

Modern Noir Expansion

For Fate's Edge Tabletop RPG

Urban Shadows and Moral Ambiguity Framework

Designed for Cases of Any Length

Complete with Investigation Generator System

Featuring Vice Clock Character System
52-Card Case Generation
Investigation Point Economy
Modular Urban Environment Mechanics

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1 Modern Noir Expansion Overview

1.1 Core Concept

Noir in Fate's Edge should create moral ambiguity and personal consequences while maintaining player agency through meaningful investigation and social choices. The city is both setting and character.

1.2 Key Innovations

- Vice Clock system for character flaws
- 52-card case generator for quick setup
- Investigation point economy for resource management
- Evidence rating system for clue tracking
- District-based environmental modifiers

1.3 Target Themes

- Moral ambiguity and ethical compromises
- Urban isolation and personal stakes
- Information as currency and power
- Atmospheric tension and city as character
- Personal consequences and character growth
- Social dynamics and class conflict

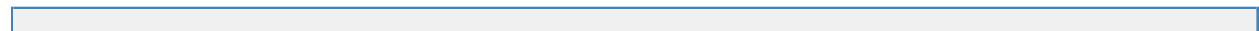
1.4 Mechanical Focus

- Investigation procedures with resource costs
- Social manipulation and information gathering
- Character corruption through Vice system
- Environmental hazards and urban modifiers
- Evidence management and case building

2 Core Mechanical Framework

2.1 Vice Clock - Character Flaw Management

The signature system represents the noir protagonist's fatal flaw through a mechanical system that creates tension between character growth and self-destruction.



Purpose and Integration

This system connects to the existing Boon economy while adding personal consequences that drive narrative forward. Players choose when to spend Boons to prevent Vice advancement, creating meaningful decisions about self-control versus indulgence.

Sample Uses:

1. Emotional Vice temptation during key interview (+1 segment) - player spends 1 Boon to resist
2. Physical Vice crisis state affects investigation rolls (-2 dice) - player must spend 2 Boons to clear 1 segment
3. Professional Vice creates complications with authorities - party must collectively decide how to manage compromised colleague

2.2 Resource Management - Investigation Points and Evidence

Acquisition Methods:

- Case setup (2 base points per case)
- Successful investigation rolls (1 point per success)
- Diamond card rewards from case resolution
- XP conversion (2 Boons = 1 XP, max 2 per session)

Spending Options:

- Automatic success on investigation actions (1 point per use)
- Evidence preservation and enhancement
- Information brokerage with contacts
- Emergency rerolls in critical situations

Narrative Weight: Players must choose between immediate investigative advantages and long-term case building.

2.3 Risk/Reward Balance

Safe Choices:

- Surface-level investigation with minimal personal exposure
- Conservative approach with reduced Investigation Point economy (-1 die penalties)
- Avoiding direct confrontation with dangerous elements

Risky Choices:

- Deep investigation with significant personal cost
- Direct engagement with criminal elements
- Pursuing sensitive information at personal risk
- +1-2 Vice segments, evidence contamination risks

Failure States:

- Case collapse due to evidence loss or witness intimidation
- Personal reputation damage affecting future cases
- Legal consequences requiring character retirement
- Character transformation into antagonist

3 Campaign Clock Framework

3.1 Primary Clock: Case Clock (4-10 segments)

Progress toward case resolution and complications affecting investigation timeline.

Case Clock	Progress toward case resolution and complications
Segments	●●●●0/4 (for 2-5 cards)

Advancement Triggers:

- Time pressure elements (2-5 cards): +1 segment per day/scene
- Complication cards (6-10): +1 segment
- Major complications (J/Q/K): +2 segments
- Twists/Aces: +3 segments or immediate crisis

Consequences when filled: Case reaches critical point - resolution required, evidence destroyed, witness lost, or personal crisis.

3.2 Secondary Clocks

3.2.1 Vice Clock (4 segments per vice)

Character personal flaw progression affecting performance and judgment.

Vice Clock	Character personal flaw progression
Segments	●●●●0/4

Triggers:

- Temptation situations: +1 segment per scene (automatic)
- Resisted advancement with 1 Boon
- Cleared with 2 Boons (1 segment reduction)

Consequences: Increasing penalties to rolls, SB generation, crisis states requiring immediate attention.

3.2.2 Pressure Clock (6-8 segments)

External forces complicating investigation through authority/criminal interference.

Pressure Clock	External forces complicating investigation
Segments	●●●●●●0/6

Triggers:

- Authority interference: +1 segment
- Media attention: +1 segment
- Criminal retaliation: +2 segments
- Personal threats: +2 segments

Consequences: Reduced investigation options, increased danger, forced resolution paths.

3.2.3 Reputation Clock (8 segments)

Professional/social standing effects on future opportunities and contact cooperation.

Reputation Clock	Professional/social standing effects
Segments	●●●●●●●0/8

Triggers:

- Ethical compromises: +1 segment
- Successful cases: +1 segment
- Public exposure: +2 segments
- Scandals: +3 segments

Consequences: Future case difficulty, contact availability, authority cooperation levels.

3.3 Clock Interaction

Case Clock drives other clocks; as it advances, Pressure and Reputation clocks accelerate. High Vice segments make Case advancement faster due to compromised judgment.

4 Character Integration System

4.1 Thematic Character Options

4.1.1 Professional Archetypes

Private Investigator:

- +1 Investigation, +1 Subterfuge
- Access to information networks and contacts
- Vulnerable to authority interference and legal complications

Rogue Cop:

- +1 Command, +1 Intimidation
- Authority cooperation bonus but complications with criminal elements
- Vulnerable to internal affairs investigations

Street Samurai:

- +1 Melee/Brawl, +1 Stealth

- Combat training and discipline but -1 social rolls due to reputation
- Vulnerable to legal consequences and authority attention

Socialite:

- +1 Presence, +1 Insight
- Access to high society information and resources
- Vulnerable to blackmail and family scandals

Hacker:

- +1 Technology, +1 Investigation (digital)
- Access to digital information and surveillance systems
- Vulnerable to physical confrontations and legal consequences

4.2 Background Integration

Criminal Past:

- Start with 1 Vice segment
- Gain +1 die to intimidation/social manipulation
- Vulnerable to law enforcement attention and blackmail

Police Connections:

- Authority cooperation bonus (+1 die)
- Creates complications with criminal elements
- Vulnerable to internal investigations and ethical conflicts

Wealthy Family:

- Resources and contacts (+1 Investigation Point base)
- Vulnerable to family scandals and expectations
- May attract unwanted attention from criminals

Military Veteran:

- Combat training and discipline (+1 Melee/Brawl)
- PTSD triggers and trust issues (Psychological Vice risk)
- May have valuable insider knowledge but legal restrictions

4.3 Mechanical Hooks

4.3.1 Vice Management

Each character starts with 1-4 Vice segments based on card draw:

- Jack Draw: 1 segment
- Queen Draw: 2 segments

- King Draw: 3 segments
- Ace Draw: 4 segments (immediate crisis scene)

4.3.2 Investigation Specialties

Characters can become experts in specific investigation types:

- Surveillance Specialist: +1 die to Stealth-based investigation
- Interrogation Expert: +1 die to Insight-based social rolls
- Evidence Analyst: +1 die to Perception-based scene examination
- Digital Investigator: +1 die to Technology-based research
- Street Network: +1 die to Subterfuge-based infiltration

4.3.3 Reputation Modifiers

Professional standing affects case difficulty and contact availability:

- 0-2 segments: +1 die to investigation (respected professional)
- 3-5 segments: Standard investigation (mixed reputation)
- 6-8 segments: -1 die to investigation (questionable methods)

4.3.4 Evidence Handling

Character skills affect evidence quality and preservation:

- Investigation 3+: Can improve evidence ratings by one grade
- Technology 3+: Digital evidence preservation bonus
- Perception 3+: Hidden evidence detection bonus

5 Quick Setup Protocol

5.1 30-Minute Campaign Launch

Character Preparation:

- Use pre-generated characters or build using 20-30 XP with noir-themed backgrounds
- Ensure party has mix of investigation, combat, and social capabilities
- Assign relevant Talents for noir engagement (Streetwise, Hardened, Smooth Talker)

Core Conflict Establishment:

1. Draw 3 cards (Spade=Crime, Heart=Person, Club=Complication) to establish case
2. Identify highest rank for Case Clock size (2-5:4, 6-10:6, J/Q/K:8, A:10)
3. Draw 1 Diamond for potential reward/motivation

Opening Scene Hook:

- Immediate investigation opportunity with personal connection

- Time pressure element creating urgency
- Introduction to key NPC from Heart card
- First complication from Club card manifestation

Primary Campaign Clock:

- Case Clock based on highest card rank
- Each character draws Vice card for starting segments
- Start with 2 Investigation Points for immediate use

Key Mechanical Tutorial:

- Introduce Investigation Points through first investigation scene
- Demonstrate Vice Clock management through temptation scenario
- Show evidence rating system through clue discovery
- Establish district modifiers through environmental description

5.2 Scaling Options

5.2.1 One-Shot (1-2 sessions)

- Single Case Clock with simplified complications
- 1-2 Vices per character for focused character development
- Simplified evidence system with basic A-F ratings
- Resolution focused on immediate case outcome

5.2.2 Short Campaign (3-5 sessions)

- Full Vice system with multiple potential vices
- Reputation/Pressure clocks creating ongoing consequences
- Evidence degradation system with daily tracking
- Interconnected cases with sequel hooks

5.2.3 Extended Campaign (6+ sessions)

- Multiple interconnected cases affecting city/region
- Character retirement/promotion options for broken PCs
- Permanent reputation effects influencing all future cases
- City-wide consequences from major case resolutions

6 Environmental and Narrative Mechanics

6.1 Setting-Driven Mechanics

6.1.1 District Modifiers

Different city areas provide investigation bonuses/penalties:

Downtown/Core Business District:

- Investigation: +1 Research, -1 Surveillance
- Social: +1 Interview (professional), -1 Infiltration
- Hazards: Security cameras, private security, high visibility

Waterfront/Docks:

- Investigation: +1 Surveillance, -1 Interview
- Social: +1 Intimidation, -2 Sway
- Hazards: Criminal presence, unsafe structures, limited lighting

Residential/Suburbs:

- Investigation: +1 Interview, -1 Infiltration
- Social: +1 Building Rapport, +1 Research (public records)
- Hazards: Nosy neighbors, home security, limited escape routes

Entertainment District:

- Investigation: +1 Infiltration, -1 Surveillance
- Social: +1 Social Engineering, -1 Direct Confrontation
- Hazards: Crowds, alcohol/drugs, transient population

Industrial/Warehouse:

- Investigation: +1 Scene Examination, -2 Interview
- Social: +2 Intimidation, -2 Sway
- Hazards: Physical danger, limited escape, noise cover

6.1.2 Time and Weather Effects

Time of Day:

- **Daylight (6 AM - 6 PM):** +1 Scene Examination, -1 Surveillance
- **Twilight (6 AM/6 PM - 8 AM/8 PM):** Balanced conditions
- **Night (8 PM - 6 AM):** +1 Surveillance, -1 Interview

Weather Conditions:

- **Clear:** Standard conditions
- **Rain:** +1 Surveillance (fewer witnesses), -1 Scene Examination
- **Fog/Heavy Rain:** +2 Infiltration, -2 Interview
- **Snow:** +1 Tracking, -1 Chase Scenes

6.2 Atmosphere Tools

6.2.1 Urban Sensory Engagement

Sound:

- Traffic, sirens, whispered conversations
- Neon hum, footsteps in alleyways
- Jazz from clubs, arguments from apartments
- Surveillance equipment, construction noise

Sight:

- Neon reflections on wet pavement
- Shadow play between buildings
- Surveillance cameras on every corner
- Contrast between wealth and poverty districts

Smell:

- Coffee shops and diners
- Cigarettes and alcohol
- Rain on concrete and industrial chemicals
- Expensive perfumes vs. urban decay odors

Touch:

- Rough brick walls and fire escapes
- Polished lobby surfaces vs. grimy streets
- Cold metal of fire escapes and fences
- Expensive fabrics vs. worn clothing textures

Taste:

- Cheap diner coffee and pie
- Expensive restaurant food and wine
- Street vendor hot dogs and pretzels
- Cigarettes, alcohol, urban air quality

6.3 Narrative Structure

6.3.1 Scene Types

Investigation:

- Gathering clues, evidence collection, research
- Wits + Investigation or related skills with Investigation Point costs
- May generate SB for complications or Vice temptations

Social Encounter:

- Interviews, interrogations, negotiations
- Presence + Insight/Sway with position modifiers
- Vice Clock advancement opportunities for relevant characters

Action Sequence:

- Chases, combat, break-ins
- Standard Fate's Edge combat with urban environmental modifiers
- May trigger Pressure Clock advancement or Reputation changes

Moral Choice:

- Ethical dilemmas, compromise decisions, personal cost evaluations
- May trigger Vice Clock advancement or Reputation Clock changes
- Creates sequel hooks or character development opportunities

6.3.2 Pacing Markers

Sessions 1:

- Case introduction with immediate hook
- Initial investigation establishing methods
- First complications and NPC introductions
- Vice temptation opportunities for character establishment

Sessions 2-3:

- Pattern recognition revealing deeper conspiracy
- Key revelations connecting case elements
- Major complications testing investigation progress
- Character development through Vice management

Sessions 4+:

- Climax with multiple resolution paths
- Consequences of previous choices becoming clear
- Character retirement/promotion opportunities
- Setup for sequel cases or campaign conclusion

6.3.3 Resolution Formats

Success States:

- **The Professional:** Clean case resolution with minimal ethical compromise (12-15 XP)
- **The Reformed:** Case solved through moral growth and ethical choices (15-18 XP)

- **The Pragmatist:** Effective resolution through necessary compromises (10-13 XP)

Failure States:

- **The Fallen:** Case resolution through corruption and ethical abandonment (8-10 XP, character change)
- **The Broken:** Personal/case failure leading to character retirement (5-8 XP)
- **The Framed:** Success achieved but at cost of personal freedom/reputation (10-12 XP, ongoing complications)

Partial Success:

- **The Compromise:** Partial resolution with significant ongoing issues (12-15 XP)
- **The Sacrifice:** Success achieved through personal loss or ethical compromise (13-16 XP)

Pyrrhic Victory:

- **The Cost:** Complete success with devastating personal/professional consequences (15-18 XP, major changes)

7 GM Toolkit

7.1 Session Preparation Checklist

- Draw case cards and establish Case Clock
- Prepare key NPCs with motivations and secrets
- Plan 2-3 investigation scenes with different approach options
- Identify Vice temptation opportunities for each character
- Prepare environmental complications (1 SB each)
- Set up resolution paths with different consequences
- Prepare sensory descriptions for atmosphere building

7.2 Complication Generator

7.2.1 Mild (1 SB)

- Key witness disappears before interview
- Evidence contaminated or destroyed
- Surveillance detected by subject
- Unexpected phone call interrupts investigation
- Power outage in investigation area

7.2.2 Moderate (2 SB)

- Media attention escalates case profile

- Police obstruction or investigation begins
- Technology fails during critical moment
- Informant goes silent or changes story
- Traffic accident blocks access routes

7.2.3 Serious (3 SB)

- Crime scene compromised by unauthorized personnel
- New suspect emerges with solid alibi for original suspect
- Evidence chain of custody broken
- Personal connection to case compromised
- Authority figures demand case details

7.2.4 Major (4+ SB)

- Alibi checks out completely, eliminating primary suspect
- Personal relationship compromised through blackmail
- Authority investigation begins into investigator conduct
- Key evidence revealed to be planted or fabricated
- Innocent person implicated requiring case restart

7.3 Player Agency Reminders

Handling Unexpected Approaches:

- Embrace creativity but maintain noir consequences
- Adapt investigation paths to player innovations
- Allow success but with appropriate complications
- Provide multiple valid paths to objectives

When to Push Back:

- Only when player choices would break core noir themes
- When actions would eliminate all tension or challenge
- When safety/pacing requires narrative redirection
- When mechanical balance needs preservation

Maintaining Tension:

- Use clock advancement and Vice temptations rather than adversarial GMing
- Provide meaningful choices with real consequences
- Balance hope and despair throughout campaign
- Let player decisions drive case complications

8 Experience and Resolution Systems

8.1 Experience Awards

Participation:

- +2 XP per session attendance
- +1 XP for meaningful noir engagement
- +1 XP for contributing to atmospheric tension

Thematic Play:

- +1-2 XP for meaningful noir engagement
- +1 XP for playing character's vices appropriately
- +2 XP for embracing moral ambiguity consequences

Risk Taking:

- +1-3 XP for choosing dangerous investigative paths
- +2 XP for resisting Vice temptations at cost
- +1 XP for pursuing sensitive information

Vice Management:

- +1-2 XP for successfully managing character flaws
- +1 XP for partial Vice resistance with consequences
- +3 XP for transforming Vice into character growth

Narrative Contribution:

- +1-2 XP for creating memorable noir moments
- +1 XP for contributing to group investigation success
- +2 XP for defining campaign's central noir theme

9 Modular Design Elements

9.1 Plug-and-Play Components

Vice Clock System:

- Works independently in any character-driven campaign
- Scalable segment counts for different campaign lengths
- Compatible with existing Boon economy

Investigation Procedures:

- Enhance any mystery/investigation scenario
- Modular action types with different skill requirements
- Integration with resource management systems

Evidence Rating System:

- Adds depth to clue management in any investigation
- Scalable complexity from simple A-F to detailed tracking
- Creates meaningful choices about evidence preservation

District Modifiers:

- Can enhance any urban setting
- Modular effects based on campaign tone
- Compatible with existing environmental hazards

9.2 Cross-Expansion Compatibility

Horror Expansion:

- Psychological breaking points enhance moral ambiguity
- Investigation procedures complement horror clue gathering
- Urban atmosphere supports noir horror settings

Cyberpunk Expansion:

- Corporate conspiracy elements in case backgrounds
- Technology investigation skills enhance digital forensics
- Character corruption parallels cybernetic augmentation

Fantasy Expansion:

- Urban political intrigue mirrors noir social dynamics
- Investigation procedures work with magical clues
- Character vices enhance moral complexity in fantasy

9.3 Power Scaling

Lower Tiers (Rookie/Seasoned):

- Reduced Vice penalties and simpler crisis states
- More Investigation Points for easier case progression
- Fewer environmental complications and modifiers
- More recovery options for clock advancement

Higher Tiers (Veteran/Paragon):

- Increased corruption risks and severe Vice consequences
- Complex moral choices with no clear right answers
- Harsher environmental modifiers and complications
- Permanent consequences for filled clocks and broken characters

New Players:

- Streamlined systems with fewer clocks
- Clearer resolution paths and guidance
- Reduced penalties for high Vice states
- More safety mechanisms and recovery options

Experienced Players:

- Additional complications and harsher consequences
- Fewer safety mechanisms and more permanent effects
- Integration with existing campaign threads and consequences
- Character retirement/promotion options for extreme states

10 Quick Reference Appendix

10.1 Investigation Actions

Core Actions (Use Fate's Edge dice pool):

- **Surveillance:** Wits + Stealth (DV 2-4)
- **Interview:** Presence + Insight (DV 1-3)
- **Research:** Wits + Investigation (DV 2-3)
- **Scene Exam:** Wits + Perception (DV 1-4)
- **Infiltration:** Wits + Subterfuge (DV 3-4)

Position Effects:

- **Controlled:** You act from safety or advantage. Failure still leaves you options.
- **Risky:** Standard case. Failure has teeth, but not ruin.
- **Desperate:** High stakes. Failure is severe; success may bring extra XP.

Investigation Points: Spend 1 to automatically succeed on any action (once per scene)

10.2 Vice Clock Quick Reference

Vice Clock Management:

- **1 Boon:** Prevent Vice Clock from incrementing this scene
- **2 Boons:** Clear 1 segment from Vice Clock
- **4 Segments Full:** Draw new Vice card, apply fallout, reset clock

Vice Clock Penalties:

- **1 Segment:** +1 SB on vice-related rolls
- **2 Segments:** +2 SB, -1 die to resist vice
- **3 Segments:** +3 SB, -2 dice, 1 Boon per session to function

- **4 Segments:** +4 SB, -3 dice, no Boon spending until resolved

10.3 District Modifiers Quick Reference

Downtown/Core Business District:

- Investigation: +1 Research, -1 Surveillance
- Social: +1 Interview (professional), -1 Infiltration
- Hazards: Security cameras, private security, high visibility

Waterfront/Docks:

- Investigation: +1 Surveillance, -1 Interview
- Social: +1 Intimidation, -2 Sway
- Hazards: Criminal presence, unsafe structures, limited lighting

Residential/Suburbs:

- Investigation: +1 Interview, -1 Infiltration
- Social: +1 Building Rapport, +1 Research (public records)
- Hazards: Nosy neighbors, home security, limited escape routes

Quick Complications (1 SB each):

- Key witness disappears
- Evidence is contaminated
- Media attention escalates
- Police obstruction
- Surveillance detected
- Informant goes silent
- Crime scene compromised
- New suspect emerges
- Alibi checks out
- Technology fails
- Vice temptation appears
- Personal connection compromised

10.4 Case Clock Setup

Card Rank to Clock Size:

- **2-5:** 4 segments (simple case)
- **6-10:** 6 segments (moderate complexity)
- **J/Q/K:** 8 segments (complex case)

- **A:** 10 segments (twist case)

Evidence Rating System:

- **A+:** Unimpeachable - direct observation, clear documentation
- **A:** Strong - solid documentation, reliable witness
- **B:** Good - circumstantial but compelling
- **C:** Fair - circumstantial, questionable reliability
- **D:** Weak - hearsay, speculation
- **F:** Unreliable - contradicted, obtained illegally

11 Design Philosophy Requirements

11.1 Must Include Elements

Meaningful Player Choice:

- Every major decision (investigation approach, ethical choices, risk level) has clear, lasting consequences
- Multiple valid approaches to case obstacles (investigation, combat, social, flight)
- Character-specific Vice temptations that reflect individual backgrounds and flaws
- Resolution paths that reward different play styles and thematic choices

Mechanical-Theme Integration:

- Vice Clock system directly serves noir themes of moral ambiguity and self-destruction
- Investigation Point economy reinforces information-as-currency themes
- Evidence rating system mirrors the fragility of truth in noir
- District modifiers embody the city-as-character concept

Gradual Complexity:

- Introduce systems gradually across sessions (Investigation Points → Vice Clock → Evidence System)
- Start with basic case management before adding secondary clocks
- Reveal complex district effects as campaign progresses
- Scale Vice consequences with character development

Multiple Valid Approaches:

- Investigation, combat, and social solutions all viable with different risk/reward profiles
- Different character archetypes can contribute meaningfully to case resolution
- Multiple resolution paths that reward different campaign approaches
- Adaptive case responses to player innovations

Character Spotlights:

- Each session provides opportunities for different character types
- Investigation specialists excel with research and surveillance
- Social characters shine during interviews and negotiations
- Combat characters handle action sequences and intimidation

Clear Continuation Hooks:

- Win or lose, cases create sequel opportunities or ongoing consequences
- Partial clock fills create regional reputation effects
- Character Vice development provides campaign-long arcs
- Case resolutions affect future investigation difficulty

11.2 Should Avoid Elements

Railroading:

- Player choices genuinely matter to case outcomes
- Multiple resolution paths with different consequences
- Varied investigation approaches leading to different revelations
- Adaptive case responses to player innovations

Information Dumps:

- Lore emerges through investigation and social interaction
- Case details revealed through player actions rather than exposition
- NPC motivations discovered through interviews and observation
- Evidence guides investigation rather than railroading

Mechanical Bloat:

- New systems enhance rather than complicate core mechanics
- Vice Clock integrates with existing Boon economy
- Investigation procedures use standard resolution with thematic modifiers
- Clock interactions follow logical cause-and-effect relationships

Unwinnable States:

- Even failure leads to interesting continuation
- Partial success provides ongoing character development
- Case collapse creates sequel campaign hooks
- Character transformation offers new adventure possibilities

Generic Elements:

- Every location, NPC, and encounter serves noir themes
- District modifiers reinforce urban atmosphere concepts

- Vice temptations reflect core noir character flaws
- Case complications embody moral ambiguity themes

11.3 Excellence Indicators

Innovative but Accessible:

- New mechanics (Vice Clock, Investigation Points) feel natural to noir genre
- Integration with existing Boon economy maintains system familiarity
- Scalable complexity allows for gradual learning curve
- Clear mechanical procedures support narrative noir themes

Thematic Consistency:

- Every element reinforces core themes (moral ambiguity, urban isolation, information currency)
- Clock names and effects directly relate to noir concepts
- Vice temptations reflect psychological and moral noir themes
- Resolution paths embody different noir story archetypes

Scalable Design:

- Works for different group sizes and experience levels
- Streamlined clocks for new players maintain core tension
- Extended campaign options for experienced groups
- Modular components work independently or together

Prep-Efficient:

- GM can run with minimal preparation using card systems
- Checklist provided for session preparation
- Index cards suggested for quick reference during play
- Generator systems reduce prep time for new cases

Session-Sized Beats:

- Clear goals and climaxes for each session
- Investigation setup provides session foundation
- Key revelations create mid-campaign tension
- Case resolution drives session conclusion

Player Agency Documentation:

- Clear guidance on handling unexpected choices
- Embrace creativity while maintaining noir elements
- Provide multiple valid approaches to case obstacles
- Maintain tension through consequences rather than adversarial GMing

12 Modern Noir Deck Generators

12.1 Quick Case System

Core Investigation Mechanics

One-Shot Case Framework (Designed for 2-3 hour sessions):

Case Elements (Draw 3 cards from standard deck):

- **Spade:** Crime/Inciting Incident (the hook that pulls you in)
- **Heart:** Key Person (central figure in the case)
- **Club:** Complication/Pressure (what makes it difficult)
- **Diamond:** Reward/Resolution (what you can gain or achieve)

Rank Interpretation:

- **2-5:** Simple case with straightforward resolution
- **6-10:** Moderate complexity with meaningful choices
- **J/Q/K:** Complex case with multiple viable solutions
- **Ace:** Twist - the case is not what it initially seemed

Quick Setup:

1. Draw 3 cards (Spade, Heart, Club)
2. Identify the highest rank as your main Challenge Clock (2-5: 4 segments, 6-10: 6 segments, J/Q/K: 8 segments, A: 10 segments)
3. Start with 2 Investigation Points

Core investigative activities (use Fate's Edge core mechanic):

Surveillance (Wits + Stealth, DV 2-4):

- Following suspects without detection
- Observing meetings and transactions
- Gathering behavioral intelligence

Interview (Presence + Insight, DV 1-3):

- Direct questioning of witnesses and suspects
- Reading body language and micro-expressions
- Building rapport or applying pressure

Research (Wits + Investigation, DV 2-3):

- Database searches and record checks
- Background investigations on persons of interest
- Cross-referencing information for patterns

Scene Examination (Wits + Perception, DV 1-4):

- Physical evidence collection and analysis
- Crime scene reconstruction
- Pattern recognition in evidence placement

Infiltration (Wits + Subterfuge, DV 3-4):

- Gaining access to restricted locations
- Undercover operations
- Social engineering and deception

Investigation Points: Spend 1 point to automatically succeed on any investigation action once per scene

Evidence Rating System:

- **A+ Evidence:** Unimpeachable - direct observation, clear documentation, multiple witnesses
- **A Evidence:** Strong - solid documentation, reliable witness, clear chain of custody
- **B Evidence:** Good - circumstantial but compelling, single reliable witness
- **C Evidence:** Fair - circumstantial, questionable witness reliability
- **D Evidence:** Weak - hearsay, speculation, compromised source
- **F Evidence:** Unreliable - contradicted, obtained illegally, severely compromised

Evidence Degradation: Each day without follow-up reduces evidence quality by one grade

12.2 52-Card Investigation Deck

12.2.1 Spades (Crime/Incident)

- 2. Stolen briefcase with confidential files
- 3. Hit-and-run accident with no witnesses
- 4. Break-in at a high-end art gallery
- 5. Corporate espionage discovered too late
- 6. Disappearance during a business trip
- 7. Blackmail attempt on a public figure
- 8. Forgery scheme unraveling publicly
- 9. Witness intimidation before trial
- 10. Evidence tampering in a murder case
- J. Corporate embezzlement scheme
- Q. Political scandal about to break
- K. Murder covered as suicide
- A. Case is actually an elaborate setup

12.2.2 Hearts (Person)

- 2. Anxious secretary with hidden knowledge
- 3. Wealthy socialite with a dark past
- 4. Veteran security guard with PTSD
- 5. Ambitious assistant with their own agenda
- 6. Retired detective turned private consultant
- 7. Tech genius with social anxiety
- 8. Politician's spouse with secrets
- 9. Former criminal trying to go straight
- 10. Journalist investigating corruption
- J. Disgraced lawyer seeking redemption
- Q. Corrupt police captain
- K. Crime boss's estranged child
- A. The person you trust most is involved

12.2.3 Clubs (Complication)

- 2. Time pressure - evidence disappears at midnight
- 3. Multiple suspects all have solid alibis
- 4. Key witness is afraid to talk
- 5. Crime scene was compromised
- 6. Someone is following your investigation
- 7. Crucial evidence is in a restricted area
- 8. Media attention making things difficult
- 9. Police are obstructing your work
- 10. You're being framed for a crime
- J. Someone is willing to kill to stop you
- Q. The case connects to your personal past
- K. Your client is lying to you
- A. Solving this case will destroy someone you care about

12.2.4 Diamonds (Reward/Resolution)

- 2. Substantial cash payment
- 3. Access to exclusive social circles
- 4. Professional reputation boost

- 5. Crucial evidence in another case
- 6. Protection from a dangerous person
- 7. Information that clears your name
- 8. A favor from a powerful figure
- 9. Resolution of a personal matter
- 10. Exposure of a major conspiracy
- J. Choice of eliminating or recruiting a foe
- Q. Control over a valuable resource
- K. Complete vindication of your methods
- A. The truth, no matter the personal cost

12.3 Quick Setup Procedure

1. Draw 3 cards (Spade, Heart, Club)
2. Identify highest rank for Challenge Clock (2-5:4, 6-10:6, J/Q/K:8, A:10)
3. Draw 1 Diamond for potential reward
4. Start with 2 Investigation Points
5. Draw 1 Vice card to determine potential temptations

12.4 Vice Clock System

Core Concept: The Vice Clock represents your character's ongoing struggle with personal demons that threaten to undermine their professional life and moral compass. It's a mechanical representation of the noir protagonist's fatal flaw.

Vice Clock Structure:

- **4-Segment Clock:** Visual tracker that increments during play
- **Increments:** +1 segment per scene (automatic unless prevented)
- **Prevention:** Spend 1 Boon to stop increment in that scene
- **Resolution:** Spend 2 Boons to clear 1 segment

12.5 16-Card Vice Deck (Face Cards Only)

12.5.1 Hearts (Emotional Vice) - Red:

- **Jack:** "She's Trouble" - Compulsive contact with toxic relationships
- **Queen:** "Lover's Betrayal" - Romantic entanglements that compromise work
- **King:** "Obsessive Pursuit" - Inability to let go of personal cases
- **Ace:** "Love Conquers All" - Catastrophic sacrifice for unworthy causes

12.5.2 Spades (Physical Vice) - Black:

- **Jack:** "Nightcap" - Drinking affects performance and sleep
- **Queen:** "Hard Liquor" - Regular substance abuse impacts health
- **King:** "Bottle Courage" - Need substances for dangerous situations
- **Ace:** "Rock Bottom" - Overdose, withdrawal, or violent episodes

12.5.3 Clubs (Professional Vice) - Black:

- **Jack:** "Bent Rules" - Cutting corners attracts official scrutiny
- **Queen:** "Dirty Deals" - Taking bribes or compromising ethics
- **King:** "Corrupt Core" - Systematic abuse of professional position
- **Ace:** "Badge of Corruption" - Authority weaponized for personal gain

12.5.4 Diamonds (Psychological Vice) - Red:

- **Jack:** "Paranoid Tendencies" - Seeing threats, alienating allies
- **Queen:** "Trust Issues" - Inability to work effectively with others
- **King:** "Complete Isolation" - No personal connections, vulnerable
- **Ace:** "Psychotic Break" - Hallucinations, delusions, blackouts

12.6 Vice Clock States

1 Segment - Temptation:

- Generate 1 additional SB when rolling for actions related to this vice
- Minor roleplay reminders (character references the temptation)

2 Segments - Habit:

- Generate 2 additional SB when rolling for vice-related actions
- -1 die penalty to rolls when resisting the vice
- Start scenes with 1 banked SB related to this vice

3 Segments - Addiction:

- Generate 3 additional SB when rolling for vice-related actions
- -2 dice penalty to rolls when resisting or when deprived
- Must spend 1 Boon per session just to function normally
- Start scenes with 2 banked SB related to this vice

4 Segments - Crisis:

- Generate 4 additional SB when rolling for vice-related actions
- -3 dice penalty to ALL rolls when deprived
- Cannot spend Boons for other benefits until crisis resolved

- Start scenes with 3 banked SB related to this vice

12.7 Vice Clock Management

Prevention (Ongoing):

- **Cost:** 1 Boon per scene
- **Effect:** Prevent Vice Clock from incrementing

Mitigation (Active):

- **Cost:** 2 Boons
- **Effect:** Clear 1 segment from Vice Clock

Escalation (When Full):

1. Draw new Vice card (same or different suit)
2. Apply appropriate fallout based on card rank
3. Reset clock based on new card (Jack=1, Queen=2, King=3, Ace=4)

12.8 Character Creation Integration

Starting Vice Clock Values:

- **Jack Draw:** 1 segment
- **Queen Draw:** 2 segments
- **King Draw:** 3 segments
- **Ace Draw:** 4 segments (immediate crisis scene)

Multiple Vice Management:

- Only one Vice Clock increments per scene (character's choice)
- Other vices generate 1 SB each per scene regardless
- Managing multiple vices requires proportionally more resources

12.9 Quick NPC System

The Femme Fatale:

- **Archetype:** Dangerous woman with hidden agenda
- **Motivation:** Personal gain, revenge, or protection of secrets
- **Methods:** Manipulation, seduction, information control
- **Weakness:** Overconfidence, emotional vulnerability, over-elaborate schemes
- **Red Flags:** Knows more than she should about the case; Appears at crucial moments; Has unexplained wealth or connections; Changes story when pressed
- **Potential Roles:** Client, witness, suspect, ally, or mastermind

The Corrupt Cop:

- **Archetype:** Law enforcement officer on the take
- **Motivation:** Money, power, protection from own crimes
- **Methods:** Evidence tampering, witness intimidation, information brokering
- **Weakness:** Paranoia, need for control, predictable routines
- **Red Flags:** Always "conveniently" arrives late to crime scenes; Has unexplained income or expensive tastes; Knows details that weren't in official reports; Pressures investigation in specific directions
- **Potential Roles:** Investigator, suspect, obstruction, or reluctant informant

The Wealthy Businessman:

- **Archetype:** Respectable figure with dark secrets
- **Motivation:** Protecting empire, eliminating threats, maintaining image
- **Methods:** Money, influence, legal intimidation, hired muscle
- **Weakness:** Public exposure, legal vulnerabilities, family concerns
- **Red Flags:** Everything seems legitimate on paper; Has connections in high places; Willing to spend large sums to "resolve" problems; Associates with unsavory characters discretely
- **Potential Roles:** Client, victim, suspect, employer, or case originator

The Broken Veteran:

- **Archetype:** Former hero fallen on hard times
- **Motivation:** Survival, justice, redemption, or revenge
- **Methods:** Skills from past life, desperation, insider knowledge
- **Weakness:** Trauma, addiction, moral flexibility, isolation
- **Red Flags:** Has skills that don't match current circumstances; Knows too much about specific procedures or locations; Desperate for money but refuses certain jobs; Displays military or specialized training unconsciously
- **Potential Roles:** Informant, suspect, ally, victim, or tragic figure

The Informed Citizen:

- **Archetype:** Ordinary person with crucial knowledge
- **Motivation:** Fear, conscience, revenge, or protection of loved ones
- **Methods:** Observation, accidental discovery, personal connection
- **Weakness:** Fear of consequences, incomplete information, personal bias
- **Red Flags:** Sees investigation but won't approach directly; Has information that doesn't fit official narrative; Behaves nervously around certain topics or people; Knows details that suggest personal involvement
- **Potential Roles:** Witness, reluctant informant, accidental victim, or key to breakthrough

12.10 Sample Quick Cases

The Missing Heirloom:

- **Spade 7 (Crime):** A priceless family heirloom was stolen from a locked safe during a charity gala
- **Heart Q (Key Person):** The wealthy socialite whose family owns the item
- **Club 9 (Complication):** Multiple suspects had access, and the family has dark secrets they'd kill to protect
- **Diamond 6 (Reward):** Substantial finder's fee plus access to exclusive social circles
- **Clock:** 6 segments (media attention will ruin the family's reputation)
- **Quick Hook:** "Mrs. Blackwood's emerald necklace disappeared sometime between 9 and 11 PM. The safe was locked, the room was secured, but the necklace is gone. The family is desperate to recover it before tomorrow's society pages."
- **Investigation Points:** Interview the butler, examine the safe for tampering, review security footage
- **Vice Clock Integration:** If investigating involves a romantic interest (Heart Q), players with Emotional Vice may face temptation. If family secrets involve corruption, Professional Vice players may be tempted.

The Blackmailer:

- **Spade J (Crime):** Someone is threatening to expose a city councilman's affair unless paid
- **Heart 8 (Key Person):** The councilman's assistant who may know more than she's telling
- **Club K (Complication):** The blackmailer has connections in the police department
- **Diamond 10 (Reward):** The councilman will pay handsomely to end this quietly
- **Clock:** 8 segments (exposure will end the councilman's career and marriage)
- **Quick Hook:** "Councilman Harris has been receiving threatening letters demanding \$50,000. He's desperate but refuses to go to the police. Someone knows his secret and is willing to destroy him for money."
- **Investigation Points:** Trace the letters' origin, interview the councilman's staff, check financial records
- **Vice Clock Integration:** Players with Professional Vice may be tempted by the councilman's offer. Those with Emotional Vice may develop feelings for the assistant.

The Vanishing Witness:

- **Spade A (Crime):** A key witness in a murder trial has disappeared the night before testimony
- **Heart 3 (Key Person):** The witness's roommate who claims to know nothing
- **Club 5 (Complication):** The witness owed money to dangerous people
- **Diamond 7 (Reward):** The DA's office will provide protection and a substantial reward
- **Clock:** 6 segments (the trial starts tomorrow and will collapse without the witness)

- **Quick Hook:** "Maria Santos was supposed to testify against the Torrino crime family tomorrow. She didn't show up for work this morning, and her apartment shows signs of a struggle. The prosecution's case will fall apart without her."
- **Investigation Points:** Search the apartment for clues, interview neighbors, check financial records
- **Vice Clock Integration:** Players with Psychological Vice may become paranoid about the danger. Those with Physical Vice may turn to substances under pressure.

This Modern Noir expansion provides GMs with flexible tools for running urban investigation campaigns while maintaining the mechanical elegance and player agency that defines Fate's Edge. Whether running a single-session case or an extended noir campaign, these tools ensure that moral ambiguity and personal consequences remain central to the experience.

Remember that the best noir emerges from player investment in their characters' flaws and the urban environment around them. Use these mechanical tools to support narrative tension and character development, not replace them. The moral complexity of noir choices should feel meaningful and lasting.

**In the shadows of the city, where neon lights cast long shadows and everyone has something to hide, the truth waits patiently. Will you find it? What will it cost you?
Will you survive the consequences?**