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Troubleshooter

A campaign for *Risus: The Anything RPG*

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*You've got it, I want it.
My little troubleshooter*

- Judas Priest, Troubleshooter

BACKGROUND

*This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but with a whimper.*

-T. S. Eliot, The Hollow Men

The year is 2007. The world is as it is today, but darker. Violence, corruption and disease are rampant. Nearly a decade of increasingly violent protests have led the governments of the world to give greater power to their law enforcement agencies and giving police officers greater discretion with the use of lethal force. In the United States the FBI has begun a policy of infiltration of groups labeled as subversive unmatched since the days of J. Edgar Hoover, and many European law enforcement agencies are conducting similar operations in their own countries. The drug trade is more lucrative than ever, with producers and traffickers alike making millions of dollars every month. In response, more multinational drug enforcement agencies have been formed, agencies operating almost above the law in pursuit of baron and junkie alike. A reduction of the anti-monopoly laws has allowed the growth of large multinational corporations as never before, and a series of lawsuits have established their right to equip and train their security personnel as they see fit, even giving them legal enforcement powers under certain conditions - creating armies of paramilitary troops loyal to the corporations who operate many times as a law unto themselves. Africa's situation is worse than ever, with millions dying from AIDS, and millions more from the endless civil wars, fueled by corporations sending mercenaries and supplies to one side or another in return for favored status after the war. The United Nations are powerlessly gridlocked on most all issues, barring them from providing much needed aid to the starving, dying populace. The Balkan states have once again erupted into conflict, and this time the world has chosen not to intervene. Terrorist activities are common as never before, with dozens killed weekly in the name of greed, religion, politics, and even the environment. Computers are close to reaching Moore's Limit and broadband internet connections are standard, with the IT industry waiting for the next inevitable breakthrough. Doomsday cults rise and fall, insane prophets predict the end of the world and mass suicides abound. The world stands on the brink of chaos, seeming ready to plunge into the abyss at a moment's notice.

THE COMPANY

*He who is skillful in winning against
the enemy does not wrestle with him*

-Lao Tzu

The Company is best described in the words of its founder: "The client gives us a problem, and money. We make them both go away.". Indeed, it is to the Company that politicians, corporate executives and private individuals turn to when they have a problem that they cannot solve by conventional means. Whether this problem is an embarrassing photograph, a troublesome rival or a vanishing package, the Company can solve it.

The Company's delicate relationship with many of the world's most powerful nations allows it to operate in total secrecy. Outside of the Company itself, only a handful of people even know of its existence. And yet, it is a powerful force in the world of today, unscrupulously serving both its clients and itself.

The Company's elite field agents are the Troubleshooters, expert operatives sent to carry out missions for the Company. Troubleshooters' talents are varied, ranging from urban assault to hacking. All Troubleshooters are trained to make sure they have a basic familiarity with firearms, vehicles and electronic systems, but they arrive with their own specialties. When they are recruited, their identities are permanently erased - as far as the system is

concerned, they never even existed. Troubleshooters have no permanent groups - the Company assembles a different teams for every mission, choosing the Troubleshooters whose talents and abilities are required. Troubleshooters receive no fixed salaries. During missions, they have access to the Company's bank accounts to pay their expenses, and between missions the Company provides them with luxurious residences, a large amount of money and a false identity to use.

THE MISSION

The Client

*I got a name and I got a number,
I got a line on you*

-Genesis, Just A Job To Do

The Company's clients tend to be people who both have the types of problems the Company specializes in dealing with and the funds to pay for it to be solved. The Company itself is rarely contacted directly by potential clients. Rather, the client is approached by someone - usually a Company agent - who 'has a friend who has a friend who might know someone who can help you', or similar story. This phase must be conducted delicately, as usually the very existence of the problem is not common knowledge. If the potential client shows interest, the agent who initiated the contact will act as a mediator between them and the Company, making sure the individual is interested and has the money to pay. Once this is established, the exact terms are negotiated and agreed upon. Once the initial payment has been made, the Troubleshooters are deployed.

The Team

*Their shoulders held the sky suspended;
They stood, and earth's foundations stay;
What God abandoned, these defended,
And saved the sum of things for pay.*

-A. E. Houseman, Epitaph On An Army Of Mercenaries

Rarely will the Company send a single Troubleshooter on a mission alone. Usually a team will be sent, the members' skills working in concert to achieve the objectives. While some missions may require special teams, most missions will use the same basic team structure: 3-6 Troubleshooters with at least one military specialist, one hacker or security expert and one intelligence operative. The military specialist deals with whatever combat situations arise during the mission; the hacker or security expert deal with whatever electronic surveillance systems and intrusion countermeasures are encountered, as well as provide much of the raw data; finally, the intelligence operative takes care of most of the logistical elements, gathers much of the information and analyzes the available data and determines the best course of action. While this largely depends on the nature of the mission, the intelligence operative will tend to be the mission commander.

Investigation and Intelligence

*You had something to hide
Should have hidden it, shouldn't you?*

-Depeche Mode, The Policy Of Truth

I&I missions focus on gathering information and tend to resemble a regular detective story. The information being tracked might be anything from the password of a mainframe system to the defense secrets of a third-world nation. As someone was willing to pay a large amount of money in order to obtain the information, it is probable that at least equal efforts have been made to conceal it. Thus, while the I&I team is primarily composed of investigators and spies a number of military specialists are usually attached as well.

Extraction

*They were the ones you called when you needed something
transferred from points A to B, or to the bottom of the C.*

-Terry Pratchett, Hogfather

Extraction is the general name given by the Company to both theft and kidnapping, depending on what is to be extracted. Extraction missions are often preceded by I&I missions aimed at discovering where the target is and what opposition is expected. Commonly, the preliminary I&I is conducted by a different team than the one doing the extraction itself. A team conducting an extraction of an object will usually be composed chiefly of security and intelligence experts, with a number of military specialists attached in case anything should go wrong. When extracting a person about half the security experts will be replaced with military personnel, as the chances of combat rise significantly.

Assassination

*You know your place in the sky,
You hold your course
And your aim*

-Victor Hugo, Les Miserables

Assassination missions are unique among all the Company's missions because they alone *require* violence. Assassinations have been carried out by the Company against politicians, corporate executives, celebrities, scientists, and more. While no fixed team makeup exists for assassination missions, a Troubleshooter who was professional contract killers before their recruitment will usually both lead the team and carry out the hit itself.

Political Activities

*He must not flinch from being blamed for vices
that are necessary for safeguarding the state*

-Machiavelli, The Prince

Political Activities, in Company lingo, refers to operations directed at producing a certain political effect. The most expensive and difficult type of operation, a PA op can take over a year to complete successfully. After Cleanups, PA operations are the most likely to be ordered internally, by the Company itself, rather than by an outside client.

Cleanup

I am just a figment of your imagination

-Tommy Lee Jones, Men In black

'Cleanup' is the Company phrase meaning cover-up. Cleanups are sometimes commissioned by outside clients, but most commonly they are ordered from within the Company to remove all evidence of a mission - especially a failed one. Cleanups can involve anything from stealing a security video to killing the guard who saw it. Unlike all other types of missions, cleanups are always carried out by one of the number of permanent teams of Cleaners - Troubleshooters specializing in evidence elimination.

Gear And Equipment

*Arch-anarch, chief builder,
Prince and evangelist,
I am the Will of God:
I am the Sword.*

-W. E. Henley, The Song Of The Sword

During missions the team will undoubtedly require certain tools, many of which are not widely available. Every Troubleshooter is equipped with a basic kit consisting of a Beretta 9mm pistol, a laptop computer with access to the Company databases, and a satellite-based telephone with a secure connection. Besides this basic kit, most existing equipment can be requisitioned from Company satellite offices around the world. Basic firearms - including military ones - are made available by request. Transportation depends on the situation - most teams will be given access to one or two ground vehicles, but use of Company jets and helicopters is strictly limited, and only Troubleshooters with a justifiable need are given access to them. The Company operates only a small research branch, instead using equipment designed by the world's militaries and intelligence services. However, a small number of tools have been developed by the Company itself, and are issued to Troubleshooters in the field:

Omni-ID: Essentially a small, programmable LCD screen the size of a standard ID, the Omni-ID can be set to display any ID required. While not accurate enough to fool a computer, the Omni-ID is priceless when trying to fast-talk a guard or similar.

White Noise Projector: A handheld tubular device, the White Noise Projector fills the air in a 1.5 meter radius with white noise, making eavesdropping impossible. Anyone standing within the circle can hear normally, but anyone outside the circle cannot hear any noise coming from within it.

Unikey: The Unikey is a non-reusable strip of plastic that, when inserted into a lock, hardens into the shape of the key needed to open it, acting as a universal skeleton key.

Bodybag: Nicknamed the bodybag, this plastic container act as a complete shock-absorber: it fits one person with minimal gear and can be dropped from nearly any height, preventing any harm to the occupant. Used primarily for insertion into difficult or dangerous terrain, the bodybag is faster, safer and less detectable than a standard parachute.

THE CHARACTERS

*How often at this desk I sat into the depth of night and
looked for you until over these books and papers you
appeared to me, my melancholy friend.*

-Goethe, Faust

Characters are built with the standard Risus rules, with all options enabled except Funky Dice. As Troubleshooters are far better trained, better equipped and more experienced than the average person, the Cliche ***Troubleshooter*** allows the character to perform nearly superhuman feats. ***Troubleshooter*** may not be purchased with double-pump.

Besides Cliches that describe the character's profession (Hacker, Accountant, etc.) characters should have Skill Cliches - treated like Cliches, but limited to proficiency in something specific. For example, instead of Soldier, a Cliche that would allow a character to skillfully use a multitude of different firearms, a character has to take Skill Cliches for the specific types of guns they know how to use.

Some example Skill Cliches:

- *Ju Jitsu*
- *Helicopter Pilot*
- *Pistol*
- *Stealth*
- *Shotgun*

Skill Cliches allow more variety in character creation. Skill Cliches cost *half* the cost of regular Cliches, and can be purchased double-pumpable. Skill Cliches represent not only the character's proficiency in a specific field, but also the quality of the equipment they are using for it. Thus, a character who is lowered to 0 dice in their ***Submachine Gun*** Skill Cliche hasn't forgotten how to use an Uzi - they have run out of ammo, their weapon has jammed, etc. Certain items can also give bonuses to Cliches and Skill Cliches.

Note: Only PC's are required to use Skill Cliches. NPC's can, for simplicity's sake, have Cliches such as ***Soldier***, ***Cop***, etc.

Using The ***Troubleshooter*** Cliche

The ***Troubleshooter*** Cliche can be used to boost other Skill Cliches: the character pumps a Skill Cliche normally, but loses the dice from ***Troubleshooter*** instead of the pumped Skill Cliche itself. However, for every one die added to the Skill Cliche by the pump, subtract two dice from ***Troubleshooter***. The character must choose whether to pump the Skill Cliche normally or through ***Troubleshooter*** before rolling the dice. A character may not combine regular pumping and pumping with ***Troubleshooter***.

Finally, ***Troubleshooter*** also acts as a pool from which characters can take dice and use them to give themselves temporary Skill Cliches. If a character encounters a situation in which they require a Skill Cliche that they do not possess, they can take dice from their ***Troubleshooter*** Cliche and use them to give themselves temporary Skill Cliches. The rate is one die in a Skill Cliche for every die subtracted from the Special Cliche. The temporary Skill Cliche does not recover and is lost once reaching zero. The Special Cliche only recovers once the temporary Skill Cliche has been reduced to zero.

Does this rock? Does it suck? Do you know how to make it better? Send comments, complaints, flames (well no, not flames please) to

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