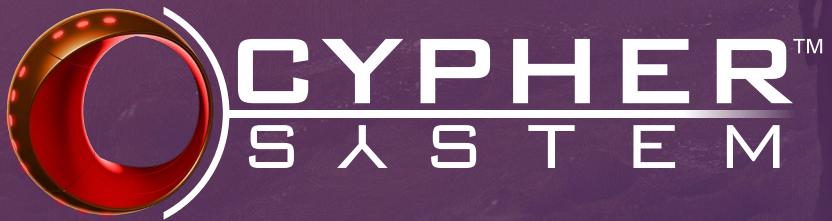
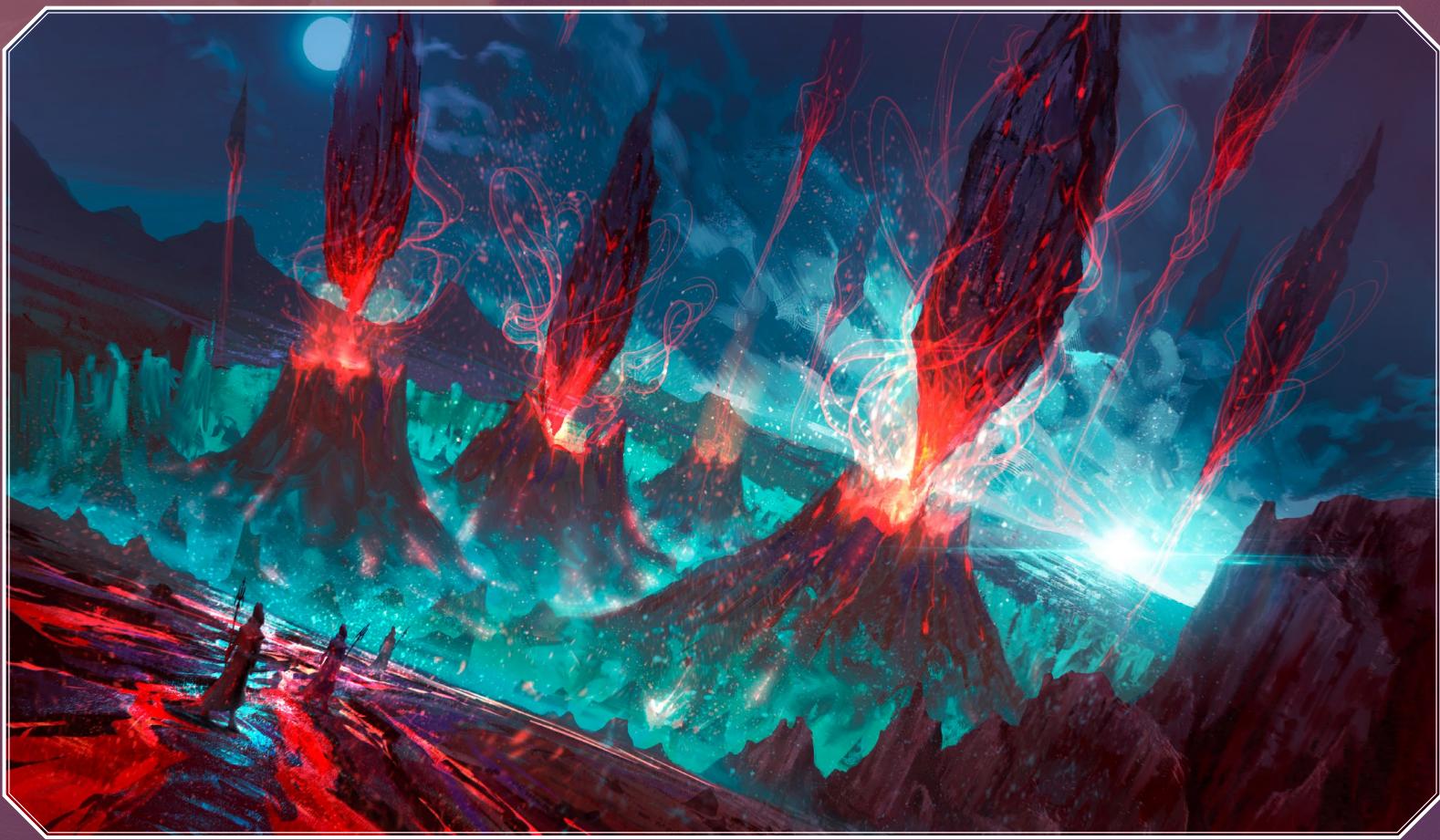


CYPHER SYSTEM RULES PRIMER



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CYPHER SYSTEM RULES PRIMER

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WELCOME TO THE CYpher SYSTEM!

Build any campaign in any genre with this critically acclaimed game engine. Praised for its elegance, ease of use, flexibility, and narrative focus, the Cypher System unleashes your creativity with intuitive character creation, fast-paced gameplay, and a uniquely GM-friendly design.

It's easy to learn, but offers all the depth, nuance, and complexity you want. While far more flexible and less rules-intensive than other games, it still has the power and sophistication to create any story or adventure you can imagine.

This Primer

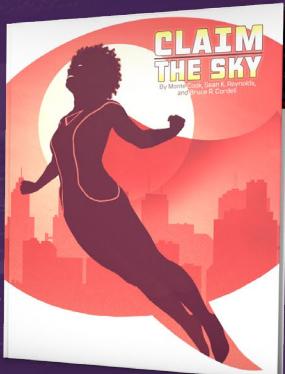
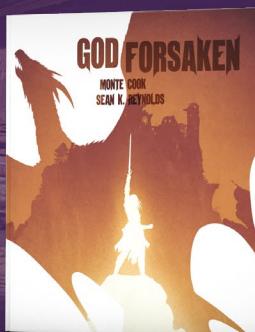
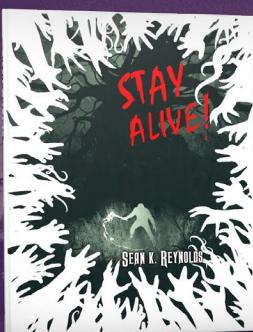
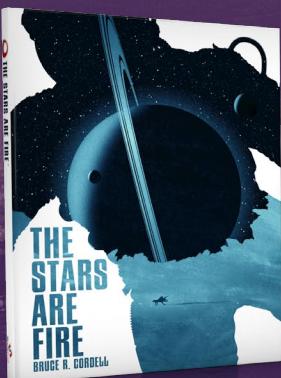
This primer contains the core rules of the Cypher System, letting you learn and try out the system. It also includes a short adventure and a set of pregenerated characters. The adventure is set in the "real world"—making it easy to jump into without learning a new setting.

But the Cypher System is also great for fantasy, science fiction, horror, cyberpunk, superheroes—virtually anything! Aliens-inspired space horror. Whimsical light fantasy, à la *The Princess Bride*. Old West zombie apocalypse. Swashbuckling space pirates. Reality-hopping dimensional travelers. If you can imagine it, the Cypher System makes it easy!

The Cypher System Rulebook

The 448-page *Cypher System Rulebook* gives you everything you need to power the campaign you want to run—release your imagination with the Cypher System. It includes the complete game rules, plus optional rules and advice for a variety of genres. You get loads and loads of options for building virtually any character you can imagine. And it has equipment, creatures and NPCs, cyphers and artifacts, and great GM advice on adapting the Cypher System to a variety of settings, and on running fun, engaging, fast-paced, easy-to-GM game sessions.

Our genre books dig deeper and explore new territory. Each 224-page tome looks at the full breadth of the genre, explores ways to make great campaigns in that milieu, offers optional rules and GMing guidance, gives you creatures, cyphers, and character options, and presents a ready-to-use campaign setting plus a couple of adventures.



HOW TO PLAY THE CYpher SYSTEM



The Cypher System is a game that is played in the joint imagination of all the players, including the GM. The GM sets the scene, the players state what their characters attempt to do, and the GM determines what happens next. One scene logically flows to the next—you might start in a town, travel across the wilderness, and eventually end up at the site of an ancient ruin—and before you know it, you've got a story as compelling as any you've read or watched. The rules and the dice help make the game run smoothly, but it's the people, not the rules or the dice, that direct the action and determine the story—and the fun. If a rule gets in the way or detracts from the game, the players and the GM should work together to change it.

The Cypher System uses a twenty-sided die (d20) to determine the results of most actions. Whenever a roll of any kind is called for and no die is specified, roll a d20.

This is how you play the Cypher System:

1. The player tells the GM what they want to do. This is a *character action*.
2. The GM determines if there's a chance of failure or if that action is routine (and therefore works without needing a roll).
3. If there is a chance of failure, the GM determines which stat the task uses (Might, Speed, or Intellect) and the task's *difficulty*—how hard it will be on a scale from 1 (really easy) to 10 (basically impossible).
4. The player and the GM determine if anything about the character—such as training, equipment, special abilities, or various actions—can modify the difficulty up or down by one or more steps. If these *modifications* reduce the difficulty to less than 1, the action is routine (and therefore works with no roll needed).
5. If the action still isn't routine, the GM uses its difficulty to determine the *target number*—how high the player must roll to succeed at the action (see the Task Difficulty table, page 5). **The target number is always**

three times the task's difficulty, so a difficulty 4 task has a target number of 12. To succeed at the task, you must roll the target number or higher. The GM doesn't have to tell the player what the target number is, but can give a hint, especially if the character would reasonably know if the action was easy, average, difficult, or impossible.

6. The player rolls a d20. If the roll is equal to or higher than the target number, the character succeeds.

That's it. That's how to do anything, whether it's identifying a strange device, calming a raging drunk, climbing a treacherous cliff, or battling a savage alien. Even if you ignored all the other rules, you could still play the Cypher System with just this information.

The key features here are: character actions, determining task difficulty, and determining modifications.

TAKING ACTION

Each character gets one turn each round. On a character's turn, they can do one thing—an action. All actions fall into one of three categories: Might, Speed, or Intellect (just like the three stats). Many actions require die rolls (rolling a d20).

Every action performs a task, and every task has a difficulty that determines what number a character must reach or surpass with a die roll to succeed. Most tasks have a difficulty of 0, which means the character succeeds automatically. For example, walking across a room, opening a door, picking something off the floor, and throwing a stone into a nearby bucket are all actions, but none of them require a roll. Actions that are usually difficult or that become difficult due to the situation (such as shooting at a target in a blizzard) have a higher difficulty. These actions usually require a roll.

WHEN DO YOU ROLL?

Any time your character attempts a task, the GM assigns a difficulty to that task and you roll a d20 against the associated target number.

When you jump from a burning vehicle, swing a battleaxe at a mutant beast, swim across a raging river, identify a strange device, convince a merchant to give you a lower price, craft an object, use a power to control a foe's mind, or use a laser gun to carve a hole in a wall, you make a d20 roll.

However, if you attempt something that has a difficulty of 0, no roll is needed—you automatically succeed. Many actions have a difficulty of 0. Examples include walking across the room and opening a door, using a special ability to negate gravity so you can fly, using an ability to protect your friend from radiation, or activating a device (that you already understand) to erect a force field. These are all routine actions and don't require rolls.

Using skills, assets, and Effort, you can decrease the difficulty of potentially any task to 0 and thus negate the need for a roll. Walking across a narrow wooden beam is tricky for most people, but for an experienced gymnast, it's routine. You can even decrease the difficulty of an attack on a foe to 0 and succeed without rolling. If there's no roll, there's no chance for failure. However, there's also no chance for remarkable success (in the Cypher System, that usually means rolling a 19 or 20; see Special Rolls, page 10).

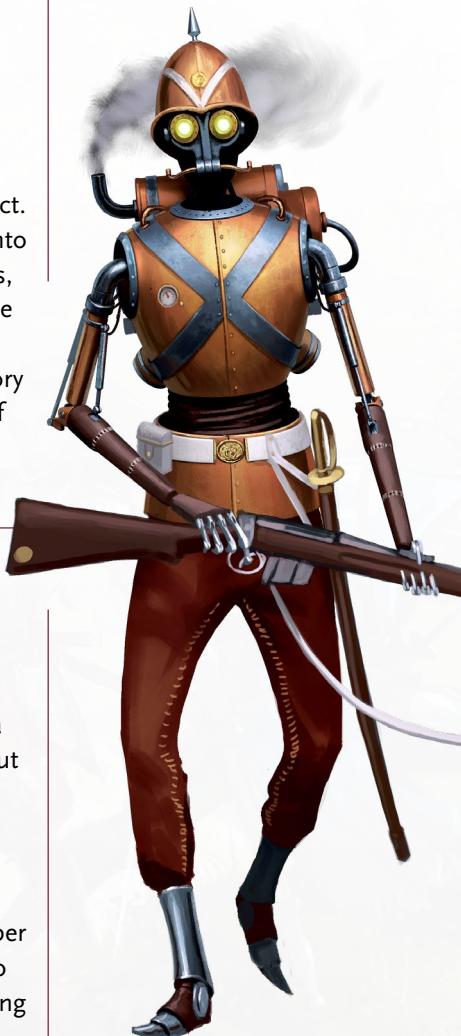
DETERMINING TASK STAT

Every task relates to one of a character's three stats: Might, Speed, or Intellect. Physical activities that require strength, power, or endurance relate to Might. Physical activities that require agility, flexibility, or fast reflexes relate to Speed. Mental activities that require force of will, memory, or mental power relate to Intellect. This means you can generalize all tasks into three categories: Might tasks, Speed tasks, and Intellect tasks. You can also generalize rolls into three categories: Might rolls, Speed rolls, and Intellect rolls. The category of the task or roll determines what kind of Effort you can apply to the roll.

DETERMINING TASK DIFFICULTY

The most frequent thing a GM does during the game—and probably the most important thing—is setting a task's difficulty. To make the job easier, use the Task Difficulty table, which associates difficulty rating with a descriptive name, a target number, and general guidance about the difficulty.

Every difficulty from 1 to 10 has a target number associated with it. The target number is easy to remember: it's always three times the difficulty. The target number is the minimum number a player needs to roll on a d20 to succeed at the task. Moving down the table means the task is more difficult, moving up means it is less difficult.



TASK DIFFICULTY

| Task Difficulty | Description | Target No. | Guidance |
|-----------------|--------------|------------|---|
| 0 | Routine | 0 | Anyone can do this basically every time. |
| 1 | Simple | 3 | Most people can do this most of the time. |
| 2 | Standard | 6 | Typical task requiring focus, but most people can usually do this. |
| 3 | Demanding | 9 | Requires full attention; most people have a 50/50 chance to succeed. |
| 4 | Difficult | 12 | Trained people have a 50/50 chance to succeed. |
| 5 | Challenging | 15 | Even trained people often fail. |
| 6 | Intimidating | 18 | Normal people almost never succeed. |
| 7 | Formidable | 21 | Impossible without skills or great effort. |
| 8 | Heroic | 24 | A task worthy of tales told for years afterward. |
| 9 | Immortal | 27 | A task worthy of legends that last lifetimes. |
| 10 | Impossible | 30 | A task that normal humans couldn't consider (but one that doesn't break the laws of physics). |



Modifiers affect the difficulty rather than the player's roll. This has two consequences:

1. Low target numbers such as 3 or 6, which would be boring in most games that use a d20, are not boring in the Cypher System. For example, if you need to roll a 6 or higher, you still have a 25% chance to fail.
2. The upper levels of difficulty (7, 8, 9, and 10) are all but impossible because the target numbers are 21 or higher, which you can't roll on a d20. However, it's common for PCs to have abilities or equipment that reduce the difficulty of a task and thus lower the target number to something they *can* roll on a d20.

When setting the difficulty of a task, the GM should rate the task on its own merits, not on the power of the characters. Difficulty is not relative. A level 4 locked door is the same no matter who tries to open it.

MODIFYING DIFFICULTY

Character skills, favorable circumstances, or excellent equipment can make a task easier. For example, if a character is trained in climbing, it turns a difficulty 6 climb into a difficulty 5 climb. This is called “*easing the task*.” If the character is specialized in climbing, it turns a difficulty 6 climb into a difficulty 4 climb. This is called “*easing the task by two steps*.”

A *skill* is a category of knowledge, ability, or activity relating to a task, such as climbing, geography, or persuasiveness. A character who has a skill is better at completing related tasks than a character who lacks the skill. A character's level of skill is either *trained* (reasonably skilled) or *specialized* (very skilled).

If you are trained in a skill relating to a task, you ease that task by one step. If you are specialized, you ease it by two steps. A skill can never ease a task by more than two steps.

Anything else that eases tasks (help from an ally, a particular piece of equipment, or some other advantage) is referred to as an *asset*. Assets can never ease a task by more than two steps.

You can also ease a given task by applying Effort. This costs 3 points from the relevant stat Pool, minus any Edge. Using Effort eases the task by one step. (At higher tiers, characters can apply additional Effort, each of which costs 2 points from the relevant stat Pool and eases the task by an additional step.)

To sum up, three things can ease a task: skills, assets, and Effort. If you can ease a task's difficulty to 0 using one or more of these, you automatically succeed and don't need to make a roll.

If something makes a task harder (like fighting on a slippery floor), it *hinders* the task by one or more steps. Hindering is the opposite of easing.

COMBAT

Making an attack in combat works the same way as any other roll: the GM assigns a difficulty to the task, and you roll a d20 against the associated target number.

The difficulty of your attack roll depends on how powerful your opponent is. Just as tasks have a difficulty from 1 to 10, creatures have a level from 1 to 10. Most of the time, the difficulty of your attack roll is the same as the creature's level. For example, if you attack a level 2 bandit, it's a level 2 task, so your target number is 6.

Players make all die rolls. If a character attacks a creature, the player makes an attack roll. If a creature attacks a character, the player makes a defense roll.

The damage dealt by an attack is a flat number based on the weapon or attack used. For example, a spear always does 4 points of damage.

Your Armor characteristic reduces the damage you take from attacks directed at you. You get Armor from wearing physical armor (such as a sturdy leather jerkin or chainmail) or from special abilities. Like weapon damage, Armor is a flat number, not a roll. If you're attacked, subtract your Armor from the damage you take. For example, a leather jerkin gives you 1 point of Armor, meaning that you take 1 less point of damage from attacks. If a bandit hits you with a knife for 2 points of damage while you're wearing a leather jerkin, you take only

1 point of damage. If your Armor reduces the damage from an attack to 0, you take no damage from that attack.

When you see the word "Armor" capitalized in the game rules (other than as the name of a special ability), it refers to your Armor characteristic—the number you subtract from incoming damage. When you see the word "armor" with a lowercase "a," it refers to any physical armor you might wear.

Typical physical weapons come in three categories: light, medium, and heavy.

LIGHT WEAPONS inflict only 2 points of damage, but they ease the attack roll by one step because they are fast and easy to use. Light weapons are punches, kicks, clubs, knives, handaxes, rapiers, and so on. Weapons that are particularly small are light weapons.

MEDIUM WEAPONS inflict 4 points of damage. Medium weapons include swords, battleaxes, maces, crossbows, spears, and so on. Most weapons are medium. Anything that could be used in one hand (even if it's often used in two hands, such as a quarterstaff or spear) is a medium weapon.

HEAVY WEAPONS inflict 6 points of damage, and you must use two hands to attack with them. Heavy weapons are huge swords, great hammers, massive axes, halberds, heavy crossbows, and so on. Anything that must be used in two hands is a heavy weapon.



Wearing physical armor increases the cost of using a level of Effort when attempting a Speed-based action (+1 for light armor, +2 for medium, +3 for heavy). Training reduces this cost. Wearing armor you're not trained in increases the cost.





ATTACK MODIFIERS AND SPECIAL SITUATIONS

In combat situations, many modifiers might come into play. The GM is at liberty to assess whatever modifiers they think are appropriate to the situation (that's their role in the game). Often the modifier eases or hinders the task. So if a situation makes it harder to attack, when a PC attacks a nonplayer character (NPC), their attack is hindered, and when an NPC attacks a PC, their defense roll is eased. This is because players make all rolls, whether they are attacking or defending—NPCs never make attack or defense rolls.

When in doubt, if it seems like it should be harder to attack in a situation, hinder the attack rolls by one step. If it seems like attacks should gain an advantage or be easier in some way, ease the attack rolls by one step.

DEALING AND SUFFERING DAMAGE

When an attack strikes a character, it usually means the character takes damage.

An attack against a PC subtracts points from one of the character's stat Pools—usually the Might Pool. Whenever an attack simply says it deals "damage" without specifying the type, it means Might damage, which is by far the most common type. Intellect damage, which is usually the result of a mental attack, is always labeled as Intellect damage. Speed damage is often a physical attack, but attacks that deal Speed damage are fairly rare.

NPCs don't have stat Pools. Instead, they have a characteristic called *health*. When an NPC takes damage of any kind, the amount is subtracted from its health. Unless described otherwise, an NPC's health is always equal to its target number. Some NPCs might have special reactions to or defenses against attacks that would normally deal Speed damage or Intellect damage, but unless the NPC's description specifically explains this, assume that all damage is subtracted from the NPC's health.

Objects have an object damage track instead of health: intact, minor damage (level reduced by 1), major damage (broken but can be repaired), and destroyed (ruined and can't be repaired).

As mentioned previously, damage is always a specific amount determined by the attack. For example, a slash with a broadsword deals 4 points of damage. An Adept's Onslaught force blast deals 4 points of damage. Often, there are ways for the attacker to increase the damage. For example, a PC can apply Effort to deal 3 additional points of damage, and rolling a natural 17 on the attack roll deals 1 additional point of damage.

AMBIENT DAMAGE

Some kinds of damage aren't direct attacks against a creature, but they indirectly affect everything in the area. Most of these are environmental effects such as winter cold,

THE DAMAGE TRACK

Hale is the normal state for a character: all three stat Pools are at 1 or higher, and the PC has no penalties from harmful conditions. When a hale PC takes enough damage to reduce one of their stat Pools to 0, they become impaired. Note that a character whose stat Pools are much lower than normal can still be hale.

Impaired is a wounded or injured state. When an impaired character applies Effort, it costs 1 extra point per level applied. For example, applying one level of Effort costs 4 points instead of 3, and applying two levels of Effort costs 7 points instead of 5.

An impaired character ignores minor and major effect results on their rolls and doesn't deal as much extra damage in combat with a special roll.

When an impaired PC takes enough damage to reduce one of their stat Pools to 0, they become debilitated.

Debilitated is a critically injured state. A debilitated character may not take any actions other than to move (probably crawl) no more than an immediate distance. If a debilitated character's Speed Pool is 0, they can't move at all.

When a debilitated PC takes enough damage to reduce a stat Pool to 0, they are dead.

Dead is dead.



high temperatures, or background radiation. Damage from these kinds of sources is called ambient damage. Physical armor usually doesn't protect against ambient damage, though a well-insulated suit of armor can protect against cold weather.

THE EFFECTS OF TAKING DAMAGE

When an NPC reaches 0 health, it is either dead or (if the attacker wishes it) incapacitated, meaning unconscious or beaten into submission.

As previously mentioned, damage from most sources is applied to a character's Might Pool. Otherwise, stat damage always reduces the Pool of the stat it affects.

If damage reduces a character's stat Pool to 0, any further damage to that stat (including excess damage from the attack that reduced the stat to 0) is applied to another stat Pool. Damage is applied to Pools in this order:

1. Might Pool (unless the Pool is 0)
2. Speed Pool (unless the Pool is 0)
3. Intellect Pool

Even if the damage is applied to another stat Pool, it still counts as its original type for the purpose of Armor and special abilities that affect damage. For example, if a Warrior with 2 Armor is reduced to 0 Might and then is hit by a monster's claw for 3 points of damage, it still counts as Might damage, so their 2 Armor reduces the damage to 1 point, which then is applied to their Speed Pool. In other words, even though the Warrior takes the damage from their Speed Pool, it doesn't ignore Armor like Speed damage normally would.

In addition to taking damage from their Might Pool, Speed Pool, or Intellect Pool, PCs also have a *damage track*. The damage track has four states (from best to worst): hale, impaired, debilitated, and dead. When one of a PC's stat Pools reaches 0, the character moves one step down the damage track. Thus, if they are hale, they become impaired. If they are already impaired, they become debilitated. If they are already debilitated, they become dead.





Some effects can immediately shift a PC one or more steps on the damage track. These include rare poisons, cellular disruption attacks, and massive traumas (such as falls from very great heights, being run over by a speeding vehicle, and so on, as determined by the GM).

Some attacks, like venom from a serpent's bite, an Adept's Stasis ability, or the paralytic saliva of a ghoul, have effects other than damage to a stat Pool or shifting the PC on the damage track. These attacks can cause unconsciousness, paralysis, and so on.

RECOVERING POINTS IN A POOL

After losing or spending points in a Pool, you recover those points by resting. You can't increase a Pool past its maximum by resting—just back to its normal level. Any extra points gained go away with no effect. The amount of points you recover from a rest, and how long each rest takes, depends on how many times you have rested so far that day.

When you rest, make a *recovery roll*. To do this, roll $1d6 + 1$. You recover that many points, and you can divide them among your stat Pools however you wish. For example, if your recovery roll is 4 and you've lost 4 points of Might and 2 points of Speed, you can recover 4 points of Might, or 2 points of Might and 2 points of Speed, or any other combination adding up to 4 points.

The first time you rest each day, it takes only a few seconds to catch your breath. If you rest this way in the middle of an encounter, it takes one action on your turn.

The second time you rest each day, you must rest ten minutes to make a recovery roll. The third time you rest each day, you must rest one hour to make a recovery roll. The fourth time you rest each day, you must rest ten hours to make a recovery roll (usually, this occurs when you sleep).

After that much rest, it's assumed to be a new day, so the next time you rest, it takes only a few seconds. The next rest takes ten minutes, then one hour, and so on, in a cycle.

If you haven't rested yet that day and you take a lot of damage in a fight, you could rest a few seconds (regaining $1d6$ points + 1)

and then immediately rest for ten minutes (regaining another $1d6$ points + 1). Thus, in one full day of doing nothing but resting, you could recover $4d6$ points + 4.

Each character chooses when to make recovery rolls. If a party of five explorers rests for ten minutes because two members want to make recovery rolls, the other characters don't have to make rolls at that time. Later in the day, those three can decide to rest for ten minutes and make recovery rolls.

| Recovery Roll | Rest Time Needed |
|----------------------|------------------|
| First recovery roll | One action |
| Second recovery roll | Ten minutes |
| Third recovery roll | One hour |
| Fourth recovery roll | Ten hours |

Using points from a recovery roll to raise a stat Pool from 0 to 1 or higher also automatically moves the character up one step on the damage track.

If all of a PC's stat Pools are above 0 and the character has taken special damage that moved them down the damage track, they can use a recovery roll to move up one step on the damage track instead of recovering points. For example, a Warrior who is debilitated from a hit with a laser gun can rest and move up to impaired rather than recover points in a Pool.

SPECIAL ROLLS

When you roll a natural 19 (the d20 shows "19") and the roll is a success, you also have a minor effect. In combat, a minor effect inflicts 3 additional points of damage with your attack, or, if you'd prefer a special result, you could decide instead that you knock the foe back, distract them, or something similar. When not in combat, a minor effect could mean that you perform the action with particular grace. For example, when jumping down from a ledge, you land smoothly on your feet, or when trying to persuade someone, you convince them that you're smarter than you really are. In other words, you not only succeed but also go a bit further.



When you roll a natural 20 (the d20 shows “20”) and the roll is a success, you also have a major effect. This is similar to a minor effect, but the results are more remarkable. In combat, a major effect inflicts 4 additional points of damage with your attack, but again, you can choose instead to introduce a dramatic event such as knocking down your foe, stunning them, or taking an extra action. Outside of combat, a major effect means that something beneficial happens based on the circumstance. For example, when climbing up a cliff wall, you make the ascent twice as fast. When a roll grants you a major effect, you can choose to use a minor effect instead if you prefer.

In combat (and only in combat), if you roll a natural 17 or 18 on your attack roll, you add 1 or 2 points of damage, respectively. Neither roll has any special effect options—just the extra damage.

Rolling a natural 1 is always bad. It means that the GM introduces a new complication into the encounter. This is called a GM intrusion.

1: Intrusion. The GM makes a free intrusion (see below) and doesn’t award experience points (XP) for it.

17: Damage Bonus. If the roll was an attack, it deals 1 additional point of damage.

18: Damage Bonus. If the roll was an attack, it deals 2 additional points of damage.

19: Minor Effect. If the roll was an attack, it deals 3 additional points of damage. If the roll was something other than an attack, the PC gets a minor effect in addition to the normal results of the task.

20: Major Effect. If the roll was an attack, it deals 4 additional points of damage. If the roll was something other than an attack, the PC gets a major effect in addition to the normal results of the task. If the PC spent points from a stat Pool on the action, the point cost for the action decreases to 0, meaning the character regains those points as if they had not been spent at all.



PLAYER INTRUSION

A player intrusion occurs when a player spends 1 XP to introduce a change to the world or current circumstances that makes things easier for a PC. Using an intrusion does not require a character to use an action to trigger it; it just happens.

Examples include:

Weapon Break: Your foe's weapon has a weak spot; it becomes damaged and moves two steps down the object damage track.

Convenient Idea: A flash of insight provides you with a clear answer or suggests a course of action about an urgent question, problem, or obstacle you're facing.

Fortuitous Malfunction: A trap or a dangerous device malfunctions before it can affect you.

Friendly NPC: An NPC you don't know chooses to help you, though doesn't necessarily explain why. Maybe they'll ask you for a favor in return afterward, depending on how much trouble they go to.

GM INTRUSION

GM intrusion reflects when something in the story occurs to complicate the character's life. The character hasn't necessarily fumbled or done anything wrong (although perhaps they did). It could just be that the task presents an unexpected difficulty or something unrelated affects the current situation.

At any time, the GM can introduce an unexpected complication for a character. For example, an enemy might appear and attack, the rope the character is climbing might snap, or an unstable floor might give out beneath a character's feet. A GM intrusion always puts the spotlight on that one character, and when the GM finishes explaining what the sudden, surprising turn of events is, they ask that player, "Now what do you do?" The player must deal with this new complication.

When the GM intrudes in this manner, they must give the affected character 2 XP. That player, in turn, must immediately give one of those XP to another player and justify the gift (perhaps the other player had a

good idea, told a funny joke, performed an action that saved a life, and so on).

As a general rule, the GM should intrude *at least* once each session but probably no more than once or twice each session per character.

Anytime the GM intrudes, the player can spend 1 XP to refuse the intrusion, though that also means they don't get the 2 XP. If the player has no XP to spend, they can't refuse the intrusion.

Example Intrusion: Through skill and the aid of another character, a PC eases a wall-climbing task from difficulty 2 to difficulty 0. Normally, they would succeed at the task automatically, but the GM intrudes and says, "No, a bit of the crumbling wall gives way, so you still have to make a roll." As with any difficulty 2 task, the target number is 6. The PC attempts the roll as normal, and because the GM intruded, the character gains 2 XP. The PC immediately gives one of those XP to another player.

Another Example Intrusion: During a fight, a PC swings their axe and damages a foe with a slice across the shoulder. The GM



HELPING

If a character attempts a task and gets help from another character, the acting character's task is eased. The helping character uses their action to provide this help. If the helper is trained or specialized in that task, the task is eased by an additional step. For example, if Sally the Warrior is trying to climb a steep incline but has no skill at climbing, and Duvian the Explorer (who is trained in climbing) spends his turn helping her, Sally's climb is eased by two steps. A character with an inability in a task cannot help another character with that task—the character with the inability provides no benefit in that situation. Help counts as an asset.

intrudes by saying that the foe turned just as the axe struck, wrenching the weapon from the character's grip and sending it clattering across the floor. The axe comes to a stop 10 feet (3 m) away. Because the GM intruded, the PC gains 2 XP, and they immediately give one of those XP to another player. Now the character must deal with the dropped weapon, perhaps drawing a different weapon or using their next turn to scramble after the axe.

If a character rolls a 1 on a die, the GM can intrude without giving the character any XP. This kind of intrusion can happen immediately or very soon thereafter.

RANGE AND SPEED

Distance is simplified into three categories: immediate, short, and long.

IMMEDIATE DISTANCE from a character is within reach or within a few steps. If a character stands in a small room, everything in the room is within immediate distance. At most, immediate distance is 10 feet (3 m).

SHORT DISTANCE is anything greater than immediate distance but less than 50 feet (15 m) or so.

LONG DISTANCE is anything greater than short distance but less than 100 feet (30 m) or so.

VERY LONG DISTANCE is anything greater than long distance but less than 500 feet (150 m) or so. Beyond that range, distances are always specified—1,000 feet (300 m), a mile (1.5 km), and so on.

The idea is that it's not necessary to measure precise distances. Immediate

distance is right there, practically next to the character. Short distance is nearby. Very long distance is really far off.

All weapons and special abilities use these terms for ranges. For example, all melee weapons have immediate range—they are close-combat weapons, and you can use them to attack anyone within immediate distance of you. A thrown knife (and most other thrown weapons) has short range. A bow has long range. An Adept's Onslaught ability also has short range.

A character can move an immediate distance as part of another action. In other words, they can take a few steps over to the control panel and activate a switch. They can lunge across a small room to attack a foe. They can open a door and step through.

A character can move a short distance as their entire action for a turn. They can also try to move a long distance as their entire action, but the player might have to roll to see if the character slips, trips, or stumbles as the result of moving so far so quickly.

For example, if the PCs are fighting a group of goblins, any character can likely attack any goblin in the general melee—they're all within immediate range. Exact positions aren't important. Creatures in a fight are always moving, shifting, and jostling, anyway. However, if one goblin stayed back to use its bow, a character might have to use their entire action to move the short distance required to attack that foe. It doesn't matter if the goblin is 20 feet (6 m) or 40 feet (12 m) away—it's simply considered short distance. It does matter if the goblin is more than 50 feet (15 m) away because that distance would require a long move.



ENCOUNTERS, ROUNDS, AND INITIATIVE

Sometimes in the course of the game, the GM or players will refer to an *encounter*. Encounters are not so much measurements of time as they are events or instances in which something happens, like a scene of a movie or a chapter in a book. An encounter might be a fight with a foe, a dramatic crossing of a raging river, or a stressful negotiation with an important official. It's useful to use the word when referring to a specific scene, as in "My Might Pool is low after that encounter with the tyrannosaurus rex yesterday."

A *round* is about five to ten seconds. The length of time is variable because sometimes one round might be a bit longer than another. You don't need to measure time more precisely than that. You can estimate that on average there are about ten rounds in a minute. In a round, everyone—each character and NPC—gets to take one action.

To determine who goes first, second, and so on in a round, each player makes a Speed roll called an *initiative roll*. Most of the time, it's only important to know which characters act before the NPCs and which act after the NPCs. On an initiative roll, a character who rolls higher than an NPC's

target number takes an action before the NPC does. As with all target numbers, an NPC's initiative roll target number is three times the NPC's level. Many times, the GM will have all NPCs take their actions at the same time, using the highest target number from among all the NPCs. Using this method, any characters who rolled higher than the target number act first, then all the NPCs act, and finally any characters who rolled lower than the target number act.

The order in which the characters act usually isn't important. If the players want to go in a precise order, they can act in initiative order (highest to lowest), by going around the table, by going oldest to youngest, and so on.

For example, Colin, James, and Shanna are in combat with two level 2 abhumans. The GM has the players make Speed rolls to determine initiative. Colin rolls an 8, Shanna rolls a 15, and James rolls a 4. The target number for a level 2 creature is 6, so each round Colin and Shanna act before the abhumans, then the abhumans act, and finally James acts. It doesn't matter whether Colin acts before or after Shanna, as long as they think it's fair.

After everyone—all PCs and NPCs—in the combat has had a turn, the round ends and a new round begins. In all rounds after the first, everyone acts in the same order as they did in the first round. The characters cycle through this order until the logical end of the encounter (the end of the fight or the completion of the event) or until the GM asks them to make new initiative rolls. The GM can call for new initiative rolls at the beginning of any new round when conditions drastically change. For example, if the NPCs gain reinforcements, the environment changes (perhaps the lights go out), the terrain changes (maybe part of the balcony collapses under the PCs), or something similar occurs, the GM can call for new initiative rolls.

Since the action moves as a cycle, anything that lasts for a round ends where it started in the cycle. If Vasagle the Adept uses an ability on an opponent that hinders its defenses for one round, the effect lasts until Vasagle acts on their next turn.

INTERACTION

Obviously, players can talk to each other all they want, and at least some of that conversation represents what the characters are saying to each other. Often, a PC will want to talk to an NPC. It might be to haggle with a shopkeeper, convince a guard to let them pass by, or just get information from someone in the know. This conversation is normally handled by the GM taking on the NPC role and talking things through. When a PC tries to convince an NPC of something, or when they try to deceive or intimidate the NPC, a roll is involved. This is handled just like anything else—use the level of the NPC as the difficulty, modified by the circumstances. Trying to convince a loyal soldier to disobey orders is harder than his level might indicate, but convincing the soldier that new orders have come in might be normal. Skills like persuasion or deception might help, and of course Effort can be used (always Intellect).

Although fighting dangerous beasts or other foes can be interesting and exciting, much of gameplay in the Cypher System probably involves other situations: overcoming obstacles, interacting with NPCs (guards, weird creatures, machine intelligences, or far weirder things!), solving mysteries, finding solutions to problems, blazing trails through the wilderness, sneaking, climbing, running, and all other kinds of exciting activities. Sometimes these actions allow PCs to achieve goals, such as “find the lost child in the woods” or “help escort a merchant to the next city.” But more often than not, they propel characters toward making discoveries.

CORE OF GAMEPLAY

The core of gameplay in the Cypher System—the answer to the question “What do characters do in this game?”—is “Discover new things or old things that are new again.” This can be the discovery of something a character can use, like an artifact. It makes the character more powerful because it almost certainly grants a new capability or option, but it’s also a discovery unto itself and results in a gain of experience points.

Discovery can also mean finding a new procedure or device (something too big to be considered a piece of equipment) or even previously unknown information. If the PCs find an ancient hovertrain and get it working again so they can use it to reach a distant location, that’s a discovery. If they locate a signal-receiving station and figure out how to turn off the transmission from an overhead satellite that’s causing all the animals in the region to become hostile, that’s a discovery. The common thread is that the PCs discover something that they can understand and put to use. A cure for a plague, the means to draw power from a hydroelectric plant, an operational flying craft, or an injection that grants the knowledge to create a protective force-field dome over a structure—these are all discoveries.

The GM should award between 1 and 4 XP at the end of a session if the characters made any significant discoveries.



EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points (XP) are rewards given to players when the GM intrudes on the story (this is called GM intrusion) with a new and unexpected challenge. For example, in the middle of combat, the GM might inform the player that they drop their weapon. However, to intrude in this manner, the GM must award the player 2 XP. The rewarded player, in turn, must immediately give one of those XP to another player and justify the gift (perhaps the other player had a good idea, told a funny joke, performed an action that saved a life, and so on).

Alternatively, the player can refuse the GM intrusion. If they do so, they don’t get the 2 XP from the GM, and they must also spend 1 XP that they already have. If the player has no XP to spend, they can’t refuse the intrusion.

The GM can also give players XP between sessions as a reward for recovering interesting artifacts or making discoveries during an adventure. You don’t earn XP for killing foes or overcoming standard challenges in the course of play. Discovery is the soul of the Cypher System.

A player can spend XP they’ve accumulated to reroll any die roll and take the better of the two rolls. Rerolling costs 1 XP.





UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHARACTER

Each character has a simple statement that describes them, like: “I am an [adjective] [noun] who [verb].”

For example, Sevit is a Swift Warrior who Wields Two Weapons at Once. Reilitas Kazan is an Intelligent Adept who Leads.

In this sentence, the *adjective* is called your descriptor.

The *noun* is your character type.

The *verb* is called your focus.

In some games, character type might be called your character class. It’s the noun of the sentence “I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*.” You can choose from four character types: Warrior, Adept, Speaker, and Explorer.

Your descriptor places your character in the situation and helps provide motivation. It’s the adjective of the sentence “I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*.”

Focus is what your character does best. It’s the verb of the sentence “I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*.”

CHARACTER STATS

Every character has three defining characteristics (called “statistics” or “stats”): Might, Speed, and Intellect.

Might: The concepts of strength, endurance, constitution, hardiness, and physical prowess are all folded into Might.

Might governs actions from forcing doors open to resisting disease. It’s also the primary means of determining how much damage your character can sustain. Characters interested in fighting focus on Might.

Speed: Speed embodies quickness, movement, dexterity, and reflexes. Speed governs dodging attacks, sneaking around, or throwing a ball accurately. Nimble, fast, or sneaky characters have good Speed stats.

Intellect: Intellect encompasses intelligence, wisdom, charisma, education, reasoning, wit, willpower, and charm. Intellect governs solving puzzles, remembering facts, telling convincing lies, and using mental powers. Characters good at communicating effectively or wielding magic stress their Intellect stat.

POOL, EDGE, AND EFFORT

Each of the three stats has two components: Pool and Edge. Your Pool represents raw ability, and your Edge represents knowing how to use what you have. A third element ties into this concept: Effort. When your character really needs to accomplish a task, apply Effort.

POOL

A Pool is the most basic measurement of a stat. Comparing the Pools of two creatures gives a general sense of which is superior. For example, Lotadil has a Might Pool of 18, and thus is stronger than Bronea, who has a Might Pool of 12. Most average characters have a Pool of 9 to 12 in most stats.

When your character is injured, sickened, or attacked, you temporarily lose points from one of your stat Pools. The nature of the attack determines which Pool loses points. Physical damage from a sword reduces your Might Pool, a poison that makes you clumsy reduces your Speed Pool, and a psionic blast reduces your Intellect Pool. You can rest to regain lost points from a stat Pool (see Recovering Points in a Pool, page 10).

EDGE

Pool is the basic measurement of a stat, but Edge is also important. When something requires you to spend points from a stat Pool, Edge reduces the cost. It also reduces the cost of applying Effort to a roll.

For example, Reiltas Kazan wants to use the Onslaught ability, which costs 1 point from his Intellect Pool. Subtract his 1 Intellect Edge from the activation cost, and the result is how many points he must spend. Since the result is 0, the ability is free.

EFFORT

When your character really needs to accomplish a task, apply Effort. Applying Effort requires spending 3 points from the stat Pool appropriate to the action. Thus, if your character tries to dodge (a Speed roll) and wants to increase the chance for success, you can apply Effort by spending 3 points from your Speed Pool. The game master determines the difficulty of the task (1 to 10). Effort eases the task by one step. So, if the difficulty is 5, using Effort makes

it 4. This must be done before you attempt a roll.

Every character has an Effort score, which indicates the maximum number of levels of Effort that can be applied.

When you apply Effort, subtract your relevant Edge from the total cost of applying Effort. For example, let's say you need to make a Speed roll. You apply one level of Effort, which will ease the task by one step. Normally, that would cost 3 points from your Speed Pool. However, you have a Speed Edge of 1, so you subtract that from the cost. So, it only costs 2 points from your Speed Pool.

Skills, equipment, and special abilities can also ease a task and can be used in conjunction with Effort.

EFFORT AND DAMAGE

Instead of applying Effort to ease your attack, you can apply Effort to increase the amount of damage you inflict for any kind of attack. For each level of Effort, you inflict 3 additional points of damage.

When using Effort to increase the damage of an area attack, such as the explosion created by a detonation cypher, you inflict 2 additional points of damage instead of 3 points. But those points are dealt to all targets in the area. Even if one or more of the targets in the area resists, you still inflict 1 point of damage to them.





SKILLS (AND INABILITIES)

Your character has training in a handful of specific skills. For example, you might be trained in sneaking, climbing and jumping, or social interactions. A character's level of skill is either trained (reasonably skilled) or specialized (very skilled).

If you are trained in a skill relating to a task, ease that task by one step. If you are specialized, ease it by two steps. A skill can never ease a task by more than two steps, but you can use a skill and Effort together.

You can always attempt any action—you do not need to be trained or specialized in a related skill. In other words, being trained in climbing doesn't let you climb, it just makes you good at it. Anyone can still try to climb. It's just a bit harder.

Some characters have inabilities. If a character has an inability in a task, the difficulty of that task is hindered.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Character types and foci grant PCs special abilities. Using these abilities usually costs points from your stat Pools (listed in parentheses after the ability name). Your Edge in the appropriate stat can reduce the cost, but you can only apply Edge once per action. For example, let's say an Adept with an Intellect Edge of 2 wants to use their Onslaught ability, which costs 1 Intellect point. They also want to increase the damage by using a level of Effort, which costs 3 Intellect points. The total cost for the action is 2 points from their Intellect Pool (1 point for the Onslaught plus 3 points for using Effort minus 2 points from their Edge).

Sometimes the point cost for an ability has a + sign after the number. That means you can spend more points or more levels of Effort to improve the ability.

Many special abilities grant a character the option of performing an *action* that they couldn't normally do, such as projecting rays of cold or attacking multiple foes at once. Using one of these abilities is an action unto itself, and the end of the ability's description says "Action" to remind you.



You can always attempt any action—you do not need to be trained or specialized in a related skill. In other words, being trained in climbing doesn't let you climb, it just makes you good at it. Anyone can still try to climb. It's just a bit harder.

Some special abilities allow you to perform a familiar action—one that you can already do—in a different way. For example, an ability might let you wear heavy armor or add 2 points of fire damage to your weapon damage. These are called *enablers*. Using one of these abilities is not considered an action. Enablers either function constantly (such as being able to wear heavy armor) or happen as part of another action (such as adding fire damage to your weapon damage, which happens as part of your attack). If a special ability is an enabler, the end of the ability's description says "Enabler" to remind you.

CYPHERS

Cyphers have a single use. They might allow you to fly or become temporarily invisible. Each character has a cypher limit indicating how many cyphers they can have at the same time.

You can use your cyphers to activate their abilities as your action, just as you would a special ability. The only difference is that once you've used a cypher, it's gone.

Characters will find new cyphers frequently during the game, so players shouldn't hesitate to use their cypher abilities.

There are two kinds of cyphers: manifest and subtle.

Manifest cyphers have physical form: potions, runes, drugs, gadgets, and so on. These are great for fantasy, sci-fi, horror, and superhero games.

Subtle cyphers are more like inherent abilities. They work especially well in modern or horror games.

EQUIPMENT AND MONEY

Each character has normal equipment they can use, including backpacks, ropes, torches, and so on. Depending on the setting, you might have additional equipment, such as jet packs for a sci-fi game or cell phones for a modern setting.

The currency of a Cypher System game also depends on the setting. The GM might decide to use dollars, pounds, euros, credits, gold pieces, Martian solval beads, bottle caps, and so on. To handle this, the Cypher System rules use generalities rather than specifics—goods and services are talked about in terms of inexpensive, moderately priced, expensive, very expensive, or exorbitant. An inexpensive item might be a simple meal or a drink in the bar, while an exorbitant item is something very high-end, like a nice house or spaceship.



A DISTURBANCE AT BRIDGE HOUSE

INTRODUCTION

A Disturbance at Bridge House is a brief adventure that introduces the Cypher System to players and GMs new to the game. It's a fairly short adventure, but it gives the players a chance to inhabit the characters and explore their abilities, resolve conflict, and experience the flexibility and narrative control the system gives them. While this adventure helps guide new GMs and players as they use Cypher System mechanics for the first time, it assumes that someone (preferably the GM) has already familiarized themselves with the rules in this primer.

This is a horror adventure in a modern setting, but the same fundamentals of the Cypher System support fantasy games, science-fiction adventures, superheroes, and post-apocalyptic campaigns. If you can imagine it, the Cypher System makes it easy—using the same basic rules and structures you'll experience in *A Disturbance at Bridge House*.

This short adventure sends modern player characters (PCs) to check out an abandoned mansion with a supernatural twist. Except for the beginning (*Starting the Adventure*) and the end (*Boiler Room*), the encounters could occur in any order. The order presented here is a pretty logical progression, though, so the guidance given on the first experience with rolls, GM intrusions, and other mechanics is based on the premise that the PCs approach them in this order. But that's just for your convenience; the players should not be expected to follow this outline.

Likewise, *A Disturbance at Bridge House* was written with the included *pregenerated characters* in mind. If you have the *Cypher System Rulebook*, it's entirely suitable for use with tier 1 characters of your own creation. It's also perfectly suitable to be integrated into your own ongoing campaign, if appropriate.

Starting the Adventure, page 22

Boiler Room, page 29

Included pregenerated characters,
page 32

BACKGROUND

The setting for this adventure is the modern day. It's the "real world;" most people don't really believe in ghosts, demons, and devils—at least not really.

The focus for this adventure is the Bridge House, a mansion-sized home built by a high-flying computer programmer in 1989. During the dot-com bust of the mid '90s, the owner went bankrupt and the house was foreclosed on. Since then it's changed hands many times, but has never been occupied for long. It has been mainly dormant and decaying for years, becoming a shelter for wild animals and squatters.

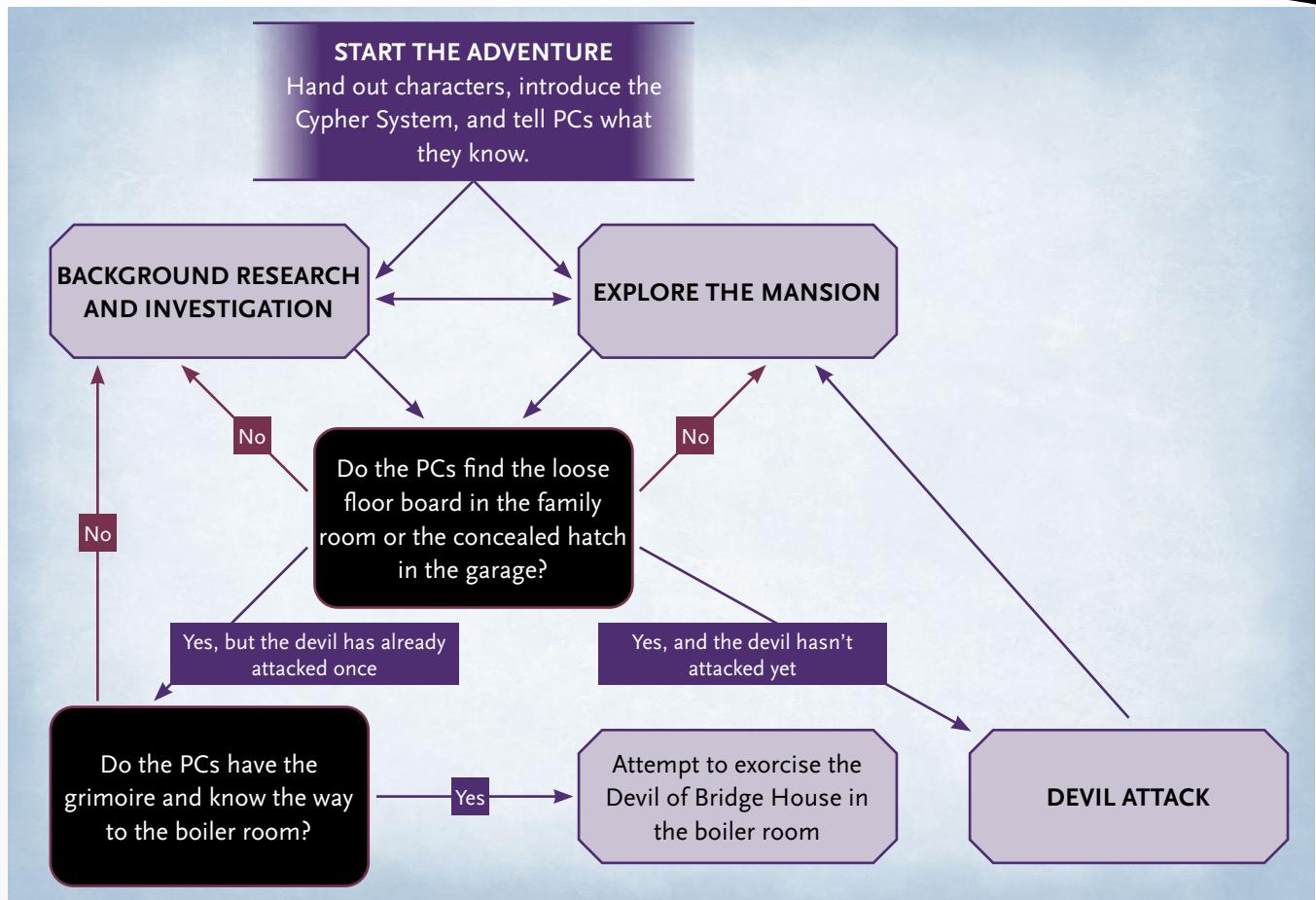
Not long after the house was first abandoned, a group of friends with an interest in mysticism began meeting in the vacant structure. Their gatherings were mostly excuses to party in a clandestine location, but in dabbling with the occult they somehow got their hands on a true grimoire—a text of hellish lore containing the names of demons and how to raise them.

And then they disappeared—all five of them. Authorities at the time didn't connect their disappearance with the derelict mansion, but that's where it happened. In the secret old boiler room beneath the mansion, they called up something, and they paid the price for their foolishness.

The thing they conjured remains. And the dilapidated house, already considered creepy by the West Seattle residents of the area, slowly gained an even more unpleasant reputation.

The property has attracted a potential investor interested in converting the building into apartments. Concerned about the mansion's reputation, the investor's agent has hired investigators to check out the house, clear out any squatters, and discover any other liabilities that might complicate new construction.

Those investigators are the PCs.



SYNOPSIS

The amateur occultists managed to summon a supernatural beast—a nameless infernal creature referred to in this adventure as the Devil of Bridge House. This hellish creature has made the house its domain, and lays claim to anyone who spends too long inside.

The Devil of Bridge House can only be permanently exorcised through a ritual prescribed in *The Infernal Key* (the grimoire used by the amateur occultists to summon it). That ritual must happen at the heart of the devil's infestation—the hidden Boiler Room. To make that happen, the PCs will need to discover *The Infernal Key* (still hidden in the house), find the Boiler Room, and make the connection.

Along the way the PCs will find clues indicating the presence of the devil, and probably be attacked by the creature itself. Defeating the devil in combat, or exorcising it improperly, won't do the trick. It completely reforms, free of any damage, each day at midnight—and each time someone tries to exorcise it with the grimoire in the boiler room.

The adventure is likely to play out as follows.

Background Investigation: The PCs might conduct a little online research and/or talk to neighbors around the property they're investigating.

Exploring the Mansion: PCs explore around and inside the abandoned mansion, discovering clues to the supernatural infestation. Eventually, they find both the grimoire they need to banish the evil presence in the house and the secret basement that contains a boiler room where they need to conduct the ritual of exorcism.

Boiler Room, page 29

Devil Attack: However, as the PCs discover either the grimoire or the boiler room (whichever they find first), the devil attacks, trying to kill or drive them off.

Boiler Room: If the PCs persevere, they can attempt the ritual. However, the devil does its damnedest to make sure they don't complete it.

Modifying Difficulty, page 6

Effort, page 17

Dealing and Suffering Damage,
page 8

Recovering Points in a Pool,
page 10

Cyphers, page 19

GM Intrusion, page 12
Character stats, page 16

Edge, page 17

Difficulty, page 4

Suzette Gower: level 2,
tasks related to selling
property as level 5

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

After reading the Background and Synopsis, begin here.

PASS OUT CHARACTERS

Ask your players to choose a character from the pregenerated options. (Obviously, you can skip this if you already have your own characters.) Give them a minute to look over their characters. Then ask them to introduce their characters to each other. Encourage them to explain their characters' connections to each other as described under Notes.

INTRODUCE THE CYPHER SYSTEM

If you are running *A Disturbance at Bridge House* with players new to the Cypher System, take just a few minutes to introduce a few key concepts:

- Their characters are described by a three-part sentence. The sentence tells you a little about who the character is, and each part contributed some of the mechanical elements of the character. The Cypher System offers hundreds of options for types, descriptions, and foci.
- The three pools reflect the character's general strengths. While a pool's value is important, the Edge—which is like a discount any time you spend points from the pool—is also a valuable indicator of strength.
- Every task is resolved by setting its difficulty on a scale of 1 to 10. The GM establishes the difficulty, but a PC's skills, along with assets such as tools,

To: JB
From: Suzette Gower <sgower@vestbright.com>
Subject: Bridge House investigation

Hey hey! Here's the scoop on the Bridge House.

So this house has been on and off the market for decades, but nobody's ever done anything with it. Until now. Maybe. Depends on what you find. The place was built in 1989 by a high-flying computer programmer named Sam King. During the dot-com bust back in the '90s King lost everything, and the bank foreclosed on the house.

It's stayed empty because people think it's haunted. Like, every time a new owner has moved in, they've moved out within a month or three. Can you believe it? Superstitious people drive me up the wall! My theory: the lot is totally overgrown, like a wild park in the middle of West Seattle. I think the neighbors prefer that to a new condo development, so they kind of cooked this thing up. The guy next door totally gives me that vibe.

I've got a buyer lined up, and they want to develop the property. But this deal really needs no impediments. Like, if there's a meth lab or a squatter group or something, we need that cleaned up.

Anyway, I want you to find the truth. Your contract pays a hefty bonus if you find an issue you can deal with immediately, like clearing out any squatters or finding proof of neighbor shenanigans.

I'm attaching the floorplan. Hope it's accurate—I don't think any work's been done on the place since King skipped out on it. I'll text you the address.

—S

help from a friend, and so on can lower that difficulty. Once the final difficulty is established, the player rolls a d20, trying to beat a target that's three times the difficulty. (So a difficulty 4 task requires a roll of 12 or higher.)

- When a task is really important, the player can apply Effort. It costs 3 points from the appropriate pool (minus Edge), and lowers the difficulty by 1.
- Players roll all the dice. Not just for skills and attacking, but also to defend themselves when they're attacked.
- Every character has special abilities. Sometimes these cost points from a pool (but the Edge applies). Additionally, the characters have cyphers—these are single-use abilities which sometimes take the form of disposable items.

That's probably enough detail to start with; the rest can be picked up through play.

Finally, tell the players that you're giving them 1 XP each, and explain that one of the things they can do with an experience point is reroll a bad die roll. Tell them they'll get more XP during the adventure in the form of GM intrusions.

TELL THE PLAYERS WHAT THEIR PCs KNOW

The PCs have been hired to investigate a derelict mansion called the Bridge House in West Seattle, Washington, USA, as follows.

- J.B. was contacted by an associate named Suzette Gower. Suzette is in her mid-40s and partial to fashionably tied scarves.
- Suzette is the agent for an investor looking to develop the property. But it's been in bad shape, and previous sales have fallen through, so she wants the PCs to clean it up.
- Suzette conducts business with the PCs via video chats, email, and text.

Give the PCs the handout (Suzette's email to J.B., page 31), and the map (page 25) that's referenced in the email. Alternatively, if you'd prefer a bit more roleplaying, you can have the PCs meet with Suzette, where she'll convey the same essential information.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION

If PCs decide to do some online research or talk to surrounding neighbors, they can learn a few useful clues.

RESEARCHING ONLINE

If a PC spends about twenty minutes researching the Bridge House and its neighborhood on the internet or via similar means, ask them for a difficulty 4 Intellect roll. If the PCs are new to the Cypher System, you can let them know the target difficulty you've assigned is level 4, and remind them that this means they're looking for a 12 or higher on their d20 die roll (assuming they don't use Effort to lower the difficulty by one step). A skill relating to research can lower the difficulty by 1, and the player can choose to apply Effort, also reducing the difficulty by 1, if they think it's particularly important to succeed.

On a success, they find two interesting pieces of information.

- **School Demolished to Build Mansion:**

The Northbridge Elementary School was torn down to build Bridge House in 1990. It was called "Bridge House" by its builder, a computer programmer flush with dot-com investment money. An eccentric, the programmer retained the school's antique furnace to heat the new structure, which was built over the original basement. According to scant internet records of the time, programmer Sam King's company went bankrupt. He lost the house, and finally moved overseas to avoid authorities. No obvious further online leads connect to the programmer.

- **Northbridge Elementary Furnace Refurbished Ahead of Schedule:**

According to a scan from a local newspaper snippet in the '80s, a furnace and hot water heater in the school's basement boiler room was notorious for not working, leaving students and teachers cold in the winter. But thanks to local funding, that got fixed in 1982.

If the researching character succeeds on their initial die roll with a 19 or 20, this indicates a special result. They might choose to find out more info in their search. If they do, they find the following story.

- **Missing West Seattleites Still Unaccounted For:**

Five adults living in West Seattle went missing in the mid-90s. Police never found any clues regarding what happened to them, other than they were all friends who disappeared on the same day. They sometimes went on road trips together, apparently to check out local hauntings, cryptid sightings, and UFO hot spots. In an unattributed remark, a neighbor commented, "You ask me, the Bridge House got them."

TALKING TO NEIGHBORS

► READ ALOUD ▶

The neighborhood surrounding Bridge House is built on the side of a massive gentle slope, covered in suburban trees, sidewalks lining quiet streets, and modest homes.

Between breaks in the trees is the occasional picturesque glimpse of the Puget Sound far below, and the Olympic Mountains on the horizon.

CANVASSING THE NEIGHBORHOOD

PCs knocking on random doors, or otherwise approaching locals, can easily enough find some people willing to talk about Bridge House. (No roll is required to discover this information.) The upshot is that most people don't really know anything—but some of them can direct the PCs to someone who might.

- "Bridge House? That's what it's called? I always wondered. I hear it's haunted."
- "We just moved to the neighborhood. Why is there something strange about that place?"
- "I tell my kids not to play in there. Pets go missing a lot around here. It wouldn't surprise me if it has something to do with that Bridge House."
- "You should talk to Mister Ansari. His house is the only other one on that block. I once heard him say Bridge House is evil."

TALKING TO MISTER ANSARI

Mister Ansari's home is one of two houses on a huge city block almost completely covered in an overgrowth of invasive wild blackberries and trees. While the mansion

Seattle's reputation for rain is well-earned. Downpours and thunderstorms are less common than light but soaking drizzle. That, a heavy overcast, and the early onset of evening darkness in the winter months can lend a creepy atmosphere to the player's exploration of West Seattle.

Locating Sam King does not figure into this adventure.

There's no indication of a basement or boiler room on the floor plan provided by Suzette. For reasons known only to him, Sam King kept it a secret.

hides behind this tangle, Mister Ansari's home is easily seen from the street.

◀ READ ALOUD ▶

This modest home sits on a neatly manicured lawn. It has a gabled roof, decorative half-timbering, and a covered porch. Comfortable but weather-stained seating is scattered about the porch. A brass knocker is affixed to the front door.

Mister Ansari is large man with a white beard, silver spectacles, and a Seahawks knit cap. He answers the door with a suspicious, “What do you want?”

Ask whichever character answers the NPC for a difficulty 4 persuasion roll. On a success, they can get Mister Ansari talking. On a failure, he shuts his door saying, “I don’t want whatever you’re selling.” PCs can try again, but must expend at least one level of *Effort* on each retry.

If PCs get Mister Ansari talking, he tells them the following in answer to their questions. (Use the “Mister Ansari gets mad” *GM intrusion* at some point in the conversation. When you do, remind the character they keep 1 XP, and give the other 1 XP to another PC.)

- “Some dot-com era smart guy built the mansion. When the bubble burst in the mid-90s, he took off. The house just sat, moldering. And collecting evil. Ghosts, probably.”
- “Why do I think it’s haunted? I share a property line with that place! Sometimes I see green lights. And the laughter. Always just after midnight. It’s terrible. Gives me nightmares if I don’t wear my earplugs.”
- In response to a question/suggestion that neighbors are faking a haunting to prevent the sale, “Have you lost your mind? The last thing we’d want to do is stop someone from buying and fixing up the place. Maybe if someone did, property values would finally go up around here!”
- “I’ve never gone in there. But I think those people who disappeared might’ve. You heard of them? Yeah, decades ago, some folks who lived around here. Always looking for UFOs and ghosts and shit. One day, they were just gone. I don’t remember their names anymore.”

Effort, page 15

GM Intrusion, page 10

GM intrusion: Mister Ansari gets mad at the character over a misunderstanding, or for something the character actually does. Mister Ansari must be persuaded again to keep talking.

GM Intrusion: The character is startled by a neighborhood kid, Sarah Mahal, who jumps out of the thicket and yells at the top of her lungs,

You ask me, the Bridge House got them.”

• “I’ve lived here my whole life. Used to be a school right there. I went to it as a kid. The damn hot water never worked. It was always cold in the classrooms. Maybe the area was haunted even back then?”

EXPLORING THE MANSION

From the street, most of the block seems to be covered in overgrown invasive blackberries, weeds, and trees. Blackberry shrubs are dense, thorny thickets almost impossible to get through, at least, not without getting major scratches and cuts. A single heavily overgrown, rutted driveway provides access onto the grounds, and leads to the structure at the center.

◀ READ ALOUD ▶

The overgrowth partly occludes a weather stained, moss and vine covered abandoned two-story mansion. The windows are boarded with plywood, and the place is dark and quiet.

THE GROUNDS

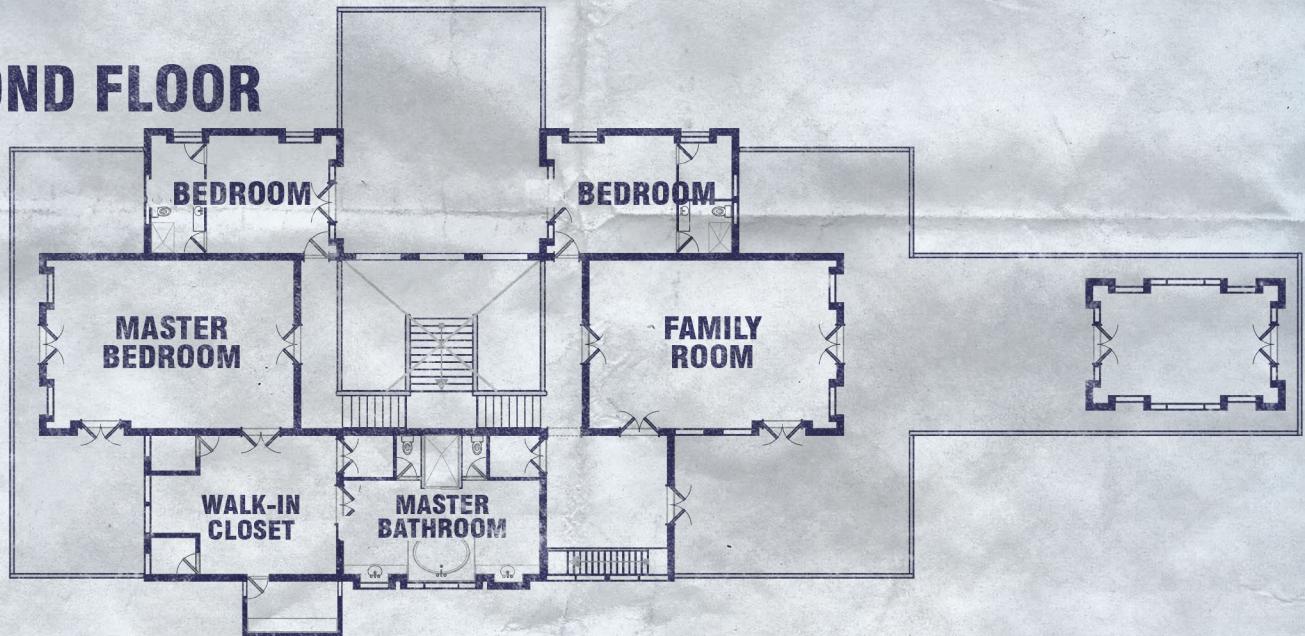
PCs who walk around the mansion’s exterior, sometimes braving encroaching blackberry thorns, can attempt a couple of difficulty 2 perception tasks. On each success, they find the following. At some point during this search, use the “startled by a neighborhood kid” *GM intrusion*.

- Several dead birds are scattered about the house exterior. All are missing their heads. The heads are nowhere to be found, but it seems like they might have just been forcibly pulled off.
- Weird symbols are etched into the mansion’s siding about 10 feet (3 m) above the ground. Someone who climbs up and looks closely guesses the inscriptions were made with a sharp-edged instrument like an awl (or claw?).

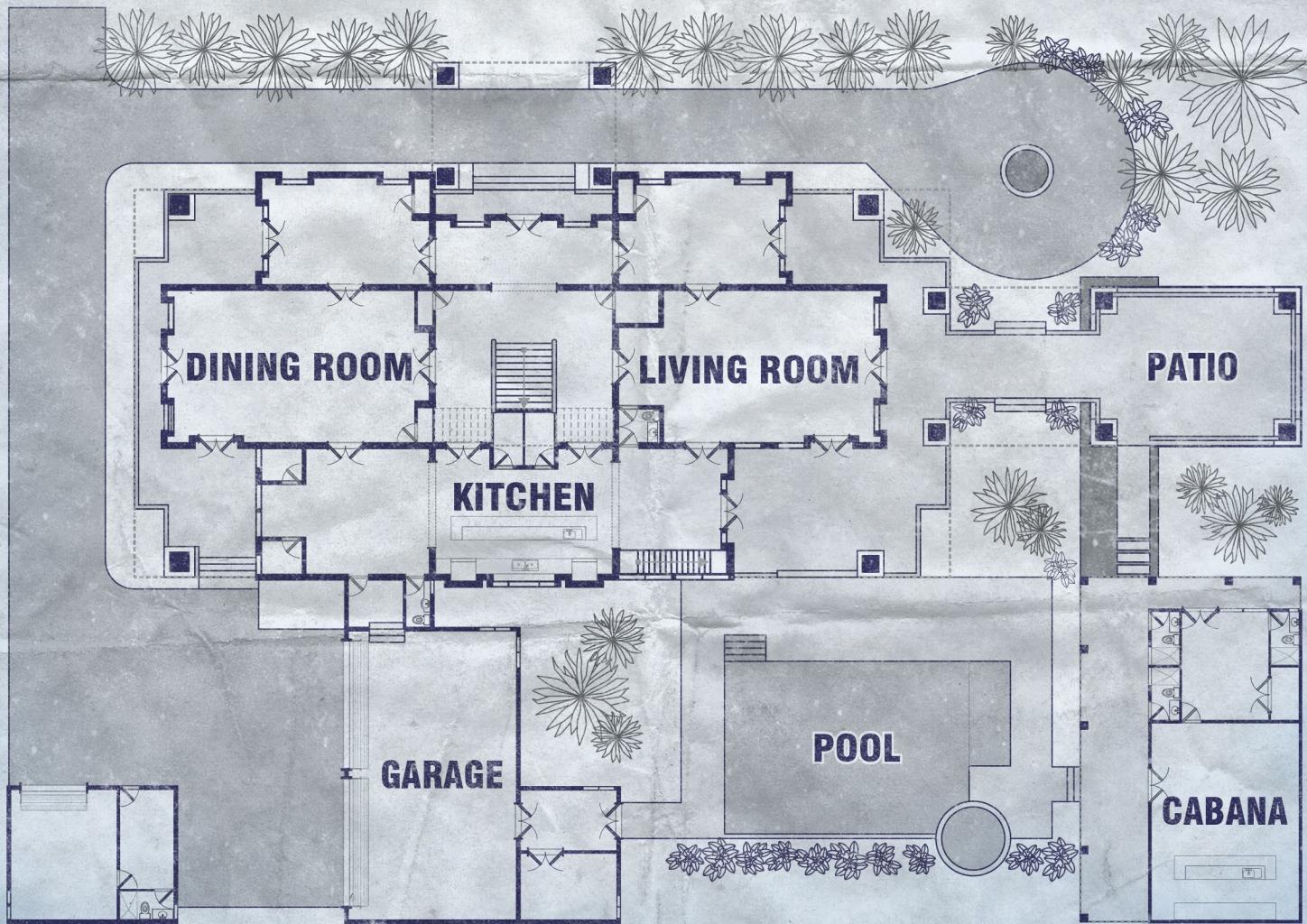
If the PC Bobby Reyes sees the symbol and succeeds on a difficulty 4 identifying magic task, they believe the symbols proclaim the house to be “claimed by Hell.” If Bobby isn’t present, someone else could attempt a difficulty 4 Intellect task instead. In this special case, the task is hindered for anyone not trained in identifying magic.

BRIDGE HOUSE

SECOND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



Boiler Room, page 29

Sarah Mahal: level 1

These symbols possess a subtle magical effect: anyone who spends more than a few hours in and around the house grows increasingly uncomfortable and afraid. The symbols are at least responsible for why the house keeps being foreclosed on. If one or more of the symbols are covered or scratched out, they reappear again the next night, unless the Devil of Bridge House is finally exorcised properly in the Boiler Room.

If you use the GM intrusion introducing Sarah Mahal, she yells because she mistakes the PCs as squatters. Yelling at a squatter usually makes them run off. She's looking for her pet cat Sprinkles. Sprinkles went missing a couple of days ago. Sarah is bundled in a blue rain shell and is probably about 11 years old.

THE POOL

◀ READ ALOUD ▶

The old pool is half filled with deadfall and moldering leaves, and smells like something died down there.

GM intrusion: *The character slips on something slimy and falls into the pool, but not before striking their head on the pool's edge as they go in, inflicting 4 points of damage.*

If someone climbs down into pool and searches, they quickly find several decaying dog and cat corpses, all missing their heads. (None of them are the missing pet cat Sprinkles; Sprinkles is hiding in the Boiler Room.) It's sort of difficult to tell, but it seems like they were just pulled off. If you use the suggested "character slips" GM intrusion, remind the damaged character they can use a recovery roll to regain lost points to a Pool.

THE MANSION

The main double doors of the mansion are secured with a big, rusted padlock. The PC Kit Castillo has lockpicks and skill with lockpicking. If Kit isn't present or can't manage to pick the lock, any PC could try to force it with Might task, or just cut the lock off if they obtain bolt cutters.

However, a successful difficulty 3 perception task (if present, J.B.'s carpentry training reduces this task to a level 2 perception roll) reveals that the nearest plywood-boarded window to the right of the door hangs from bent nails—it's easily lifted, providing an entry, because there is no glass behind this one.

Padlock: level 5

Max Yeun: *level 2, stealth and escaping as level 4*

Other potential entrances include other boarded windows (though most of the rest are secure and contain glass), the garage door, and various patio doors. Other doors are also secured with padlocks. Generally, whichever entry other than the window with loose plywood the PCs try requires that they succeed on a difficulty 5 Might task to force a way inside.

Once inside, PCs can explore the interior.

GENERAL INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

Only some areas shown on the Bridge House map contain areas of interest. Locations that are not described, such as the kitchen and dining room on the first floor, and most of the rooms on the second floor (except the master bedroom) are simply in an abandoned, dilapidated state.

◀ READ ALOUD ▶

The walls are cracked, peeling, and mold speckled. Rotted carpet and leaves share the floor with moldering, broken furniture. Water drips from the sagging ceiling. The corners are hazed with cobwebs.

Generally, the preceding description applies everywhere in the house. However, it's best not to belabor every empty room. Rather, skip forward by saying "you search a couple of rooms without finding anything," until the PCs come to an area containing something out of the ordinary.

LIVING ROOM

◀ READ ALOUD ▶

The detritus includes a moldering sectional couch and a smashed console TV. Evidence of a small fire scars the center of the room. A ratty sleeping bag and a bulging backpack lie nearby.

A squatter—Max Yeun, a man smelling of alcohol, wearing ragged, second-hand clothing and a single glove—has been sleeping in the living room the last two nights. Unless the PCs have been trying to be quiet, Max heard them come in. He hides in the half-fallen curtains that cover the exit facing the pool. If PCs enter the living room, or even an adjoining room, he makes a break for it, crashing out of the

living room exit facing the pool, making so much noise the PCs can't help but hear him.

Catching a fleeing Max Yeun requires one of the characters to succeed on a difficulty 4 Speed defense roll, followed by a difficulty 2 Might task to tackle him, assuming the PCs avoid more aggressive tactics. Max fears the PCs because he assumes they are with the police. He's also started getting a bad feeling about the place.

If caught, the squatter can be convinced to talk with a successful difficulty 2 persuasion task. Max is a bit muddled, but can provide the following information.

- "I been here a couple nights. I didn't mean nothing by it. No one's gonna care."
- "I couldn't get work after my accident. Things went to shit from there."
- If asked about only having one glove, "The other one got caught in a floorboard upstairs. Seemed like it was loose, but I couldn't get it up."
- "I heard someone walking around upstairs last night, in the room above this one. Also, maybe someone crying? I was too scared to check it out in the dark, but I went up this morning. No one was there. It's freaky bullshit, man." (Max heard the sounds he describes in the family room on the second floor.)
- "Oh wait, I just remembered! I had some crazy dreams. Candles burning with green flames. Scary laughing. A monster dancing in the shadows in the garage... I forgot until just now. Screw this place, I'll find somewhere else to sleep."

FAMILY ROOM

► READ ALOUD ►

The temperature in this room, just as dilapidated and ruined as the rest of the house, is noticeably lower, causing your breath to steam.

PCs who spend more than a few seconds investigating this room notice (no roll required) a glove on the floor. Max Yeun (in the living room) lost it while trying to pry up a loose floorboard. One fingertip of the glove remains pinched between the board and the floor—but despite this, the floorboard definitely appears to have been removed and replaced in the past.

The PCs can pry out the board with a successful difficulty 2 Might task. The difficulty comes from something gummy and dried that has partly mortared the board in place. A difficulty 4 Intellect task (skills like medical diagnosis reduce this difficulty) identifies the "mortar" is long dried human tissue.

Interruption: Unless the investigators have already fought the devil in the garage, use a GM intrusion to interrupt the characters with a **Devil Attack** before they can try removing the board.

The hollow that lies beneath the removed board contains a literal hand-full of loose bones scattered across the face of a dusty book.

Finger Bones: A successful difficulty 2 **medical diagnosis** task correctly identifies the loose bones as the first few digits of someone's fingers—fingers that were apparently severed by the board being smashed down as someone reached into the space.

The Ghost: Before the PCs leave this room, the spiritual remains of **Alina Idle** appear. This can happen due to PC action: Bobby Reyes, a PC able to speak with the dead, might try their ability on these bones. Otherwise, use the suggested group GM intrusion. (Group intrusions mean each PC gets 1 XP.) Note that while the intrusion grants the PCs XP, it comes with a cost in the form of potential Intellect damage from the unexpected shock of seeing the apparition.

Either way, a glowing spiritual image of a young woman appears. She is missing half her fingers on one hand. Alina Idle was one of the five friends who originally summoned the Devil of Bridge House. The PCs can question the spirit, should they choose, to learn the following. If a PC is using an ability to ask questions, the spirit is more forthcoming than the ability normally allows.

- "I am Alina Idle. My friends and I summoned a beast—a demon, a devil, whatever you want to call it—from Hell. It was an accident! And we paid the price. It devoured us. It lives here now. It will eat you if you stay long enough."

Devil Attack, page 28

Remember, just because a PC isn't trained in skill doesn't mean they can't attempt a roll. For someone not trained in medical diagnosis, this task would be a difficulty 3 Intellect roll.

Alina Idle, spirit: level 2

GM intrusion: *The devil attacks a character.*

A choke point is a place where an adventure can be derailed if PCs can't move past it. Anytime one is identified, it's ideal to come up with at least a couple of ways characters can get past.

GM intrusion (group): The spirit of Alina Idle appears; if not called by a special ability, the spirit's unexpected manifestation requires all nearby creatures that fail a difficulty 4 Intellect defense roll to suffer 1 point of Intellect damage (ignores Armor).

Online Research, page 23

GM intrusion: The devil attacks a character.

If someone is not trained in magic, they can still attempt a difficulty 5 Intellect roll to succeed, but their task is hindered.

The ritual, page 30

- “I found a book—*The Infernal Key*. I thought it was fake. But it was a true grimoire, containing the name of at least one infernal being and how to raise it.”
- “At first, it didn’t seem to work, so I hid the book here. But later, the Devil of Bridge House made itself known! Realizing what we’d done, I tried to retrieve the book from under the floor here. But it caught me.”
- “To exorcise the beast, use the ritual described in the grimoire. But you must complete the ritual in the boiler room. That’s the only place it will work, to send the beast back to Hell for good.” (Alina’s spirit, having finished its last debt to reality by telling the PCs how to fix her error, fades.)

The Infernal Key: Bound at the turn of the previous century, this battered old volume contains a lot of hard-to-grasp ravings and what appears to be a single ritual. A character who succeeds on a difficulty 2 understanding magic can figure out how to conduct the ritual. Apparently, the ritual must be conducted in “a place of power” (which in this case, is the boiler room, as Alina’s spirit describes). If conducted, the book promises to either call a devil, or if a devil is already called, to exorcise that same beast.

How the ritual works in game terms, should the PCs attempt to exorcise the Devil of Bridge House, is described in the boiler room sub-entry called **The Ritual**.

Once successfully used to banish the devil it called, the pages of the book burn away in a wisp of Hellfire, rendering the book no longer useful for calling or exercising devils.

GARAGE

► READ ALOUD ►

A rusted-out sports utility vehicle up on blocks squats at the center of this dingy, debris-strewn garage.

Investigating PCs who succeed on a difficulty 2 perception task in the garage find a concealed hatch in the floor beneath a loose scatter of dead leaves, old tarps, and splintered plastic bins.

Choke Point Option: If the PCs don’t find the concealed hatch, tell the PC J.B. that something’s been subconsciously bothering them about the mansion’s “bones,” and they just realized why. They think the mansion was built atop the foundations of an older structure. With that realization (an asset, easing the task) plus their general construction training (which also eases the task), they find the hatch as a routine task, no roll required.

If J.B. isn’t present, suggest to Lux Scheben (or another PC) that, in their experience, finding out more about a situation, whether legal or construction related, is a worthwhile online task to attempt. If they’ve already found the information described under **Online Research**, remind them about the boiler room clue. That should give PCs enough to look more seriously for an entrance to the boiler room.

Interruption: Unless PCs already fought the devil in the family room, use a GM intrusion to interrupt the characters with a Devil Attack before they can try the hatch.

Otherwise (or after they drive off the devil), they can pull open the hatch, which squeals on creaking hinges. Old cement stairs are revealed, leading down into the darkness, and ultimately to the boiler room.

DEVIL ATTACK

This encounter occurs when you feel it would be best, but most likely right before the PCs discover the grimoire in the family room, or try to open the concealed hatch in the garage—whichever happens first. The devil understands that the grimoire’s ritual can banish it back to Hell if conducted in the boiler room.

► READ ALOUD ►

A shadow stretches, swells, and suddenly disgorges a horror of flapping bat wings, a bestial face screaming with maniacal laughter, and twisting horns whose tips burn with green flames.

The Devil of Bridge House can attack from any shadow in and next to the mansion, stepping out of the darkness like it’s an open door. If hurt (or even if it’s “killed” before being properly exorcised),

it can slip back into a shadow to hide somewhere else in the house until it regenerates at midnight. It also regenerates when someone starts incanting the ritual in the boiler room. Its favorite place to rest is actually inside the great metal furnace down in the boiler room.

If the PCs seem at all competent, the devil spends one action summoning up two **shadow spider swarms** from nearby shadows. The eldritch swarms attack the PCs until the swarms are destroyed (or the devil is “killed”), at which point the swarms fall back into the original, mundane shadows from which they shaped.

After the attack, remind the damaged character they can use a **recovery roll** to regain lost points to a Pool.

BOILER ROOM

Steep, damp cement stairs lead from the concealed door in the garage about 20 feet (6 m) downward, passing into older construction. The stairs end in a short landing that opens in the boiler room proper.

◀ READ ALOUD ▶

A rusted metallic furnace squats at the center of this damp, cement-floored basement. Flickering green light shines dimly from seams between the furnace's iron plates. An archway opens into another room on the basement's opposite side.

The boiler room is about 20 feet (6m) on a side, with a 12 foot (3.6 m) high ceiling, with a single adjoining side room.

The PCs have likely previously encountered the devil, driving it off. Thus, they have some time to look around and prepare before starting in on the ritual to exorcise it, assuming they have the grimoire *The Infernal Key* recovered from the family room. If PCs don't have the book or at least a copy of the ritual, they won't be able to do anything here yet.

SIDE ROOM

If PCs take the time to check out this area, they discover a heap of mummified corpses piled here, all missing their heads and bearing signs of gnawing elsewhere.

DEVIL OF BRIDGE HOUSE 4 (12)

Motive: Retain tie to the world

Environment: Bridge House

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short when walking or flying

Modifications: All tasks related to deception as level 7

Combat: When possible, a devil attacks with surprise, usually out of a shadow. If successful, it unfurls two great wings, claws at the ends of its fingers, and its horns begin burning with green fire. It leaps into the air, flies up to a short distance toward the nearest foe, and attacks that creature as a single action. A creature hit by a flaming horn takes an additional point of Intellect damage each round as the flame seems to spread and burn beneath their skin. A “burning” character can quench the flame by spending their action rolling on the ground.

Once every few days, the devil can use its action to summon a couple of level 3 shadow creatures that resemble swarms of spiders composed of shadow.

The Devil of Bridge House can use any shadow in Bridge House like a door to any other location. It regenerates any damage, even its apparent death, each midnight, and/or if someone begins the ritual to exorcise it from the world in the Bridge House boiler room.

Shadow spider swarm: level 3, bite inflicts 3 Speed damage (ignores Armor), direct sunlight hinders shadow spider tasks, defenses, and attacks

Recovering Points in a Pool, page 10

These are the bodies of dozens of previous victims, piled high, going all the way back to the original occultists.

Cyphers: On a shelf just inside the archway are three objects, displayed like trophies, that the devil took from the original novice occultists: a ring, a pair of gloves, and a metal tin containing white dust.

Manifest cyphers, page 17

The displayed trophies are **manifest cyphers**, which a character with training in magic (such as Bobby Reyes) can determine with a touch. If the characters have used up any of their cyphers (whether manifest or subtle) during the adventure, they can replenish some of those from these.

- **SHOCK ring manifest cypher (level 5)**

Each time the user strikes a solid creature or object for the next minute, the attack generates a burst of electricity, inflicting 1 additional point of damage.

- **SOLVENT dust in a tin manifest cypher (level 5)**

Dissolves 1 cubic foot of material each round. After 5 rounds, the cypher becomes inert.

- **STIM gloves manifest cypher (level 5)**

Eases the user's next action taken by three steps.

THE RITUAL

When a character begins incanting from *The Infernal Key*, the Devil of Bridge House reappears from a shadow, fully rejuvenated. Roll initiative—the combat is on.

Use a group GM intrusion when the devil uses its second action (after its initial attack on its first turn) to **animate three corpses** in the side room, which rise as shambling zombies. The zombies attack PCs until the zombies are destroyed or the devil is, at which point they revert back to the gnawed corpses they started as.

If the PCs damage the furnace (with a difficulty 3 Might roll—or by using the SOLVENT manifest cypher described in the side room), the devil loses one of its turns writhing in pain, but then jumps right back into the combat.

If the PC incanting from the grimoire spends 5 rounds reading from the book while standing in the boiler room, then succeeds on a difficulty 3 understanding magic task at the end, they exorcise the devil. If the reader is interrupted (because they have to deal with a zombie or devil attack, or because you use the “cat jumps out of the shadows” GM intrusion), they can spend another, later round (or rounds) incanting to make up the difference. And if they fail their magic task roll, they can retry on later rounds (though they must expend Effort to do so).

Devil of Bridge House, page 29

Suzette Gower, page 22

Animating the dead isn't something the Devil of Bridge House can normally do, so it takes a GM intrusion to accomplish—GM intrusions are a great way to give creatures special unique abilities tailored for a particular situation.

GM intrusion (group): The devil animates three headless zombies from the corpses in the side room.

Sarah Mahal, page 26

GM intrusion: A cat jumps out of the shadows, screeching, at the incanting character. The character is so startled that they lose their next action. On the bright side, the cat is Sprinkles, who got in through a broken furnace vent and has been somehow successfully hiding from the devil.

Zombie, non-infectious: level 3, Speed defense as level 2; health 12; if the attack roll that would reduce a zombie to 0 health is an odd number, the zombie retains 1 point of health instead of going down.

THE WRAP UP

Failure: If the PCs fail to complete the ritual, or don't get a chance to try, the devil remains in Bridge House. Its influence ensures that the house remains unsold, allowing the evil place to continue to catch wild animals, pets, squatters, and the occasional runaway.

Success: If the PCs successfully finish the incantation in the boiler room, they witness the devil being exorcised.

► READ ALOUD ►

Shadows swirl around the devil, growing thicker and thicker and they freeze into a massive malevolent hand. The hand squeezes. The devil utters a weirdly human scream as the hand slowly sinks into the floor, and is gone.

If the devil is exorcised, the characters gain the monetary bonus they were promised by **Suzette Gower**, the agent of the homebuilder who hired them in the first place. However, they may wish to refrain from telling her the whole story. Indicating that they cleared out a particularly nasty squatter, without involving the police, is sufficient to satisfy her needs, especially if the sale ends up going through and no further tales of haunting or evil presence is reported.

XP Award: The PCs each earn 2 XP for exorcising the Devil of Bridge House, and another 1 XP each if they see to it that Sprinkles the cat is safely returned to Sarah Mahal.



To: JB
From: Suzette Gower <sgower@vestbright.com>
Subject: Bridge House investigation

Hey hey! Here's the scoop on the Bridge House.

So this house has been on and off the market for decades, but nobody's ever done anything with it. Until now. Maybe. Depends on what you find. The place was built in 1989 by a high-flying computer programmer named Sam King. During the dot-com bust back in the '90s King lost everything, and the bank foreclosed on the house.

It's stayed empty because people think it's haunted. Like, every time a new owner has moved in, they've moved out within a month or three. Can you believe it? Superstitious people drive me up the wall! My theory: the lot is totally overgrown, like a wild park in the middle of West Seattle. I think the neighbors prefer that to a new condo development, so they kind of cooked this thing up. The guy next door totally gives me that vibe.

I've got a buyer lined up, and they want to develop the property. But this deal really needs no impediments. Like, if there's a meth lab or a squatter group or something, we need that cleaned up.

Anyway, I want you to find the truth. Your contract pays a hefty bonus if you find an issue you can deal with immediately, like clearing out any squatters or finding proof of neighbor shenanigans.

I'm attaching the floorplan. Hope it's accurate—I don't think any work's been done on the place since King skipped out on it. I'll text you the address.

—S



CYPHERS

ANALEPTIC subtle cypher (level 1)

Restores 5 points to the user's Speed Pool.

CONCENTRATE subtle cypher (level 5)

Provides an additional asset for any one task, even if that means exceeding the normal limit of two assets.

FARSIGHT manifest cypher (level 5)

Form: opera glasses

Observe a location visited previously, regardless of how far away it is (even across galaxies). This vision persists for up to ten minutes per cypher level. The character can switch between viewing this location and viewing their current location once per round.

1

LIMIT

EQUIPMENT

Extendable baton

Fashionable clothing

Penknife

Smartphone

First aid kit

\$500

MONEY

BACKGROUND

Most people dismiss your abilities as superstitious nonsense. However, you learned about your connection with the occult when the ghost of your dead aunt (a psychic in her day) told you that you had a mystic third eye that could see what most others could not.

NOTES

When a Craigslist ad asking for "someone with experience in debunking haunted house stories" showed up, you met Lux Scheben. Lux offered you a chance to join a group investigating just such a place.

PORTRAIT



Chen Meier

NAME

IS A

Risk-taking

Doctor

WHO

DESCRIPTOR

TYPE

Helps Their Friends

FOCUS

Explorer with Skills & Knowledge flavor

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER

1

1

XP

MIGHT

SPEED

INTELLECT

10

1

13

0

15

0

POOL

EDGE

POOL

EDGE

POOL

EDGE

RECOVERY ROLLS

$1d6 + 1$

1 ACTION 1 HOUR

10 MINS 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

IMPAIRED DEBILITATED

+1 Effort per level
Ignore minor and major
effect results on rolls
Combat roll of 17-20
deals only +1 damage

Can move only an
immediate distance
Cannot move if Speed
Pool is 0

SKILLS

T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

Pool T S I

Healing tasks (page 228 CSR)

I X

Medical diagnosis

I X

Tasks with an element of chance

X

Intellect defense rolls

I X

Initiative

S X

Stealth tasks (inability)

S X

ADVANCEMENT



INCREASE CAPABILITIES
+4 points into stat Pools



MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION
+1 to the Edge of your choice



EXTRA EFFORT
+1 into Effort



SKILL TRAINING
Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill



OTHER
Refer to the Cypher System Rulebook

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pressing Your Luck: You can choose to automatically succeed on one task without rolling, as long as the task's difficulty is no higher than 6. When you do so, however, you also trigger a GM intrusion as if you had rolled a 1. The intrusion doesn't invalidate the success, but it qualifies it in some fashion, leading to a later (or immediate) consequence. You can do this one time, although the ability renews each time you make a ten-hour recovery roll.

Block (3 Speed points): You automatically block the next melee attack made against you within the next minute. Action to initiate.

Advice from a Friend (1 Intellect point): You know your friend's strengths and weaknesses, and how to motivate them to succeed. When you give an ally a suggestion involving their next action, the character is trained in that action for one round. Action.

Friendly Help: If your friend tries a task and fails, they can try again without spending Effort if you help. You provide this advantage to your friend even if you are not trained in the task that they are retrying. Enabler.

Find the Way: When you apply Effort to a navigation task because you don't know the way, are lost, are attempting to blaze a new route, need to choose between two or more otherwise similar paths to take, or something very similar, you can apply a free level of Effort. Enabler.

[Other character abilities already figured in Skills]

ATTACKS

Unarmed attack (light weapon, melee, 2 points of damage)

CYPHERS

PROTECTION subtle cypher (level 4)

For the next hour you have an asset on Speed defense rolls.

REMEMBERING subtle cypher (level 5)

Allows you to recall any one experience you've ever had. The experience can be no longer than three minutes, but the recall is perfect, so (for example) if you saw someone write something on a pad of paper, you remember what they wrote.

2

LIMIT

EQUIPMENT

Billy stick

Profesional clothes

Doctor's whites

Doctor's traveling bag

First aid kit

Stethoscope

Duct tape

Smartphone

Sports utility vehicle

\$250

MONEY

0

ARMOR

BACKGROUND

Your medical practice was too small to go it alone, so you shuttered it, and are considering your options.

NOTES

With the closure of your clinic, your student debts need paying. You're hoping this new thing Lux Scheben asked you to help with will also provide a payout.

PORTRAIT



J.B. Revel

NAME

IS A **Tough**

SOLDIER

WHO

descriptor

Works for a Living

FOCUS

Warrior

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER

1

1

XP

MIGHT

SPEED

INTELLECT

14

1

12

0

10

0

RECOVERY ROLLS

$1d6 + 2$

1 ACTION 1 HOUR

10 MINS 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

IMPAIRED DEBILITATED

+1 Effort per level

Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls

Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage

Can move only an immediate distance
Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SKILLS

T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

Pool

T

S

I

Speed defense

Might defense

Carpentry

Electrical repair

Plumbing

ATTACKS

Hunting knife (light weapon, melee, 2 points of damage)

Crowbar (medium weapon, melee, 4 points of damage)

Small handgun (light weapon, long range, 2 points of damage)

CYPHERS

CURATIVE subtle cypher (level 5)

Restores 5 points to your Might Pool.

STIM subtle cypher (level 5)

Eases your next action by three steps.

2

LIMIT

EQUIPMENT

Hunting knife

Crowbar

Small handgun and 50 rounds

Work clothes

Leather jacket (provides 1 Armor)

Smartphone

Vape

Work truck: keeps a shotgun (heavy weapon, short range) and 30 rounds in a locked compartment in the truck

1

\$250

MONEY

BACKGROUND

You served in the military, saw some things that left you questioning your choices, and decided to go into business for yourself as a handyman and occasional bodyguard.

NOTES

You're starting a housing inspection business. Your first client is a homebuilder's agent who wants you to look into a very weird situation involving an abandoned mansion. Suzette gives you reason to believe this isn't any kind of ordinary inspection "because the place is supposedly haunted," so you asked your friend Lux Scheben to join you, plus anyone else Lux can convince to join you.

PORTRAIT



Kit Castillo

NAME

IS A Foolish

Criminal

WHO

Throws with Deadly Accuracy

FOCUS

Explorer with Stealth flavor

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER

1

TIER

1

EFFORT

XP

MIGHT

SPEED

INTELLECT

10

POOL

1

EDGE

9

POOL

0

EDGE

11

POOL

0

EDGE

RECOVERY ROLLS

1d6+
1

1 ACTION 1 HOUR

10 MINS 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

IMPAIRED DEBILITATED

+1 Effort per level

Ignore minor and major

effect results on rolls

Combat roll of 17-20

deals only +1 damage

Can move only an
immediate distance

Cannot move if Speed

Pool is 0

SKILLS

T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

Pool T S I

Speed defense (when 1 Speed paid)

Lockpicking

Stealth

Intellect defense (inability)

Detecting lies, illusion, traps (inability)

ADVANCEMENT



INCREASE CAPABILITIES
+4 points into stat Pools



MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION
+1 to the Edge of your choice



EXTRA EFFORT
+1 into Effort



SKILL TRAINING
Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill



OTHER
Refer to the Cypher System Rulebook

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Carefree: You succeed more on luck than anything. Every time you roll for a task, roll twice and take the higher result.

Intellect Weakness: Any time you spend points from your Intellect Pool, it costs you 1 more point than usual.

Opportunist: You have an asset on any attack roll you make against a creature that has already been attacked at some point during the round and is within immediate range. Enabler.

Danger Sense (1 Speed point): Your initiative task is eased. You pay the cost each time the ability is used. (Noted under Skills) Enabler.

Legerdemain (1 Speed point): You can perform small but seemingly impossible tricks. For example, you can make a small object in your hands disappear and move into a desired spot within reach (like your pocket). You can make someone believe that they have something in their possession that they do not have (or vice versa). You can switch similar objects right in front of someone's eyes. Action.

Precision: You deal 2 additional points of damage with attacks using weapons that you throw. (Noted under attacks) Enabler.

[Other character abilities already figured in Skills, as well as the -4 Intellect for the Foolish descriptor in Pools]

ATTACKS

Throwing knife (light weapon, short range, 4 points of damage)

CYPHERS

REJUVENATE subtle cypher (level 4)

Restores 4 points to a Pool of your choice

PILL STOLEN FROM A RESEARCH LAB manifest cypher (level 7)

For the next hour, you regain 1 Pool point per round, up to a total of 14 points. As each point is regained, choose which Pool to add it to. If all your Pools are at maximum, the regeneration pauses until you lose points again, at which point it begins again (if any time remains in the hour until the duration expires or a total of 14 points have been restored).

2

LIMIT

EQUIPMENT

10 throwing knives secreted about your person

Leather jacket (light Armor)

Fashionable clothing

Boltcutters

Magic kit (small knicknacks that aid in simple tricks, includes lockpicking tools)

Smartphone

Hand cuffs

\$150

MONEY

1
ARMOR

BACKGROUND

Your parents were missionaries, so you spent much of your young life traveling to exotic places, and stealing stuff from each one. These days, you portray yourself as a magician, and sometimes perform in small venues and online, doing magic tricks, performing amazing feats of knife throwing, and sometimes hustling at games of darts in bars.

NOTES

Lux Scheben has gotten you out of a couple of legal scrapes. So when Lux asks you along on an outing where your skills might come in handy, you felt obliged to agree.

PORTRAIT



| | | | | | |
|--|-----------|---|-----------|------------|-----------|
| NAME | | Lux Scheben | | | |
| IS A | | Charming | Lawyer | | |
| DESCRIPTOR | | WHO | | | |
| FOCUS | | | | | |
| Interprets the Law | | | | | |
| TYPE | | | | | |
| Speaker | | | | | |
| TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER | | | | | |
| 1 | 1 | XP | | | |
| MIGHT | | SPEED | | INTELLECT | |
| 9 POOL | 0 EDGE | 12 POOL | 0 EDGE | 15 POOL | 1 EDGE |
| RECOVERY ROLLS | | DAMAGE TRACK | | | |
| 1d6+ 1 | | <input type="checkbox"/> IMPAIRED <input type="checkbox"/> DEBILITATED +1 Effort per level Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 ACTION <input type="checkbox"/> 10 MINS | | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 HOUR <input type="checkbox"/> 10 HOURS | | | |
| SKILLS T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability | | | | | |
| Pleasant social interaction | | Pool | T | S | I |
| Intimidation | | I | X | | |
| Detect lies | | I | X | | |
| Lying | | I | X | | |
| Searching | | I | X | | |
| Persuasion | | I | X | | |
| Knowing the laws of the land | | I | X | | |
| Intellect defense rolls (Inability) | | I | | | X |
| Lore, knowledge, or understanding | | I | | | X |
| ATTACKS Unarmed attack (light weapon, melee, 2 points of damage) Small handgun (light weapon, long range, 2 points of damage) | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--|
| ADVANCEMENT | | | | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools | <input type="checkbox"/> | MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice | <input type="checkbox"/> | EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort | <input type="checkbox"/> | Skill TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill | <input type="checkbox"/> | OTHER Refer to the Cypher System Rulebook |

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Demeanor of Command (2 Intellect points): You project confidence, knowledge, and charisma to all who see you for the next hour. Your demeanor is such that those who see you automatically understand that you are someone important, accomplished, and with authority. When you speak, strangers who are not already attacking give you at least a round to have your say. If speaking to a group that can understand you, you can attempt to have them produce their leader or ask that they take you to their leader. You gain a free level of Effort that can be applied to one persuasion task you attempt during this period. Action to initiate.

Fast Talk (1 Intellect point): When speaking with an intelligent creature who can understand you and isn't hostile, you convince that creature to take one reasonable action in the next round. A reasonable action must be agreed upon by the GM; it should not put the creature or its allies in obvious danger or be wildly out of character. Action.

[Other character abilities already figured in Skills]

CYPHERS

BEST TOOL subtle cypher (level 5)

Provides an asset for any one task using a tool, even if that means exceeding the normal limit of two assets.

SPEED BOOST subtle cypher (level 5)

Adds 2 to your Speed Edge for one hour.

2

LIMIT

EQUIPMENT

Fashionable clothing

Briefcase (contains legal pads, pens, etc.)

Smartphone

Locked in a safe at home: a handgun (medium weapon, ranged) and 30 rounds of ammo

Sedan

\$500

MONEY

0

ARMOR

BACKGROUND

One of your parents was a famous lawyer and encouraged you to enter the field. However, you've recently taken an unpaid leave of absence from your firm in order to take care of a new situation that's developing.

NOTES

After being invited to join an investigation by your friend J.B. Revel, you convinced the other characters to join you—some friends, some friends of friends, and a self-proclaimed psychic who might be useful—to help look into the “haunted” house J.B. is inspecting.

PORTRAIT



CYPHERS

INTELLECT BOOSTER subtle cypher (level 5)
Adds 2 to your Intellect Edge for one hour.

PERFECTION subtle cypher (level 5)
Treat your next action as if you had rolled a natural 20 on it.

2
LIMIT

| EQUIPMENT | |
|---|-------|
| Fashionable clothing | |
| Laptop | |
| Smartphone | |
| Go bag with water, energy bars, emergency blanket, flashlight, emergency radio, whistle, facemasks, and a padlock with keys | |
| 1 | \$500 |
| ARMOR | MONEY |

BACKGROUND

You were a war correspondant for many years, but have decided to try something new.

PORTRAIT

NOTES

Over the years, you've noticed a couple of stories about a local "haunted mansion" pop up in the newsroom. So when your friend Lux Scheben gave you the scoop about an informal investigation of Bridge House, you were excited to join.