Shadows & Steel — Underworld and Criminal Networks

(Fate's Edge v0.2)

A criminal-campaign module for Fate's Edge: crime families, smugglers, black markets, fences, fixers, and the law that hunts them. Built to sit beside Violets & Stone (districts), Political Intrigue (faction play), Caravans (smuggling legs), Allies & Adversaries (crew/org management), Assets & Patrons, and the core SRD. Uses Position/DV, SB, clocks, Strings, Favor/Leverage/Exposure—no new math.

What's New in v0.2 (from playtest)

- More playbooks: added Fixers and Ward-Breakers.
- Heat threshold table: formal Crew/City Heat triggers; Setup SB → Heat/Alarm rule.
- Overhead tools: Clock Budget (3+1), Heat-to-Complication conversion, one-page Heist Cheat Sheet.
- Supernatural tie-ins: Arcane Tier black market, ward crimes, psionic hooks.
- Long arcs: three campaign frames with milestones.
- Political mapping: War Faction clocks, formal Blood-Silver + Witness settlement.

Quickstart (2 minutes)

1. Make a Crew Sheet (§1) and pick a Playbook (Smugglers, Thieves, Enforcers, Grifters, Fixers, Ward-Breakers). Choose 3 Crew Tags and 2 Strings.
2. Sketch a Turf Map (§2) with 4–6 nodes (districts/venues/routes). Mark 1 Racket you control.
3. Start tracks: Crew Heat [6], City Heat [6], Notoriety [4] (opt.), Law Mandate/Crisis 2/2.
4. Choose an opening Score Type (§6): Heist, Smuggling Run, Protection Play, or Confidence Game.
5. On any 1, GM spends from Shadows & Steel SB (§9.4). Setup Rule: each SB gained during Setup may either Alarm +1 or Crew Heat +1 (GM picks by fiction).

Crew Sheet (Template)

[CREW NAME]
Type: Smugglers / Thieves / Enforcers / Grifters / Fixers / Ward-Breakers
Tags (choose 3): Riverwise • Locksmiths • Shadow Accounts • Bribe Web • Knives Out • Silver Tongues • Wrecker's Fire • Clean Faces • Ghost Safehouses • Ward Keys • Court Whisper
Strings (choose 2): dockmaster favor • tollhouse key • guild fence • customs blind • patrol captain's debt • theater front • lamp-notary on retainer • ruin-keeper indulgence
Tracks:

- Crew Heat [6] (recent attention)
- Notoriety [4] (opt., famous style)
- Rep [6] (standing underground)
- Bank (coin abstraction)

Allies/Rivals: fixers, fences, patrol captains, rival crews
Safehouses/Fronts: names + tags

Crew Benefits by Type

- **Smugglers:** start Riverwise, Customs Blind; once/leg, Smuggle DV –1.
- **Thieves:** start Locksmiths, Clean Faces; once/score, Infiltrate Position +1.
- **Enforcers:** start Knives Out, Wrecker's Fire; once/score, Intimidate/Break Effect +1.
- **Grifters:** start Silver Tongues, Shadow Accounts; once/score, convert Audience: Cool → Warm.
- **Fixers (NEW):** start Bribe Web, Court Whisper; once/score, treat Petition/Broker DV –1 in courts/markets.
- **Ward-Breakers (NEW):** start Ward Keys, Ghost Safehouses; once/score, ignore first Desperate from wards/psionic weather.

Turf Map & Territory Control

Turf Map: Draw 4–6 nodes: Districts (e.g., Dye Yards, Pilots' Quays), Venues (Moon Market, Gambling Row), Pipelines (river cut, sewer run, postern stairs). Connect with arrows that show movement/contraband flow.

Rackets:

gambling den • dice house • ropewalk skims • dock tithe • counterfeit inks • lanternhouses • fighting pits • lockshop chain • locker barge • eel-channel • ward-glass salvage (NEW) •

oath-lamp forgery (NEW).

Taking Turf:

create Claim [6] on a node. During scores aimed at this node, strong outcomes tick Claim. When it fills, add the racket and a String (front or bribe web). Mark Crew Heat +1.

Holding Turf:

each session, roll Hold (Wits+Tactics) vs DV 2–4 by pressure. On hit, gain Bank +1 or Audience: Warm in that node. On 1s, advance a Trouble [4] for that turf (rivals, inspectors, unions).

Territory War:

When rivals contest, start War [8]. While War>0, Bandwidth –1 between sessions. Settlement Template: pay Blood-Silver (2 Bank each) + name a Witness Faction; all parties stake a Lamp-Oath [4]. Breaking it: Exposure +1, Repute –1 with the witness faction, War resumes at 2/8.

Heat, Law, and Crackdowns

Crew Heat [6] thresholds

- 0–2: background hum.
- 3: start Patrol Sweep [4].
- 4–5: random stops; Notoriety +1 when you make a flashy move.
- 6: trigger Sting [6] and Exposure +1.

City Heat [6] thresholds

- 0–2: routine.
- 3: curfew murmurs, stop-and-search; start Patrol Sweep [4] in hot districts.
- 6: Crackdown [4] (DV +1 on criminal actions, law starts with Audience: Hostile).

Cooling Actions

- **Lay Low:** lose 1 Bandwidth; clear Crew Heat –2; gain Notoriety +1 (opt.).
- **Grease Palms:** spend Bank/Favor; clear Crew Heat –1 and one Inspection.
- **Hard Pivot:** burn a front (lose one racket) to clear Crew Heat –3 and City Heat –1.

Law Tools: Riverine Patrol, City Watch, Tax Assessor, Bridge Guards—each tracks a Sting [6].

Black Markets & Rare Goods

Use Market from Caravans.

Tiers & DV:

Street DV 2–3 • Guild DV 3–4 • Court DV 4–5 • Arcane (NEW) DV 5 (wards, psionic keys, oath-lamps).
Tags: Contraband, Hot, Forged, Sacred, Perishable, Traceable, Warded (NEW).

Partials:

price spike (Bank –1) • Crew Heat +1 • quality flaw (–1 Effect next use) • seller's Temp String • Inspection [4] starts.
Miss: sting springs (Sting [6] +2), counterfeit, or owed favor to a rival fence.
Laundering: Broker/Account DV 3–4. On hit, convert Hot → Clean; on 1, City Heat +1.

Informant Webs

Map a Web: 3–5 Informants (dock porter, lamplighter, clerk, patrol runner, skald...). Each has Access, Reliability [4], Price, Flags.

Use: pay Price for Clue +1, small String, or DV –1 in their sphere. On 1s, Reliability –1. At 0, they flip or vanish; start Burn [4] to recover/replace.

Moves (NEW):

- **Cross-Check:** spend 2 informants on same topic → take +1 Effect and only the lowest Reliability –1 applies on a 1.
- **Mask a Source:** spend Bank 1 to prevent Reliability –1 once.

Heist Operations

Heists in the shadows of Fate's Edge require careful planning, precise execution, and the ability to adapt when things go wrong. The following framework provides structure while maintaining the flexibility essential to underground operations.

5.1.1 Heist Framework

Every successful heist follows a natural progression through distinct phases, each with its own challenges and opportunities.

Heist Phases

Planning Intelligence gathering, approach vector selection, and resource allocation

Setup Positioning, final preparations, and initial infiltration

Execution Core operation with primary objectives

Extraction Escape and aftermath management

5.1.2 Heist Planner

Before any heist, complete this essential planning document to establish the foundation for success:

Heist Planner Template
Objective: _____
Venue: _____
Entry/Exit Strings:

- _____
- _____

Setup Rolls (0-2): Each strong hit grants Position +1 or DV –1 later; each 1 → GM +1 SB or Alarm +1/Crew Heat +1
Threat Clocks:

- Alarm [4–6] _____
- Security Measures [4] _____
- Inside Complications [4] _____

Flashback Opportunities: _____

5.1.3 Kit Tokens

Each crew member begins a heist with 2 Kit Tokens representing plausible gear or contacts that can be deployed during critical moments. Additional tokens beyond 2 add Crew Heat +1 as word spreads about your extensive preparations.

Common Kit Token Uses:

- **Lock Picks** - Precision tools for mechanical security (Disable +1 Effect)
- **Dark Lantern** - Concealable illumination (Notice +1 in dark areas)
- **Silk Rope** - Lightweight climbing equipment (Athletics +1 for climbing)
- **False Papers** - Identity documents for social infiltration (Sway +1 Effect)
- **Safe House Key** - Emergency refuge access (Position +1 for escape)

- **Informant Favor** - One-time assistance from a contact (convert Partial to Success)
- **Distracting Toy** - Mechanical diversion (create distraction once)
- **Healing Salve** - Emergency medical aid (clear 1 Harm)

5.1.4 Score Types

Different heist objectives require different approaches, each with unique challenges and opportunities.

The Heist Infiltrate a secure location to steal valuable items or information while avoiding detection.

Key Clocks:

- Alarm [4–6] - Security response time and alert level
- Security Sweep [4] - Methodical search patterns and guard rotations
- Extraction Window [4] - Time-limited escape opportunity

Approach Vectors:

- **Deceit** - Social engineering and false identities (Presence + Sway/Deception)
- **Stealth** - Avoiding detection through shadows and silence (Body + Stealth)
- **Violence** - Direct confrontation when subtlety fails (Body + Melee/Athletics)
- **Bribery** - Paying for access or silence (Wits + Streetwise)

The Smuggling Run Transport contraband through checkpoints and inspections while maintaining plausible deniability.

Key Clocks:

- Papers Scrutiny [6] - Document examination intensity and thoroughness
- Patrol Net [6] - Law enforcement presence and coordination
- Cargo Integrity [4] - Condition of smuggled goods during transport

Special Procedures:

- **Hidden Compartments:** Smuggle DV –1; on 1s, start Contraband Trail [4]
- **Cutout Operations:** Delegate checkpoint interactions to reduce personal exposure
- **Night Passage:** Stealth approaches during low-visibility conditions
- **Code Running:** Use Vilikari eel-channels for covert movement

The Protection Play Defend a person, place, or operation from rivals or authorities while maintaining operational security.

Key Clocks:

- Threat Assessment [4] - Intelligence about incoming dangers and timing
- Security Posture [6] - Defensive preparations and positioning
- Response Time [4] - Speed of reaction to threats and coordination

Defensive Options:

- **Safe Houses:** Ghost Safehouses (String) for emergency refuge
- **Lookouts:** Early warning systems using local contacts
- **Counter-Surveillance:** Active measures to detect and evade watchers
- **Decoy Operations:** Misdirect attention from actual targets

The Confidence Game Manipulate targets through elaborate schemes and false trust while maintaining multiple deception layers.

Key Clocks:

- Trust Building [6] - Establishing credibility and rapport with marks
- Scheme Complexity [4] - Maintaining multiple deception layers without contradiction
- Exposure Risk [6] - Chance of being discovered or scheme unraveling

Social Engineering Tools:

- **Cover Identities:** False backgrounds with supporting documentation
- **Emotional Manipulation:** Exploiting targets' desires and psychological weaknesses
- **Evidence Plants:** Creating false proof to support deceptions
- **Reputation Management:** Maintaining believable social standing

5.1.5 Heat Management During Heists

Effective heat management can mean the difference between a clean score and a crew's downfall.

Setup Rule Each SB gained during Setup may either:

- Alarm +1 (advance security response and alert levels)
- Crew Heat +1 (increase personal attention and recognition)

GM chooses based on fiction and narrative impact.

Heat Events During Scores **Crew Heat Thresholds:**

- **Crew Heat 3:** Patrol Sweep [4] begins - increased law enforcement presence
- **Crew Heat 6:** Trigger Sting [6] and Exposure +1 - formal investigation initiated
- **City Heat 3:** Random stops; Notoriety +1 when making flashy moves - general scrutiny
- **City Heat 6:** Crackdown [4] (DV +1 on criminal actions) - systematic enforcement pressure

Cooling Actions **How to shed heat:**

Lay Low Lose 1 Bandwidth; clear Crew Heat -2; gain Notoriety +1

Grease Palms Spend Bank/Favor; clear Crew Heat -1 and one Inspection

Hard Pivot Burn a front to clear Crew Heat -3 and City Heat -1

5.1.6 Informant Networks in Heists

5.1.7 Cross-Check Advantage

Spend 2 informants on the same topic:

- Take +1 Effect on related rolls
- Only the lowest Reliability -1 applies on a 1

5.1.8 Masking Sources

Spend Bank 1 to prevent Reliability -1 once when using informants.

5.1.9 Informant Complications

When an informant's Reliability reaches 0:

- They flip allegiance or vanish
- Start Burn [4] to recover/replace
- GM may spend SB to create immediate problems

Black Market Integration

5.2.1 Acquiring Heist Gear

Market Tiers and DV:

- Street DV 2-3
- Guild DV 3-4
- Court DV 4-5
- Arcane DV 5 (wards, psionic keys, oath-lamps)

5.2.2 Partials and Misses

Partials:

- Price spike (Bank -1)
- Crew Heat +1
- Quality flaw (-1 Effect next use)
- Seller's Temp String
- Inspection [4] starts

Misses:

- Sting springs (Sting [6] +2)
- Counterfeit gear
- Owed favor to rival fence

5.2.3 Heist Complications Generator

Roll 1d12	Complication
1	Inside man panics
2	Boom winch jammed; requires at-sea repair under watchfire
3	Spirit net across eel-cut; needs Ward or sacrifice
4	Lantern tower replaced crew; new officer loves procedure
5	Cargo stinks of contraband spice; dogs alert
6	Friendly convoy is bait; hidden interdictor behind fog
7	Rival smugglers mirror your codes; collisions of story
8	Weather window slams; cross chop makes boarding Dominant
9	Ghost ballast sings; occult backwash risks crew morale
10	Courtesy duel demanded by a junior; public
11	Harbormaster's nephew aboard; scandal risk
12	Prisoner knows you; shouts your alias

5.2.4 Heist Rewards and Consequences

5.2.5 Successful Heist Outcomes

Clean Score 3-5 Cred + Standing with criminal elements

Heat Management Reduce Crew Heat -1 through careful planning

New Contacts Gain informants or fence relationships

Reputation Building Increase Notoriety in appropriate circles

5.2.6 Failed Heist Consequences

Sting Operations Trigger law enforcement responses

Exposure Increase personal and crew visibility

Debt Accumulation Owe favors to fix problems

Reputation Damage Lose Standing with criminal networks

5.2.7 Heist Scene Examples

5.2.8 The Vault Break

Setup: Infiltrate merchant's house to access secure safe
Position: Dominant (inside contact), DV 3
Key Actions:

- Disable (Wits + Tinker) vs. DV 4 for lock mechanisms
- Infiltrate (Body + Stealth) vs. DV 3 for guard avoidance
- Skulk/Shadow (Wits + Subterfuge) vs. DV 2 for timing

Threat Clocks:

- House Guards [6]
- Vault Mechanism [4]
- Alarm Response [4]

5.2.9 The Social Heist

Setup: Infiltrate noble's ball to steal documents
Position: Controlled (under scrutiny), DV 3
Key Actions:

- Sway (Presence + Sway) vs. DV 3 for social access
- Deception (Presence + Deception) vs. DV 4 for false identity
- Notice (Wits + Notice) vs. DV 2 for security observation

Threat Clocks:

- Guest Recognition [6]
- Security Patrols [4]
- Document Location [4]

5.2.10 Heist Scaling Guidelines

5.2.11 Small Crew (2-3 members)

- Focus on 1-2 approach vectors
- Reduce clock sizes by 1-2 segments
- Increase DV by 1 for complex operations
- Emphasize individual skill over team coordination

5.2.12 Large Crew (4-6 members)

- Multiple simultaneous approach vectors
- Increase clock sizes by 1-2 segments
- Decrease DV by 1 for coordinated efforts
- Emphasize teamwork and specialization

5.2.13 High-Stakes Operations

- Increase all DV by 1-2
- Add additional threat clocks
- Reduce Heat management options
- Increase consequences for failure

5.2.14 Heist Integration with Other Systems

5.2.15 Political Intrigue

- Heists can gather intelligence for larger schemes
- Political cover can reduce Heat consequences
- Faction relationships affect market access
- Court connections provide legal cleanup options

5.2.16 Assets and Patrons

- Safe houses provide extraction points
- Patron influence can reduce legal consequences
- Asset leverage creates additional approach vectors
- Strings facilitate market access for stolen goods

5.2.17 Allies and Adversaries

- Followers can provide specialized assistance
- Rival crews create competitive pressure
- Informant networks enable better planning
- Organizational backing provides resources

Tools for Play

Typical Actions (DV)

Infiltrate 2–4 • Disable 3–5 • Skulk/Shadow 2–4 • Broker 2–4 • Intimidate/Break 2–4 • Evade 2–4 • Operate (Smuggle) 2–4.

Chases (Urban Ladder)

Foot: 2 open • 3 markets • 4 rooftops • 5 sewers.
Cart/Boat: 2 canal • 3 locks • 4 eel-cuts • 5 tide race.

Heat Events (thresholds)

At Crew Heat 3: Patrol Sweep [4].
At Crew Heat 6: Sting [6] + Exposure +1.
At City Heat 3: random stops/curfew murmurs.
At City Heat 6: Crackdown [4] (DV +1).

Shadows & Steel SB (GM menu)

Marked Silver (Inspection [4]) • Bad Badge (Alarm +1) • Gossip Sting (Audience flips) • Dogged Tail (Pursuit [6]) • Union Pushback (Blood-Silver owed) • Turned Informant (Reliability –1) • Watch List (Crew Heat +1).

Overhead Aids (NEW)

- **Clock Budget (3+1):** keep three visible clocks (Objective, Alarm/Patrol, a Rival/War) + one shadow (GM). Fold extra pressures into SB spends.
- **Heat→Complication:** when tempted to add a new clock mid-score, raise Crew Heat +1 and spend an SB item instead.

Generators

Black Market Goods (d12):

1 rare pigment • 2 forged seal kit • 3 ward key • 4 eel-channel charts • 5 customs stamps • 6 moon-kiln glass • 7 lockspike set • 8 poison salts • 9 tax records • 10 theater takings • 11 relic case • 12 ledger cipher.

Fences & Fixers (d12):

1 archivolt broker • 2 quay factor • 3 lamp-notary • 4 skald bookie • 5 guild widow • 6 patrol sergeant • 7 foreign factor • 8 tie-in priest • 9 river witch • 10 street doctor • 11 dice lord • 12 mask troupe.

Law Gambits (d12):

1 bait coin • 2 uniform sweep • 3 warrant blitz • 4 lamplighter eaves • 5 snitch buy • 6 courier sting • 7 tax audit • 8 curfew test • 9 postern watch • 10 vessel inspection • 11 customs raid • 12 proof-of-life stall.

Example of Play (short)

As in v0.1, updated to reflect Setup SB → Heat/Alarm and Clock Budget. (See canvas appendix for the full "Dyer's Ledger" walkthrough.)

Long Arcs (NEW)

- **Ledger War:** expose or control citywide tax records; milestones: seize weighhouse seal • flip a lamp-notary • bargain with Tax Assessor • settle with guilds.
- **Convoy Black:** dominate river/port smuggling; milestones: eel-channel map • union détente • patrol captain's debt • free harbor writ.
- **Ward Grid:** steal/broker arcane infrastructure; milestones: ward-glass salvage • oath-lamp control • ruin-keeper pact • mirrored hall heist.

Political Integration (NEW)

Link War [8] to Political Faction Clocks: each War +2 also ticks a related Influence/Stability/Exposure +1 for the two factions most involved. Settlement with witness faction grants Favor +1 with that faction if the oath stands a season.

GM Reference (one page)

- Crew: tags, Strings, Crew Heat [6], Notoriety (opt.), Rep.
- Turf Map: nodes; Claim [6]; War [8]; settlement template.
- Heat: thresholds; Sweep → Sting → Crackdown; Cooling.
- Markets: tiers (Street/Guild/Court/Arcane); partials; laundering.
- Informants: Web; Reliability [4]; Cross-Check/Mask.
- Scores: planner; Kit Tokens; threat clocks.
- SB Menu & Overhead: SB list; Clock Budget (3+1); Heat→Complication.
- Integration: V&Stone districts; Political factions; Caravan smuggling; psionic/ward crimes.

Changelog

v0.2 — Added Fixers & Ward-Breakers; formal Heat thresholds and Setup rule; Arcane Tier market; supernatural crimes; overhead aids; long arcs; political mapping; settlement template; revised example pointers.

End of v0.2