Common Playbook

You're a PC. You and your comrades are literally the center of the entire universe. This playbook includes what you need to define yourself and drive the story.

[Please read the last two pages first.]

Resources

Concept – What's your deal? Don't just put a species and playbook name. Put what makes you cool, special, or exciting. Stick to things we'd notice on screen. You can change or refine this as you play.

Drives – What do you want or need? What gets you out of bed to take exciting risks? Like, why even bother? 1 is fine, but 2 is better for you.

1.

2.

☙**Profession –** If you've got a trade or career that isn't covered by a PC playbook, put it here.

Health – Health abstractly represents the integrity and functionality of your body, mind, and spirit. When you're weakened or injured, you ⌞take harm⌝, which might cause you to lose health. When you erase your last health, ⌞you die⌝.

● 1. ☐ ☐ ☐ (Human)
△ 2. ☐ ☐ ☐ (Superhuman)
△ 3. ☐ ☐ ☐ (Boss-tier)

Resist ☐ ☐ – When you make a roll and don't like the complications the GM describes, you can ⌞resist consequences⌝.

XP ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ – You get XP mostly for good storytelling. When you fill your last XP, ⌞level up⌝.

Aptitudes

These are exciting things that many people could learn to do, although they hardly cover the true gamut of experience. They're intentionally broad. If you want, you can informally restrict yourself—e.g. nurture only with feng shui, research only beetles, etc.

○ **Operation** ○ ○ ○ **–** Running, piloting, or commanding subtle or intricate mechanisms to reap maximum performance.

○ **Administration** ○ ○ ○ **–** Wrangling and managing minutiae—nothing slips through the cracks.

○ **Nurturing** ○ ○ ○ **–** Providing just the right encouragement, support, safety, or kick in the ass.

○ **Fighting** ○ ○ ○ **–** Coordinating, applying, and resisting purposeful violence or force with scary familiarity.

○ **Athletics** ○ ○ ○ **–** Pushing yourself to the limit as you exert your body.

○ **Research** ○ ○ ○ **–** Discovering, examining, and analyzing knowledge that others would overlook.

○ **Engineering** ○ ○ ○ **–** Applying knowledge and artifice to synthesize novel techniques and artifacts.

○ **Relations** ○ ○ ○ **–** Manipulating, negotiating, or navigating some kind of relationship with deep empathy and insight—we get it, you fuck.

○ **Shady Shit** ○ ○ ○ **–** Practicing the secret tricks of the trade for those who lurk beyond the edge of polite society.

○ ☙**Spooky Shit** ○ ○ ○ **–** Interacting with the weird, esoteric, and uncanny on its own terms—or at least you think you are.

○ ☙**Professional Skills** ○ ○ ○ **–** Applying the educated, practiced, or specialized knowledge and skills of your trade or profession.

Story Moves

"Someone" means a person or anything animate. "Something" means anything inanimate.

Fuck 'em up – You want someone to ⌞take harm⌝ and maybe die, so you make it happen.

Compel compliance – You want someone to do your will, so you direct, entice, coerce, or force them.

Make it chooch – You want a broken, unreliable, or unfamiliar mechanism or artifact to do something useful, so you roll up your sleeves and get to work.

Go apeshit – You want some inanimate object to stop working or existing, so you disrupt, ruin, or destroy it.

Get out the way – You don't want to ⌞take harm⌝, so you dodge, evade, or flee an attack or mishap.

Parkour! – You want to be some other specific place, urgently, so you traverse terrain that's challenging or dangerous in its own right—the terrain need not be concrete.

Medic! – You want to stabilize or improve someone's ⌞health⌝, so you attend to their injuries or illness.

Scope it out – You want more details and information about your surroundings or their contents and inhabitants, so you survey, observe, and intuit.

Connect the dots – You want to extract useful information from clues, data, or details you've got, so you apply and collate what you know.

Schmooze 'em – You want to build rapport, trust, or graces with someone, so you do something you think they'll like or respect.

Fool 'em – You want to control what someone believes, so you deceive or misdirect them.

Go dark – You want to avoid the consequences of discovery or detection, so you take precautions or special care.

Moves

Resist consequences – If you don't like the consequences or complications the GM describes when you get ↘↓ on a ⌞story move⌝, speak up and **spend 1 Resist** to insist they invent something less drastic instead. This isn't the same as ⌞*dispute fiction*⌝; resist consequences whenever you think it's advantageous in-game.

Buy Resist – Any time you make a ⌞story move⌝ and get ↗→, you can announce that you wish to convert it to ↘ and restore 1 Resist.

Lead the group – Spend 1 Resist. You lead others in a ⌞story move⌝ where you'll succeed or fail as a group. You roll the move as normal and everyone canonically shares your result.

If you get ↗→↘, before you proceed with the story, everyone else rolls the same story move. They are free to describe their actions individually, along with what aptitudes they're exercising. Their results don't change the narrative, but if everyone rolls ↗→↘, you restore 1 Resist.

Take harm – You take ⌞harm⌝ when you're injured or hurt in some way (or if a move says so). Unless a move says specifically how much harm you take, use the scale under harm in the Meta playbook.

When you take harm, take these steps:

1. Make any moves you <u>can</u> make.
2. Make any moves you <u>must</u> make.
3. Decide if you have ⌞armor⌝ that applies.
4. If now you take harm ≤ 0, this move is over. Otherwise continue.
5. Tell the GM how much harm you're taking. They'll roll some dice and say if anything changes.
6. Write down any status you may have gotten.
7. Lose 1 health for each harm.
8. If you have 0 health, ⌞*you die*⌝ and this move is over.
9. Make any moves you <u>must</u> make when you lose health (vs take harm).

Armor – Armor is worn to protect you from ⌞harm⌝. Armor has a rating in the range 1-3. If it would make sense for your armor to protect you from the kind of harm you're taking, reduce the harm by the armor's rating.

When determining the rating of armor, look at the harm scale and decide what severity of injury the armor would protect you from.

You die – You've lost your last ⌞health⌝ or a move says you die. You can go sweetly into the night and build a new character to love. Or…

You're out of the scene for now, but you somehow survived. You come back later with 1 health and a permanent, severe ⌞status⌝ of the GM's choice. Explain what happened to the group.

Earn XP – When you finish a play session, it's time to decide what ⌞XP⌝ you've earned. Talk as a group about this: maybe they remember something you forgot. Ultimately, though, it's up to you.

You get 1 XP for each item below that you (not the GM) think is true for this play session. You can only take each item once, even if you did the thing multiple times in the session.

- At no point did ⌞*you die*⌝.
- You made a particularly badass or clutch ⌞story move⌝ that reinforced your Concept.
- You suffered a particularly painful (or hilarious) blunder as a result of playing to your Concept— this <u>doesn't</u> have to be a failed roll.
- You made a ⌞story move⌝ to pursue a Drive.
- You offer the GM honest-but-gentle constructive feedback when they do GM XP.

Level up – When you fill your last XP, you can spend all your XP to fill a ○ in your playbook—you must fulfill all other criteria to buy the item. ✦ Instead of buying a ○, the GM might let you buy or remove a permanent ⌞status⌝. You probably can't buy a △, but you could ask anyway.

Sorcerer Playbook

You do magic with sheer fucking force of will.

Meta Moves

With great power... – This playbook is about just describing novel magic and having it happen in the game, so your moves are super open-ended. But in order to define your power with the same personal scale as the other PCs in this game, there are some restrictions. Please abide by their spirit and work with your GM so everybody has fun.

Resources

Will – The overwhelming conviction that your magic should override the very laws of reality.

- ● 1. ☐ ☐ ☐
- ○ 2. ☐
- ○ 3. ☐

Aptitudes: Threads

These are the strands that a sorcerer weaves together to create their magic. Note that they have different max ratings—not all threads are as easy to work.

○ **Affect an area** ○ ○ **–** Weaving to affect a spatial area, its contents, or occupants.

○ **Affect at range** ○ ○ **–** Weaving to affect something beyond arm's reach.

○ **Affect the living** ○ ○ **–** Weaving to directly affect a living body, mind, or spirit.

○ ♚**Affect the dead** ○ ○ **–** Weaving to directly affect a once-living body or spirit.

○ **Conjure object** ○ ○ **–** Weaving to conjure an inanimate object or other organized matter.

○ **Conjure life –** Weaving to conjure living matter.

○ **Conjure elements** ○ ○ **–** Weaving to conjure energetic classical elements.

○ **Elemental kinetics** ○ ○ **–** Weaving to move or shape energetic classical elements.

○ **Alter fundamentals** ○ ○ **–** Weaving to alter how some fundamental physical phenomenon works—gravity, chemical bonds, electromagnetism, the nuclear strong force, etc.

○ **Accelerate entropy** ○ ○ **–** Weaving to mimic or enhance the ravages of chaos.

○ **Reverse entropy –** Weaving to slow or undo the ravages of chaos.

○ **Transit** ○ ○ **–** Weaving to move or connect something such that it doesn't cross the space in between.

○ **Alter time –** Weaving to alter the physical flow of time.

Moves

Restore Will – You restore 1 Will when you roll ↗ on any ⌞story move⌝. <u>If you have 0 Will</u>, → also counts.

Lose Will – You lose 1 Will when you roll ↓ on any ⌞story move⌝.

Weave magic – You create and cast a magical effect defined by your creativity and mastery of the ⌞Threads⌝. <u>You cannot make this move if you have 0 Will.</u>

Describe what you want your weaving to do in defiance of reality's standard expectations. This can be practically anything you can think of, but there are some rules:
- weave magic on a personal, local, immediate scale.
- target one "thing" at a time—that might be an area containing many occupants, but not 3 separate individuals.
- you must directly perceive your target—not just something it's part of or contained inside.
- don't get in a rut—try not to repeat yourself too much in the same scene.

Your effect ends if you no longer perceive your target, dawn breaks, or you ⌞weave magic⌝ again. When your effect ends, the logical changes, outcomes, and consequences caused by the effect do not reverse themselves. That building is still on fire, even if the spark is long faded.

Decide which Threads the effect depends on. If you're unsure, ask the GM. You should rationalize creatively, but respect fiction and use common sense. Include every Thread that relates to the effect you've described, even if you haven't bought that Thread. Try to stick to the "primary" part of the effect in defiance of reality: you might weave to conjure fire, but stuff burning is normal.

From all the Threads your effect depends on, the one with the lowest rating is the **weak thread** for this effect. If there are multiple with the same low rating, it doesn't matter; pick one.

You typically use your magic to ⌞*make a story move*⌝. If that's the case this time, roll the move with **weak thread**.

If you're gonna ⌞*fuck 'em up*⌝, you can do **1 + weak thread** harm—this means you do 0 harm if your weak thread is -1. If you can't do enough harm to fit the injuries your description would cause, you'll need to alter the scale of your described effect to fit the harm you can cause.

♚If you're trying to do something that really doesn't fit into a ⌞story move⌝, roll **weak thread**.

↗ You achieve your effect and restore 1 Will.
→ You achieve your effect.
↘ You achieve your effect, but pick 1:
- the effect is short-lived.
- the effect is weak.
- there's a serious side effect.
- you affect someone you didn't mean to.
↓ The effect won't come together and you lose 1 Will.

Mutagen Meta Playbook

Nouns – These rules define 3 critical game concepts (moves, aptitudes, resources), then name, define, and use specializations of the basic concepts. No need to memorize everything, but try not to confuse different species of stuff with similar names.

Symbology – I use some symbols to save space, most defined elsewhere. ⌐¹ means there's a ⌐noun¹ defined with (nearly) that name in the rules. Italics is an "active" ⌐move¹ name, not <u>emphasis</u>.

Moves – A move is an action you can take as either a <u>player</u> or a <u>character</u> while playing this game. The block of text describes how the move works. Usually a move has an in-game effect; sometimes it has activation conditions or costs.

Meta moves, like this one, define the game itself. You ⌐make a move¹ like this one just by reading it.

Aptitudes – An aptitude is a score representing affinity or proficiency at some challenging activity. ⌐Moves¹ say what you <u>can</u> do; aptitudes track what you're <u>good</u> at. Don't confuse them.

Resources – A resource is some asset or quality you have in this game. Some resources are just notes you keep, but many are tracked with points that go up and down during play. Some combine both.

***Make a move* –** You "make" a ⌐move¹ by <u>doing something described in a move</u>. You may be <u>required</u> to make a move by its description or by some other move.

If there's no move that at least kinda describes what you're doing, or there is but you don't have it, you can't do that thing.

If the move's description says that some conditions apply, but those conditions aren't met (and you can't meet them), you can't make the move. Same if it says there's a cost that you can't or won't pay.

Chain moves – Sometimes a ⌐move¹ (parent) says that it applies when you're making a different move (child) or that you should make another move (child) as a part of the parent. Unless otherwise stated, you're making both moves: first the parent and then the child. Everything related to the child applies normally, unless the parent move says otherwise.

***Respect our limits* –** This game is for everyone at the table. If somebody needs to ⌐state a limit¹, immediately cut away or fade to black from whatever is upsetting them. Talk as a table about how to continue the story while embracing the limit.

***State a limit* –** This is a game to have fun. If some theme, activity, or imagery of the story is ruining your fun, speak up. You don't have to explain why, you only have to indicate what.

***Think for the camera* –** This game works better when we think like we're directing a tv series more than writing a novel. Focus on what we can perceive with our (supernatural?) senses here in the moment.

Invent fiction – This game shines when you speak up to refine, improve, or augment the scenario. It needs to make sense, and the GM has final veto, but the only firm rule is: don't contradict anything already established. **Use this to set up a move <u>or</u> just to make shit cooler.**

Ex. They're wearing my favorite designer. My fur is saturated violet. Lucky I've always got my boot knife. Maybe the roof collapsed in one corner. It's a huge gun, just a fucking giant revolver with shells like Vienna sausages. Surely there's a forklift in this warehouse.

***Be curious, not cautious* –** This game is more fun when we play to find out what happens than when we play to keep our characters content. Stories about people who never take risks, never get hurt, who never fail leave fewer memories than stories about a hot fucking mess.

***Don't sweat the meta* –** In this game, it's okay for you to know things that you don't know, and to act on that knowledge when it would make shit cooler. Likewise, don't keep "secrets". Be open so that everybody knows the badass shit you're up to.

Dispute fiction – Sometimes the GM will say something they think is cool, but that just ruins the story for you. You're trying to ⌐be curious, not cautious¹ but whatever the GM said just seems to cheapen the whole damn thing for you. Speak up and negotiate an alternative.

This isn't the same as ⌐resist consequences¹. Don't use this to gain an in-game advantage. Use this when something happens that would make you turn off a show you were watching.

Labeled items – Items are often grouped into labeled sections. Instead of a specific item, a ⌐move¹ may mention a section label instead. This refers to any or all items found in a section with that label—or any subsection of it.

Bought and free items – Some items have a ○; these items must be purchased at character creation or with XP. When you buy a ○, fill it in solid. Items with ● are "pre-bought".

Items prefixed with △ are yours <u>only</u> if a move or the GM says you get them—fill it in that case. You cannot buy △ directly.

Items with neither △, ○, nor ● are automatically in play if your playbook contains them.

Gated moves (0) – Some moves have a number in parenthesis after the name. In order to buy such a move, you must already have at least that number of moves from the same subsection of your playbook.

☀Consult the GM – Stuff with a ☀ icon may not be appropriate for your story (at this time)—or it may have special fictional restrictions or implications. Talk to the GM about taking any ☀ option. Please be cool if it's unavailable. Limitations define us.

Aptitude Rating – When you first get an ⌐aptitude¹, it starts at +0—even this gives you almost a 60% chance of success. Each additional ○ you buy gives you another +1 to your modifier. If you haven't got an aptitude, but need to roll it anyway, roll with -1.

Some aptitudes have more or less ○ available. Buying more than 4 ○ lets you soak up penalties to rolls, but doesn't let you exceed the maximum total modifier.

Alternate aptitudes – If a move says to roll something with a nonstandard ⌐aptitude¹, just use the weird one—<u>don't</u> add it on.

Mutagen Meta Playbook

(Progress) Bars – Progress bars are a GM-managed shared ⌊resource⌉ abstractly representing rising tension or sustained activity. A bar has a title and some number of ticks between 2 and 8. When the last tick is filled, whatever the title says happens.

Tick a bar – When the GM or a move says to tick a ⌊bar⌉, fill one tick on it. If they say to tick it some number of times, fill that many ticks.

Resource points – If applicable, each point of a particular ⌊resource⌉ is tracked with a ☐—maybe with an individual note attached. Some resources come in ranks with ◯, permitting you to buy more ☐.

When you restore or gain a resource, fill a ☐. You cannot have more of a resource than you have ☐ for it. If all your ☐ are full when you're supposed to gain the resource, just don't fill anything.

When you spend or lose a resource, erase a filled ☐. If you don't have any filled ☐, you can't do moves requiring you to spend that resource. On the other hand, if a move's effect tells you to lose a resource you're out of, just don't erase anything—any other effects or consequences of the move still happen as normal, though.

Unless stated otherwise, you start the game with all resources full.

Lose what you spend – Unless stated otherwise and regardless of where the cost appears in the move's description text, you lose a move's cost(s) immediately before you roll and determine results. If there's no roll, you just lose the ⌊resource⌉ before the effect takes place.

Status – A status is a short, free-form phrase describing a condition or state that is true; about you, anybody else, an item, or place. When a move or the GM says you or something of yours gets a status, write it down. As long as it's written down, no aspect of the fiction can violate its truth.

Remove a status – Erase a ⌊status⌉ when a move or the GM says you can, or when it no longer makes sense for it to be true.

Exploit status – When you make a ⌊story move⌉, you can describe how you're capitalizing on a ⌊status⌉ (yours or otherwise) to add +1 on your move. You can only exploit one status per move.

Harm – Harm is abstract systemic or traumatic damage (not necessarily physical) sustained by something living. A single injury can do 1-3 harm. Unless a move says specifically how much harm it does, just use common sense and the scale below.

The scale is calibrated roughly to the human body. A bunch of small injuries or one serious injury—you want a doctor—1 harm. A life-threatening injury—you need a doctor—2 harm. An injury likely to outright kill a vanilla human—too late for a doctor—3 harm.

Inanimate objects don't take damage in these terms. If want to "hurt" something inanimate, ⌊go apeshit⌉ on it.

Roll – A ⌊move⌉ may say you roll to find out what happens. For most moves, it'll say to roll with an ⌊aptitude⌉. That move, a different one, or the GM may also tell you there are penalties or bonuses to the roll. Sum the aptitude and all the pluses and minuses into a total modifier, then cap it at ±3. Roll 2d6 and add the total modifier to get your result.

Read the dice – When you roll, you'll get a number between (-1) and 15. That's broken down by range into different results, for which moves will describe different effects.

Range	Result Name	Result Icon
12-15	Critical Success	↗
10-11	Full Success	→
7-9	Some Success	↘
(-1)-6	Failure	↓

The icons are shorthand for the result name. When written in a group like ↗→, it means any of the results appearing in that specific group.

Low/Zero Effect – When you're describing how you make a ⌊story move⌉, the GM might say you'll have Low/Zero Effect. This means even if you roll ↗→, you won't get (all of) what you want.

Story moves – Story ⌊moves⌉ decide what happens next when you act in the face of conflict, risk, or adversity to get what you want. They serve the same purpose as system rules in other games, but in a flexible way that puts the fiction first. They answer "okay, so what happens next?"

Most moves flatly describe something you can do, but they don't address why you're doing it, what you hope to ultimately achieve. A metaphor: you slam on the brakes while you're driving, but are you trying to avoid or to cause a collision? Another: you fence with the Duchess, but are you trying to kill or to teach her?

Each story move follows the same formula: it states what you want to achieve, and it gives a hint at how you're trying to get it. When figuring out which story move you're making, the hint about method is less important than the part about your intent.

There aren't many story moves; they're mostly in the Common playbook. I intend them to be fairly universal. Please think metaphorically when applying them to weird situations.

Make a story move – When you make a ⌊story move⌉, describe how you're trying to achieve your goal in-game. Be specific. Wait a sec before rolling; the GM might have something to say.

If you're making a story move as part of another move, that move might say what to roll with. Otherwise decide if your description depends logically and primarily on **any** ⌊aptitude⌉ you've got —use common sense. If you've got something, roll with that **aptitude**. Finally, if you've got nothing that fits, roll with **-1**.

The GM playbook has stuff about what might happen for each story move, but the results all follow this formula.

↗ You succeed with an unexpected benefit.
→ You succeed as you've described.
↘ You succeed but there's some trade-off, consequence, or complication.
↓ Something didn't go right. It might not be your fault, but you didn't achieve your goal.