FREE LEAGUE

TALES FROM THE LOOP

RULES

READ THIS FIRST

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ISBN: 978-91-88805-95-9

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WELCOME TO THE LOOP

The landscape was full of machines and scrap metal connected to the facility in one way or another. Always present on the horizon were the colossal cooling towers of the Bona Reactor, with their green obstruction lights. If you put your ear to the ground, you could hear the heartbeat of the Loop – the purring of the Gravitron, the central piece of engineering magic that was the focus of the Loop's experiments.

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We were on our way home from school when all the lights in town went out, one by one. As we biked in silence through dark neighborhoods, we hardly saw any people. My best friend Erin didn't want to go home alone. Instead, she came along to the house where I and my little sister live.

When we got there, I felt something was wrong. We stopped outside the gate. It was fall, but the leaves had not yet fallen from the trees. Wind was blowing through the crown of the huge apple tree in the front garden. That's where we had our hideout: a treehouse with a rope ladder that can be pulled up to prevent unwanted intruders, like our parents.

Just as I was about to open the gate and lead my bicycle up to the house, my best friend Erin stopped me. "Look," she said and pointed at a large shadow next to the apple tree. "It's watching the street." As I kept staring at it, I realized that it was a robot – one of the waste disposal models from the construction site across town. It had made a big hole in the hedge and now its head was moving from side to side, watching and waiting. I was about to turn and sneak away when I heard someone screaming from inside the house. It was my mother.

EXAMPLE

The Gamemaster: *Through the kitchen window you can see the shape of someone,*

RIKSENERGI

maybe your mother, moving around as if struggling with something.
Player 1 (Kelly): *I slowly put the bike on the ground, careful not to make any noise. Then I sneak past the robot, to the house.*
Player 2 (Erin): *Oh, no, don't do it.*
The Gamemaster: *Does Erin do anything to stop her, or do you help her?*
Player 2: *Can I try to distract the robot by throwing something out in the street?*
The Gamemaster: *Sure! Ok, Kelly, you roll Sneak. Erin, give her an extra die as help.*
Player 1: *I got three dice from the* **BODY** *attribute, and then the extra die from Erin. So, four dice in total. And I got one 6, which means that I succeed!*
The Gamemaster: *Ok, so what happens?*
Player 2: As Kelly is about to open the gate to the garden, I take one of the strange painted metal decorations that Kelly's mother has placed by the gate. Then I throw it on a lamppost across the street.
Player 1: *At the same moment, I sneak slowly past the robot.*
The Gamemaster: *The robot stops looking around when it hears the sound. It stands completely still for a few seconds – enough time for you, Kelly, to get inside the house. But then the robot moves, and it is a lot faster than you would expect. In just a couple of seconds, it trashes through the hedge, just right by where you are standing Erin, and marches out in the street. It is a matter of time before it sees you. What do you do?*

This story is an example of what can happen when you play the *Tales from the Loop* roleplaying game, which takes place in the fantastic universe created by Simon Stålenhag.

A roleplaying game is a conversation where you and your friends build a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. A typical story takes between three to six hours of play. Most often you sit at a table and you need paper, pens, and at least ten six-sided dice.

DICE

A set of custom dice for *Tales from the Loop* is included in this boxed set. You can play the game with normal six-sided dice as well, but the custom dice support the game mechanics and are a nice visual prop.

RIKSENERGI

THE TALES FROM THE LOOP

In this game, a story is called a Mystery. It deals with a group of friends who try to solve Mysteries together. The friends are Kids, aged 10–15 years old, living in an alternate 1980s. Everyday life is full of nagging parents, never-ending homework, and classmates bullying and being bullied.

The Mysteries allow the Kids to encounter strange machines and creatures that exist as a result of the nearby Loop – a huge underground particle accelerator built in the late 1960s. The Kids get to escape their everyday lives and problems and be part of something meaningful and magical, yet also dangerous. They risk getting injured and also changed by the Troubles they have to overcome to solve the Mysteries.

A complete Mystery is included in this starter set, called *The Recycled Boy*. Several more Mysteries can be found in the full *Tales from the Loop* core book, in which you can also learn how to create your own mysteries.

ROLEPLAYING - HOW DOES IT WORK?

All players, except one, take the role of a fictional character – a *Kid* whom they will play in the story. In-game, you choose what your Kid does and says, and you tell the others what she looks like and what she thinks and feels. You should pretend to be the Kid, like an actor in a movie or a play. It is usually easier to play the Kid if you refer to the character as "me" or "I," instead of "she" or "her."

This boxed starter set includes five sheets with pre-generated Kids for you to play. If you can't agree who will play which Kid, roll a die to settle it. The ideal number of Kids to play in a Mystery is three or four, but anything from one to five is possible.

The one player who doesn't control a Kid is the *Gamemaster*. She plays all people except the Kids, and controls all creatures and machines. These are called Non-Player Characters, or NPCs. The Gamemaster also describes what everything looks like in the game, how things smell and how they sound. She is responsible for making the story move forward and cuts from scene to scene, like a director in a movie.

The Gamemaster shouldn't decide what will happen in the story. She presents situations and puts the Kids in Trouble. The players decide how the Kids try to overcome that Trouble, and that creates the story.

To support the story, the Gamemaster has a Mystery, a script that describes locations and NPCs that the Kids can encounter, and what Trouble they may need to overcome. The Mystery is only a guide, as the Gamemaster can choose to improvise and make up her own events, but she can always fall back on the Mystery when she is unsure of what to say or do.

The Gamemaster's task is a bit more difficult than that of the others, but can also be even more rewarding. The Gamemaster can invent intriguing mysteries, play robots and mad scientists, and she may, with the help of the players, describe the fantastical world of the Loop. The Gamemaster should cheer on the Kids just like you do with the heroes of a movie, but at the same time put them in Trouble so that she can enjoy how they overcome it and solve the Mystery.

The players and the Gamemaster take turns telling what the characters do, what the scenery looks like, and what happens. It is important that everyone gets space and time to participate. The group should listen to, and take in, each other's ideas. The story should be created together, and it's important to help one another, not compete for attention.

Sometimes situations arise where the Kids try to do something difficult. In those situations, you roll dice and let chance determine if you succeed or fail.

TWO LOOPS, SWEDISH AND US

There are two settings in this game. The primary setting is an alternate version of the Swedish Mälaren Islands, west of the capital Stockholm. The second, alternative setting is based on the US town of Boulder City, Nevada, which has a Loop of its own and is a sister facility to the Swedish Loop. The Mysteries written for the game are primarily based on the Swedish setting, but they provide alternate names of characters and locations for the US setting. All comments in orange brackets [like this] in the scenario texts refer to the US setting. You can decide together in the group which setting you prefer to play in.

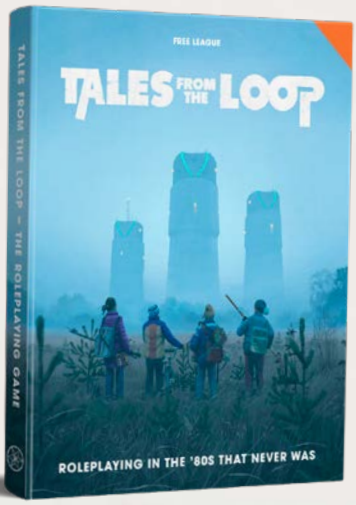
PLAY IN YOUR HOME TOWN?

It's entirely possible to set your game in your own home town, where you live or where you grew up. In your game universe, maybe that's where the Loop was built? Creating your own game setting requires some more work, but can be a lot of fun!

RIKSENERGI

THE CORE RULEBOOK

This boxed set is designed as an introduction to Tales from the Loop. After having played The Recycled Boy, we recommend you to check out the full rulebook. The core book contains comprehensive rules for creating your own Kids to play, guidelines for creating new Mysteries, and no less than four complete Mysteries to play. Beyond the core rulebook, there are several modules for this game with even more Mysteries and other tools.



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ROLLING DICE

The Kids have numeric ratings for what they are good at: understanding machines, fast talking, climbing trees, and running fast. The rating indicates how many six-sided dice you get to roll when trying to overcome Trouble. A six means a success. You rarely need more than one success. If you fail, you may try again, but then you risk getting hurt, upset or scared. This is explained further in Chapter 4.

PRINCIPLES OF THE LOOP

The *Tales from the Loop* roleplaying game has six core principles that the players and the Gamemaster will use to create stories with the right kind of feeling and plot. They are also tools for finding a way to get along, if players have different opinions about what should happen in the story and how it should be described. The principles are first presented as a numbered list, and then explained in more detail.

1. Your home town is full of fantastic things.
2. Everyday life is dull and unforgiving.
3. Adults are out of reach and out of touch.
4. Mysteries are dangerous but Kids will not die.
5. The game is played scene by scene.
6. The world is described collaboratively.

1. YOUR HOME TOWN IS FULL OF STRANGE AND FANTASTIC THINGS

When fusion, particle accelerators and the magnetrine effect were discovered in the 1950s, it broke the boundaries between the possible and the impossible. Huge transport vessels fly, cyborgs and robots can think, scientists create time portals and objects that replace people's identities. Strange beasts roam the landscape, and humanity can contact people and creatures from other times and places.

Not infrequently, things are created because of experiments that go wrong or random events that spawn something new and unexpected. Only the imagination limits what can happen in the land of the Loop in the 1980s. The Kids should discover all these strange things. See the world through the eyes of Kids.

Use your own experiences from being a kid – whether you are one now or it was many years ago – to create magic and wonder. Think of how it feels to sneak out in the middle of the night to secretly meet your friends, to dive deep under water to gather stones or ride your bike as fast as you can on hilly trails through the woods. Think of how it feels to sit sweating in a secret tree hut with friends and how those first days of summer break feel. Think of what it is like to spy on the creepy guy with the dogs, or listen to the older kids' stories about burglars or the strange old lady. Let yourself be swept away.

2. EVERYDAY LIFE IS DULL AND UNFORGIVING

The alarm clock rings every morning, and homework must be done every night. It does not matter that the magnetrine ships sail by outside the window, that mom and dad still quarrel, and your brother seems to hate you. Your house smells fishy and you don't get enough pocket money to buy that tape you want. The garbage has to be thrown out every day, bullies give you nicknames, and your bike is broken. It's raining, and you have no raincoat.

Life is full of setbacks and obstacles. The adults decide and do as they please, and Kids are forced to do as they say. Sure, sometimes a problem is solved and you enjoy a nice moment, but it only lasts a short while, then it's the same as before. Everyday life.

3. ADULTS ARE OUT OF REACH AND OUT OF TOUCH

It doesn't matter what you say – the adults neither listen nor understand. They live in their own world. There's no point in asking them for help with problems, Mysteries to be solved or Troubles that must be overcome. The Kids are on their own. The adults won't even believe in all the strange things that the Kids encounter.

The adults nag and whine and argue with each other. They are busy with themselves and their work. Moreover, they are ignorant. It is usually their mistakes that the Kids need to fix – machines that run amok, experiments gone bad, aircraft that crash or explode. The worst are the adults who actually see the Kids and want to exploit or harm them.

Sometimes adults help, like when your dad comforts you, or you call the police and they catch the burglars, but it never lasts and it often comes with a price. The police take all the glory, your stepmom wants you to mow the lawn all summer as payment for her help, or your teacher sees you as an ally and expects you to help her keep an eye on the bad guys in class.

4. THE LAND OF THE LOOP IS DANGEROUS BUT KIDS WILL NOT DIE

The Kids can be hurt, locked up, mocked, displaced, robbed, or broken-hearted, but they cannot die in this game.

5. THE GAME IS PLAYED SCENE BY SCENE

Just like in the movies, the Mystery is played in scenes. First, the characters talk to each other in the house, then we skip to when they meet their teacher at school. Don't play out every little step they take on the way between home and school. Skip the boring or less important parts.

In *Tales from the Loop*, the Gamemaster is the one who "sets" the scenes, often with the help of the players. Setting a scene means to initiate the scene and end it when it seems done. The Gamemaster should consult the players when unsure.

The Gamemaster can set scenes on her own initiative, like this:

> *"When you come home at night, you hear someone crying in the kitchen. Your father is sitting at the table. When he sees you, he puts on a fake smile. What do you do?"*

The Gamemaster should also ask the players to suggest which scene should be set. A good rule of thumb is to allow players to set at least every other scene.

EXAMPLE

The Gamemaster: *Does anyone have a scene?*
Player 1 (Olle): *I would like to try to break into the school to see what they are hiding there.*
The Gamemaster: *Do you go there alone?*
Player 1: *Yes.*
The Gamemaster: *The sun is going down above the oaks when you lean your bike against the fence behind the gymnasium. It is quiet and empty, and all the windows are dark.*

6. THE WORLD IS DESCRIBED COLLABORATIVELY

The Gamemaster is responsible for setting scenes and describing things in the story, but that doesn't mean she should do all the work herself. The Gamemaster should ask the players for help all the time. Ask them what the school looks like, what the weather is like, why the neighbors are arguing, and so on.

The Gamemaster should ask the Kids questions: What does your mother look like? What's fishy about the lady of the house next door? What is the mood like in the house when you get home? How do you feel? What are you thinking? What have you done that makes her hate you? What are you wearing? How come you love her? The Gamemaster should use the players' imaginations by asking questions all the time, and making sure the group creates the world together.

If the players make up flying schools and parents who work as Alien Hunters, the Gamemaster should remind them of the principle "Everyday life is dull and unforgiving." The strange and the mysterious should be in the Mysteries. The Gamemaster has the final say.

CHAPTER

02

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THE AGE OF THE LOOP

The Loop's presence was felt everywhere on the Mälaren Islands. Our parents worked there. Riksenergi's service vehicles patrolled the roads and the skies. Strange machines roamed the woods, the glades, and the meadows. Whatever forces reigned deep below sent vibrations up through the bedrock, the flint lime bricks, and the Eternit facades – and into our living rooms.

RIKSENERGI

One of the core elements of the game setting is that the *Tales from the Loop* RPG takes place in a distinct and iconic period of time: the 1980s. It's a time you probably know well – you might even have grown up during this era, and if not, you have probably experienced it through a score of iconic movies like *E.T., The Goonies,* and *Wargames*.

It is the decade that gave us global pop stars like Michael Jackson and Madonna, when hard rock and synth pop dominated the radio, and the Commodore 64 was the world's best-selling computer. In a way, it was the first really modern decade. The VCR made its way into homes, and a generation of kids watched movies that previously were out of sight and reach for them.

After the pessimistic '70s, the '80s looked ahead and upwards. Everything seemed possible. Yet it was also a decade of fear and conflict. Looming over everything was the spectre of the Cold War, and the global threat of nuclear war. To be scared of The Bomb was as natural as being afraid of climate change today. This, and everything else that happened during this era, is part of this game. But there is more to it as well – this game is about an '80s that never was.

THE '80S THAT NEVER WAS

Things are not quite as you remember them. The '80s of this game are filled with strange technology and top secret, government-run projects. The twin large particle accelerators in Sweden and the US are still active. "Balanced autonomous systems" (commonly known as robots) are commonplace and 10,000 ton gauss freighters traffic the Tundra route to Siberia. This is the era of *Tales from the Loop*.

TEN MOVIES

- Ghostbusters ('84)
- Top Gun ('86)
- Return of the Jedi ('83)
- The Goonies ('85)
- E.T. ('82)
- The Breakfast Club ('85)
- Back to the Future ('85)
- Stand By Me ('86)
- Gremlins ('84)
- Karate Kid ('84)

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In the years after the second World War, the major powers invested huge amounts of time and money in experimental research programs. Most of these yielded almost no results, but a few of them paid off handsomely. The so-called magnetrine effect was discovered by scientists in the Soviet Union, and gave birth to the majestic gauss freighters that, in the decades that followed, became a common sight, especially in the northern hemisphere. The magnetrine effect is distinctly weaker in the southern hemisphere, limiting its use to smaller gauss ships.

In the US, the world's first particle accelerator was constructed in Boulder City, Nevada, in the 1950s. Part of a military program, its scientific findings were unclear, and rumors calling it a failure spread. That did not stop scientists in Sweden from following suit. In the 1960s, the Swedish government formed Riksenergi, an agency tasked with building the world's largest particle accelerator on the Mälaren Islands outside of Stockholm. The Facility for Research in High Energy Physics was inaugurated in 1969, and top scientists from all over Sweden relocated to the area so as to partake in one of the most ambitious scientific endeavors of its time. It did not take long for the inhabitants of the islands to come up with a new name for the facility: The Loop.

Meanwhile, the Japanese company Iwasaka perfected the self-balancing machine in laboratories in Osaka. In the '70s and '80s, these machines, most often simply called robots, became a more common sight in industries and defense forces.

MAKING THE FANTASTIC MUNDANE

The world of the *Tales from the Loop* is our world, but it's also quite different. The discovery of the magnetrine effect and the perfecting of robot technology in the late '60s have made things we consider fantastic commonplace. Keep in mind that while seeing a huge gauss ship cruise above the ground is an awe-inspiring sight for the Kids in this game, it is not something magical or fantastical. They grew up in this reality; for them, hovering magnetrine ships and robots are as normal as jets or computers are to us. *Tales from the Loop* is science fiction, but it is not about technology. At its heart, this game is about growing up in the shadows of strange things and solving mysteries. It is about the Kids.

SCIENCE – A TIMELINE

1950-59

- Scientists in the Soviet Union discover the Magnetrine Effect.
- The world's first particle accelerator is built in Boulder City, Nevada.

1960-69

- Iwasaka, a Japanese company, develops the self-balancing machine, laying the foundation for the development of what are today known as robots.
- Riksenergi, the government agency tasked with operating the Swedish accelerator, is founded.
- Department of Advanced Research into Teleportation is started by the US government agency ARPA.
- The construction of the Swedish accelerator. The Facility for Research in High Energy Physics, more commonly called the Loop, is completed.

THE SWEDISH LOOP

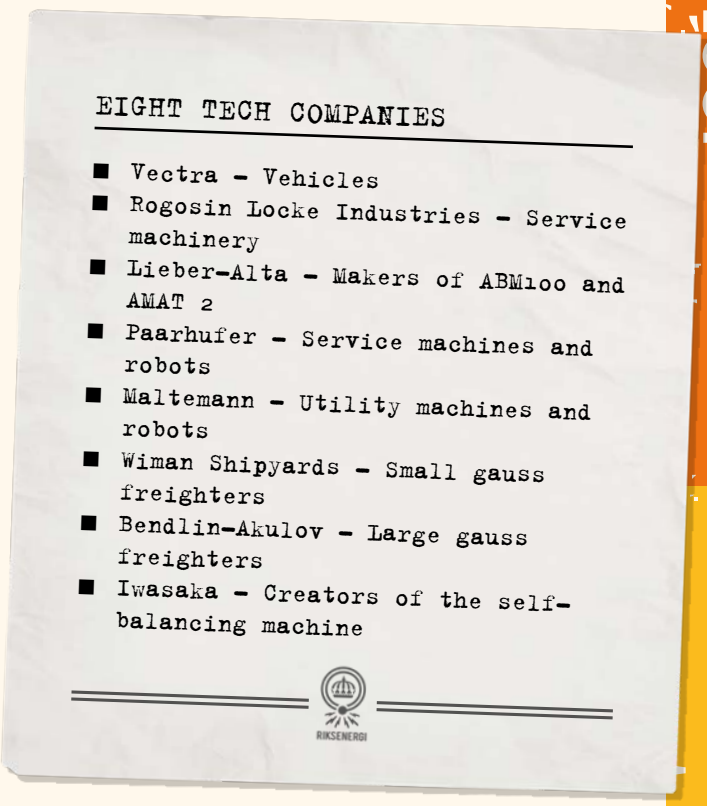
From its inception in 1969, the Facility for Research in High Energy Physics, or simply "The Loop," is the largest particle accelerator of its kind in the world.

SWEDEN IN THE '80S

Sweden in the 1980s is a very different country from what it is today. Some call it a socialist utopia, others a failed experiment of finding a middle way between capitalism and communism. It is a country governed by the monolithic Social Democratic party, who have ruled more or less single-handedly since World War II. It's a far cry from the communist countries of Eastern Europe, but the belief that the government should care for its citizens from cradle to grave is still strong. Education is free for everyone, as is health care. Alcohol is only sold in state owned Systembolaget stores, there are only two TV channels - both state owned and showing a mix of American soap operas, Swedish social realist dramas, and cartoons from behind the Iron Curtain.

Sweden is officially neutral, and is not aligned with NATO or the Warsaw Pact. Indeed, it was one of the few countries in Europe that was not occupied and did not fight in World War II, a subject that has been much debated among its less lucky neighbors. But regardless of what Finns or Norwegians think about Sweden's way of not taking sides, it is firmly entrenched in the Swedish psyche. The Social Democratic government has good diplomatic relations with both the Soviet Union and the US. But even if the official stance always is to never pick a side, it is an open secret that the Swedish military, many politicians, and a large part of the population only really see one obvious enemy: the Soviet Union.

There are rumors that cooperation with NATO countries is more widespread than commonly believed, and some talk about secret research and intelligence projects in cooperation with US representatives. When the Soviet submarine U-137 runs aground outside Blekinge in southern Sweden in 1981, the threat suddenly becomes very real.


EIGHT TECH COMPANIES

- Vectra - Vehicles
- Rogosin Locke Industries - Service machinery
- Lieber-Alta - Makers of ABM100 and AMAT 2
- Paarhufer - Service machines and robots
- Maltemann - Utility machines and robots
- Wiman Shipyards - Small gauss freighters
- Bendlin-Akulov - Large gauss freighters
- Iwasaka - Creators of the self-balancing machine

RIKSENERGI

1970-79

- Scientific work commences at the Loop. Scientists from all over Sweden, and indeed Europe, are recruited to the project.
- The first civilian autonomous robots enter service.
- Robot-wave tactics used by Chinese in the Baikal Wars fail, bringing military use of robots to an end.

1980-89

- Hans Albrechtsson takes over as Director of the Loop.
- The Swedish Armed Forces introduces the AMAT-1, crewed self-balancing machines.
- Strange sightings are reported around the Loop. Wildlife patrols are increased.

RIKSENERGI

After the incident, the Swedish navy steps up its efforts, and submarine hunting becomes a regular thing throughout the rest of the decade, although with no tangible results.

Sweden is also a changing society. Influence from the West, and especially the US and the UK, is growing stronger both in popular culture and in economic policies. So-called "yuppies" are celebrating the capitalist way in Stockholm, with one hand on an absurdly large mobile phone and the other on the steering wheel of a Porsche. Kids are playing with *Garbage Pail Kids, He-Man* and *Transformers*. The personal computer can be found in many homes, most often in the form of the Commodore 64.

Pen and paper roleplaying games, like *Drakar och Demoner* and *Mutant*, sell 100,000 copies. Going on charter vacations becomes a national pastime. The shift from the idealistic and political '70s to a more individual and pleasure-seeking way of life in the '80s is gradual, but clear. In February 1986, Swedes awake to momentous news: the iconic Prime Minister Olof Palme has been murdered in cold blood in downtown Stockholm. The murder will never be solved, and some claim that this marks the end of the age of innocence in Sweden.

Throughout the decade, the Swedes carry on with their lives the way they have always done. Enduring the long cold winters, spending the short but beautiful summers in country houses, and the rest of the year longing for next summer.

GROWING UP IN SWEDEN

Being a kid in 1980s Sweden feels like being stuck between the past and a bright, shining future. There are still only two channels on the TV, the computers in school are hopelessly outdated ABC 80s, and a vocal minority of the adult world sees parts of popular culture, such as horror films, computer games, and heavy metal, as soul-corrupting garbage.

Still, things are exponentially better than the drab, grey '70s when your older siblings grew up. VHS tapes of American movies are copied and distributed among friends, pirated cassettes full of Commodore 64 games are tiny slices of heaven for enthusiasts, and the music scene is alight with decadent and deliciously dangerous metal groups as well as stylish and glitzy synth pop duos.

Teen magazines such as *Okej* (glam rockers), *Datormagazinet* (computer games), and *Frida* (love and heartache) are required reading for the young, as well as comics such as the popular *Fantomen* (The Phantom), *Spindelmannen* (Spider-Man), and *Min Häst* (for horseriding youth).

Parents have a less controlling parenting style in the '80s, and often let Kids keep to themselves without any major interference. Kids are allowed to roam the countryside as they please, as long as they return before dark. It is also a decade where divorce becomes commonplace, and many kids grow up in separate homes. Turbulence at home and the existential uncertainty that comes with this casts a shadow over many kids who seek to understand what is happening to their once so-called safe families.

School is mandatory and free. All kids go to the *grundskola* (basic school) at the age of seven, and continue for nine years before they go on to two to four years in *gymnasiet* (college). English is taught from an early age, and because all television shows and movies only have subtitles in Swedish, kids learn to speak English very well, although often with Hollywood-like accents rather than the British English that is most often taught in school.

The school system is relatively fair and progressive, but echoes of archaic methods from the '60s still remain. Teachers are often kind and well-meaning, but hopelessly out of touch with the realities of the kids. Bullying is a real and commonplace problem, and teachers and parents alike struggle to handle it properly. For some, the school years are torture at the hands of their so-called comrades, and the only respite they find is in like-minded friends or an escape into dreams of something else.

THE US LOOP

The Loop might have reached its highest level of notoriety in Sweden, but it got its start as a top-secret military project in the USA. Specifically, it began in Boulder City, Nevada, a sleepy little town just a half-hour's drive southeast of Las Vegas, overlooking Lake Mead. While it started out in the early days of the Cold War in the 1950s, the US Loop peaked in the heady years of the 1980s.

The Loop was originally meant to investigate the possibility of instantaneous teleportation between two points on the planet. It was formed under the auspices of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), which was known simply as ARPA at the time. President Dwight D. Eisenhower himself ordered the creation of the Department of Advanced Research into Teleportation (DART), hoping to employ the fruits of its labors as a means of moving troops around the globe at a moment's notice.

But that initial promise – secret as it might have been – was never fulfilled, and the city seems to have suffered for it.

AMERICA IN THE '80S

Although Boulder City can sometimes seem like a deserted island in the middle of an endless sea of sand, it's actually not a terrible place to grow up.

America in the age of the Loop isn't quite the same as the one you might remember. Strange airships scud across the sky, floating atop gigantic magnetrine discs. Robots perform a lot of the heavy labor, often guided by human operators – but sometimes not. This all seems perfectly normal to the Kids born into this world, of course, but that doesn't mean there isn't plenty there that can still mystify and shock them.

The '80s is the era of Ronald Reagan, the former actor who becomes the nation's oldest-ever President by promising a "morning in America." It's a time when Americans want to have faith in their government restored to them after it's been shattered by Watergate and President Nixon's resignation. The threat of an imminent nuclear holocaust may cast a shadow over everything, but by the end of the decade, the Soviet Union is knocked onto the ropes, and it seems there's nothing America can't do.

At the same time, that faith turns out to be founded on a pack of lies. Reagan doesn't just free the hostages from Iran in 1981. Instead, in 1980, he negotiates for them to be held until his inauguration, to help him win the election.

Not too much later, the CIA refuses to obey Congress' ban on helping prop up the Contra rebels in Nicaragua. Congress also cuts off funding to CIA efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas in that war-torn nation, but CIA agents illegally procure their own funds for the cause by selling weapons to America's enemies in Iran instead.

For the most part, though, no one knows this until later in the decade. And to Kids in America, little of this matters directly to them anyway.

At the start of the decade, underage drinking reaches deep into high schools, because the drinking age in much of the country is 18 – although it had been 21 in Nevada since the end of Prohibition. That starts to change in 1984, when Congress forces the states to raise the national drinking age to 21. At the same time, the Reagan administration heats up the War on Drugs, sending First Lady Nancy Reagan out with the slogan, "Just Say No." While widely mocked, teen use of drugs drops during the decade from its highs in the '70s.

Meanwhile, the era of Free Love comes to an end with the rise of HIV and AIDS. This world-wide epidemic infects millions of people who share dirty needles or have unprotected sex. Now, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) don't just make you sick: they can literally kill you.

Military service is entirely voluntary. While men have to register for the draft at age 18, no one's been conscripted into the US military since the early '70s. Perhaps because of this, the '80s are comparatively peaceful. The US invades the Caribbean island of Grenada in 1983 and Panama in December of 1989, but both operations are swift, limited, and conclusive.

There are only four major TV stations in most of the country: ABC, CBS, NBC, and PBS (Public Television). In 1986, Fox joins the fray. Cable TV is still rolling out over much of the nation, bringing new channels like HBO, MTV, and ESPN to American households. Cartoons start being broadcast in the afternoons, after school, rather than just on Saturday mornings.

During the decade, the Federal Communication Commission ends the prohibition of toy companies making cartoons based on their products. They flood the airwaves with toy-based shows, including *Transformers, My Little Pony, He-Man and the Masters of the Universe, G.I. Joe,* and *Thundercats*.

GROWING UP IN AMERICA

Being a kid in 1980s America feels like being stuck between a wild, dangerous past and an even stranger and more complicated future. Your grandparents fought in World War II. Your parents either fought in or protested the Vietnam War. The Cold War seems to be heating up to the ignition point, and if you manage to survive that, you can see a corporate-owned, cyberpunk future heaving toward the digital horizon. You ride the wave of nostalgia that seems like it's sure to crash on the

TEN SONGS

- Take On Me – A-ha ('85)
- Billie Jean – Michael Jackson ('82)
- Karma Chameleon – Culture Club ('83)
- The Final Countdown – Europe ('86)
- Jump – Van Halen ('84)
- Girls Just Want To Have Fun – Cyndi Lauper ('83)
- We Built This City – Jefferson Starship ('85)
- Take My Breath Away – Berlin ('86)
- Rock You Like A Hurricane – Scorpions ('84)
- We're Not Gonna Take It – Twisted Sister ('84)

shoals of nuclear armageddon, and the only thing you can hope for is that you can keep surfing long enough to grab a fresh wave laced with future shock.

The only cell phones anyone has at this point are the size and weight of a brick, and they usually come attached to a car. If you want to get a hold of someone when you're out of the house, you have to hunt for a pay phone and hope you have a quarter to plug into it.

You don't have GPS. You have paper maps that no one can seem to fold back together, and you have your memories. The upside is that no one can reach you unless you want to be found, and the idea of someone tracking you using an array of satellites ringing the planet seems like something out of Star Trek.

The only apps anyone has come before dinner at your favorite restaurant.

In America, you start school with kindergarten at the age of five. Grade school ranges from 1st through 5th or 6th grade, after which you go to middle school or junior high. High school usually starts with 9th grade and ends at 12th. Most kids go to public schools, which are free, although some parents pay tuition to send their kids to private schools instead. After high school, you head off to college or technical school – both of which you must pay for – or enter the job market straight away.

Divorce rates reached a peak in the 1980s, leaving lots of kids living in single-parent homes. Most kids in such situations wind up living with their mothers. Sometimes they spend every other weekend with their fathers, who end up playing a smaller part in their lives. Almost all kids spend a good chunk of their waking hours in school. In homes where the parents both work – or there's only one parent around – the kids often come home to an empty house, giving rise to a generation of latchkey kids. They tend to themselves, and sometimes younger siblings, until their parents get home from their jobs. If they don't come straight home from school, there's no one around to notice.

In their spare time, many kids listen to tunes – including this new thing called rap music – on the radio or on cassettes. Some play their cassettes on portable players like the Sony Walkman or tote them around on their shoulders inside massive boom boxes that use six to eight D-cell batteries. They also watch movies and TV shows on VCRs – both in VHS and Betamax formats – and swap copies of tapes recorded off broadcast TV with each other.

Some kids play a lot of tabletop games, including *Dungeons & Dragons, Traveller,* and *Middle-Earth Roleplaying (MERP)*. In certain areas, these games are banned – along with heavy metal music recordings – for fear that they might have a demonic influence on the kids who play them. The Satanic Panic causes a lot of hand-wringing, but the added notoriety seems to sell even more games and records than before.

Most homes don't have a computer in them, but in those that do, the Apple II and the Commodore 64 top the list, mostly because they offer video games more intricate than the ones you can find on the Atari, Colecovision, or Intellivision systems of the day, things like Zork and Castle Wolfenstein. This changes in 1985 when the relatively inexpensive Nintendo Entertainment System reaches America, and Super Mario Bros. storms the nation.

CHAPTER

03

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THE KIDS

The echo sphere lay there in the gravel pit. A faint tune hummed from within the sphere when the wind resonated between the steel walls. Kalle and Olof immediately ran inside and started shouting to test the echo. A pair of nervous ospreys wheeled above the sphere. I remained outside, reminded of that first day there with my grandfather. Thinking back on it now I realize that this is probably my first memory of experiencing nostalgia. Odd; a summer's day and three nine-year-olds, one of whom was stopped in the middle of playing by a childhood memory.

RIKSENERGI

Each player in this game except the Gamemaster controls a Kid whom they will play in the story. This starter set includes five sheets with pre-generated Kids for you to play. If you can't agree who will play which Kid, roll a die to settle it.

This chapter explains how Kids function in game terms, and introduces a number of important rules and concepts. The full *Tales from the Loop* core rulebook includes full rules for creating your own Kids to play in the game.

AGE

In this game, your character is between 10 and 15 years old. Your age affects your attribute scores and the amount of Luck Points you have, but also how you picture the Kid in your mind and how you play the character.

ATTRIBUTES

Your Kid is defined by four attributes that tell you what you are good at and how you can cope with Trouble. The attributes are: **BODY**, **TECH**, **HEART** and **MIND**. The attribute scores range from 1 to 5, and determine the number of dice you roll when you try to overcome Trouble.

- **BODY** is the ability to jump high, run fast, fight, sneak, and climb.
- **TECH** is the ability to understand machines and robots, program technological things, open locked doors, and build things.
- **HEART** is the ability to make friends, lie, know the right people, create a good atmosphere, and persuade others.
- **MIND** is the ability to find weak points, understand people, situations and creatures, solve riddles, and understand clues.

RIKSENERGI

LUCK POINTS

The Luck Points are something you can use to overcome Trouble more easily – they give you the chance to re-roll dice. This is explained further in Chapter 4. In this game, younger Kids are luckier than older ones. You start the game with a number of Luck Points equal to 15 minus your age. Your Luck Points are replenished at the beginning of every session. You cannot save Luck Points from one session to another and you can never go above your starting number.

When you turn a year older, your maximum number of Luck Points is permanently reduced by one.

SKILLS

Each attribute has three connected skills. These are areas where the Kid can be well trained. The level of a skill varies between 0 and 5, and corresponds to how many dice you can add to the dice roll when you try to overcome Trouble, in addition to the dice from your attribute.

BODY

- **SNEAK** is the ability to hide and sneak.
- **FORCE** is the ability to lift heavy things, fight, and endure physically stressful situations.
- **MOVE** is used to climb high, balance, and run fast.

TECH

- **TINKER** is the ability to build and manipulate machines and other mechanical items.
- **PROGRAM** is the ability to create and manipulate computer programs and electronic devices.
- **CALCULATE** is the ability to understand machines and other technical systems.

HEART

- **CONTACT** is the ability to know the right person.
- **CHARM** is used to charm, befriend, and manipulate.
- **LEAD** is the ability to make others work well together, and to help them when they are scared, sad or confused.

MIND

- **INVESTIGATE** is the ability to find hidden objects and understand clues.
- **COMPREHEND** is the ability to have the right piece of information or to be able to find it at the library.
- **EMPATHIZE** is the ability to understand what makes a person, an animal or any kind of conscious thing tick, and how to find its weak spot.

ITEMS

Some Items can be useful to overcome Trouble. Items can give a bonus to the dice roll, from 1–3 extra dice to roll.

To get a bonus from an Item, it must be obvious how it is of use to you. A skateboard gives a bonus to **MOVE** when you're fleeing from a bully in the street, but not when climbing a tree. The Gamemaster should disallow unreasonable attempts to use Items.

Most objects that you encounter during the Mysteries are props – everyday things that are described to give atmosphere but that don't affect dice rolls. This can be a stick in the woods, a Coke bottle or a notepad. The Gamemaster decides which objects are Items that give a bonus and which are just props.

ICONIC ITEM

You start the game with one Iconic Item; it works just like other Items, but it also says something about who you are.

This Item gives two bonus dice in a situation where it can be used to help you overcome Trouble. The Iconic Item will not disappear or break whatever happens, unless you want it to. If it gets stolen or lost, you'll find it before the end of the Mystery. The Iconic Item cannot be used by other Kids.

GAINING NEW ITEMS

You may find or build things, or train Creatures, to get new Items during a Mystery. The Gamemaster gives the Item a bonus of +1 to +3, depending on how powerful it is deemed to be. Often, Items that can be encountered are described in the Mystery.

DRIVE

Your Drive is the reason why you expose yourself to dangerous and difficult situations to solve Mysteries with your friends. It helps you to understand your Kid, and makes it easy to get involved in a Mystery – whatever is going on, the Kids will want to figure it out.

PROBLEM

All Kids have a Problem. You may have kept yours to yourself or told the other Kids. The Problem is a part of Everyday Life, something that worries you. During the game, the Gamemaster will use the Problem to put you in Trouble.

PRIDE

Every Kid has a Pride, something that makes you feel strong, important, and valuable. The Gamemaster should use the Pride to put you in Trouble by setting up scenes that highlight or threaten the Pride. A classmate turns out to be as good or better than you at school. Dad is losing his job at the fire station. An animal is tormented.

Pride is also a tool for you to understand and play your Kid. Problem and Pride may interact, and Pride can even become a Problem, but it may also be two separate things. Once per Mystery, you may check your Pride to get one automatic success in a dice roll. You can check your Pride after a failed roll, or even after a successful roll in order to get an extra success (page 26). You must explain how your Pride helps you.

EXAMPLE

The Gamemaster: *The hole in the ground is dark and damp, and you hear something echoing down there. When you lean in over the hole, it sounds like laughter. Mad mechanical laughter. What do you do?*

Player 1 (Olle): *I back away from the hole. "I think we should find another way in."*

Player 2 (Anita): *"No way." I stare at you with firm eyes, but I'm really scared. "We are going down there, and we are going to stop that thing." I slowly sneak down into the hole trying to move as quietly as possible.*

The Gamemaster: *Roll* **SNEAK**.

Player 2: *I failed, but I check my Pride, "Nothing scares me," so I make it anyway!*

RELATIONSHIPS

Each pre-generated Kid has their Relationships to the other Kids in the group, and to an NPC, listed on the character sheet. The NPC Relationships are meant to be a connection between the Kids and the strange things that will start happening as the game is played.

CONDITIONS

The Kids cannot die, but they can suffer from Conditions. When you try to overcome Trouble but fail, or if you push a dice roll (Chapter 4), you may be forced to take a Condition. There are five Conditions, and the first four are mild: Upset, Scared, Exhausted and Injured. The exact interpretation of a Condition can vary, and may need to be adapted to the situation at hand.

You decide what Condition to take in a given situation, and you get a –1 on all dice rolls until it is healed. Additional Conditions are cumulative; two Conditions give –2 on all dice rolls. If all four mild Conditions are marked and you take another Condition, you are Broken.

If you get Broken, something really bad has happened. You are mentally or physically hurt, and you will automatically fail all dice rolls until healed.

CONDITIONS

Condition	Modifier
Upset	**-1**
Scared	**-1**
Exhausted	**-1**
Injured	**-1**
Broken	**Automatic Failure**

The Conditions are also an indicator for how to play the Kid. You decide how much you want to play out your Conditions in the scenes. The Gamemaster can help you by asking questions: How do you feel? In what way are you Upset? You should never be forced to play your Condition if you don't want to do so.

CHAPTER

04

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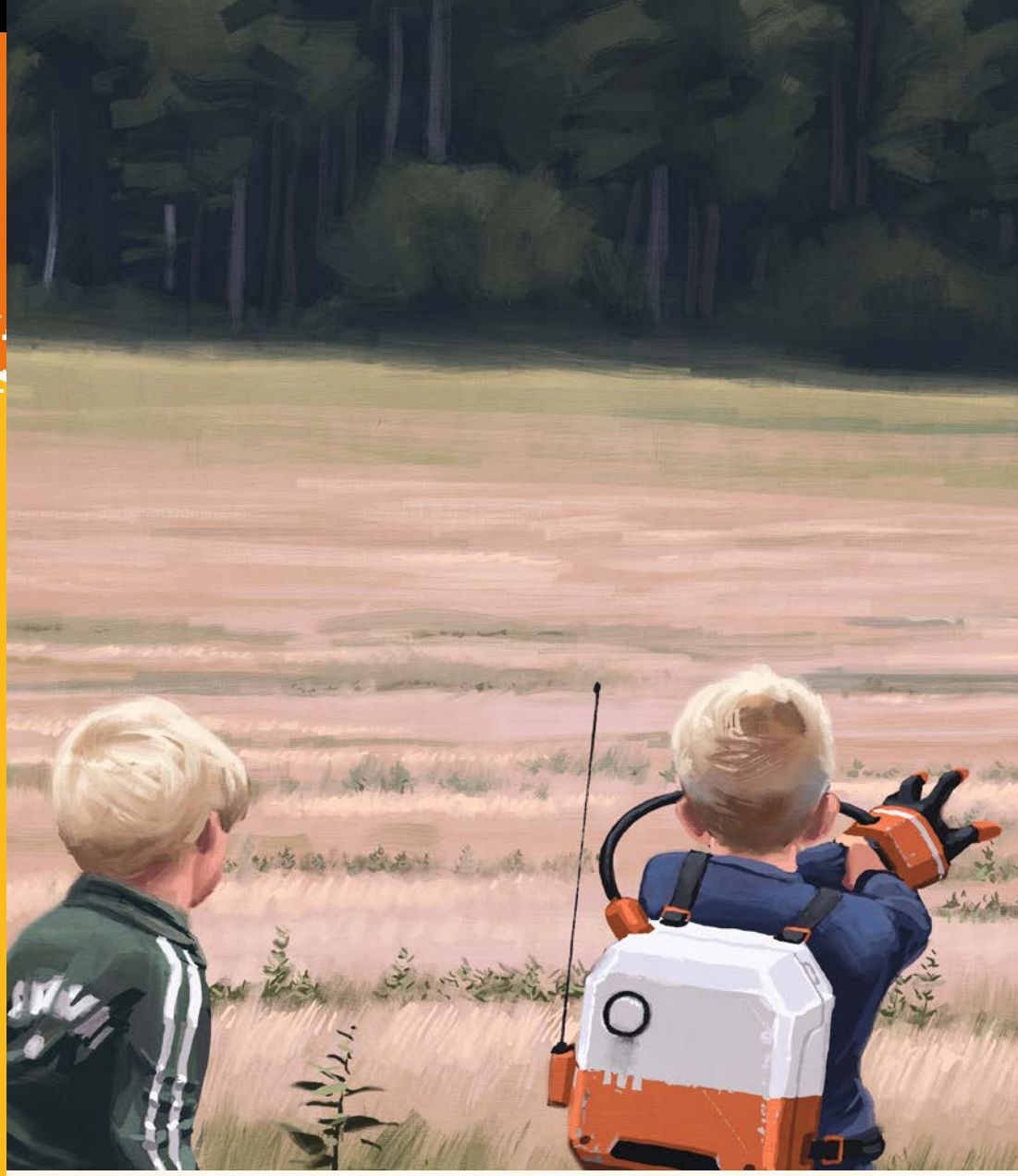
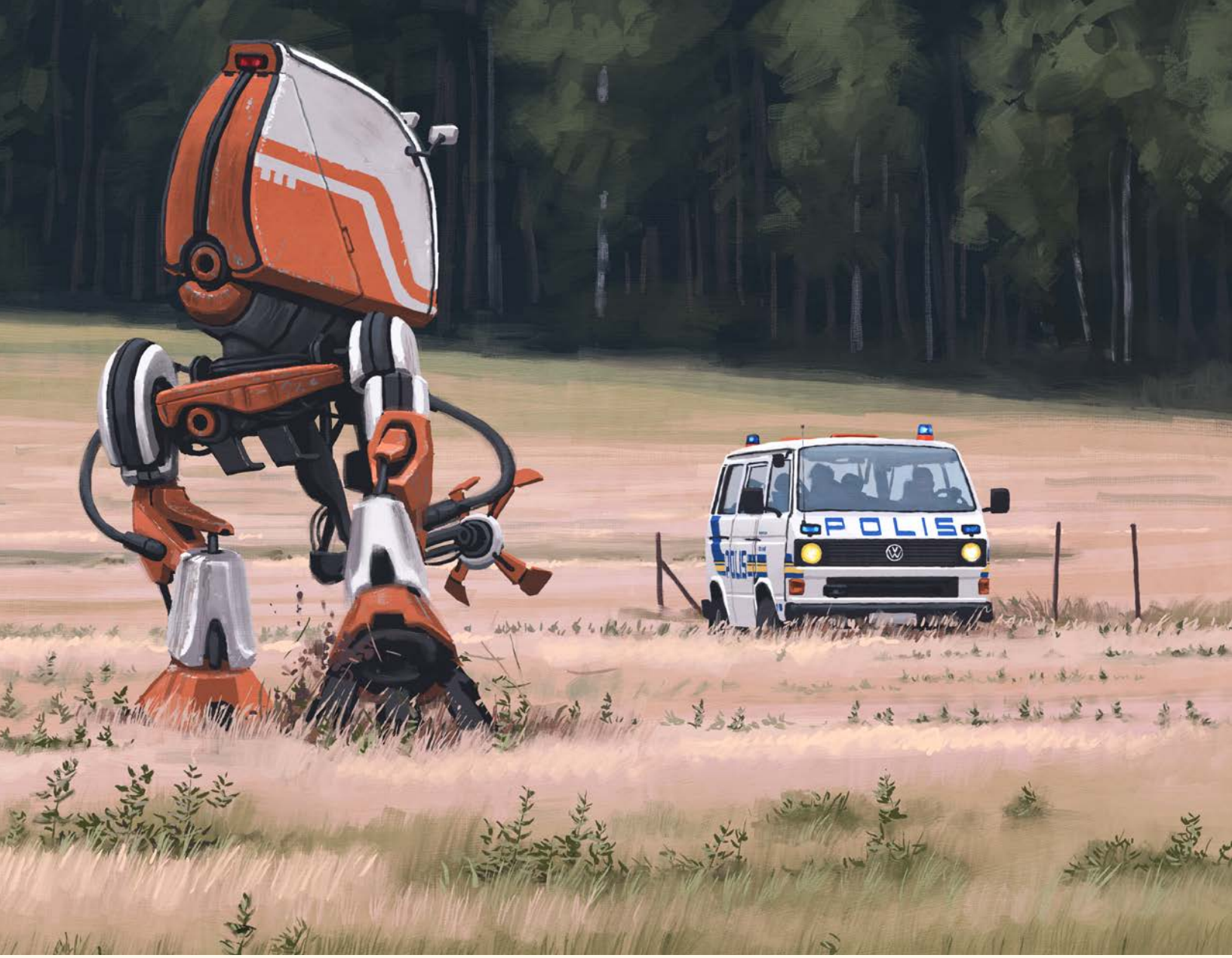
RIKSENERGI



TROUBLE

"Foxhound requesting permission to return to ba…" I was interrupted by a sudden snap among the twigs on the slope behind the robot. In terror, we watched as the robot twirled around with shocking speed, and we saw how it moved across the entire glade in a second, like a lightning-fast spider. A frightened pheasant flew out of the shrubbery, cackling in terror, and narrowly avoided the robot's pincer, which snapped through the air behind the bird's tail.

Lo stared at me, terrified, and hissed: "Request granted, return to base, over and out." Then we ran.



Trouble is something that prevents Kids from doing something; it can be a bad thing about to happen or a possibility fraught with danger. It is the Gamemaster's job to create Trouble, but the Kids can also get themselves into Trouble. Trouble is woven into the conversation and described by the Gamemaster as people and creatures doing things, or as something happening. The Gamemaster asks you how you react, and you may try to overcome it somehow, or ignore it and let it happen.

EXAMPLE

The Gamemaster: *You sneak into the school through the open door. It is quiet, and the moon that shines through the windows is the only light.*

Player 1 (Olle): *I move slowly through the corridors toward the headmaster's room.*

The Gamemaster: *Just as you pass the chemistry class, you hear footsteps in the corridor from around the corner. Someone is coming, and will see you in a few seconds. What do you do?*

Player 1: *Oh crap!*

TYPICAL TROUBLE

- Someone is standing outside the entrance and will see you if you try to enter.
- One of the bullies throws a bottle at you.
- The old man's dog is chained to a tree in the garden; it seems to be sick and is frothing at the mouth.
- Mom refuses to let you go out tonight.
- Your parents start arguing again.
- The car drops you off at the southern part of the island; it's a long way to walk home in the middle of the night.
- Your classmates don't believe you.
- He looks at you as if he sees you for the first time. Now you have the chance to tell him how you really feel about him.
- The robot attacks you with its claw.
- The portal opens with a deafening roar, and everything in the room is sucked towards it, including you.

SUFFERING CONDITIONS

Sometimes the Gamemaster will tell you that you will suffer a Condition (see Chapter 3), if you don't overcome the Trouble. This should happen only when it's obvious that you will take a beating. If you get a Condition that is already checked, you must choose another one to check.

THE DICE ROLL

You describe how you try to overcome the Trouble, and what you're trying to accomplish. The Gamemaster may ask for more details if she thinks the situation is unclear, or may ask you to change your mind if you are trying to do something that is impossible.

Grab a number of dice equal to your score in the attribute you use. Then add more dice equal to your level in the corresponding skill. If there isn't any suitable skill, only roll for the attribute. Every six rolled is a success. In most cases, only one success is needed to overcome Trouble.

ITEMS AND PRIDE

You may use your Iconic Item for a dice roll, when appropriate (the Gamemaster has final say). It gives you two extra dice to roll.

You can also use your Pride, once per Mystery. It gives you an automatic success. You can activate the Pride after a failed roll, or even after a successful roll to add a success.

EXAMPLE

The Gamemaster: *At the bottom of the hole lies a stone tablet with strange figures and characters on it.*

Player 3 (Dennis): *I pick it up. Do I understand what it says?*

The Gamemaster: *Not without studying it at the library.*

Player 3: *Okay, I place it in my backpack and bicycle over to the school library. A while later, I sit at a table covered in books.*

The Gamemaster: *Roll* **COMPREHEND**.

Player 3: *I have* **MIND** *4 and* **COMPREHEND** *3, for a total of seven dice. (Rolls the dice.) I get a 6, which means success!*

The Gamemaster: *When you open a book about Pharaohs, you realize that these are Egyptian hieroglyphics. The tablet must have traveled through some kind of portal from another time. It tells about a monster with shiny, hard skin and long, two-fingered hands that can easily lift a grown man.*

Player 3: *Do I get what that means?*

The Gamemaster: *No more than you've already figured out.*

TYPICAL TROUBLE WITH THREAT OF A CONDITION

- Your big brother tries to wrestle you down in front of your classmates. You risk being Upset.
- The car starts to weave back and forth across the road. If it crashes, you are all Injured.
- The two military robots start looking for you with their headlights. If they find you, they will Scare you.
- You are trapped on the island. If you don't find a way to escape, you will be Exhausted.
- The noise from the strange portal sounds like nothing ever heard on Earth before. If you keep listening, you will be Scared.

RIKSENERGI

LUCK

You can spend a Luck Point after a failed dice roll. A Luck Point lets you reroll failed dice, without needing to *push* (see page 27). You cannot go back to the earlier result. You cannot spend more than one Luck Point on a single dice roll. Your maximum number of Luck Points is equal to 15 minus your age. Your Luck Points are replenished after each play session. You cannot save them between sessions.

DOING THE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE

In rare cases, more than one success is needed to overcome Trouble. You might be trying to do something almost impossible, such as persuading your mother to let you go outside even though the garden is full of crazy robots, or jumping from a bridge down onto a car passing at full speed. This may require two or even three successes. The Gamemaster should only demand more than one success in the most extreme cases.

NO TURNS OR INITIATIVE

In many roleplaying games, conflicts and combat are divided into segments of actions that are resolved one at a time. This is not the case in *Tales From the Loop*. Instead, each action or intention is resolved with one single dice roll. This doesn't mean there can't be more than one roll in a conflict. Let the dialogue decide what happens and what seems reasonable. Don't forget to describe actions before rolling dice. In the end, the Gamemaster has the final say about what seems plausible.

RIKSENERGI

Trouble	Successes Required
Difficult (Normal)	1
Extremely Difficult	2
Almost Impossible	3

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Some skills let you ask questions of the Gamemaster. The Gamemaster must answer them truthfully, and with as much detail as seems possible in the situation. You have overcome Trouble, and should not be given vague or half-truth answers.

EXAMPLE

Player 1 (Olle): *Dad, have you been cheating on mom?*
The Gamemaster: *"How can you even ask that question, of course not! Go to your room! Not one more word of this nonsense." He looks really mad.*
Player 1: *I try to see if he´s lying.*
The Gamemaster: *Roll* **EMPATHIZE**.
Player 1: *Success. Let´s see… I want to know if he´s lying, and I want to know what he feels.*
The Gamemaster: *Oh, he is absolutely lying. He´s mad, but also ashamed and, you suddenly realize he's very, very scared.*

BUYING EFFECTS

If you roll more successes than you need, leftover success can sometimes be used to "buy" beneficial bonus effects. Such effects are described for each skill. The same effect can be bought several times. The Gamemaster decides which effects, if any, are suitable in any given situation.

EXAMPLE

Player 2 (Anita): *I roll* **FORCE** *to wrestle my brother to the ground. Three sixes! Can I buy effects?*
The Gamemaster: *Of course.*
Player 2: *I can buy two effects, let´s see… He is humiliated, and I don´t have to roll again for the exact same Trouble.*
Gamemaster: *Okay, remember it´s the exact same Trouble; if he attacks you in front of others you will beat him without rolling the dice. Now, tell me how you wrestle and humiliate your brother!*

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

The Gamemaster never rolls dice for the NPCs. When they try to overcome Trouble, the Gamemaster decides if they succeed or fail. If their actions cause Trouble, the Kids may try to prevent or overcome them. When an NPC helps you, the Gamemaster may decide to give you 1, 2 or 3 bonus dice. This only happens in rare cases. The Kids need to rely on each other.

SPECIAL NPCS

Some NPCs are significantly harder to beat. They will have one or more *special attributes*, with a score of 2 or 3. Trouble that is directly tied to a special attribute is particularly hard to cope with – to over-

come the NPC, you need to roll a number of successes equal to the attribute score. The Gamemaster has final say as to whether a special attribute is applicable for a roll.

EXAMPLE

A strange underwater storm with the special attribute **WILD CURRENTS** *2 means that Kids who try to swim through the water must get two successes when making a* **MOVE** *roll. Kids trying to wrestle or outrun a raptor with* **FEROCIOUS BEAST** *3 need three successes. If they try to outsmart the raptor or beat it in some other way that isn't physical, only one success is required.*

FAILED ROLLS

If you roll too few successes, your action fails. An unsuccessful attempt to overcome Trouble must never mean that nothing happens. Somehow the situation changes, probably for the worse. What happens is up to the Gamemaster to decide. You might need to check a Condition, you might end up in new Trouble, or you might suffer a Complication (see the boxed text).

COMPLICATIONS

A failed test shouldn't be a roadblock. To progress the Mystery even if a dice roll fails, the Gamemaster can use Complications. Suffering a Complication after a failed result, you still succeed with the most crucial part, but something goes wrong along the way. The Gamemaster decides what happens. The word "but" is often helpful.

Complications may lead to new Trouble, present a risk for new Trouble, provide a partial clue (forcing the Kids to investigate further), or force the Kids to change their plans. Examples:

- You climb over the fence and into the scrapyard, but the guard dog heard you.
- As you row out into the lake, the boat's owner comes running from the parking lot.
- You grab the scientist's notebook and run, but it gets torn in half.

PUSHING THE ROLL

When you fail a roll, you may choose to immediately retry the task, by mentally or physically pushing yourself to the limit of your abilities. This is called *pushing the roll*, and can only be done once, immediately after the failed roll. You must describe what you do to push yourself. You may push a successful roll to be able to buy more Effects.

When you push a roll, you must first check a Condition. Choose any Condition that you feel fits the story. Then you reroll all the dice except those showing sixes. If the reroll is successful, the Gamemaster describes what happens. If the reroll also fails, you may not push again (but you can use a Luck Point or your Pride).

If the Trouble came with a threat of a Condition, you may have to check two Conditions if you pushed the roll but still failed after the reroll. You can push a dice roll before or after using a Luck Point.

EXAMPLE

Player 2 (Anita): *I look her in the eyes and try to look sad. "But please mom, if you don't drive us we'll miss the party."*
The Gamemaster: *Roll* **CHARM**.
Player 2: *Damn, I miss.*
The Gamemaster: *She looks stern and is about to say something, do you push?*
Player 2: *Yes, of course. I look away and say with a cold voice, "If dad was alive he would have done it."*
The Gamemaster: *What Condition do you check?*
Player 2: *I'm getting really Upset now.*
The Gamemaster: Ok. *Reroll all dice.*
Player 2: *No successes this time either.*
The Gamemaster: *She doesn't say anything, just looks at you.*
Player 2: *I start crying for real, with shame, and go to my room. I feel horrible.*

HELPING EACH OTHER

One Kid may help another overcome Trouble if it seems plausible in the situation. To help, you describe what you do, and then your friend gets one extra die to roll. A Kid may never get help from more than one of their friends for a single dice roll. The Gamemaster has final say on when helping is possible. When you help someone, you are bound to the outcome of the roll. If it fails, you suffer the same effects as the Kid who rolled.

EXTENDED TROUBLE

Sometimes, at a crucial moment of a Mystery, Trouble can be so climactic that the Kids have to come up with a plan and work together – a single dice roll is not enough to portray the Trouble they are in. Each Kid will have their part to play in the plan's final success or failure. This is called Extended Trouble.

1. SET THE STAKES

The Gamemaster declares what is at stake; what will happen if the Kids fail.

2. THREAT LEVEL

The Gamemaster declares the total number of successes that the Kids need to beat the Trouble. A Threat Level of twice the number of Kids is normal, three times the number of Kids is hard, and four times the number of Kids is almost impossible.

Don't use NPC special abilities (previous page) in Extended Trouble – it's included in the Threat Level.

3. MAKE A PLAN

The Kids decide what they want to do, agree on which skill each one will use, and in what order they will then act to make their rolls. The Kids get to choose which skills to use, but the Gamemaster can disallow any clearly unreasonable skill uses.

4. PLAY THE SCENES

Each Kid gets a scene to act and rolls for their chosen skill. Successes go towards reaching the Threat Level, but can also be used for bonus effects. If there is time, a Kid may roll for **LEAD** to create a dice pool (see page 31) instead of adding towards the Threat.

5. OUTCOME

Each Kid rolls once, pushing rolls if they want to, and when all scenes are over the total number of sixes is compared to the Threat level of the Extended Trouble.

- If the final sum of sixes are less than half of the Threat Level, the Kids have failed completely.
- If the number of successes reaches half or more of the Threat Level, the Kids can check additional Conditions to get more sixes, in order to reach a compromise. Each added Condition counts as an extra success. The Kids can make themselves Broken to succeed if they want to. If the Kids reach the Threat Level this way, they will achieve a part of their goal. Details are up to the Gamemaster.
- If the Kids reached the Threat level, without checking extra Conditions, the Kids achieve their goal, and overcome the Trouble.

THE SKILLS

SNEAK (BODY)

The ability to hide, sneak or steal.

BONUS EFFECTS:

- Give a success to another Kid.
- You find something unexpected, or more of what you were looking for.

FORCE (BODY)

The ability to lift heavy things, fight, and endure physically stressful situations.

BONUS EFFECTS:

- Give a success to another Kid.
- Impress, frighten or humiliate.
- Pin your opponent.
- Take something from your opponent.
- Your opponent is knocked unconscious.
- You don't need to roll to overcome the exact same Trouble in the future.
- You avoid any collateral damage.

MOVE (BODY)

The ability to climb high, balance, run fast, and chase someone or get away.

BONUS EFFECTS:

- Give a success to another Kid.
- Impress someone.
- No one notices you.

TINKER (TECH)

The ability to build and manipulate machines and other mechanical items.

BUILD

The Gamemaster will tell you what it takes to build something. Some examples of what might be needed:

- You need a certain Item.
- You need to successfully **CALCULATE**.
- You need to successfully **COMPREHEND**.
- You need to successfully **PROGRAM** something.
- You need a lot of time.
- You need new tools.

When you have what you need, you roll to overcome the Trouble of actually making the thing. If the roll is successful, you write down the object as an Item with a bonus of +1.

BONUS EFFECTS:

- The thing is more durable than expected. Add +1 to the bonus (up to +3).
- The thing can do more than expected. Add +1 to the bonus (up to +3).
- The thing is more discreet than expected. Add +1 to the bonus (up to +3).

MANIPULATE

The **TINKER** skill can also be used to break, use or jury-rig mechanical things, to pick locks, and drive motor vehicles. Sometimes you have to use **CALCULATE** first to figure out how to do it.

DESCRIBE HOW YOU DO IT

It isn't enough for you to say you use a skill. You need to say what you do in order to get to roll. This could be done by having a conversation in-game or by describing your actions; how you study a dinosaur with the binoculars, or how you open the top of a robot with a hammer and a screwdriver and then telling the other players what it looks like inside.

AVOIDING ATTACKS

Sometimes, an NPC tries to hurt or manipulate you. In such a situation, describe how you try to avoid the Trouble, and roll for the relevant skill. If it's a physical attack, like a punch to the face, **MOVE** is most often used. If the NPC is doing something relational like seducing you or telling you lies, use **CHARM**. In situations where you need to rely on wits to understand something in time to avoid it, roll **COMPREHEND**, and in situations where a sharp eye is required, like when you are walking into an ambush, roll **INVESTIGATE**.

RIKSENERGI

BONUS EFFECTS:

- Give a success to another Kid.
- You don't need to roll to overcome the exact same Trouble in the future.
- You do it quickly.
- You do it quietly.
- You show off.

PROGRAM (TECH)

The ability to create and manipulate computer programs and electronic devices. This is a sister skill to **TINKER**, but used for electronic things rather than mechanical.

CREATE

The Gamemaster will tell you what it takes to create something. Some examples of what might be needed:

- You need a certain Item.
- You need to successfully **CALCULATE**.
- You need to successfully **COMPREHEND**.
- You need to successfully **TINKER** first.
- You need a lot of time.
- You need new tools.

When you have what you need, you roll to overcome the Trouble of actually creating the thing. If the roll is successful, write down the object as an Item with a bonus of +1.

BONUS EFFECTS:

- The thing is more effective than expected. Add +1 to the bonus (up to +3).
- The thing can do more than expected. Add +1 to the bonus (up to +3).

MANIPULATE

The **PROGRAM** skill can also be used to manipulate electronic items. Examples include infecting a computer with a virus, disabling an alarm or electronic lock, confusing or controlling robots, and operating strange objects like time machines or transformation globes. Sometimes you have to use **CALCULATE** first to figure out how to do it.

BONUS EFFECTS:

- Give a success to another Kid.
- You don't need to roll to overcome the exact same Trouble in the future.
- You do it quickly.
- You get new or unexpected information.
- You show off.

CALCULATE (TECH)

The ability to know how technical objects work and how to use them. It could be robots, machines, magnetrine ships, cyborgs, or an alarm clock. If you succeed, you get to ask two questions:

- What is its purpose?
- How does it work?
- How can I use it?
- Who built it?
- What problems could it cause?
- Is it illegal?

BONUS EFFECT:

- Ask one additional question and take +1 die on one roll when you use the information (up to +3).

CONTACT (HEART)

The ability to know the right person and get in touch with them. You tell the Gamemaster who the person is, and roll to overcome the Trouble of finding them. If you succeed, you find them, or they find the Kids ready and able to help. If you fail, the person doesn't want to help you or maybe they even want to hurt, humiliate or make life difficult for you, and will come looking for you.

BONUS EFFECTS:

- The contact has all the right tools with them.
- The contact may heal one of your Conditions.
- The contact brings more people, also ready to help.
- You don't have to roll to get a hold of the contact again during this Mystery.
- The contact knows something important.
- You may use the contact once as an Item with bonus +1 (up to +3).

EXAMPLE

Player 1 (Olle): *Do I know anybody who could help us get to the body?*
The Gamemaster: *Do you?*
Player 1: *Eh… yes, my dad's friend is a cop. He likes to play with me when he visits.*
The Gamemaster: *What is his name?*
Player 1: *He is called Salmon because he loves to fish, but his real name is Oskar.*
The Gamemaster: *Roll* **CONTACT**.
Player1: *Miss!*
The Gamemaster: *Suddenly a police car parks outside the school. All the kids go to the windows to look. You can see that it's Salmon. He walks right towards your classroom and he looks mad. Maybe he heard what you did at the robot factory?*

CHARM (HEART)

The ability to charm, lie, befriend, and make people do what you want. As always, the Gamemaster decides what can plausibly be achieved.

BONUS EFFECTS:

- They keep believing you.
- You have formed a lasting relationship.
- They will take risks to help you.
- They will try to persuade others to believe you.
- They are frightened, confused or impressed.
- They are infatuated.

LEAD (HEART)

The ability to make your friends work together, to help them focus on the task at hand in difficult situations, and to soothe them when they are scared or confused.

If you have time with the other Kids, you may inspire and prepare them for a difficult situation. You roll to overcome Trouble, and your successes become a dice pool (see the table below). You may, in the upcoming scenes, distribute bonus dice to the other Kids when they roll to overcome Troubles – but only if they do as you say. You cannot give these dice to yourself.

If you fail to **LEAD**, you must check a Condition, and ask the other Kids how the relationship has been hurt. There may only be one dice pool active at a time – the group cannot have more than one leader.

LEADING OTHER KIDS

Successes	Dice Pool
1 success	2 dice
2 successes	4 dice
3 successes	6 dice

If you spend time privately with another Kid, giving them advice and comfort, you may heal one of their Conditions. You roll to overcome Trouble, and if you succeed, the Condition is healed. If you fail, you suffer the same Condition. You cannot heal Broken Kids using this skill.

BONUS EFFECTS:

- Heal an additional Condition.
- Heal one of your own Conditions.

INVESTIGATE (MIND)

The ability to find hidden objects, understand clues, break puzzles or survey a place or a situation. You get to ask two of these questions:

- What is hidden here and where is it?
- What does it mean?
- What has happened here?
- How can I get into/out of/past something?
- What threats can I perceive here?
- Where is it?

If the roll fails, you have misunderstood something, someone has found out something about you, or you suffer a Condition. The Gamemaster decides.

BONUS EFFECT:

- Ask one additional question and get +1 die on one roll when you use the information (up to +3).

COMPREHEND (MIND)

The ability to have the right piece of information or to be able to find it at the school library or a similar location. The Gamemaster will give you the information, or ask you to come up with something on your own. If you fail the roll, the Gamemaster gives you bad news or the wrong information (the Gamemaster doesn't say which it is).

BONUS EFFECT:

- You get additional information and +1 bonus die to one roll when you use the information (up to +3).

EMPATHIZE (MIND)

The ability to study what makes a person, an animal or a conscious robot or cyborg tick, and how to find its weakness. You need time to study or talk to the creature or person to be able to roll for the skill. If you succeed, you get to ask two questions.

- What is their weak spot?
- How can I make them do something?
- What do they feel?
- What do they want?
- What will they do?
- Are they lying?

If the roll fails, the Gamemaster either gives you bad news or the wrong information (the Gamemaster doesn't tell which it is) or makes something bad happen.

BONUS EFFECT:

- Ask one additional question and take +1 die on one roll when you use the information (up to +3).

EXAMPLE

Player 2 (Anita): *I want to know what he is thinking, so I roll* **EMPATHIZE**, *with four dice.*
The Gamemaster: *Wait, wait, wait! You have to study him or talk to him before you can understand him.*
Player 2: *Okay, I do that. I talk to him.*
The Gamemaster: *What do you say?*
Player 2: *I walk up to him in the schoolyard, and ask him what he was doing on Adelsö yesterday.*
The Gamemaster: *He looks at you for a long time. "I wasn't there."*
Player 2: *"Strange, I'm sure I saw you there."*
The Gamemaster: *"You're mistaken." He looks confused or scared. Roll the dice.*

WHEN TO KNOW WHAT

There are four skills to get information: **COMPREHEND**, **INVESTIGATE**, **CALCULATE** and **EMPATHIZE**. In some cases, they will overlap. The Gamemaster and the players should decide together which skill is appropriate in any given situation, and in some cases you may choose the better of two skills. The Gamemaster has final say.