enough to cow the average mortal. Everywhere you go, people like you, fear you, or follow your commands, as you please.

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— **Changed** —

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## TEST SUBJECT (3)

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Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure]

Minor Complication (-1): Distrusts Scientists

As a result of being a frequent test subject for a dozen or more unscrupulous scientists,

your body and mind are remarkably resistant to harm.

---

## THE BEAST WITHIN (1)

---

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh) Physical Force, Menace, Skulk

Minor Focus (-1): Potion

Major Transform (-2): Transformation requires A Few Minutes; replace one aspect with “Violent Sociopath”

Taxing (-2): Spend a Fate Point to transform back

After downing a vial of foul-tasting liquid, you unleash your inner beast, transforming into a hulking, intimidating brute who revels in anti-social acts of all kinds (but mostly the violent kinds).

---

## FELINE REFLEXES (4)

---

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh) Move, Dodge, Initiative [Physical]

Minor Complication (-1): Shocking Appearance

The mix of human and jaguar genetic material in your body grants you an amazing reaction time and sprint speed.



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# — Human Oddity —

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## HUMAN PRETZEL (6)

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Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Dexterity, Dodge, Move + Unusual: Tight squeeze (+1)

Major Delay (-2): Move takes A Few Minutes

Your world-class contortionism skills make you frustratingly nimble and enable you to move through small spaces that others would find impassable.

---

## PROTEAN FLESH (0)

---

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Disguise + Unusual: Shapeshifting (+1)

Minor Focus (-1): Polymorphic Tonic

Minor Transform (-1): Transformation requires A Full Action/A Few Moments; replace one aspect with “The Perfect Disguise”

Major Charges (-2): Use skill a number of times per session equal to skill rating

Minor Snag (-1): Disguise lasts for one scene

With an injection of Dr. Monroe's polymorphic tonic, you're able to organize and make conscious the properties of your weird physiology to convincingly assume the appearance of someone else.

---

## GROTESQUE ELONGATION (12)

---

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Physical Force + Range x3 [5 zones] (+3), Resist Damage, Move, Strike + Spray (+1)

Conviction (-2): The Freak Shall Inherit the Earth

Minor Snag (-1): Resist Damage applies only against bludgeons

You can stretch and twist your body to incredible extremes. You can grab objects many yards away, lessen the impact of blows with your elastic body, take huge strides with elongated legs, and expand yourself to engulf several enemies at once.

---

## — Magus —

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---

## GRIP OF THE HUNDRED-HAND GIANT (15)

---

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Physical Force + Range x3 [5 zones] (+3), Strike + Range x3 [5 zones] (+3), Resist Damage

Major Focus (-2): The Amulet of Marcus Fontius the Elder

This spell conjures an invisible hand of force capable of lifting heavy objects, attacking enemies, or shielding the magus from attacks.

---

## **FAR STEP (3)**

---

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)

Leap + Unusual: Doesn't cross intervening space (+1), Dodge

Profane (-2): Invest 4 Fate Points to use this skill in a scene

By muttering an incantation, you can suddenly be in the other room - or in Australia.

---

## **HELM OF MINERVA (9)**

---

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Notice, Examine, Insight, Willpower, Initiative [Mental], Convince

Major Focus (-2): Helm of Minerva

This elaborate headgear confers all manner of supernatural abilities on the wearer, including uncanny powers of perception, mental fortitude, and persuasive speech.

---

## **HELLFIRE (6)**

---

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Shoot, Menace, Variable [Session] x4

Profane (-2): Invest 2 Fate Points to use this skill in a scene

Minor Delay (-1): Full Action/A Few Moments

Minor Sang (-1): Variable trappings can only be used to add Extras

You conjure an explosive blast to harm or frighten your enemies.

---

## — Mutant —

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### CONCUSSIVE EYE BEAMS (0)

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Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Shoot + Range + Spray (+2)

Minor Focus (-1): Crystal Spectacles

Major Snag (-2): No conscious control over Eye Beams without Crystal Spectacles

Whenever you open your eyes and lift your specially crafted crystal spectacles, whatever you're looking at tends to explode.

---

## ACCELERATED HEALING (4)

---

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Resist Damage, Treatment [Physical] + Unusual: No tools required (+1)

Minor Snag (-1): Can only use Treatment on self

Your flesh and bone knit themselves together far faster than Nature intended.

---

## GIGANTIC SIZE (12)

---

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Physical Strength, Resist Damage, Strike + Zone (+2) Minor Transform (-1): Full Action/A Few Moments; replace one aspect with “Towering Giant”

Your towering stature makes you stronger, harder to hurt, and capable of hitting multiple targets at once with a single sweep of your arm.

---

## FORCEFUL TELEPATHY (3)

---

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Convince + Psychic (+1), Insight + Psychic (+1)

Conviction (-2): The Truth Will Out

You peer inside the target’s mind to see what makes him tick, gently guide his actions,

or outright take control of his mind.

---

## — Super-Normal —

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### STRENGTH TRAINING (7)

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Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Physical Force, Leap, Resist Damage

Minor Complication (-1): “It seems that I don’t know my own strength!”

The character’s phenomenal strength lets her leap impressive distances, deliver deadly blows in hand-to-hand combat, and shrug off minor damage.

---

### MAN OF ACTION (15)

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Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Leap, Climb, Move, Shoot, Strike, Dodge, Parry, Initiative [Physical]

Conviction (-2): Honor Before Victory

A lifetime of training and adventure has forged you into a true Man of Action, able to handle whatever dangers you face with impressive aplomb.

---

## MISTRESS OF ALL PURSUITS (5)

---

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Languages, Willpower, Variable [Session] x2

Minor Complication (-1): Scarred by Adventure and Horror

You've seen and learned much in your time as a globetrotting adventuress, making you an unpredictable threat in any situation.

# Gifts

Gifts represent areas of special training, talent, or similar capability within the purview of a single skill. Mechanically speaking, this is reflected by a small bonus or a bit of rulesbending in the character's favor. Described below are the six different types of Gifts, each of which costs 1 Refresh to buy.

Every character starts with one Gift for free.

| GIFT NAME        | DESCRIPTION  |
|------------------|--|
| Companion        | A “helper” NPC loyal to the character.                                       |
| Equipment        | Important or special gear of some kind.                                      |
| Impact           | Declare an aspect with the skill for free on a roll that succeeds with spin. |
| Signature Aspect | One aspect can be invoked once per scene for free.                           |
| Skilled          | +5 skill points.   |
| Theme            | A variety of circumstantial benefits spread among three connected skills.    |

---

## — Companion —

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The character has a sidekick, valet, personal secretary, manservant, clockwork butler, fetch, or some other “helper” character. The Companion defaults to Average (+1) quality, with one Average (+1) skill, 2 stress boxes in each stress track, and one Trifling consequence. A Companion requires the expenditure of a Fate Point to act alone. Otherwise, he or she attaches to the character as a Minion would, and provides the character with a +1 bonus to any skills the two share in common. In addition, each Companion automatically comes with three improvements, chosen from the list below. Unless otherwise indicated, an improvement can be taken more than once for the same Companion.

Every time this Gift is taken, it can be used to either create a new Companion or provide another three improvements to any existing Companions.



- Aspect: The Companion gains an aspect (but no Fate Points).
- Quality: Increase the Companion's quality by +1, to a maximum of Good (+3). A Fair (+2) Companion has one Average (+1) skill, one Fair (+2) skill, 3 boxes in one stress track and 2 boxes in the other two, and a Good (+3) Companion has one Average (+1) skill, one Fair (+2) skill, one Good (+3) skill, and 3 boxes in each stress track.
- Communication: The character and the Companion have a special mode of communication in keeping with their capabilities. This could be a portable wireless telegraph, a high-powered magnesium Aldus lamp projected into the night sky, a psychic link, or whatever else is within reason for the character. Attempts to break this communication link between the two are made against a difficulty of 2 + the Companion's quality.
- Independent: The Companion can act on their own without needing to spend a Fate Point, unless the Companion's sent off on a mission of significant story importance (comparable with something a PC might do, for example). While the Companion is so separated, they have access to the main character's Fate Points and two of their aspects relevant to their bond.
- Keeping Up: If the main character has some unusual form of locomotion, the Companion can somehow follow along without getting left behind.
- Skilled: The Companion gains 3 skill points. None of a Companion's skill ratings can exceed his or her quality.
- Gifted: The Companion gains one of the following Gifts: Equipment, Impact, or Theme. This improvement can't be taken more than twice per Companion.
- Empowered: Upgrade the Power Tier of one of the Companion's skills. The Companion receives Tier Benefits from this skill the same way characters do. Empowered counts as two improvements.
- Numerous: Each time this improvement is taken, the main character gains one additional Companion.
- Summonable: The Companion can show up at the main character's beck and call without needing to resort to conventional means. This takes One Minute (see the Time Table in Time and Space) by default; for a Fate Point, the Companion arrives

in An Instant. The Companion automatically vanishes at the end of the scene.

---

## — Gifts and Flaws —

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*As an optional rule for those groups who want a little more nuance in their Gifts, you can apply certain Drawbacks to Companion and Equipment Gifts to represent allies or gear that can sometimes hinder as much as they help. Maybe that doorman's gambling debts make him susceptible to bribes, or those fancy range-finding goggles of yours seem to work only when they feel like it.*

*Whereas a Drawback on a skill reduces its cost by one or two points, if this option is used, a Minor or Major Drawback on a Companion or Equipment Gift provides an additional improvement.*

*Applying a Complication aspect to a Companion or piece of Equipment adds an aspect to it, but one with a predominantly negative or troublesome slant. Conviction and Weakness Drawbacks, however, are too character-specific to be applied to something as external as Companions or Equipment.*

*Snags are great for limiting the usual scope of Companions or Equipment, such as mail armor that doesn't offer protection against firearms or a sidekick who doesn't speak English. Delay and Taxing can be suitable for many types of Equipment, but usually don't make much sense when it comes to Companions.*

*Most other Flaws don't work quite as well and probably shouldn't be applied to Companions or Equipment (and it should go without saying that the Focus Flaw can't be applied to Equipment), but the ultimate call on that is up to the GM and your group. GMs should*

*carefully consider whether to use this optional rule. It's great for certain situations, but is potentially open to abuse as well.*

---

## — Equipment —

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The character has an important or special piece of mundane (or mostly mundane) equipment. When this Gift is taken, the piece of equipment gains three of the following improvements. Every time this Gift is taken, it can be used to either create a new piece of equipment or provide another three improvements to any existing equipment.

- Aspect: The piece of equipment gains an aspect (but no Fate Points).
- Deadly: The equipment acts as a Weapon 1 for one type of stress (Health, Composure, or Reputation). This bonus can't do more than double the stress dealt by an attack. For example, if a weapon with Weapon 2 is used for an attack that succeeds by 1 shift, the attack does 2 stress, not 3. This improvement can be taken up to three times on a single piece of equipment, providing a maximum of Weapon 3. Only the highest Weapon value from any one piece of equipment can apply at a time.
- Well-Made: The equipment grants a +1 bonus to one skill relevant to its operation, chosen when this improvement is taken. This counts as two improvements, and can only be taken a maximum of three times on a single piece of equipment.
- Empowered: The equipment artificially boosts the Power Tier of one skill. Examples include an enchanted sword that lets its wielder fight as if his Arms skill were in the Supernatural Tier, or a brainwave-enhancing skullcap that gives anyone who wears it Extraordinary Tier Academics. If the character's skill is already in a higher Power Tier, use either his own Power Tier or the equipment's, whichever is higher. (In other words, multiple Power Tiers don't "stack.") Each step

above the Mundane Tier counts as four improvements.

- Alternate Use: The equipment lets the wielder use one skill in place of another in limited circumstances.
- Protective: The equipment grants Armor 1 against one type of stress (Health, Composure, or Reputation) in a manner appropriate to the Equipment. This improvement can be taken up to three times on a single piece of equipment, providing a maximum of Armor 3. Only the highest Armor value from any one piece of equipment can apply at a time.
- Rugged: The equipment adds one stress box to one of the owner's stress tracks (Health, Composure, or Reputation). This improvement can only be taken a maximum of three times on a single piece of equipment. In order to take this improvement, the equipment must be a suit of armor or some similarly protective item. Only the highest Rugged value from any one piece of equipment can apply at a time to any one stress track.
- Numerous: Each time this improvement is taken, it gives the character a duplicate of a previously defined piece of equipment.
- Essential: The equipment lets the owner take an additional Trifling consequence, usually Physical. This improvement can't be taken more than twice on the same piece of equipment. In order to take this improvement, the equipment must be a suit of armor or some similarly protective item. Having multiple pieces of equipment with this improvement does not increase this benefit.

---

## — Skill, Equipment, or Aspect? —

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*As you can see, there are basically three ways to represent a gadget using these rules: as a Strange skill, as an Equipment Gift, or simply as an aspect. So which is the right one to use? Any of them, really - it*

*just depends on what you want to do.*

*If it's a Wonder - some truly remarkable bit of gear like mechanical wings - or a supernatural artifact of some kind, make it a Strange skill. That'll give you the power and versatility to make something truly remarkable and/or outlandish.*

*If it's an exceptional but otherwise mundane item that's conceivably possible to create in the non-Strange world, it's probably best to make it an Equipment Gift. As an Equipment Gift, it won't give you any new abilities, really. It'll just make you better at things you can already do.*

*Or you can skip these routes entirely and just make it one of your personal aspects. For example, if you have an aspect of "My Father's Cavalry Sabre" to represent a family heirloom, you could invoke it when fencing, schmoozing with one of your father's old cavalry buddies, cutting a tough rope, or anything else where it might come in handy. But it would exist only in narrative terms - you'd have to spend a Fate Point to get any use out of it.*

*Probably the best option is to make your gadget either a Strange skill or an Equipment Gift, and devote an aspect to it, either a personal aspect or with the Aspect improvement. That way you can define it mechanically and concretely, if you go in for that sort of thing, plus you get added utility (and Fate Points) from it as an aspect.*

---

## — Impact —

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Choose one of your skills (whether Common, Unique or Strange). When you use that skill and obtain spin, you can declare a fragile aspect on yourself, your opponent, or the

scene (as appropriate) as a free action. EXAMPLES: Fisticuffs Impact, Resolve Impact, Investigation Impact.

---

## — Skilled —

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Receive another 5 skill points.

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## — Theme —

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Choose three skills (whether Common, Unique or Strange) that share a thematic connection, such as Athletics, Brawn, and Alertness (physical fitness) or Academics, Art, and Science (education). Each of these skills receives one (and only one) of the following benefits. This Gift can be purchased multiple times, but no skill can ever receive more than one benefit.

- A +1 bonus in narrow circumstances, such as +1 Athletics when jumping, +1 Firearms with Electrophorous Firing Pieces, or +1 Fisticuffs when outnumbered.
- A +2 bonus when using that skill to maneuver or Block.
- Use the skill in place of another skill in narrow circumstances, such as using Brawn instead of Athletics when chasing someone, using Firearms instead of Athletics to defend against ranged attacks, or using Occultism instead of Presence to orate.
- Ignore circumstantial or environmental penalties equal to or less than the skill's rating.

# Advancement

Progress, evolution, revolution - The PCs are constantly growing and developing as a result of their triumphs and misfortunes. In game terms, this advancement occurs after significant developments in the narrative: at the end of a chapter, story, or volume.

---

## — Chapters —

---

A chapter can generally be equated with a session of play, or with the resolution of a significant story element. The end of a chapter also provides an opportunity for the characters to evolve in response to what's just happened. This means one of the following:

- Swap two skills of adjacent skill ratings with each other, such as a Fair (+2) skill and an Average (+1) skill.
- Replace one Gift with another or, if you have the Refresh to spend, buy a new Gift.
- Earn one skill point.
- Rename a Free aspect.

Chapter advancements let you shift a character's focus to reflect the story so far, or just change something about the character that isn't working out as expected, like an aspect or skill. However, these alterations have to be reasonable within the context of the chapter. For example, if the chapter ends with the PCs in prison, one of them can't suddenly acquire a set of lockpicks or a Spark while they're in there.

In addition, if you refused a compel on one of your Conviction aspects during the chapter, you receive a second chapter advancement.

---

## — Stories —

---

A series of chapters - usually three or four sessions - constitutes a story. When a story ends, your character's Refresh increases by one. He also gets one of the following:

- One chapter advancement.
- One skill point.
- Rename a Conviction aspect.
- Upgrade the Power Tier of one skill, if you have the Refresh to spend.

As with a chapter advancement, any changes to the character should derive organically from the story itself.

With the end of a story usually comes the resolution of a major plotline. As a consequence, the characters have been through the wringer and are probably worse for wear.

If the character has a Grievous consequence at the end of a story, he can erase it and alter one of his aspects accordingly. For example, if your characters find herself with a Grievous consequence of "Shattered Faith in Mankind," you get to clear it - but you also have to change one of her personal aspects to reflect her newfound cynicism. Maybe her "Heroic Tendencies" are twisted into a belief that "The Only Person I Can Count On Is Myself."



But there's a silver lining: The character's Refresh increases by one. This is in addition to the standard point of Refresh received at the end of a story. However, this point of Refresh cannot be spent until the end of the next chapter or story.

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## — Volumes —

---

A string of connected stories makes up a volume. Perhaps the characters have been struggling to foil the machinations of a single Master Villain, finally confront him face-to-face, and emerge victorious (or not). Or maybe the link between the stories is a theme rather than a person, such as dealing with a rash of individuals around the globe who've been mutated into gigantic kaiju-style monsters by the fallout from some cosmic event. Whatever the case, the characters (and maybe even the world) will never be the same.

At the end of a volume, the character's Refresh increases by one and he can clear a Grievous consequence, as described above. He also gets all of the following:

- Two chapter advancements.
- One story advancement (which could be another chapter advancement, if the player's really into those).
- Rename a Conviction aspect, or turn a Free aspect into another Conviction aspect.

In addition, the group's allotment of Collateral consequences increases, starting with another Middling consequence. If the group already has four Middling consequences, add a third Grievous consequence instead. If the group already has three Grievous consequences, add a second Dire consequence instead.

The end of a volume signifies a major change in the campaign. You can think of it as

shifting gears, or moving up a weight class. The characters grow more powerful, but so do the threats they'll be facing in the future.

# Running the Game

It is the great goal of this book to provide you, the GM, with enough material and inspiration to run a truly fun and memorable Strange Fate game. This section offers some techniques and advice for leveraging the setting and its themes into play, and on taking full advantage of all the hooks and hints your players give you when building their character. It also contains rules and guidelines for interacting with the environment, setting scenes, and creating and playing the various antagonists (and occasionally, allies) the players will encounter, along with an extensive sampling of NPCs of every stripe. Go bravely, and let thy GM screen by thy armor.

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## — Time and Space —

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FATE handles both time and distance in abstract terms. The first is measured by steps on the Time Table; the second, by loosely defined areas called zones.

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## — The Time Table —

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Whenever a character does something, it takes a certain amount of time - anywhere from an instant for something like throwing a punch to a few days or more for conducting intensive academic research or forging an ensorcelled dagger.

The Time Table lists a wide range of time increments, from no time at all at the top to an eon at the bottom. Each of these is called a step. When speaking of taking less time than normal, we refer to that as steps up on the Time Table; taking longer than normal means taking steps down.

Where two values are given, the one before the slash is the time required in a conflict. Most actions in combat require just that - An Action - and can be combined with a supplemental action, which imposes a -1 penalty to the character's skill roll for the round, or a Free Action, which carries no penalty. Something that requires A Full Action, however, consumes a character's entire effort for the round - not even a Free Action can be taken with a Full Action.

| ## THE TIME TABLE             |
|-------------------------------|
| Free Action / No Time         |
| An Action / An Instant        |
| A Full Action / A Few Moments |
| Two Rounds / Half a Minute    |
| Three Rounds / A Minute       |
| A Conflict / A Few Minutes    |
| A Scene / 15 Minutes          |
| Half an Hour                  |
| An Hour                       |
|                               |

|                    |
|--------------------|
| A Few Hours        |
| An Afternoon       |
| A Day              |
| A Few Days         |
| A Week             |
| A Few Weeks        |
| A Month            |
| A Season           |
| Half a Year        |
| A Year             |
| A Few Years        |
| A Decade           |
| A Generation       |
| A Lifetime         |
| A Century          |
| Five Hundred Years |
| A Millennium       |
| An Eon             |

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## — Zones —

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Zones divide up the geography of a scene into intuitive areas of action. When you're in the same zone as someone else, you can have a civilized conversation, a fistfight, or any interaction that requires proximity. If you're a zone away from that person, you'll probably have to shout to communicate, and the only way you can engage them in combat is to throw or shoot something at them. If the distance separating you is two zones or greater, only firearms and other missile weapons can reach your enemy.

There are no hard-and-fast rules for how big or small a zone is - use your best judgment and settle on whatever makes sense for the scene. Generally speaking, you only need a few. For example, a scene that takes place on a hill could be divided into three zones: Hilltop, Hillside, and Base. Or you could get more detailed, if that's what the scene demands: The Big Rock, The Clearing, Eastern Hillside, Western Hillside, Riverside, Forest. Similarly, a house could be just that - a single zone - or it could be divided into multiple floors, each with its own collection of zones, such as Entry Foyer, Parlour, Main Hall, Stairway, Dining Room, and so forth. The various floorplans in Chapter 2, for example, make for great zone maps.

It's often a good idea to further distinguish a scene's zones with one or two aspects. For example, that Dining Room probably has a "Table and Chairs," and the Stairway could have "Creaky Third Step." The more detailed you get with zones and aspects, the more easily the players will be able to interact with and make use of the environment. To keep things straight, draw a series of circles on a piece of blank paper, labeled with their aspects.

By default, a character can move 1 zone as a supplemental action. Moving farther than that requires an Athletics roll, or a skill with an appropriate Mobility trapping. See the trapping descriptions for Climb, Leap, and Move for more detail.

Beyond common sense considerations such as two people needing to be in the same room to be able to have a discussion, only physical conflicts really demand zones.

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## — Border Values —

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Zones can also have factors that make crossing between them difficult - things like walls, locked doors, fences, moats, debris, rubble, or some other complication. These are represented by border values. Subtract the border value from the skill roll made to enter the zone, or, if the movement is a supplemental action, from whatever skill roll the character makes during the round.

For example, let's say Night Hag wants to drop down on a miscreant in an alley from the rooftop above. That's a movement from one zone (Rooftop) to another (Alley). The GM rules that the drop means a border value of 3. Since Night Hag's objective this round is to attack the criminal, the movement is a supplemental action, so she'll take a penalty of -3 to her Fisticuffs roll.

## Doing Things

Characters in your games are going to do a lot. For most things they do, there's no real need for

rules: They can stand, walk, talk, go shopping, and otherwise do normal things without needing to roll dice. They can even take actions that use their skills, like riding a horse or flying, without worrying about the dice. No, the dice only come out when things get interesting - when there's a challenge with meaningful consequences for both success and failure.

Generally speaking, when a character rolls the dice, it's a success if the result matches or exceeds the difficulty; otherwise, it's a failure. When the issue is simple, then this may be all that's necessary, but sometimes you also need to know how well a character did or did not do. For example, if a character rolls three higher than the target, that's better than rolling only one higher.

---

## — Interpreting Shifts —

---

*Let's say your roll succeeds easily, but you don't have a use for those excess shifts. What do they mean in terms of the narrative?*

*> **0 shifts:** Minimal success. Not bad, but not great either.*

*Complications may ensue.*

*> **1 shift:** Notable success. Your performance is solid and reliable, equal to the work of a true professional.*

*> **3 shifts:** Significant success. Your performance is impressive and masterful. Moreover, your roll generates spin, if you have a use for that.*

*> **5 shifts:** Potent success. Not only is your performance remarkable, it may carry some secondary benefit, such as a deeper insight into the situation at hand.*

*> **10+ shifts:** Incredible success. A success of this caliber is usually the result of applying a supernatural solution to a mundane task. Onlookers are likely to either give you a wide berth or tag along like eager puppies, as appropriate.*

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## — Effort, Shifts, and Effect —

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Accomplishing a task - climbing a wall, singing an aria, stabbing a sauropod - consists of three parts: your effort, the shifts you obtain, and your final effect.

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**Effort** The total of your roll plus your skill and any other modifiers, including bonuses from invoking aspects, is your effort. This will always be compared against a target number, be it Mediocre (+0) for an easy, everyday task, a higher static number for more difficult tasks, or an opposing party's effort.

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EXAMPLE: Augustus is setting a trap in a scrapyard. He uses his Good (+3) Underdweller skill to do this. As this is a static task, the GM rules that Augustus only needs to hit a target of Mediocre (+0) to succeed. After rolling the dice, adding his skill bonus, and spending a Fate Point to invoke his “Too Clever By Half” aspect, Augustus' total effort is Great (+4).

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### Shifts

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The margin by which your effort overcomes that target number is the number of shifts you've obtained on your roll. In a conflict, these shifts pretty much automatically go towards damaging your opponent, physically or otherwise, but in other circumstances shifts can be spent to achieve other goals. Sometimes the GM will spend shifts in accordance with what you've described, or sometimes you'll spend them yourself.

Among other things, shifts can be spent to:

- **Reduce time required:** Make the action take less time, usually one step on the



Time Table per shift.

- **Increase quality:** Improve the quality of the job done beyond the minimum required.
- **Increase subtlety:** Make the results of your action harder for someone else to detect.
- **Overflow:** In a conflict - usually physical combat - shifts in excess of what's needed to Take Out a group of Minions can be applied to another group of Minions. These excess shifts are referred to as Overflow. (See The Opposition for details.)

EXAMPLE: Augustus' Great (+4) effort vs. a Mediocre (+0) target gives him four shifts on his roll. The GM decides that the two factors at work here are how deadly the trap is and how long it takes to complete (A Few Hours by default). Augustus' player points out that how well-hidden it is will make a difference, too - if the pursuers can't see the trap, it'll take them by surprise. The GM agrees. Consequently, shifts can be spent to make the trap more effective, faster to set, and/or harder to detect. He can take a few hours to make a Great (+4) trap that has only Mediocre (+0) concealment, or a Fair (+2) trap with Average (+1) concealment that only takes an hour to build, or any other combination of those three factors and his 4 shifts.

There is no such thing as "negative shifts" - if the effort falls short of the target number, it's a failure, plain and simple. However, if that failure could reasonably be mitigated by taking more time with the task, the character can retroactively gain a +1 to the roll for each step down on the Time Table. As a rule of thumb, this is limited to a +4 bonus for four steps down. For example, if picking a lock should normally take about 15 minutes, the character could opt to spend the entire afternoon to gain +4 and overcome missing the roll by 4.

If the effort results in three or more shifts, it generates spin. Spin has different effects in different situations - for example, the Impact Gift uses spin to create an aspect - but it's

most important in conflicts. (See Conflicts, below, for more on this.)

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## Effect

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The number of shifts obtained and put directly towards your intention - i.e., what you were trying to get done in the first place - is your effect. For instance, in the example above, the main thing Augustus is trying to do is harm or discourage his pursuers, so shifts spent directly on the quality of his trap will be his effect.

EXAMPLE: Augustus chooses to make a trap with Average (+1) Stealth in An Hour (requiring him to spend 1 shift), which means that he has 2 shifts left over to spend on the trap's effect, which in this case is Fair (+2). When the Special Branch goons who are after him come upon the trap, Augustus' player will roll the trap's Average (+1) Stealth opposed by the goons' Alertness, then make an attack with its Fair (+2) Arms (the trap's effect). If they saw the trap, they defend with Athletics; otherwise, they defend as if their skill were Mediocre (+0).

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## — Setting Difficulties —

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*Sometimes it can seem tricky to figure out just how difficult a given task should be. You can use the following guidelines to help determine where to set difficulties relative to a character's skills.*

*\* **Skill -2 or lower:** The character will nearly always succeed without needing to invoke any aspects.*

*\* **Skill -1:** The character is likely to succeed, but may have to invoke an aspect.*

\* **Skill +0:** *The character's chances of success and failure are roughly even.*

\* **Skill +1:** *The character will probably have to invoke an aspect to succeed.*

\* **Skill +2 or higher:** *The character will almost always have to invoke one or more aspects to succeed.*

*If the task's Power Tier is higher than the skill's, that matters a great deal as well. Generally speaking, for each Tier of difference, you can expect the player to need to invoke two aspects to make up for the deficit.*

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## — When to Roll Dice —

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Dice are used in one of three types of situations:

- **Simple Actions:** The character rolls against a fixed difficulty. Most aspect declarations are simple actions.
- **Contests:** Two characters each roll, with the high roll winning and generating shifts. Aspect maneuvers and assessments (and opposed declarations) are contests.
- **Conflicts:** Two or more characters act in direct opposition to one another, but resolution is not as simple as a contest.

Simple actions are rolled against a difficulty set by the GM and are used to simply see if a character can do something, and possibly how well he can do it. The GM describes the situation and the player chooses a skill to apply to it, and rolls against a difficulty determined by the GM\*\* (by default, Mediocre). Some sample simple actions include.\*\*

- Climbing a wall
- Researching an obscure fact
- Examining a crime scene for clues
- Shooting a (non-character) target

Generally speaking, the quality of a simple action beyond success or failure only matters when the results of that action are going to be referenced later. For example, if your effort to conceal a secret compartment under a loose floorboard is Great (+4), that'll be the difficulty for anyone else who tries to find it.

Contests are very much like simple actions, except the action is in direct opposition to someone else and easily resolved one way or another. Rather than setting a difficulty, each party rolls the appropriate skill, and the outcome is resolved as if the high roll had beaten a difficulty equal to the low roll. A tie means both succeed, but whether that means the outcome is a tie or if it calls for another roll depends on the situation. Some sample contests include:

- An arm wrestling match
- A quick footrace
- A game of chance

Ordinarily, shifts obtained in a contest don't really matter - all you really want to know is who won. In some situations, however, the outcome of the contest may influence a future roll, the GM may offer a bonus to the winning player for the second roll, or even let the victor place a temporary aspect on himself, his competitor, or the scene, as appropriate to the situation.

The GM may also declare a consequential contest: The loser takes a Trifling consequence for a loss of 2 or 3 shifts, a Middling consequence for a loss of 4 to 5 shifts, or a Grievous consequence for a loss of 6 shifts or more. Consequential contests are best for when

circumstances call for something a bit more dramatic, despite the simple outcome.

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## — Difficulty and Power Tiers —

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*When attempting a simple action with a difficulty of a Power Tier higher than the skill you're using, replace one Fudge die with a d6 per degree of difference. But instead of adding the result of the d6 to the roll, subtract it. Compare your effort to the target number, as usual, to determine your effect.*

*For example, let's say you're attempting to pick Great (+4) (E) lock using your Good (+3) Burglary. Because the Power Tier of the task is one higher than your skill's Power Tier, you swap out a Fudge die for a d6 and roll 3dF-1d6. Your result: --2, or -3. Adding that to your skill rating of Good (+3) yields a total effort of Mediocre (+0) - not nearly good enough to defeat that lock. Spending 2 Fate Points to invoke two aspects, though, will give you the +4 you need to succeed.*

Other times, the GM or the players may want something that takes longer than a single roll without having a full-blown contest. In these cases, an extended contest - a series of rolls that add up to a final result - is the way to go. There are two basic ways to go about this, which we'll call the race and the chase.

In the race, set a number as the goal or "finish line" - the higher the number, the longer the race - then have each participant roll against a difficulty number, usually Mediocre (+0), and record how many shifts he obtains. Repeat this process, accumulating shifts each round, until one participant accumulates enough shifts to reach the finish line.

That's your winner. Usually only one skill (or one skill trapping) will be applicable to the task at hand, but if the player can justify another within reason, the GM's free to allow whatever works in context. The participants can take as much time as is required to reach the goal, but that's not to say that the situation can't worsen the longer it continues.

EXAMPLE: Our hero Augustus and a cultist of Thoth are trapped on opposite ends of a burning building's rooftop, their only possible means of escape a hot-air balloon tethered to a chimney some distance away. If they simply duke it out, the conflagration below will consume them both. Instead, each makes a beeline for the balloon. It's a race! The GM sets the difficulty at Mediocre (+0) and the finish line at 5 shifts - but each round spent on the rooftop will inflict a point of Health stress due to the heat and smoke inhalation. The two lock eyes for an instant, then run for their lives. After three rounds, Augustus has his 5 shifts, while the cultist only has 3. Augustus leaps into the balloon's basket with 3 Health stress, while the cultist - a Good (+2) quality Minion - falls to his knees mere feet from salvation, coughing and choking.

By a similar token, the chase also uses skill rolls and tracks accumulated shifts. But here, participants try to generate as many shifts as possible within a limited time period. In addition, instead of a static target number, the difficulty can change on a round-by-round basis. Individual stress tracks are replaced by a single stress track, with victory for the pursuer on the left and victory for the quarry on the right.

In the first round, the quarry rolls his skill against a target of Mediocre (+0), but modified by the Power Tier of the pursuer's applicable skill. (For example, if the quarry is using a skill in the Extraordinary Tier and the pursuer's skill is merely Mundane, the quarry rolls 3dF+1d6, but if each participant's skill were in the Extraordinary Tier, he'd just roll 4dF.) This is the quarry's "head start."

On the next round, and on every subsequent round, the quarry sets a difficulty number

for himself and for his pursuer, then each rolls their relevant skill against that number. For every shift obtained by the quarry, he fills in a stress box; for every shift obtained by the pursuer, she clears a stress box. If the quarry accumulates enough shifts to bypass the stress track before time is up, he wins, whatever that may mean in the context of the contest. If not, or if the pursuer manages to clear the entire stress track, the pursuer wins.

EXAMPLE: Before Augustus ended up on that rooftop, he had to outrun the fire racing up the stairway from below. The GM draws a stress track with five boxes and sets the time limit at three rounds. If Augustus can't get to the roof before then, the fire will have caught up with him! For his head start, Augustus rolls his Fair (+2) Athletics against a target of Mediocre (+0) and gets a +++00, for a total of effort of Superb (+5). He checks all five stress boxes - an excellent start! Then the GM rolls the fire's Good (+3) Athletics, but only rolls +—, for an Average (+1) effort. That clears the fifth stress box, barely cutting into Augustus' lead. Sensing victory, Augustus' player opts to set the difficulty at Mediocre (+0) again for the second round. His next Athletics roll is +00-, which added to his skill rating gives him a Fair (+2) effort - enough to check that fifth box again and bypass the end of the stress track.

In both the race and the chase, time needs to be an important factor. This is a little more explicit in a chase, which has a pre-set time limit measured in rounds, but time should matter in a race as well. The difference is that time crunch in a race is usually going to be more focused on the narrative rather than enforced by mechanics. Don't bother with a race if there's no real hurry in the first place.

Conflicts are what happen when two or more characters are in opposition in a fashion that cannot be quickly and cleanly resolved. A conflict is broken down into a number of exchanges where each party makes an effort to try to achieve their goal, taking turns to act. Opponents who stand in their way may be called upon to roll a response. They will accumulate success in the form of stress on opponents. Eventually, opponents will

accumulate enough stress, or suffer enough consequences, to be taken out; alternatively, opponents may preemptively offer a concession.

An entire scene may (and often does) revolve around a conflict. Conflicts include:

- Any kind of fight scene
- A political debate
- A long, tense staredown
- Destroying a rival's public reputation before they can return the favor
- Trying to talk your way past a bouncer as he tries to scare you off

Conflicts are such a special case that they get their own section.

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## — Conflicts —

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Once a conflict begins, take it step by step:

1. Frame the scene.
2. Establish groups.
3. Establish initiative.
4. Begin the exchange.
  - a. Take actions.
  - b. Resolve actions.
  - c. Begin a new exchange.

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### Step 1: Where Are We?

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At the most basic level, this is when the GM tells the players where they are, what they can see, hear, and smell, who else is there, and that sort of thing - give the players a sense of where they are and what's going on from their characters' perspective, so they can act or react accordingly.

Mechanically, though, the GM's primary means of framing the scene are zones and scene aspects. Zones have been discussed earlier, but scene aspects require a little more fleshing-out.

Scene aspects represent anything about the scene that could provide an advantage or disadvantage in a conflict. The GM should make any obvious scene aspects, such as "Dimly Lit" or "Quiet As The Grave," available to the players to tag or invoke. The best way to do this is to put each on an index card in the middle of the table, and mark them with a check once they've been tagged. (Hint: Get the ones that are blank on both sides.) Or you can use a small dry-erase board, then wipe it clean once the scene's over - whatever works for the group.

Any aspects that aren't obvious from the start, such as the energy pulsing from a cursed obelisk concealed behind a thin plaster wall, or the personal aspects of an NPC, have to be discovered by the PCs, usually through an aspect assessment or some other manner that makes sense, before they can be tagged or invoked.

It's generally considered bad form for the GM to tag scene aspects before the players get a chance.

On the whole, the more scene aspects there are, the more lively the environment will be, and the more the players will be inclined to interact with it. This is a good thing - the more action, the better. GMs should therefore be pretty liberal about throwing scene aspects out there, giving the players a very tactile way of interacting with the

environment and incorporating these details into their action descriptions. Five scene aspects, give or take a couple, is usually a good number.

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## — Scene Aspects: The Players' Role —

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*As the GM, don't feel like you have to come up with every scene aspect on your own. Take a minute to field a few suggestions from the players, then write down three or four that really speak to you. It's a win-win situation: You get to outsource some of your workload onto the players, and because the aspects come from those players, they're more likely to use them in interesting ways.*

*This is best for improvised scenes - ones you hadn't planned for, but that flow naturally from the narrative. Most of the time you'll want to figure out aspects for the "expected" scenes in advance.*

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### Step 2: Who's On Your Side?

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It may seem like a no-brainer, but it's good to sort out who wants what out of the scene before dice start rolling. Usually, it's a simple matter of PCs vs. NPCs, but it doesn't always have to be so clear-cut. Maybe some PCs will be at odds with others, or simply want a gentler or harsher resolution than their compatriots.

Taking time to establish groups gives everyone involved in the conflict a chance to state their intentions. If one PC wants to pump a criminal for information while another just wants to kill every bad guy in the room, that's something they each need to know up

front, because before too long they're going to be at odds. Similarly, it's a helpful reminder for the GM to make sure she knows what each of the NPCs in the scene hopes to get out of it, which can inform their decisions later when it comes time to decide committed they are to attaining their goals.

This is also the time to figure out who's facing off against whom. Is one character going to make himself a target for the enemy's minions while his companions try to defuse the bomb, or do the PCs want to deal with one problem at a time? Will everyone talk to the Duchess at once, or will that be the responsibility of the PC with the best Rapport? Giving everyone an explicit time to determine all of this can save some headaches later on.

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### Step 3: Who Goes First?

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The next step is to decide in what order the participants in the conflict will act. This is referred to as the initiative order, or just initiative - as in "taking the initiative." The skill (or Initiative trapping) used for initiative depends on the scope of the conflict. Physical conflicts use Alertness (Initiative [Physical]), mental conflicts use Resolve (Initiative [Mental]), and social conflicts use Empathy (Initiative [Social]).

There are many ways to skin this particular cat, some of which include:

- Roll for it. Everyone rolls the appropriate skill, invoking or tagging aspects if desired, and acts in order from highest to lowest. Egalitarian, but can bog things down with a lot of dice-rolling before the conflict's really even begun.
- Skill ratings only. As above, but instead of rolling, initiative is determined by the Power Tiers and raw ratings of the participants' skills, with ties being broken by a roll-off or GM fiat. Also egalitarian, but not finegrained enough for some groups' liking.

- Clockwise. Start with the character with the highest initiative-determining skill rating, then just proceed around the table clockwise after that. Initiative generally matters most in the first round anyway.
- He started it! Begin with whoever initiated the conflict - threw the first punch, delivered the first insult, intimidated the first threat - and proceed via one of the above methods from there. Organic, but has the potential to unfairly favor whichever player is most likely to start trouble (on the other hand, incentivizing that sort of troublemaking behavior isn't necessarily a bad idea).
- Players first, GM last. Combined with any of the above methods, all of the players get to act in their initiative order first before any of the NPCs. Emphasizes the importance of the PCs in the story, but sometimes means an interesting antagonist gets shut down before he can move a muscle.

Regardless, remember to first consider the skill's Power Tier - a skill with the Initiative trapping of a higher Power Tier will always let the character act before anyone else. If there's a tie for Power Tier, the GM can call for a dice roll or just break it in whatever way makes the most sense.

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## Step 4: What Do You Want to Do?

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When your character's turn comes up during the exchange, describe what your character is doing in terms of one of the basic conflict actions. These are:

- Attack: Make an opposed roll against your target with the intent of causing harm (dealing stress).
- Maneuver: Make a skill roll (usually opposed by your target) to try to gain an advantage instead of dealing stress.
- Move: Roll to change zones, with each shift representing a zone entered or a point of border value overcome.

- Full Defense: Hunker down and turtle up. By concentrating entirely on defense for the exchange (a Full Action), any defense rolls you make receive a +2 bonus. Each character gets one basic action for the turn, each of which requires An Action, unless indicated otherwise. However, you can usually take a supplemental action as well, which imposes a -1 penalty to your skill roll for the exchange. It's pretty easy to spot which action requires a skill roll and which is merely supplemental. Look at the two skills and consider which one is interesting, or carries the most risk - that's the one that gets the dice roll. For example, if you want to kick open a door and punch a cultist in the face, the door-kicking seems relatively bland compared to the face-punching, so you'll roll Fisticuffs at -1. If both tasks definitely require a skill roll, such as punching one enemy while trying to shoot another, neither can be a supplemental action to the other. Only one at a time can be attempted.

Free Actions are so minor as to require almost no time or attention at all, such as taking a quick look at your surroundings or shouting out a warning to your allies. As such, a Free Action can be combined with An Action at no penalty.

Each of these basic actions is described in more detail below.

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## — Attack —

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An attack is a direct assault against your opponent with the intent of causing harm in the form of stress and consequences. As such, attacks are always opposed rolls between the attacker and the defender. There is no limit to the number of times a combatant can defend against attackers in an exchange, even against multiple attackers.

The skill used for an attack depends on the attacker's agenda and preferred methods. The Common skills that cover attacks include Arms, Fisticuffs, and Firearms for physical conflicts (or any skill with the Strike or Shoot trapping), Intimidation for mental conflicts (or any skill with the Menace trapping), and Contacting for social conflicts (or any skill with the Influence trapping). The attacker's skill also determines what skill the defender can use as a defense. See the list of trapping descriptions for more detail.

If the attacker wins the roll, the shifts he acquires translate into a stress value he can inflict on the defender. If the defender wins, or it's a tie, the attack fails.

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## Stress and Consequences

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When an attack succeeds, it inflicts stress on the target. Stress is an abstract representation of the difficulties that threaten to take someone out of a conflict. Health stress can be minor cuts, bruises, fatigue, and the like. Composure stress can be thought of as an erosion of willpower, nerve, or emotional control. Reputation stress represents disparaging rumors or damaging slights against one's character.

In any event, you can look at stress as the closest of close calls - not enough to be a lasting problem, but enough that you can't withstand it forever.

When you take stress, check the box on the appropriate stress track equal to the total stress dealt and all boxes to the left of it. If the box to be checked is already full, the stress "rolls up" to the next clear box. For example, if an attack deals 2 Health stress, check the second and first boxes on your Health stress track. If another attack deals another 2 stress to the same track, check the track's third box.

Anytime a character takes stress, he can opt to take a consequence - a special kind of

aspect that represents a longer-lasting result of failing to defend against attacks. You don't want consequences, but sometimes they're your only chance to stay on your feet.

The exact nature of a consequence largely depends on the nature of the conflict as well as its scope (Physical, Mental, or Social). The more consequences of a given scope you can withstand, the harder it is to defeat you in a conflict of that scope. For example, a character who can take two Trifling Social consequences is going to be more difficult to discredit than another character who can only take one Trifling Social consequence. A Physical consequence might be a "Bloody Nose," representing an actual injury, or "Off-Balance," representing the difficulty the character now has coordinating his feet after being punched in the nose. Or maybe the character is now suffering from "Shaken Confidence" after taking a fist to the face. Note that even though "Shaken Confidence" doesn't necessarily reflect a physical condition or wound, it was derived from a physical attack so it's fair game for a Physical consequence.

Normally, the player taking the consequence gets to describe what it is, so long as it's compatible with the attack that inflicted the harm in the first place. The GM can arbitrate the appropriateness of a consequence as well, which may result in a back-and-forth conversation between player(s) and GM to agree on something that makes sense. This is perfectly normal and nothing to worry about.

The consequences a character can withstand come in three degrees of severity, each of which absorbs a corresponding amount of stress. Consequences can't be taken after the fact to clear boxes in a stress track. They happen in the moment, as the attack happens.

- Trifling consequences absorb 2 stress. They last for the remainder of the scene and automatically go away as soon as the character gets a chance to catch his breath (usually when the scene ends).
- Middling consequences absorb 4 stress. They require effort during "downtime" to mitigate - a skill roll with a target difficulty of Great (+4). If the roll succeeds, the

consequence is reduced from Middling to Trifling; if it succeeds with spin, it's removed altogether. As for which skill applies, that depends on the scope of the conflict that generated it and the nature of the consequence itself. See the Treatment trapping description for more detail.

- Grievous consequences absorb 6 stress, and persist for the rest of the story. These consequences are traumatic enough that even when they go away, they leave their mark on you. If you have a Grievous consequence at the end of the current story, erase it and alter one of your personal aspects to reflect how the experience has changed you.

By default, a character may take one of each degree of consequence. Once the consequence slot is used, it can't be used again until the current consequence has been cleared. Multiple consequences can be "stacked" to absorb greater amounts of stress, such as combining a Trifling consequence with a Middling consequence to absorb 6 stress (instead of taking a much more serious and life-altering Grievous consequence).

If the consequence(s) absorb all of the stress an attack deals, you take no stress. Otherwise, you take stress equal to whatever remains.

Keep in mind that because consequences are aspects, they can be tagged, invoked, or compelled just like any of your personal aspects - and like any aspect created by a skill roll, the first tag is free. After that, invoking one of your consequences will cost your opponent a Fate Point, but the good news is that the Fate Point goes to you. Consider it a small recompense for your trouble.

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## Weapons and Armor

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Weapons bought as Equipment Gifts can inflict additional stress by taking the Deadly improvement. Multiple instances of Deadly on the same piece of Equipment are



cumulative, up to a maximum of +3 stress. However, this can't increase the stress dealt by a weapon to more than twice the number of shifts obtained. For example, if you're attacking with a sword with Deadly x2 and you win the exchange by 1 shift, you'll deal 2 stress, not 3.

Similarly, Equipment with the Protective improvement absorbs stress, providing Armor equal to the number of Protective improvements taken (up to a maximum of Armor 3). If multiple pieces of Equipment with the Protective improvement are worn, only take the highest Armor value from any one of them.

Weapons and armor can also be represented by Strange skills, like a sword forged from meteoric iron or a breastplate fashioned from demon hide. A PC or NPC could conceivably have a Unique skill called, for example, Mail Coat, with the Resist Damage trapping, which would be rolled as a defense against physical attacks.

Otherwise, weapons and armor are merely window dressing. Those cultists may be armed with scimitars, but unless they were purchased as Equipment with the Deadly improvement, they're not any more deadly than their bare fists. So why use them? Apart from flavor and looking cool - a vital factor behind nearly anything of any importance in a story - fighting with weapons allows them to use Arms instead of Fisticuffs. This also means that there's a tactical advantage in disarming them, which gives the PCs something to do besides try to brain them. More significantly, though, it keeps the emphasis on the characters and their skills instead of handing the conflict over to whoever has the shiniest toys.

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## — Mental Weapons, Social Armor —

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*Weapons and armor don't have to be restricted to purely physical conflicts. A beautiful ball gown can make you more persuasive; the Queen's favor can cast doubt on even the most vicious > rumors. However, these are highly contextual advantages. That fancy dress might impress the lower classes, but your social betters aren't likely to take much notice - especially if their clothes are even fancier. This makes it difficult to balance against their physical equivalents, and a big reason why the Equipment Gift is limited to tangible gear. Plus, mental and social assets such as these can be much more ephemeral. Stand beside a muddy road while a carriage goes by and that ball gown won't be so pretty anymore.*

*Keep all of that in mind before introducing "weapons" and "armor" into non-physical conflicts. If you still want to go for it, don't go overboard - bonus stress and Armor should be reserved for key situations to maintain their specialness. These types of advantages should be cherished and hard to come by. They should also be more about flavor than anything else, so keep > the modifier to within +/- 3 stress.*

*They make for great short-term in-game rewards on the fly, as well. Did you host an especially well-received soiree for London's social elite last night? That might translate to Armor 2 [Social] for the next week or so as talk of the event buoys your reputation in upper class salons. (Although the working class? They could care less.)*

*Follow the guidelines above and those in the Equipment Gift description, and you'll be in good shape.*

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## Taken Out

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If the stress you take ever bypasses a stress track's maximum capacity - that is, when you

have to check a box beyond the last box in your stress track - you're Taken Out, or forcibly removed from the conflict (and possibly the story) for at least a while. You could be dead, unconscious, disgraced, fleeing in panic, or whatever's appropriate for the attack that took you out. The attacker gets to choose your fate, so long as it's within reason. Few people actually die from shame or embarrassment, but fleeing the scene in disgrace after being Taken Out during a debate (a mental conflict) is perfectly acceptable. The winner gets to determine the what, but not the how - it's fine to tell your Taken Out opponent that he faints from fright, but not that he hits his head on the way down or soils himself. Those details are the purview of the Taken Out character's player. Even when being Taken Out does result in death, the character on the losing end of things still has control over the particulars of his death scene.

In general, a character's Taken Out condition only applies within the scope of the conflict. A character who's Taken Out during a social conflict, for example, may have his name dragged through the mud, but that doesn't stop him from seeking violent revenge on those who wronged him. Something to keep in mind the next time you consider dragging someone's name through the mud.

In a physical conflict, it's a good idea for the GM to drop a hint or two about how far an NPC is willing to go to eke out a victory. An off hand remark like "This guy looks like he's out for blood" or "The hellbeast is definitely giving off a bloodthirsty vibe" lets the players know that being Taken Out is going to mean death.

Assuming you're still alive (or can come back to life - let's not rule anything out), being Taken Out comes with a silver lining: For every consequence you currently have when you're Taken Out, you receive one Fate Point.

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## Making Concessions

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You can also choose to make a concession instead of taking a consequence. This is essentially you taking yourself out, but on your terms instead of your enemy's.

A concession has to pass muster with the group before it is accepted - the conditions of the loss still have to represent a clear and decisive disadvantage for the character. If the group (including the opposition) decides the conceding character is getting off easy, that character's player has to come up with something better. Or worse, depending on your point of view.

What exactly is "a clear and decisive disadvantage"?

- The outcome creates significant difficulty for the character moving forward. He could be deprived of an important possession, imprisoned, see a friend turn into a bitter enemy, or something similar.
- The outcome creates a situation that restricts the character's behavior in some significant way, such as owing a large debt or becoming a persona non grata in an important segment of society. This may entail imposing a long-term aspect on the character (separate from consequences) to reflect the situation through compels.
- The outcome alters one of a character's existing aspects, and for the worse. Whatever the circumstance of the concession, it's so profound that it alters the character on a fundamental level. For example, "Unshakeable Faith" could become "Looked the Devil in the Eye and Blinkered."

If you make a concession on your turn, you receive a Fate Point for each consequence you have, as if you'd been Taken Out. If you make a concession on your opponent's turn, however, you have to pay your opponent a Fate Point for every consequence you have. If you don't have enough Fate Points to cover your debt, just give your opponent all the Fate Points you have.

# — Maneuver —

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A maneuver is an attempt to gain a momentary situational advantage in a conflict by interacting with either the environment or an opponent. Unlike an attack, it's not intended to deal stress, nor does it necessarily have a lasting effect on your opponent. What it does is set up a condition that makes one or more future attacks more effective, in the form of a fragile or sticky aspect. Here are some examples of maneuvers:

- Knocking an opponent momentarily off balance.
- Disarming an opponent.
- Diving for cover behind an upended table.
- Spreading disinformation as a distraction from the real issue.
- Taking aim.

Against an opponent, a maneuver is performed much like an attack. On a successful opposed skill roll, the “attacker” gets to declare an aspect on his opponent, himself, or the scene, as applicable. For example, knocking your opponent off balance would mean putting an aspect of “Off Balance” on your opponent, whereas maneuvering yourself behind him would probably be an aspect of something like “Got the Drop on Him” on yourself. Smashing the lantern he's holding, on the other hand, could result in an aspect of “Pitch Darkness” on the scene.

As discussed earlier (in Aspects), the duration of the aspect depends on the success of the roll. If the attacker's roll succeeds by 2 shifts or less, the aspect is fragile - one free tag and it's gone. If the attacker's roll obtains spin, the aspect is sticky, meaning it sticks around for the rest of the scene or until the situation changes such that it's reasonable for it to go away.

Make a note of the roll's total effort. That's the difficulty for the target to remove the

maneuver-derived aspect on her turn, assuming it's still around. For example, if a character uses an aspect maneuver to make a target "Distracted" with a total effort on the skill roll of Superb (+5), the target will need an effort of at least Superb (+5) on her skill roll, probably using something like Alertness, to remove it. Note that this only applies to temporary aspects, not consequences.

In certain circumstances, the difficulty of a maneuver is a static number if it doesn't make sense for it to be an opposed roll. For instance, a character could use Resolve as a maneuver to put an aspect of "Focused" on himself. There's no one to oppose this action, so it's not an opposed roll. Usually, the difficulty for such a maneuver is Good (+3), but the GM can adjust this up or down if the situation warrants it - or compel one of the character's aspects or consequences to prevent the maneuver in the first place.

Alternately, if a character is attempting this sort of "self maneuver" while burdened with a consequence, the maneuver could be turned into an opposed roll, with the consequence itself treated as the opposing skill - rated at Fair (+2) for a Trifling consequence, Great (+4) for Middling, or Fantastic (+6) for Grievous.

Given the right set of circumstances, any skill could conceivably be used for an aspect maneuver, but not every skill will apply equally in every situation. Common sense and logic is usually enough to determine what works and what doesn't; if there's still confusion, it's up to the GM to make the call.

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## Maneuver Examples

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This is by no means a comprehensive list, but the examples provided below should convey the general idea behind establishing and dealing with maneuvers in play.

- Blinded: You temporarily blind the target by throwing sand in his face, smearing grease across his eyes, or something similar. This is generally done using a skill with the Strike trapping, such as Fisticuffs or Arms. The “Blinded” aspect could then be tagged or invoked to improve your attacks or defenses against the target, or possibly compelled to make the target accidentally attack an ally or stumble off a ledge. At the GM’s discretion, this could also be accomplished with a ranged attack - a trick shot that skims the target’s eyes.
- Disarmed: A successful maneuver knocks the target’s weapon (or whatever she’s holding) out of her hands. If it’s a fragile aspect, the weapon hasn’t gone far and is easily recovered after the “Disarmed” aspect has been tagged. Otherwise, a successful skill roll using Athletics or something similar recovers the weapon. The “Disarmed” aspect could be tagged or invoked by an armed attacker to aid on his roll, but an unarmed attacker can’t claim the same advantage. After all, if they’re both unarmed, the playing field has been leveled. Any skill with the Strike trapping (or, if the GM’s up for it, the Shoot trapping) can be used for this maneuver.
- Taking Cover: The character dives behind a table, a carriage, a pile of debris, or something similar to aid in her own defense. If the character is under attack when she attempts this maneuver, it’s an opposed skill roll, usually using a skill with the Move or Leap trapping. Otherwise, it’s a roll against a static difficulty - either Average (+1) for a cluttered warehouse or Superb (+5) for an empty one, or Good (+3) if you’re not sure. Or the GM can decide that no roll’s required at all, if the character has plenty of time to set it up and there are ample opportunities for cover. The “Behind Cover” aspect can be tagged or invoked to assist the character’s defense, or compelled to trap her behind her cover, unable to leave because she’s been pinned down by enemy fire. A number of skills could be used for this maneuver. In the middle of a conflict, finding cover is generally a matter of speed and mobility, making Athletics or some other skill with the Move trapping the most likely candidate, but with some justification it could also be accomplished with Alertness (to spot the cover) or an attack skill like Arms or Fisticuffs to find cover by relying on prior combat experience.

- **Called Shots:** While FATE doesn't employ hit locations, unlike some other games, it's certainly possible to make a special targeted attack against an enemy by making an aspect maneuver out of it. Want to sweep the leg? Use Fisticuffs to put an aspect of "Hurt Leg" on him. This sort of thing is ideal for a fighter who fights smart by dedicating a few rounds to aspect maneuvers and then tagging them all at once for a single monumental attack. Such an aspect can never be as severe as a consequence ("Hurt Leg" vs. "Broken Leg," for instance) - it needs to be something the target can shake off using a skill like Endurance, so keep that in mind.
- **Mind Control:** A skill with Convince + Psychic can be used to mentally control someone else by making an aspect maneuver. With a successful roll, opposed by a skill with the Willpower trapping, the character puts an aspect of "Mind Controlled" or something similar on the target. This can then be tagged or invoked for effect to give the target a command he must obey. While the first tag's for free, subsequent invocations - assuming the aspect's still around - will cost a Fate Point apiece. The target can try to remove the aspect with a maneuver of his own, of course, but the mind controller can compel the aspect to prevent him from even trying. All in all, mind control is a costly proposition, but you'll be thankful for that when some devious NPC uses it on you.

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## Blocks

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Blocks are a special kind of pre-emptive defensive maneuver designed to prevent one or more opponents from taking a specified action. In this way, they're a little like the "Disarmed" maneuver described above, but applied to a broader range of situations.

Examples include:

- Spreading a particularly damning rumor about someone that hampers their attempts to retaliate
- Blocking a doorway to prevent anyone else from going through it



- Protecting someone else from attacks
- Making sure no one else gets their hands on an object you're guarding
- Grappling someone in an attempt to restrain them

To perform a block, declare what specific type of action you're trying to prevent and roll an appropriate skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0), and record your total effort. That becomes the block's difficulty. Someone acting against your block must meet or exceed that number on an appropriate skill roll to overcome it.

If the skill is of a Power Tier higher than Mundane, treat that difficulty as if it were of the same Tier as your skill - for example, attempting a block with a Superhuman Tier skill would mean rolling 4dF and treating the result as a difficulty in the Superhuman Tier. Someone trying to overcome it using a Mundane Tier skill would roll 2dF-2d6, while someone using an Ascendant Tier skill would roll 3dF+1d6. Typically, a block action lasts until the blocker's next turn, at which point she has to decide whether to maintain the block (which means rolling the skill again to establish a new difficulty) or to let it drop. Performing or maintaining a block usually requires a Full Action.

In some special cases, a block can persist without further action from the blocker. This is usually the realm of the Strange, such as an earth-controlling mutant raising a wall of stone from the ground to confound pursuit. Oftentimes, the easiest way to handle a persistent block like this is to take the blocker's effort as the block's difficulty, as usual, then give those attempting to overcome it a cumulative +1 bonus to their rolls each round. Eventually, they'll get over, under, through, or around it.

| BLOCK BREAKER'S SKILL IS... | TIME REQUIRED |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Equal Tier or Worse         | Full Action   |
| One Tier Higher             | An Action     |
| Two or More Tiers Higher    | Free Action   |

The amount of time an attempt to break a block requires depends on the skill's Power Tier relative to that of the block's difficulty, as shown on the table. Only one attempt to break a block can be made per character per turn, even if the attempt is a Free Action.

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## — Move —

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Normally, a character can move 1 zone as a supplemental action, incurring a -1 penalty to whatever else the character does in the round. If you want to move farther than that, make a skill roll against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0). Every shift obtained can be applied toward moving (1 zone per shift) or negotiating borders between zones.

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## — Full Defense —

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As a Full Action, a character can hunker down and concentrate solely on confounding his attackers. This grants him a +2 bonus to his defenses for the round.

# The Environment

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## — Falling —

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Whether it's a faulty grip halfway up Big Ben or a jump that falls just a hair short of the next rooftop, falling can really put a crimp in your day. When the GM wants to make a fall hurt, roll against the appropriate difficulty, as shown on the table. Use a skill with the Leap trapping or the Resist Damage trapping for this. Success means a safe landing. Failure means taking Health stress equal to your margin of failure.

Materials above a Mediocre (+0) difficulty have stress tracks with a number of boxes equal to their difficulty (that is, 2, 4, or 6 boxes). If the character's intent is to break through the material, bypassing its stress track creates an opening large enough for the character to pass through. Materials with a difficulty in the Mundane Tier cannot take consequences to reduce stress, but if the difficulty is in a higher Power Tier, the material receives Tier Benefits, such as Armor or bonus consequences.

FOR EXAMPLE, a brick wall has 4 stress boxes and Armor 1, whereas a castle wall has 4 stress boxes, Armor 2, and can take one Trifling consequence.

| HEIGHT  | DIFFICULTY     | NOTES            |
|---------|----------------|------------------|
| Short   | Fair (+2)      | 10' to 20'       |
| Medium  | Great (+4)     | 20' to 40'       |
| Long    | Great (+4) (E) | 40' to 100'      |
| Extreme | Great (+4) (S) | Is that a house? |

EXAMPLE: When his hot-air balloon is blown out of the sky by an Aero Ship, Augustus finds himself plummeting toward Tower Bridge some hundred feet below. If he can succeed in a roll of his Fair (+2) Athletics against a difficulty of Great (+4) (E), he'll be able to break his fall somehow and land safely. Otherwise, it's stress or consequences. His 3dFĐ1d6 roll comes up +00Đ4, which, when added to his skill rating, gives him a total effort of -1. He'll have to deal with 5 Health stress. Ouch.

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## — Breaking Things —

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Use the difficulty guidelines shown on the table below when someone wants to break through something. This applies to any skill with the Physical Force trapping; with the GM's say-so, the Strike and Shoot trappings can also be used.

| DIFFICULTY     | NOTES   |
|----------------|---|
| Terrible (-2)  | Window glass; this is just for reference - don't bother rolling |
| Mediocre (+0)  | Thin wood   |
| Fair (+2)      | Thick wood, interior door                                       |
| Great (+4)     | Heavy or thick wood, exterior door                              |
| Fantastic (+6) | Reinforced wood, interior wall                                  |
| Fair (+2) (E)  | Exterior residential or shop wall                               |
| Great (+4) (E) | Brick, weak stone   |
| Fair (+2) (S)  | Reinforced metal, strong stone                                  |
| Great (+4) (S) | Exterior castle wall, vault door                                |
| Great (+4) (A) | Atlantean stone   |

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## — The Opposition —

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Central to any good story is the opposition - those forces arrayed against the heroes who foil their efforts at every turn. Personified as NPCs, the opposition falls into one of three categories, in ascending order of story importance:

- Minions, the nameless fist-fodder any self-respecting antagonist has at his disposal

- Adversaries, unique opponents capable of challenging the PCs on a one-to-one basis
- Villains, the primary threats who are often more than a match for any one PC

We'll get into more detail about all of them below, but first let's take a moment to talk about where they live: scenes.

Unlike the PCs, Minions and Adversaries don't have their own Fate Points. They just aren't important enough, and besides, tracking the Fate Point totals of a dozen or more Minions at once would be a royal pain. Instead, the GM gets a per-scene budget of Fate Points to be spent on behalf of these lower classes of antagonists. The exact number of Fate Points available each scene depends on two factors: the number of players at the table, and the importance of that scene's conflict to the story, whether Minor, Major, or Climactic.

For a Minor conflict, the GM gets 1 Fate Point per player. Minor conflicts are those in which the story is moved forward only slightly as a result of its resolution. Generally speaking, the stakes are relatively low. It's not unusual for a Minor conflict to end with a PC shaking a Minion by the lapels and asking, "Who sent you?" in a harsh tone. There's no real danger of a PC being Taken Out or sustaining more than a Trifling consequence; if anything, Minor scenes are more likely to drain a few Fate Points from the players.

Minor scenes are usually populated by Minions, and tend to occur early in a story. That's not to say that the PCs can't face terrifying peril right out of the gate, but stories usually work best when tension and danger increase over time. If a story does start out with the PCs free-falling from an airship while being fired upon by pteranodon-mounted gunmen, that's great - but the next scene should probably be quieter, and with a different focus. If everything's a 10, after a while it'll all feel like a 5.

Improvised conflicts, such as when the PCs pick a fight, are usually Minor.

For a Major conflict, the GM gets 2 Fate Points per player. By the end of a Major conflict, there should be a correspondingly major revelation about the larger story - the leader of the mutant gang is taking orders from a respected Member of Parliament, that's not the real Queen, St. Paul's has been rigged with dynamite, etc. Middling consequences (personal or Collateral) are a very real possibility, and the players' Fate Point reserves are likely to run low (or out).

Major scenes are rather ideal for pitting the PCs against a team of Adversaries, but that's certainly not a requirement. Indeed, the opposition in a Major scene can be limited to Minions and still be effective, or it can be a mix, such as Adversaries with some tougher Minions or, if it makes sense, the Villain and some Minions or Adversaries. Naturally, the danger with this latter option is the premature defeat of the Villain before the story's reached a proper climax. Sure, there are hoary deus ex machinae to guarantee the Villain's escape, such as the ol' hidden escape hatch, but those are probably going to leave the players feeling pretty cheated. Other solutions are certainly possible, such as the Villain being present but in disguise, or via an astral projection (and the players know this), or even "present" via radio or vocograph.

If it's that much trouble to insert the Villain into a Major conflict, why bother? For one thing, it increases the tension level. The players will instinctively know the stakes are higher if the Inscrutable Dr. Lau is standing right there. Second, it gives the players a greater sense of purpose, direction, and urgency. Third, in the story's final climactic scene, the players will be more invested if this isn't their first interaction with the Villain. Even if they don't have a huge history together, a single shared scene is enough to ratchet things up from "Who are you again?" to "You again!"

For Climactic conflicts, the GM gets 3 Fate Points per player. As the name implies, Climactic conflicts come at the end of shorter stories (one or two sessions), or at critical turning points of longer stories. As such, their resolution will either result in the end of the story itself or a significant revelation that results in a change of direction, purpose,

or focus. The stakes are highest in a Climactic conflict - all manner of consequences are possible and encouraged. If some PCs are Taken Out in the process, so much the better. Climactic conflicts need to feel dangerous, and not to be entered into lightly.

Unsurprisingly, the story's Villain (or one of them) should be the centerpiece of a Climactic conflict. This is the moment when the Villain's plans have come to fruition, or when the PCs can intervene in the nick of time to make sure they don't. Minions and Adversaries alike are welcome in a Climactic conflict as well - the gloves are off, no holds are barred, the stops are all pulled out, and so on. A good rule of thumb is to make sure that every PC has an attractive challenge to face, such as pairing off a superstrong Adversary with a super-strong PC. Then add one or two more, so that the PCs are either outnumbered or always scrambling to keep up.

For example, if you're working with five PCs, you might give them three adversaries, a few groups of Minions, and the Villain himself, plus a ticking device that, once its counter runs down to zero, will transform all of Parliament into man-eating ape creatures. That's at least seven problems to manage (if the Minion groups don't quite count as a problem each), with the added pressure of a time limit. Put the whole thing on an Aero Ship and you're looking at a Climactic conflict.

Regardless of the type of scene or conflict, these budgeted Fate Points are spent to help the opposition by invoking aspects or improving Minions (see below), but never to compel aspects. Compels are always paid for from a limitless pile of Fate Points at the GM's disposal. Why is this? We want compels to happen frequently and impulsively. Making the GM spend her Fate Point budget on compels would discourage that.

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## — Creating Minions —



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Here are some key facts about Minions:

- Minions are categorized by quality: Average, Fair, or Good.
- Minions act in groups. Individually, Minions are relatively weak, but they have strength in numbers. In a conflict, treat an entire group of Minions as a single entity. For each Minion beyond the first in a group, the group receives a +1 gang-up bonus to its dice rolls. When a Minion group is down to just one or two Minions, merge it with another decimated Minion group of the same quality to make a new, whole group. It helps with the bookkeeping. It's probably not a good idea to mix Minions of different qualities within the same group, though. That doesn't help with the bookkeeping.
- Minions have a stress threshold, not stress tracks. The stress threshold is how much stress is required to Take Out a Minion, from 1 stress to 3 stress. Divide the stress dealt to a group by the Minions' stress threshold, dropping the remainder - that's how many Minions are Taken Out. Remember to reduce the group's gang-up bonus accordingly. For example, Fair-quality Minions have a stress threshold of 2. If you deal five stress to a group of four of them, you'll take out two of them and leave the other two standing.
- Minions do not take consequences. Minions can do nothing to mitigate incoming stress.
- Minions should only have one or two aspects, three tops. They certainly can have more, but odds are they won't be around long enough to make use of more than one or two, so don't get too invested in them. One of a Minion's aspects should identify their purpose in the conflict or mode of operation - for example, "Political Functionary," "Angry Spirit," or "Merciless Bruiser."
- Minions have scopes, not skills. The three scopes are, as usual, Physical, Mental, and Social, and are rated like skills at Average (+1), Fair (+2), and Good (+3). Each acts as a very broad skill to cover anything a Minion might do within that scope. The number of scopes a Minion has depends on their quality. However, the

Minion's ability to use a given scope is limited by their identifying aspect. The Social scope of a Minion with an aspect of "Political Functionary" will be limited to tasks relevant to their role as a political functionary, in essence working very much like the Bureaucracy Common skill. It makes sense for a Minion with an aspect of "Merciless Bruiser" to use the Physical scope as if it were Fisticuffs, but not to engage in ranged combat. And so on. This reflects the Minion's narrow focus within the conflict. Minions are specialists, not generalists. But don't let that get in the way of common sense, either. A Minion with an aspect of "Thievery" would normally use his Physical scope for picking pockets, sneaking, hiding, running from the authorities, and so forth, but if he also has a truncheon, he should be able to use that same scope as if it were the Arms skill.

- The GM's Fate Points for the scene can be spent to upgrade the Power Tiers of a Minion's scopes. The costs are the same as the Refresh costs for PCs: 1 Fate Point for an Extraordinary Scope, 2 Fate Points for a Superhuman Scope, and so on. This upgrades the scope's Power Tier for all Minions with the same aspects. For example, if some Minions in a scene have the aspects "Long-Range Electrophorous Firing Piece" and "Dented Armor" and some others have the aspects "Heavy Truncheon" and "Merciless Bruiser," upgrading the Physical Scope from Mundane to Extraordinary for the former will have no effect on the latter.
- Those Fate Points can also be spent to buy Minions Gifts. Likewise, 1 Fate Point will buy a Gift for all Minions with the same aspects. Gifts like Equipment, Theme, or Impact make the most sense, while some, like Companion, are right out. Use your best judgment. Also, favor Gifts that improve offense over ones that shore up defenses. Making Minions a bigger threat is fine, but making them significantly tougher (such as with Protective or Rugged Equipment) is just going to make things drag. They're not meant to survive that long.
- Overflow is important. When a conflict involves multiple groups of Minions (and most conflicts with Minions will), remember overflow. That is, if a PC deals more than enough stress to completely Take Out the Minion group he's attacking, apply the excess to another Minion group, preferably one that's already taken some

losses.

- Minions are commonplace. If the PCs are facing numerous opponents in the course of a story, the vast majority of them should be Minions. For one thing, this is a pacing issue. Think of Minions like gears. By shifting up and down between them, you can easily control the speed and difficulty of a given conflict. Not that conflicts with Minions should be meaningless - no conflict should be - but changing a group of Minions from Good-quality to Average-quality is a lot easier than downgrading, say, a group of Adversaries. Second, it lets you more effectively build a sense of tension and danger over the course of a story. If every conflict directly involves a major enemy, it'll all start feeling samey after a while. Third, sprinkling in a few groups of Minions can help round out a conflict no matter where it is in the story, especially if doing so lets you illustrate a contrast between them and tougher opponents.

With all of that in mind, here's a closer look at Minions.

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## Average Minions: The Rank and File

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- **Scopes:** One scope at Average (+1).
- **Stress Threshold:** 1 (For every point of stress the group takes, it loses a Minion)
- **Default Group Size:** Five. A group of five Averagequality Minions will have an effective scope of Superb (+5).
- **Best Purpose:** To make the PCs look good. At this quality, a PC with a Superhuman Tier attack skill will go through most Average Minions like a hot knife through Minions. The whole point of these Minions is that they go down in one punch. If you want the PCs to face a literal horde of enemies and emerge victorious, make them Average-quality Minions.
- **Recommended Power Tier:** Mundane or Extraordinary.  
If you want them tougher or more of a threat than that, use Fair or Good Minions instead. For human Minions, an Extraordinary Tier scope should usually be

justified with special equipment as opposed to inherent ability. (If they had that much inherent ability, they probably wouldn't be stuck being Minions.) No Average-quality Minion should be even close to a match for a PC in a one-on-one fight, so don't beef them up too much.

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## Fair Minions: The Trained Professionals

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- **Scopes:** One scope at Fair (+2) and one at Average (+1).
- **Stress Threshold:** 2 (For every two points of stress dealt by a single attack, the group loses a Minion)
- **Default Group Size:** Four. The effective highest scope of a group of four Fair-quality Minions will be Superb (+5).
- **Best Purpose:** To challenge the PCs a bit or slow them down. Don't use Fair-quality Minions if you just want a quick action scene. The difference between a stress threshold of 1 and 2 might not seem like much, but it makes Fair-quality Minions twice as durable. The other thing to consider is overflow. If the player deals an odd number of stress to a group of Fair-quality Minions, that excess point of stress will just be ignored. Psychologically, from the player's perspective, this makes them feel a lot tougher.
- **Recommended Power Tier:** Extraordinary, if the Minions outnumber the PCs, or Superhuman if they don't. However, if you do give them a Superhuman Tier scope, it should be because of story logic, not game balance. Soldiers with high-tech weaponry, vicious dinosaurs, a swarm of ghosts - these are all fine. If the Minions are human, though, their greater-than-Mundane-Tier scope should usually be granted by something external to them, and not because of some innate ability. Minions are not special enough for that kind of differentiation. That's what Adversaries are for. This is also highly dependent on what Power Tiers the PCs are sporting: If the skills they'll be using in this conflict are largely in the Extraordinary Tier, then the Minions' Fair (+2) scope should be Extraordinary as

well.

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## Good Minions: The Minion Elite

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- **Scopes:** One scope at Good (+3), one at Fair (+2) and one at Average (+1).
- **Stress Threshold:** 3 (For every three points of stress dealt by a single attack, the group loses a Minion)
- **Default Group Size:** Three. The effective highest scope of a group of three Good-quality Minions will be Superb (+5).
- **Best Purpose:** To drain the PCs of resources, such as Fate Points and consequences. Expect the PCs to pay a price for victory over these Minions. Think carefully before adding Good-quality Minions to a conflict. Is there a reason they can't be Fair instead? Good-quality Minions are a lot more durable than their Fair and Average counterparts. You don't want that staying power to become dragging power.
- **Recommended Power Tier:** On par with the PCs. If they aren't a genuine offensive threat, an encounter with Good-quality Minions is just a grind. If you're using Minions of this quality, it's usually because you want to put the PCs in some danger without having to stat up a bunch of Adversaries individually. So go for it - plan to spend around half your Fate Point budget on upgrading the Power Tier of one or two scopes and buying Gifts.

For some examples of Minions, see Chapter 6: Dramatis Personae.

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## — Creating Adversaries —

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Adversaries have much more in common with PCs than Minions do, but they're still a step or two below a true Villain. A powerful mutant criminal, a Lost Kerberan, a rampaging T-Rex - each would make a fine Adversary. They're named, unique opponents, often Touched by the Strange and working as part of a team to either oppose the PCs or assist a Villain in carrying out his plans.

Adversaries are generally weaker than PCs, but not dramatically so. They should live up to their name: Adversaries, capable of taking out PCs one-on-one. Take care, though, that they don't overshadow the Villain as a threat. Even if the Villain is employing one or more Adversaries specifically for their muscle or whatever, the Villain needs to be impressive in his own right, too. It might just be in a different arena or context (see below).

The PCs should only face a handful of Adversaries in a story - say, one per PC - either all working together as a team, or split up among a few different locations.

Adversaries are built more or less like PCs, with a few notable exceptions:

- Starting Refresh for Adversaries is 4, 6, or 8, depending on the time period. Refresh is spent on Power Tiers and Gifts, just like for PCs. However, this is only relevant for character creation, as Adversaries don't have their own Fate Points - the GM spends her budget of Fate Points on their behalf. (This means that there's basically no reason to not spend all of an Adversary's Refresh on Power Tiers and Gifts.) Keep track of each Fate Point the players spend to invoke one of an Adversary's aspects. Each of these Fate Point goes to that Adversary to use as their own. When an Adversary's personal store of Fate Points exceeds their starting Refresh, their Refresh increases by 1. That Refresh can then be spent between scenes on Power Tiers and Gifts.
- Technically, an Adversary starts with 30 skill points. But that's more of a guide, really. There's no need to track every last Drawback as you might with a PC. If you

give a skill the trappings it needs and have an idea of how it works, don't bother with the details.

- An Adversary's top skill can be as high as Superb (+5). Letting an Adversary's skill pyramid exceed the normal skill cap of Great automatically makes them more of a threat without having to spend Fate Points on their behalf. However, there's no need to give them a full skill pyramid down to Average (+1) or anything. Just give them the skills you think they should have and improvise the rest during play, recording and ranking other skills as needed.
- Adversaries have aspects, but not as many as PCs. Just give them Archetype, Social Class, and Conviction aspects, then whatever other aspects they'll need to function.
- Adversaries don't have consequences of their own. Instead, they take group consequences, described below. If an Adversary's Tier Benefit grants her a bonus consequence, it gets added to the group consequences instead.

For some examples of Adversaries, see Chapter 6: *Dramatis Personae*.

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## — Creating Villains —

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Villains are the flipside of PCs: complex, driven, capable, and dangerous. The most compelling Villains aren't Villains in their own minds - from their point of view, they're fighting for the cause of justice, or at least enacting a righteous vengeance. Sure, there are outright monsters and thieves and killers, and those can be great too just for their sheer simplicity of purpose. But when it comes to being an engaging foil, the best Villain is one who evokes empathy from the players even as they're throwing him through a wall.

Individually, a single Villain should be more than a match for a given PC if that conflict

is playing to the Villain's strengths. A good Villain should be able to do something so impressive (and/or frightening) that it makes the players think twice about engaging him in a conflict. It's pretty common for a physically weak Villain to rely on others to fight on his behalf, but even then make sure he can pose a threat all by himself.

Villains are built and operate pretty much like PCs, with a few notable exceptions:

- Villains start with a Refresh of 10, 12, or 14, depending on the time period - or higher. Villains need to have a leg up on the PCs - enough so that a player will think twice before taking one on without friends around. Another two points of Refresh is usually enough to make that happen. Note that "taking on" a Villain need not mean a physical conflict. Indeed, a Villain with killer social connections (literally or figuratively) can ruin a PC's life without even meeting him face to face. See the Pre-Human Horror and the Oriental Mastermind in Chapter 6 for examples of Master Villains - Villains who far exceed the normal Refresh guidelines in the name of being a great and truly threatening enemy.
- A Villain's top skill should be rated between Great (+4) and Fantastic (+6). This is for the same reason given for Adversaries, above. Again, there's no reason to completely fill out the skill pyramid - assign the Villain the skills she needs to be the threat she needs to be, and fill in the rest as needed.
- Villains have both personal consequences and group consequences at their disposal. In this way, Villains are just like PCs, but in place of Collateral consequences they have whatever group consequences haven't been used by Adversaries. Bonus consequences granted by Tier Benefits stay with the Villain - they're not added to the pool of group consequences.

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## — Group Consequences —

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Instead of tracking consequences individually for Adversaries, they share a pool of communal consequences known as group consequences. Any Adversary can make use of this pool to reduce stress, and any bonus consequences granted by Tier Benefits that would ordinarily go to an Adversary becomes another group consequence instead. In addition, group consequences serve as bonus consequences for Villains - assuming there are any left over, of course. Minions, however, can't take advantage of group consequences. The default number of group consequences shared by Adversaries and Villains depends on the number of Adversaries in the story arc. The more Adversaries, the more group consequences.

It's entirely possible that the opposition in a given story will involve one or two Villains, a bunch of Minions, and no Adversaries, or just one gigantic Villain. Whither your group consequences then?

As a rule of thumb: No group, no group consequences.

| ADVERSARIES | STARTING GROUP CONSEQUENCES |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 1-2         | 2 Trifling, 1 Middling      |
| 3-4         | 4 Trifling, 2 Middling      |
| 5-6         | 6 Trifling, 3 Middling      |
| 7+          | 8 Trifling, 3 Middling      |

## Theme In Motion: The Unstoppable

# Express Train of Drama

Theme can sometimes be airy and vague, and tends to get lost after a few sessions of romping good adventures and wild happenings. But keeping your themes present in your campaign can provide some backbone, and possibly add an extra dimension in which to enjoy the thing.

Applied thematics is good GM kung-fu regardless of the game, but in *Strange Fate*, where much of the action can easily be player-driven rather than GM-driven, theme can be your man behind the curtains - even if the game is entirely satisfactory when played out before the giant floating green head with all the special effects.

What is your game about? Themes evolve and change, and new ones arise. If you find you aren't happy with your themes, there's no reason you can't change them. To get you thinking about it, here are core themes that the setting itself is built around. Use these if they fascinate you - but regardless, zero in on the themes that do.

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## — The Burden of Choice —

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Perhaps the theme with the greatest direct application to play is that of choice and consequences. The world of the Setting could be very gray. People do horrible things for the right reasons, and noble things for grossly selfish reasons. The true motivations behind actions are often obscure - and many of the actors sharing a stage with the player characters are deeply cynical manipulators whose idealism is deadlier than a Christmas

## Goose on New Year's Eve.

As protagonists, the player characters should be faced with difficult choices every time they act in a meaningful way. They are powerful, and the consequences of their choices are powerful. Worse, times are uncertain. It is a complex world, where one decision can have rippling unforeseen consequences, especially for people as powerful as the player characters. They stand among the tiny fraction of exceptional individuals who transcend the ordinary rules and restrictions of their society, who can even transcend the laws of nature itself. Some Kerberans can kill with a thought, remake matter, unleash cosmic destruction, or cure a sick world of its ills.

What the player characters do is always significant. Remember this. Get it tattooed on your arm. The PC's might not be the most objectively powerful beings in the setting (there certainly are others with greater point totals) but they are the most important people in the setting. They are the reason you purchased this book and are reading these words. So it holds that what they do and decide must matter. It must influence the way the setting unfolds in your game.

Keep track of incidental choices the players make which promise interesting consequences down the road - especially if you can connect the choice to an NPC with a name and persona who might show up later to highlight the earlier choice. For example, let's say during one adventure a player decides his character will reveal the terrible majesty of his character's divine avatar. Later on, a confrontation with rogue cultists seeking to sacrifice in his name might be an interesting direction to take things.

This hits the second big point: Do not punish decisions. This assumes you play with a group of friends, and that nobody is deliberately trying to be disruptive. But here's the thing: Even if a player makes a decision which you think is wrong or in poor judgment, it isn't your job as GM to punish the player or make him or her regret it. Punishing choices only leads to passive players who won't take dramatic, decisive, folly-rich

actions. Rather, make consequences interesting. Use them to add complexity and energy to your game.

Characters in the Kerberos Club are creatures of singular passion. They can be expected to make sub-optimal decisions. It should be encouraged. Doing mad, bad, dangerous, wild, and ill-advised things which shake the Empire to its knees is exactly what Strangers do.

Characters in the Kerberos Club should not always do the safe thing. The safe thing is best left in the dungeon beside the 10-foot pole and the bundle of torches.

## GM's Tools

Or, “Tricks, Techniques, and Shameless Exploitation of Human Weakness.”

### Compelling Aspects

All player characters in Strange Fate have a variety of aspects that serve as perfect hooks and pinion-points on which to link segments of your adventure. Great play can be had with no formal structure at all beyond establishing a situation that challenges or vexes one or more of your PCs' aspects.

Conviction aspects are particularly important, since they represent that which most strongly motivates and drives the character. One of the major themes of The Kerberos Club is making difficult choices in uncertain times, and putting players in a position where they must choose between a Conviction and some greater good, or another

Conviction, is not merely acceptable but encouraged. Try

to work as many of these situations into play, pushing the PCs towards moral crises whenever possible. This should not be confused with railroading or any other dysfunctional gaming mode, because you're not denying the players choice. They are explicitly given a choice: Act in accordance with your nature and accept your Fate Point(s), or defy your nature and pay for it.

While a character's Convictions are not the entirety of his or her personality, beliefs or philosophy of life, for NPCs Convictions provide a simple shorthand for that which is most important to the character - the things for which they'll willingly place themselves in danger. If you need inspiration on how to portray an NPC, play to his or her Convictions.

### *Confounded by Conviction*

*Discovering what matters most to an individual gives one a powerful lever when seeking to change their opinions. The down side to doing this is that when you pay a Fate Point to invoke or compel one of an NPC's Conviction aspects, they gain a Fate Point for accepting your influence. Compelling an NPC's Conviction aspect is even more dramatic: While the player only pays a single Fate Point to compel, the NPC receives two Fate Points, just as if the GM had compelled a PC's Conviction aspect. Of course, they can resist, but it'll cost them two Fate Points, either from their personal supply (if they have one) or from the GM's Fate Point budget for the scene. The GM is advised to go along with the compel for two reasons: First, two Fate Points is usually a pretty significant chunk of what the GM has available for the scene. Second, if a PC has managed to ferret out an NPC's Conviction and is willing to spend a Fate Point to compel it, the player deserves to see some action from that. Odds are it'll lead to a*

*dramatic or exciting moment, and that's what we're here for in the first place.*

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## — Start With Some Assumptions —

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Character creation in *Strange Fate* is best handled as a fairly open process, with the players collaborating to create characters with intermeshed histories before the game even begins. A good rule of thumb is to have no more than one “new guy” in a group, only a single character who is new to the association or friendship. This character can serve the same function in the game as similar characters serve in literature and film, to provide a window into the unfamiliar setting. The Five Questions explicitly encourage players to create connections among their characters right from the get-go; take advantage of that. It makes for a stronger group during play.

Beginning the game with the assumption that everyone is already on good terms means you don't have to do meet-and-greet encounters in the game itself, and you already have some relationships established among the characters. These first meetings can be great fun to play through, perhaps in flashback, but by starting with the group already established you make this something you can do rather than something you must do.

The collaborative nature of this process gets the players thinking like a circle of particular friends, and into the Kerberan mode of asking for favors rather than issuing or awaiting orders. A group of Kerberans is different from many other types of roleplaying character groups. They spend time together and adventure together because they like and respect each other. There is no authority, mission, or necessity that they work together, just their friendship. Even a brooding loner has to bring something to the group. There has to be a reason the others would associate with him. Seeing that this

gets established before things even begin will pay off enormously in play.

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## — Encourage Ambition —

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If your players create strongly motivated characters, then it seems logical that they would be driven to pursue their own active agendas rather than simply reacting to events as you describe them. In many games players adopt a somewhat passive posture as they wait for the GM to present them with situations, encounters, and challenges. Some more recent games take the opposite stance, putting the GM in the reactive role and giving the power to drive play and create situations entirely to the players.

In *Strange Fate*, a collaborative middle ground between these two styles serves best, alternating and interweaving player-driven plot threads with those created by the GM. The Club itself is a tool for organizing play and introducing excuses for action, adventures, missions and investigations. The real trick for the GM is to key these external stories and events off player character traits and interests, answers to the Questions, and most especially their aspects. The more driven and self-motivated the players are, the easier it will be to weave external plotlines into their goals.

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## — Small Stories —

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The counter-point to grand, sweeping, history-shaping adventure is the little moments, the small stories, the minor episodes. It can't be savage adventure against impossible odds to save Queen and Country every week. Sometimes you have to relax, sit back, and

do something different. A small story is one on a very immediate scale, just the PCs and a handful of NPCs. The stakes are very personal. The fate of Nations is not at hand, but the fate of one man or woman might be.

Looking into a little matter for a friend, associate, or other character often leads to a small story. These intimate episodes frequently provide a refreshing change of scene, as well: a trip to Brighton or out into the country. Restricted surroundings also work well: a passenger train in motion, or a snowed-in Scottish hunting lodge.

Small stories allow you to focus tight on a single aspect or relationship. When resolved effectively, they can allow you to make a shocking revelation with broader implications.

On a steamer bound for Italy, the characters are asked to defend a friend against an accusation of cheating at cards. They meet the odd passengers, puzzling out the complex web of relationships, and finally reach the climax, where they must make a choice of some sort. Who among the gamblers will they reveal to be the cheat, when all were cheating in their own ways? Whose reputations will they ruin? And what will be revealed about them by their choices?

Small stories allow you to make human concerns paramount: to put a face to larger social ills and inequities. Nothing of any broad consequence is at stake. The Empire will continue on just fine. But with a well-crafted hook to intrigue your players, small stories serve as excellent contrast to the world-shattering and the epic.

The advanced version of a small story is one which runs parallel to the main action of your game, perhaps even using a second set of characters generated for just the single-session length of the story. Create ordinary mortals, or those with some small measure of extraordinary ability (perhaps with a starting Refresh of 4), and begin their story with the usual player characters dashing off to their next big adventure.



For this session and this small story, the players run ordinary people caught in the wake of the extraordinary adventuring Kerberos Club. These shadow stories can allow you to explore the social structures and themes of the setting without the safe harbor of the Club to protect modern sensibilities from the truly awful inequities of the times. They can also illuminate the Club from the perspective of those who must suffer the consequences of a Kerberan's interesting life.

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## — From Out of the Past —

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The PCs' aspects are like trays of delicious plot-sushi waiting to be served. Jot them all down on a reference sheet and keep it handy. If you're ever stuck for a twist, B-plot, or improv session, look at that sheet and have their pasts come back to haunt them - as literally as you like.

A "World-Famous Adventurer" finds an old Andean comrade dying on her doorstep, an obsidian jaguar figurine clutched in his hand. An "Old Army Physician" is called to consult on a patient with an impossible disease, one he hasn't seen since his service in Afghanistan. A "Mysterious Assassin Trained In the Far East" catches a glimpse on the street of a man who could not possibly be there, a man who died on her blade ten years ago in Cairo.

By creating unique and interesting aspects and skills, your players are saying loudly that these things are important to their character concepts. So important that they've spent precious character-creation resources to make them mechanically useful. They're telling you, "Use this in the game."

Don't be shy about doing so.

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