

CHAPTER 4

CHARACTER FOCUS

Many foci allow you to take the same ability multiple times across tier progression. For example, Would Rather Be Reading grants the Knowledge Is Power ability several times.

Their chests moved up and down slowly, so Alex was sure they'd been alive, but . . . their eyes stared vacantly into the space in front of them, and everything else about them seemed lifeless and empty. Some of them were lying with their heads or legs at odd, uncomfortable-looking angles, but they either didn't notice or didn't care. They all seemed to have fallen away from a single, central point in the room. Kneeling there was the only figure who hadn't collapsed.

She was an older woman, Alex said, and was almost completely naked. Her skin was pale and her head was shaved. Like the others, she was still, with only the movement of her chest showing she was still alive, but unlike those on the floor, her eyes moved. They gently swept from one side of the room to the other, like she was searching for something.

—MAG 94:
"Dead Woman Walking"

Your focus helps make your character unique. Ideally, no two PCs in a group should have the same focus. A focus gives a character benefits when they are created and each time they ascend to the next tier. It's the verb of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verb*s."

This chapter contains a wide variety of foci to choose from, such as Explores Dark Places, Infiltrates, and Runs Away.

When you choose a character focus, you get a special connection to one or more of your fellow PCs, and one or two first-tier abilities. Most foci don't grant additional equipment, but a few do. For instance, someone who Carries a Gun needs a gun.

Each focus also offers suggestions for GM intrusions specific to that focus.

As you progress to new tiers, your focus grants you more abilities. Each tier's benefits are independent of and cumulative with benefits from other tiers (unless indicated otherwise). So if a first-tier ability grants +1 to damage and a fourth-tier ability also grants +1 to damage, when the character reaches fourth tier, a total of +2 to damage is granted.

At the end of this chapter, you'll also find information about the abilities that PCs can acquire if they become Avatars.

LIST OF FOCI

Carries a Gun	Leads	Practically Lives Online
Does a Bit of This and That	Learns Quickly	Runs Away
Explores Dark Places	Looks for Trouble	Solves Mysteries
Fights Dirty	Moves Like a Cat	Wears a Badge
Helps Their Friends	Needs No Weapon	Works the Back Alleys
Infiltrates	Never Says Die	Would Rather Be Reading

THE STORY BEHIND YOUR FOCUS

The story of how your character came to have the focus that they do is yours to define, as long as it fits within the setting. For example, if your character Carries a Gun, maybe they learned shooting growing up in a rural area where hunting was a way of life, or perhaps they were in the military. Maybe they picked up a gun one day after a terrible personal experience and have been trying to become proficient at the gun range ever since.

Giving a little thought to the origin of your character's focus can really help flesh out their background, tie them to places and people, and connect to other parts of their character, such as your descriptor. For instance, maybe the reason you're *Suspicious* is because the time you weren't, you lived to regret it. Maybe your character arc is all about learning truths behind something that happened to you earlier.

STARTING CHARACTERS AND THE PARANORMAL

You'll notice that essentially none of the foci here presume that the character has had paranormal experience, and none of them offer supernatural abilities. In *The Magnus Archives* Roleplaying Game, your starting character might be interested in the paranormal, and they might even believe in the paranormal, but they haven't been confronted with definitive evidence of it (questionable experiences in one's background are fine). Players that want to play a character with a background involving actual experiences with monsters, artefacts, or the like, as presented in the podcast, should work with the GM to ensure it fits with the setting.

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FOCI

CARRIES A GUN

GM intrusion: *Misfire or jam!*
The attack fails and the action is lost, plus an additional action is needed to fix the problem.

You're a proficient adversary when armed. Hundreds of hours of training mean that you don't crack when under fire; you take care of business before the bad guys even know you're there. Those who are Carry a Gun might be cops, crooks, hunters, or citizens interested in protecting themselves.

You dress in clothing that allows you either to conceal your weapon or to quickly access it, and preferably both, which might be why you're probably known for your trench coat.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. In the recent past, while doing a little target practice, you accidentally winged them, leaving them badly wounded. It's up to that PC to decide whether they resent, fear, or forgive you.

2. Pick one other PC. You once overheard them say that guns are dangerous weapons and no one should have one. It's up to you whether you want to prove them right or wrong.

3. Pick one other PC. That character's mother gave you the gun you now wield.

4. Pick one other PC. This character seems to think you're famous for something, but you know they're mistaken. It's up to you whether you set them straight.

Additional Equipment: A firearm and three magazines of ammo.

Minor Effect Suggestion: After being hit on the side of the head, the target is deafened for a few minutes.

Major Effect Suggestion: An artery hit causes the foe to bleed for 1 point of damage each round until they succeed at a difficulty 3 Intellect or Speed task to bind the wound.

TIER 1

 **Gunner:** You inflict 1 additional point of damage with guns. Enabler.

 **Practiced With Guns:** You are practiced with guns and suffer no penalty when using one. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Careful Shot:** You can spend points from either your Speed Pool or your Intellect Pool to apply levels of Effort to increase your gun damage. Each level of Effort adds 3 points of damage to a successful attack, and if you spend a turn lining up your shot, each level of Effort instead adds 5 points of damage to a successful attack. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Trained Gunner or Damage Dealer as your tier 3 ability.



 **Trained Gunner:** You can choose from one of two benefits. Either you are trained in using guns, or you have the *Spray* ability (which has a cost of 2 Speed points). Enabler.

 **Damage Dealer:** You inflict an additional 3 points of damage with your gun. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Snap Shot:** You can make two gun attacks as a single action, but the second attack is hindered by two steps. Enabler.

TIER 5

 **Arc Spray (3 Speed points):** If a weapon has the ability to fire rapid shots without reloading (usually called a rapid-fire weapon), you can fire your weapon at up to three targets (all next to one another) at once. Make a separate attack roll against each target. Each attack is hindered. Action.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Special Shot or Lethal Damage as your tier 6 ability.

 **Special Shot:** When you hit a target with a gun attack, you can choose to reduce the damage by 1 point but hit the target in a precise spot. Some of the possible effects include (but are not limited to) the following:

- You can shoot an object out of someone's hand.
- You can shoot the leg, wing, or other limb it uses to move, reducing its maximum movement speed to immediate for a few days or until it receives expert medical care.
- You can shoot a strap holding a backpack, a protective device, or a similarly strapped-on item so that it falls off.

Enabler.

 **Lethal Damage:** When you hit with your gun on a standard attack, you inflict an additional 5 points of damage. Enabler.

DOES A BIT OF THIS AND THAT

You've had a number of jobs in your life, but nothing's really stuck. No one thing consumes you, compels you, or drives you. You float from event to event. That doesn't mean you're unhappy, necessarily. It's not a bad life. You like to take it easy. Appreciate the little things. Learn new things, and then switch to something else when that gets boring. Possibly partake in a few relaxing substances now and again. Enjoy the rug that ties the whole room together. All of which is to say, you know a little about a lot of different things.

You dress casually. You might be in decent physical shape—if, you know, that's your thing—or maybe you're more cerebral (a pseudo-intellectual). It's all good.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. They have always been there for you. Gotten you out of jams from time to time. They're cool.
2. Pick one other PC. This character is too uptight for your tastes. They've got to learn to chill, and you hope you're the one to give them that perspective.
3. Pick one other PC. You're a little jealous of this character because they're better than you at your favorite hobby (bowling, karaoke, knitting, coding, or whatever it is).
4. Pick one other PC. You owe them money, and you're sincere in your promise to pay it back. You just need things to go your way, financially speaking.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You draw on your experiences to ease your next action.

Major Effect Suggestion: You get a free, no-action recovery roll.

TIER 1

 **Life Lessons:** Choose any two noncombat skills. You are trained in those skills. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Totally Chill:** Your ten-minute recovery roll takes you only one round. Enabler.

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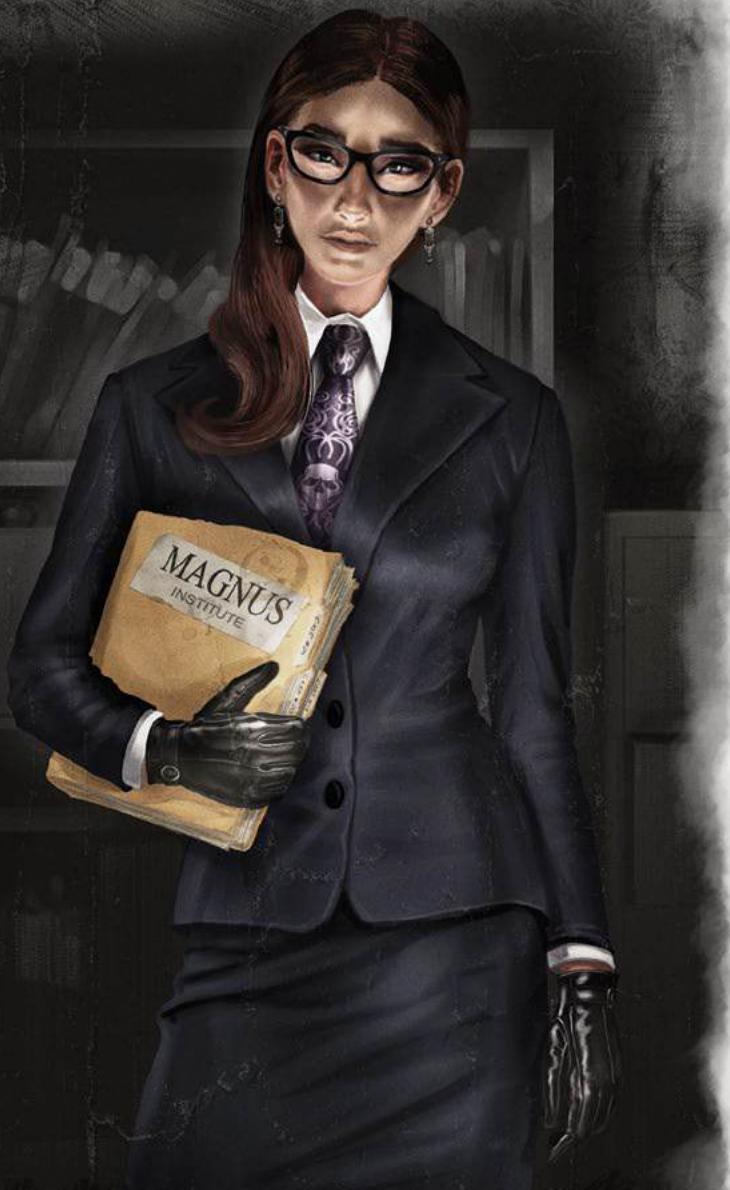
GM intrusions: New situations are confounding and stressful. Past actions (or inactions) come back to haunt the character.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Skill With Attacks or Improvise as your tier 3 ability.

 **Skill With Attacks:** Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of attack. Enabler.

When using Drawing on Life's Experiences, the player is encouraged to make up an anecdote, even if only in overview, that serves as a basis for gaining the ability's benefit.



 **Improvise (2 Intellect points):** When you perform a task in which you are not trained, you can improvise to gain an asset on the task. The asset might be a tool you cobble together, a sudden insight into overcoming a problem, or a rush of dumb luck. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Life Lessons:** Choose any two noncombat skills. You are trained in those skills. Enabler.

 **Greater Skill With Defense:** Choose one type of defense task, even one in which you are already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type, or specialized if you are already trained. You can select this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

TIER 5

 **Greater Enhanced Potential:** You gain 6 points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish. Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Drawing on Life's Experiences or Quick Wits as your tier 6 ability.

 **Drawing on Life's Experiences (6 Intellect points):** You've seen a lot and done a lot, and that experience comes in handy. Ask the GM one question, and you'll receive a general answer. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. Generally, knowledge that you could find by looking somewhere other than your current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. Action.

 **Quick Wits:** When performing a task that would normally require spending points from your Intellect Pool, you can spend points from your Speed Pool instead. Enabler.

EXPLORES DARK PLACES

You feel most at home creeping through cellars, empty homes, and warehouses by night, tunnels and warrens beneath the street, and when possible, honest-to-goodness caves. Sunlight and empty skies? No, that's not your shtick. If you're being honest, open spaces might even make you a bit uncomfortable. Which is why you prefer the gloom and press of dark places. That's where you can find lost things—hopefully valuable—under the cover of shadow.

Most likely, you wear dark clothing to help you blend into the blackness. On the other hand, you might wear sensible garments and gear because you have serious and dangerous business to attend to in the dark.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. This character has been your companion during previous expeditions, and the two of you work so well together that you both gain an asset to any die rolls when you collaborate on the same noncombat task.

2. Pick two other PCs. You think you once saw them through a keyhole doing something illegal. You can choose whether or not to share that information. The characters can choose whether it was really them (it could have been neither, one, or both), and they may or may not share that information in return.

3. Pick one other PC. This person always seems to hear you, no matter how stealthy you try to be.

4. Pick one other PC. They are so loud in everything they do that you feel obligated to try to help them learn to move more quietly through the world. Whether or not they are interested is up to them.

Minor Effect Suggestion: The target is also dazed for one round, during which all of its tasks are hindered.

Major Effect Suggestion: The target is also stunned and loses its next turn.

GM intrusions: Possessions fall out of pockets or bags in the dark; maps get lost. Information gained fails to include an important detail.

TIER 1

 **Superb Explorer:** You are trained in perception, endurance, and gymnastics tasks. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Superb Infiltrator:** You are trained in lockpicking and mechanics. Enabler.

 **Eyes Adjusted:** You are not hindered in darkness and can see faintly even in utter darkness. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Nightstrike or Slippery Customer as your tier 3 ability.



 **Nightstrike:** When you attack a foe in dim light or darkness, you get a free level of Effort on the attack. Enabler.

 **Slippery Customer:** When you apply Effort to tasks involving escaping from bonds, fitting in tight spaces, and other contortionist tasks, you get a free level of Effort on the task. Thanks to your experience, you are also trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Hard-Won Resilience:** In your explorations of dark places, you've been exposed to all sorts of terrible things and are developing a general resistance. You reduce any Stress you gain, from any source, by 1 point. Enabler.

TIER 5

 **Dark Explorer:** You ignore penalties for any action (including fighting) in extremely dim light or in cramped spaces. Because you have the Eyes Adjusted ability, you can act without penalty even in total darkness. You are trained in *stealth* tasks while in dim or no light. Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Blinding Attack or Dark Flow as your tier 6 ability.

 **Blinding Attack (3 Speed points):** If you have a source of light, you can use it to make a melee attack against a target. If successful, the attack deals no damage, but the target is blinded for one minute. Action.

 **Dark Flow (6 Intellect points):** For the next hour, you fully immerse yourself in the practice and craft of operating in the dark. When you apply a level of Effort to stealth, lockpicking, endurance, and perception tasks, you get two free levels of Effort on the task, as long as it is done in dim light or in the dark. Action to initiate.

FIGHTS DIRTY

You know one thing for certain: the only important element of a fight is who wins. How? Why? These questions are inconsequential. Thus, you'll do anything to win a fight. Some might say you have no honor, no class, or some other foolish statement, but they're missing the point. You come out on top when things get violent—and that's all that matters.

You bite, scratch, kick, and trip. You tangle foes in draperies, push them down stairs, and throw dirt in their eyes. You trick them into looking the wrong way, call them names, and say terrible things about their mothers.

Maybe you learned your methods while living on the streets, or maybe you barely survived a particularly horrific battle in a military campaign. Perhaps you simply have never bought into the idea of rules or honor when your life is on the line.

You're likely to carry a few hidden tricks, sometimes literally up your sleeve. You might have a knife in your boot, a poisoned needle in your purse or wallet, a razor in the hem of your scarf, or a handful of stinging and itching powder in a hidden pocket. Your clothing probably has a lot of pockets, actually—more than a few of them well hidden.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. They're good in a fight, but if you could teach them a few of your tricks, they'd really excel.
2. Pick one other PC. In the past, they taught you a few tricks to use in a fight.
3. Pick one other PC. This character doesn't seem to approve of your methods.
4. Pick one other PC. Long ago, the two of you were on opposite sides of a fight. You won, using your particular tactics. Now they're interested in a (friendly) rematch at some point and claim to be ready for you.

Additional Equipment: You have a weapon that is easily hidden and a dose of level 3 poison that inflicts 6 points of damage.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You manage to make your foe trip and fall prone.

Major Effect Suggestion: You tangle something around your foe's legs, and they not only fall down but also lose their next turn.

TIER 1

Taking Advantage: When your foe is prone, weakened, dazed, stunned, moved down the damage track, or disadvantaged in some other way, your attacks against that foe are eased beyond any other modifications due to the disadvantage. Enabler.

TIER 2

Eye Gouge (2 Might points): You make an attack against a creature with an eye. The attack is hindered, but if you hit, the creature has trouble seeing for the next hour. During this time, the creature's tasks that rely on sight (most tasks) are hindered. Action.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Spot Weakness or Surprise Attack as your tier 3 ability.

Spot Weakness: If a creature that you can see has a special weakness, such as a vulnerability to fire, a negative modification to perception, and so on, you know what it is. (Ask and the GM will tell you.) Enabler.

Surprise Attack: If attacking from a hidden vantage, with surprise, or before your opponent has acted, you get an asset on the attack. On a successful hit, you inflict 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

TIER 4

Mind Games (3 Intellect points): You use lies and trickery, mockery, and perhaps even hateful, obscene language against a foe that can understand you. If successful, the foe is stunned for one round and cannot act, and it is dazed in the following round, during which time its tasks are hindered. Action.

Capable Fighter: Your attacks deal 1 additional point of damage. Enabler.

TIER 5

Using the Environment (4 Intellect points): You find some way to use the environment to your advantage in a fight. For the next ten minutes, attack rolls and Speed defense rolls are eased. Action to initiate.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Twisting the Knife or Murderer as your tier 6 ability.

Twisting the Knife (4 Might points): In a round after successfully striking a foe with a melee weapon, you can opt to automatically deal standard damage to the foe with that same weapon without any modifiers (2 points for a light weapon, 4 points for a medium weapon, or 6 points for a heavy weapon). Action.

Murderer (8+ Might points): With a swift and sudden attack, you strike a foe in a vital spot. If the target is level 4 or lower, it is killed outright. For each additional level of Effort you apply, you can increase the level of the target by 1. Action.

GM intrusions: People look poorly upon those who cheat or fight without honor. Sometimes a dirty trick backfires.

Six years ago, Calvin Benchley became the first human being I murdered. I beat him round the head as he was coming out of a bar, drove him to my usual spot and shot him five times in the chest with a handgun taken from the evidence lock-up. He didn't beg for his life. He didn't say a word. I don't think he even recognised me. He was harder to get rid of than the vampires, but I managed it.

—MAG 82: "The Eyewitnesses"



HELPS THEIR FRIENDS

It's in your nature to help your friends in the little things and the big. They're your friends. Maybe you've always had them. Or perhaps you never had friends before and are grateful to be part of something bigger than yourself. Or maybe you had friends but lost them, and this is your chance to redeem yourself. It's not an obligation that makes you so selfless. Maybe it's not even a choice. When you see that they need a helping hand, you offer it without thinking; that's what friends do.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. The first time you saw a friend in trouble, you failed to offer aid. You don't know if your friend knows. You suspect not, but you're thinking about telling them.

2. Pick one other PC. You helped your friend in some minor illicit activity. Now you feel guilty about it, and a bit angry at your friend even though it was your choice to help.

3. Pick one other PC. They've always been there for you and helped you when you couldn't help yourself.

4. Pick one other PC. You both tried to help a mutual friend but failed. Now that mutual friend is gone (dead, lost, moved away, or made new friends) and you feel like it's your fault. You're not sure if your friend blames you or not.

Additional Equipment: Picture of you and your friends.

Also, if you wish, you can swap an ability gained from your type for the following.

Advice From a Friend (1 Intellect point):

You know your friends' 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.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You coach a friend, easing their next action.

Major Effect Suggestion: You provide aid to a friend, granting them a free, no-action recovery roll.

TIER 1

 **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.

 **Courageous:** You are trained in Intellect defense tasks and initiative tasks. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Weather the Vicissitudes:** Helping your friends means being able to stand up to everything the world throws at you. You ignore the first point of Stress you gain in a given day (resets after you take your ten-hour rest). Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Buddy System or Skill With Attacks as your tier 3 ability.

 **Buddy System (3 Intellect points):** Choose one character standing next to you. That character becomes your buddy for ten minutes. You are trained in all tasks involving finding, healing, interacting with, and protecting your buddy. Also, while you stand next to your buddy, both of you have an asset on Speed defense tasks. You can have only one buddy at a time. Action to initiate.

 **Skill With Attacks:** Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of attack. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **In Harm's Way (3 Might points):** When you put your friends before yourself as your action, you ease all defense tasks for all characters you choose that are adjacent to you. This lasts until the end of your next turn. If one of your friends gains Stress during that period, you can choose to take up to half of it (round up) yourself instead. If one of your friends would take a serious injury, you can take it instead, but only if you're not already impaired or debilitated. Enabler.

 **Enhanced Physique:** You gain 3 points to divide among your Might and Speed Pools however you wish. Enabler.

TIER 5

 **Inspire Action (4 Intellect points):** If one ally can see and easily understand you, you can instruct them to take an action. If the ally chooses to take that exact action, they can do so as an additional action immediately. Doing so doesn't interfere with the ally taking a normal action on their turn. Action.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Deep Consideration or Skill With Defense as your tier 6 ability.

 **Deep Consideration (6 Intellect points):** When you develop a plan that involves you and your friends working together to accomplish a goal, you can ask the GM one very general question about what is likely to happen if you carry out the plan, and you will get a simple, brief answer. In addition, each of you gains an asset to one roll related to enacting the plan you developed together, as long as you put the plan into action within a few days of the plan's creation. Action.

 **Skill With Defense:** Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. Enabler.

GM intrusions: *Others sometimes have ulterior motives. The law takes an undue interest. Even when everything goes right, repercussions follow.*

INFILTRATES

You focus on subtlety, guile, and stealth. You have studied, practiced, and trained for years as you attempt to become the perfect infiltrator. You use a wide variety of disguises and tools to perform your duties, but your greatest tools are your own skills and training.

Infiltrators are often spies, agents, or police officers who go undercover. A few are thieves or even assassins. They often wear slick bodysuits and face-concealing masks when not wearing a disguise.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. You've watched them from afar for some time before you actually met and became allies. It's up to you whether you want to tell them now.

2. Pick one other PC. No matter how hard you try, you cannot seem to hide from them.

3. Pick two other PCs. The three of you worked as a team on a mission long ago, but you had a falling out.

4. Pick one other PC. That character is your sibling (if the player agrees), and thus you look very much alike.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your opponent is so startled by your moves that they are dazed, during which time their tasks are hindered.

Major Effect Suggestion: All opponents within short range are so startled by your moves that they are dazed, during which time their tasks are hindered.

TIER 1

 **Stealthy:** You are trained in your choice of two of the following skills: deception, disguise, lockpicking, pickpocketing, or stealth. You can choose this ability multiple times, but you must select different skills each time. Enabler.

 **Sense Attitudes:** You are trained in discerning motive. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Impersonate (2 Intellect points):** For one hour, you alter your voice, posture, and mannerisms, whip together a disguise, and gain an asset on an attempt to impersonate someone else, whether it is a specific individual (Bob the cop) or a general role (a police officer). Action to initiate.

 **Flight Not Fight:** If you use your action only to move, all Speed defense tasks are eased. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Awareness or Skill With Attacks as your tier 3 ability.

 **Awareness:** When you spend a level of Effort on a perception task, you gain a free level Effort to that task. Action.

 **Skill With Attacks:** Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of attack. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Nearly Invisible (3 Speed points):** For the next ten minutes, you fully immerse yourself in the practice and craft of not being seen. While hiding, you are specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, you can regain your status by taking an action to hide your position. Action to initiate or reinitiate.

GM intrusions: Spies are treated harshly when caught. Allies disavow infiltrators who get caught. Some secrets are better left unknown.

TIER 5

Evasion: You're hard to affect when you don't want to be affected. You are trained in all defense tasks. Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Brainwashing or Spring Away as your tier 6 ability.

Brainwashing (5+ Intellect points): You use trickery and/or well-spoken lies to make someone else temporarily do as you ask. For one minute, if you succeed on an Intellect attack, you direct the actions of a target you speak to. The target must be level 3 or lower. You can allow them to act freely or override their actions on a case-by-case basis as long as you can see and direct them. If someone challenges the target's actions (or something else happens that makes the target question your directions), you must succeed on another Intellect attack roll as you verbally attempt to reassure them, or the target stops doing as you say.

In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target or increase the duration by one minute. Thus, to direct the actions of a level 6 target (three levels above the normal limit) or direct a target for four minutes (three minutes above the normal duration), you must apply three levels of Effort.

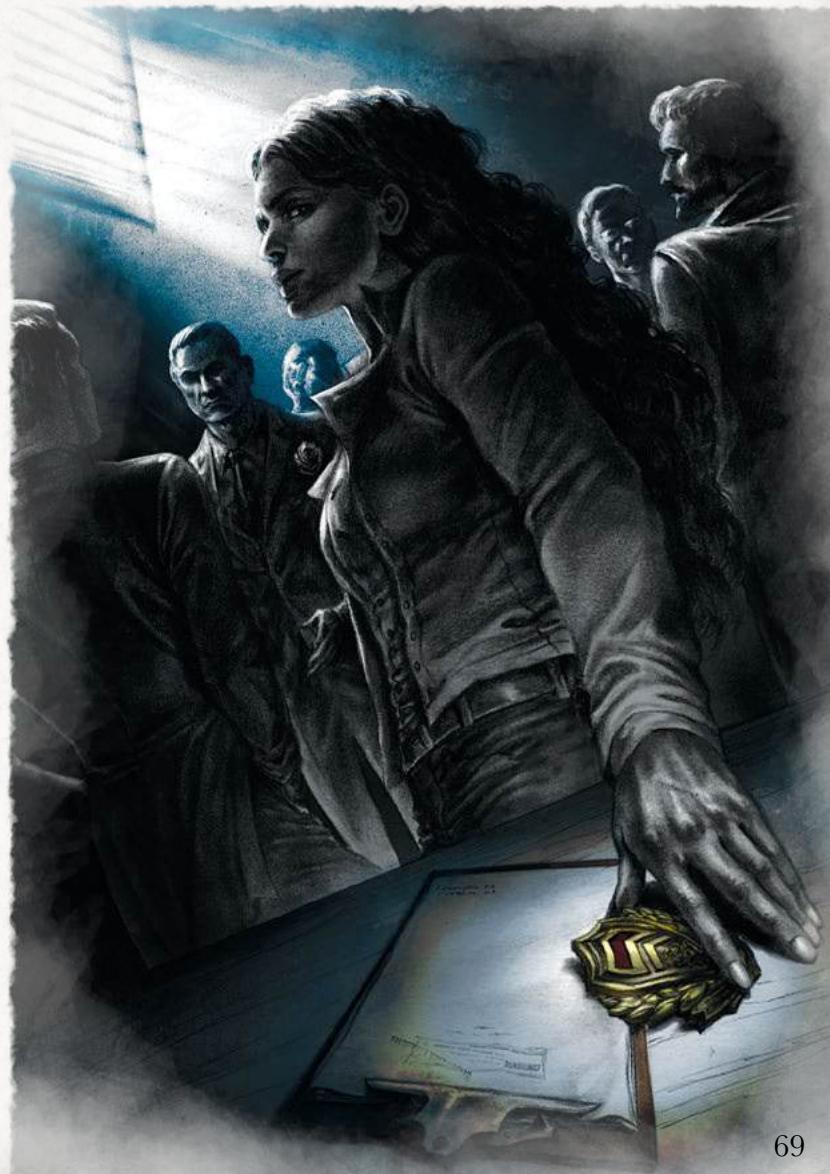
Action to initiate.

Spring Away (5 Speed points): Whenever you succeed on a Speed defense roll, you can immediately move up to a short distance. You cannot use this ability more than once in a given round. Enabler.

It became like a game to me, watching out for those soulless husks. Whether on the bus, the street or even meeting a client for work, I would look into their eyes for just a second and see the emptiness inside. I tried to make it a game, at least. Truth was they scared me very deeply. What were they? How did it happen? Were they born hollow, or did something scoop them out and leave them like that? And the question that kept me up, staring into the darkness late at night: why did it seem like I was the only one able to see them?

—MAG 122: "Zombie"

Brainwashing may be a sensitive topic for some players and should be approached with all due empathy. In any case, it's not something that should be used on other PCs.



LEADS

Using charisma, natural leadership, and perhaps some training, you command the actions of others, who follow you willingly. You are a politician, a captain, a leader, a manager, or someone else who people tend to listen to. Your confidence makes others naturally listen when you talk, but you also have the wisdom to know what actions would be best for your followers and allies.

Since you need the respect of others, you probably dress and carry yourself in such a way that inspires, endears, or intimidates. You have a voice—or developed one—suited to barking orders that can be heard even on a noisy battlefield.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. That character was once a follower of yours, but you have since grown to think of them as a peer.
2. Pick one other PC. That character recently mocked you in some fashion that really hurt your feelings. How you deal with this (if at all) is up to you.
3. Pick one other PC. They introduce you to the follower you gain at tier 2.
4. Pick one other PC. They look so much like you that you suspect they might be a half-sibling.

Minor Effect Suggestion: The next time you attempt to persuade, deceive, intimidate, or otherwise influence the same foe, the task is eased.

Major Effect Suggestion: The foe is persuaded, deceived, intimidated, or otherwise influenced for twice as long as normal.

TIER 1

 **Natural Charisma:** You are trained in all social interactions, including persuasion, deception, intimidation, and discerning motive. Enabler.

 **Good Advice:** Anyone can help an ally, easing whatever task they're attempting by one step, or two steps if the helper is trained or specialized in that skill. However, you have the benefit of clarity and wisdom. When you help another character, they gain an additional asset. Enabler.

When you use Basic Follower, the GM may require that you actually look for a suitable follower.

For more abilities relating to followers, see the follower rules (page 71).

TIER 2

 **Enhanced Potential:** You gain 3 points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Basic Follower:** You gain a level 2 follower. One of their modifications must be persuasion. You can take this ability multiple times, each time gaining another level 2 follower. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Advanced Command or Expert Follower as your tier 3 ability.

Advanced Command (7 Intellect

points): If you succeed on an Intellect attack roll, a target within short range obeys any command you give as long as they can hear and understand you. Further, as long as you continue to do nothing but issue commands (taking no other action), you can give that same target a new command. This effect ends when you stop issuing commands or they are out of short range. Action to initiate.

 **Expert Follower:** You gain a level 3 follower. They are not restricted on their modifications. You can take this ability multiple times, each time gaining another level 3 follower. Alternatively, you could choose to advance a level 2 follower you already have to level 3 and then gain a new level 2 follower. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Captivate or Inspire:** You can use this ability in one of two ways. Either your words keep the attention of all NPCs of up to level 2 that hear them for as long as you speak, or your words inspire all NPCs that hear them to function as if they were one level higher for the next hour. In either case, you choose which NPCs are affected. If anyone in the crowd is attacked while you're trying to speak to them, you lose the crowd's attention. Action to initiate.

GM intrusions: Followers fail, betray, lie, become corrupted, get kidnapped, or die.

TIER 5

 **Greater Enhanced Potential:** You gain 6 points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish. Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Band of Followers or Mind of a Leader as your tier 6 ability.

 **Band of Followers:** You gain four level 3 followers. They are not restricted on their modifications. Enabler.

 **Mind of a Leader (6 Intellect points):**

When you develop a course of action to deal with a future situation, you can ask the GM one very general question about what is likely to happen if you carry out the plan, and you will get a simple, brief answer. Action.

FOLLOWERS

Player characters with the Leads focus gain followers. Followers do not need to be paid, fed, or housed, though a character who gains followers can certainly make such arrangements if they wish. A follower is someone whom a character has inspired (or asked) to come work with the character for a time, aiding them in a variety of endeavors. A follower puts the PC's interests ahead of, or at least on par with, their own.

The PC generally makes rolls for their follower when the follower takes actions, though usually a follower's modifications provide an asset to a specific action taken by the PC they follow.

Modifications: A follower can help a PC in one or more tasks, granting the PC an asset to that task. The level of the follower indicates the number of different tasks they can help with. The tasks that the follower is able to help with are predetermined, usually chosen by the PC when they gain the follower. A level 2 follower who the player determines is a spy could grant a PC an asset on two different tasks, such as stealth and deception. Followers cannot help with tasks that they don't have modifications for; for the purpose of helping, treat the follower as if they had inabilities in all nonmodified tasks.

When the follower acts autonomously rather than helping the PC, they act like a normal NPC that has modifications. Thus, the modification increases their effective level for the associated task by one step. For example, the level 2 spy follower with modifications for stealth and deception attempts stealth and deception tasks as if they were level 3 and all other tasks as level 2.

Follower Assets to Combat and Defense: A follower cannot grant an asset to a character's attacks or defense until the follower is level 3 or higher. Even then, the follower can help with attacks and defense only if they have a modification for that kind of task.

Follower Level Progression: A follower increases in level by 1 each time a PC advances two tiers after gaining that follower. When the follower gains a level, the PC also chooses the task that the follower gains a modification for.

Exceptional Follower: When a character gains a follower, there's a small chance that the follower will be exceptional in some way, a cut above other followers of their kind. The GM determines when an exceptional follower is found, possibly as an additional reward for smart or engaging roleplaying where the PCs impress or otherwise positively interact with one or more NPCs, some of whom may later go on to become one of their followers. An exceptional follower has the same qualities as a regular follower but is one level higher.

Pet: Any PC can potentially gain a pet, though a pet typically doesn't provide modifications. If a character with the Leads focus wants a follower to be a pet, however, they can do so using the same rules as long as it makes sense. A pet probably can't grant an asset to an engineering task, for example.

LEARNS QUICKLY

You might not have your dream job, but you do all right. Perhaps events beyond your control set you down a path that led to where you are today, making the best of a mediocre or even a bad situation. Or maybe you're young, and your break just hasn't come along yet. Either way, you work hard to get ahead, deal with bad situations as they arise, and learn quickly whether you're working retail, in a warehouse, or out on the street after a horrific event left you homeless.

You don't stand out in a crowd because you've learned that doing so can draw unwanted attention. That's why you usually wear nondescript clothing, cover up any ink you have, and wear glasses whether you need eye correction or not.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. That character helped you get your current job.
2. Pick one other PC. Through no fault of their own, that character got you fired from your last job by pointing out a problem with something you were connected to only indirectly.
3. Pick one other PC. That character is your cousin.
4. Pick one other PC. You're pretty sure that character hates you, though you don't know why.

Additional Equipment: Two tickets to see a show at a local movie theater.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your next task, attack, or defense roll (if made within one minute) is eased.

Major Effect Suggestion: Treat the result of your next task, attack, or defense roll (if made within one minute) as if you rolled a natural 18.

TIER 1

 **Enhanced Intellect:** You gain 3 points to your Intellect Pool. Enabler.

 **Picked Up a Few Things:** You are trained in any noncombat task in which you do not already have training. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Quick Study:** You learn from repetitive actions. You gain an asset to rolls for similar tasks after the first time (such as operating the same device or making attacks against the same foe). Once you move on to a new task, the familiarity with the old task fades—unless you start doing it again. Enabler.

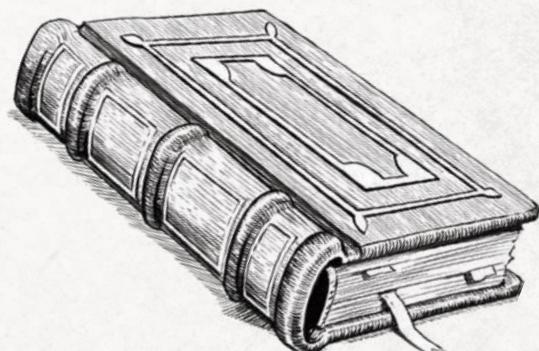
TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Enhanced Intellect Edge or Flex Skill as your tier 3 ability. Whichever one you choose, you also gain Hard to Distract.

 **Enhanced Intellect Edge:** You gain +1 to your Intellect Edge. Enabler.

 **Flex Skill:** At the beginning of each day, choose one task (other than attacks or defense) on which you will concentrate. For the rest of that day, you're trained in that task. You can't use this ability with a skill in which you're already trained to become specialized. Enabler.

 **Hard to Distract:** You are trained in Intellect defense tasks. Enabler.



GM intrusions: *Accidents and mistakes are great teachers.*



TIER 4

 **Pay It Forward (3 Intellect points):** You can pass on what you've learned. When you give another character a suggestion involving their next action that is not an attack, their action is eased for one minute. Action.

TIER 5

 **Enhanced Intellect:** You gain 3 points to your Intellect Pool. Enabler.

 **Learned a Few Things:** You are trained in two areas of knowledge of your choice, or specialized in one area of knowledge of your choice. Enabler.

TIER 6

 **Ability Choice.** Choose either Two Things at Once or Skill With Defense as your tier 6 ability.

 **Two Things at Once (6 Intellect points):** You divide your attention and take two separate actions this round. Enabler.

 **Skill With Defense:** Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. Enabler.

LOOKS FOR TROUBLE

You're a fighter. A scrapper. You relish taking off the kid gloves and confronting your opposition in the most direct way possible. You don't hide, and you don't shirk. You take things head-on in a physical way. Your friends all likely feel better about going into danger with you at their side or their back.

You probably wear bright colors—yellow, pink, or red—to help you stand out. You might even wear a T-shirt with a printed obscenity for added style.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. Due to past experiences, you watch over them. That PC is your default charge regarding your tier 2 ability, if you have not named someone else.

2. Pick one or two other PCs. They seem pretty tough, and you secretly hope that at some point you'll see who's tougher—you or them.

3. Pick one other PC. If this character is within immediate range when you're in a fight, sometimes they ease your attacks, and sometimes they accidentally hinder them (50% chance either way, determined per fight).

4. Pick one other PC. You used to be in a relationship with them, but it's long since over.

Additional Equipment: A melee weapon of your choice.

Minor Effect Suggestion: The target is also dazed for one round, during which time all tasks they perform are hindered.

Major Effect Suggestion: A piece of equipment worn or held by your opponent is destroyed.

GM intrusions: Weapons break or fly from even the strongest grip. Brawlers trip and fall. Even the battlefield can work against you with things falling or collapsing.

TIER 1

 **Fists of Fury:** You inflict 2 additional points of damage with unarmed attacks. Enabler.

 **Wound Tender:** You are trained in healing. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Protector:** You designate a single character to be your charge. You can change this freely every round, but you can have only one charge at a time. As long as that charge is within immediate range, they gain an asset for Speed defense tasks because you have their back. Enabler.

 **Breaking:** Your tasks to smash physical objects—doors, containers, and other inanimate objects—are eased. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Skill With Attacks or Greater Enhanced Potential as your tier 3 ability.

 **Skill With Attacks:** Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of attack. Enabler.

 **Greater Enhanced Potential:** You gain 6 points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Knock Out (5+ Might points):** You make a melee attack that inflicts no damage. Instead, if the attack hits, make a second Might-based roll. If successful, a foe of level 3 or lower is knocked unconscious for one minute. For each level of Effort used, you can affect one higher level of foe, or you can extend the duration for an additional minute. Action.

TIER 5

 **Mastery With Attacks:** Choose one type of attack in which you are trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are specialized in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler. (If you aren't already trained in a type of attack, select Skill With Attacks, one of the tier 3 choices, to become trained instead of specialized.)

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Greater Enhanced Might or Lethal Damage as your tier 6 ability.

 **Greater Enhanced Might:** You gain 6 points to your Might Pool. Enabler.

 **Lethal Damage:** Choose one of your existing attacks that inflicts points of damage (depending on your character, this might be a specific weapon, your unarmed attacks, or a supernatural ability). When you hit with that attack, you inflict an additional 5 points of damage. Enabler.

MOVES LIKE A CAT

You are especially dexterous. Your keen sense of balance and coordination put almost everyone else to shame. Lithe, flexible, and graceful, your natural elegance and poise allow you to navigate your environment with nimble awareness. Smooth and deliberate, you rarely knock things over accidentally, you're more likely to land safely when you fall, and sometimes, you stay safe just by avoiding danger in the first place.

You likely wear tight clothing that doesn't hinder you as you move. Likewise, you probably don't allow yourself to be overburdened by a lot of equipment.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. Their occasional clumsiness and loud behavior irritates you.
2. Pick one other PC. This character comes from the same place you do, and you knew each other as children.
3. Pick one other PC. You aid them with advice and a helping hand when they need it. Anytime the two of you are next to each other, their **gymnastics** tasks are eased.
4. Pick one other PC. They owe you a significant amount of money.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You restore 2 points to your Speed Pool.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can take a second action this round.

TIER 1

 **Greater Enhanced Speed:** You gain 6 points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

 **Balance:** You are trained in gymnastics. Enabler.

Gymnastics, page 17

GM intrusions: Even a cat can be clumsy. A jump isn't quite as easy as it looks. An escape move is so overzealous that it sends the character right into harm's way.

Endurance, page 17

TIER 2

 **Grit:** You are trained in endurance tasks. Enabler.

 **Safe Fall:** You gain no Stress from a fall. However, you can still sustain a serious injury on falls over 10 feet (3.5 m). Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Enhanced Speed Edge or Greater Enhanced Speed as your tier 3 ability. Whichever one you choose, you also gain Hard to Hit.

 **Enhanced Speed Edge:** You gain +1 to your Speed Edge. Enabler.

 **Greater Enhanced Speed:** You gain 6 points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

 **Hard to Hit:** You are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Quick Strike (4 Speed points):** You make a melee attack with such speed that it is hard for your foe to defend against, and it knocks them off balance. Your attack is eased by two steps, and the foe, if struck, takes normal damage but is dazed so that their tasks are hindered for the next round. Action.

TIER 5

 **Slippery:** You are eased in any task involving escaping any kind of bond or grasp. Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Perfect Speed Burst or Greater Enhanced Speed as your tier 6 ability.

 **Perfect Speed Burst (6 Speed points):** You can take two separate actions this round. Enabler.

 **Greater Enhanced Speed:** You gain 6 points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

NEEDS NO WEAPON

You don't use weapons—you *are* a weapon. With powerful punches, kicks, and full-body moves, you inflict incredible damage on your foes. By focusing your energy, the combined power of your body and mind means you can punish your foes without depleting your energy reserves. You might have gained your skills through intense training, from a stint in the military, or because you grew up in a dangerous area and had no choice but to learn. Whatever the origin of your feats, you likely take good care of your body, ensuring that it remains the sharpest, most dependable weapon at your disposal.

Weaponless martial artists are both feared and revered. They wear loose, comfortable clothing that allows them a full range of movement, and they rarely use weapons other than their body's own implements (although some carry items designed to enhance their body movements for greater effect, such as knuckle weapons, knee spikes, or boot blades).

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

- Pick one other PC. They seem to believe that the only true weapons are those that you can hold in your hand, and they might look at you with disdain.

- Pick one other PC. This character seems incredibly unaware of their body and always happens to get in your way. If you miss your foe and accidentally hit someone else in close range, it's likely to be them.

- Pick one other PC. You once trained with a close friend of theirs, and you owe that mutual friend much.

- Pick two other PCs. Once these two heard about your skills, they expressed interest in being your students. However, only one seems to have any aptitude.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You trip your target and knock them prone.

Major Effect Suggestion: You strike your target in a limb, making that limb useless for the next minute.

GM intrusions: Striking certain foes hurts you as much as it hurts them. Opponents with weapons have greater reach. Complicated martial arts moves can knock you off balance.

TIER 1

Fists of Fury: You inflict 2 additional points of damage with unarmed attacks. Enabler.

Scarred and Hardened: You reduce the Stress you suffer from physical injury by 1. You still suffer Stress from mental shock or despair normally. If you already have this ability thanks to your type, you reduce the Stress you suffer from physical injury by 2. Enabler.

TIER 2

Advantage to Disadvantage (3 Speed points): With a number of quick moves, you make an attack against an armed foe, inflicting damage and disarming them so that their weapon is now in your hands or 10 feet (3.5 m) away on the ground—your choice. This disarming attack is hindered. Action.

Unarmed Fighting Style: You are trained in unarmed attacks. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Moving Like Water or Greater Enhanced Potential as your tier 3 ability.

Moving Like Water (3 Speed points): You spin and move so that your defense and attacks are aided by your fluid motion. For one minute, all your attacks and Speed defense tasks gain an asset. Enabler.

Greater Enhanced Potential: You gain 6 points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish. Enabler.

TIER 4

Stand Like Iron (5 Might points): The next attack (in the current encounter) that would normally inflict a serious injury on you gives 2 points of Stress instead. Enabler.

TIER 5

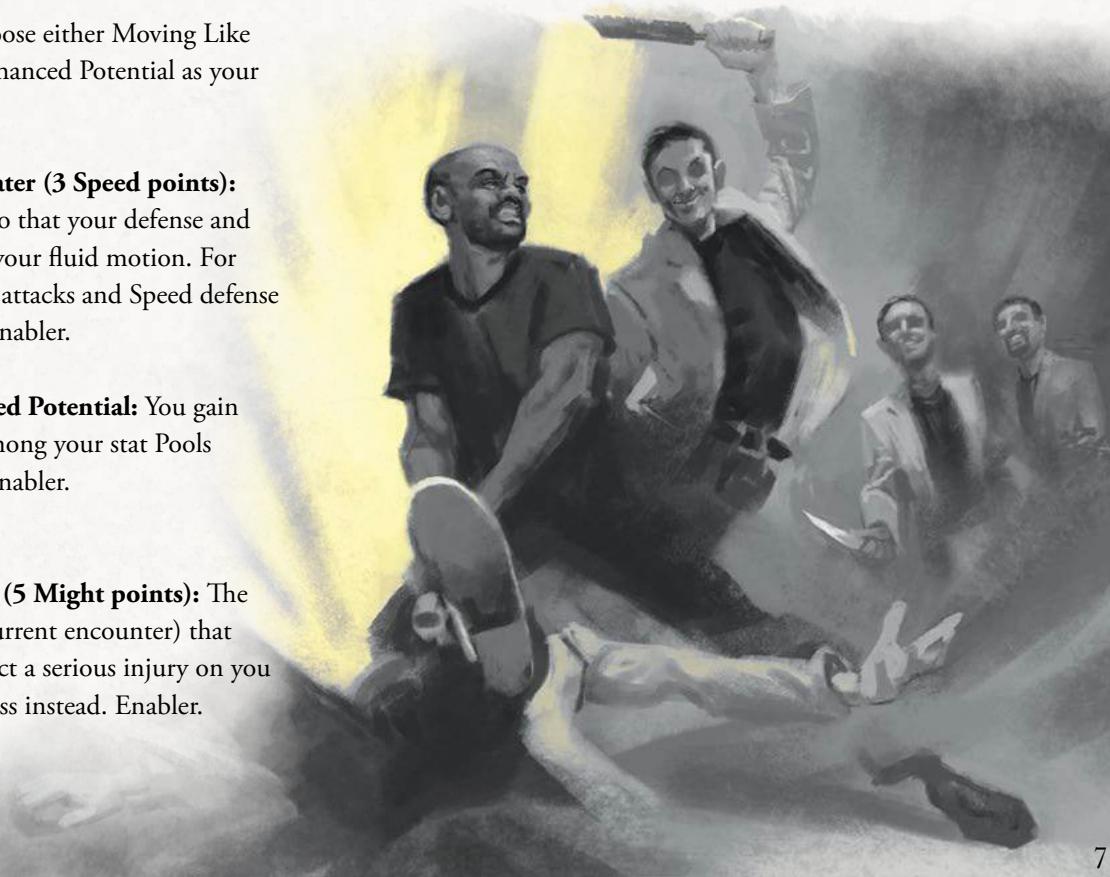
Stun Attack (6 Speed points): You attempt a difficulty 5 Speed task to stun a creature as part of your melee or ranged attack. If you succeed, your attack inflicts its normal damage and stuns the creature for one round, causing it to lose its next turn. If you fail, you still make your normal attack roll, but you don't stun the opponent if you hit. Action.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Master of Unarmed Fighting Style or Lethal Damage as your tier 6 ability.

Master of Unarmed Fighting Style: You are specialized in unarmed attacks. If you are already specialized in unarmed attacks, you instead deal 2 additional points of damage with unarmed attacks. Enabler.

Lethal Damage: When you hit with an unarmed attack, you inflict an additional 5 points of damage. Enabler.



NEVER SAYS DIE

When others are ready to quit, you're just getting started thanks to your resilience, tenacity, and relentless determination to face adversity head-on. Difficulties? They don't faze you because you're not afraid to face hard things.

You probably don't spend a lot of time on your appearance—it is far less important than actions. For that matter, so are words. You're likely not much of a talker. You're a doer.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. You feel the overwhelming need to impress this character, although you're not sure why.
2. Pick one other PC. This character seems quite capable, but in your mind, their spirit needs motivating. You're constantly trying to convince them to keep trying, go the distance, and fight the good fight.
3. Pick one other PC. You feel very protective of this character and don't want to see them harmed.
4. Pick one other PC. They say they've known you for years, but you barely seem to remember them.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You restore 2 points to your Might Pool.

Major Effect Suggestion: Your next action is eased by two steps.

Damage track, page 132

GM intrusion: Sometimes, it's equipment or weapons that give out.

TIER 1

Improved Recovery: Your ten-minute recovery roll takes only one action instead, so that your first two recovery rolls are one action, the third is one hour, and the fourth is ten hours. Enabler.

Push on Through (2 Might points): You ignore the effects of terrain while moving for one hour. Enabler.

TIER 2

Tough: You can take punishment beyond what others can. You gain an additional step in your **damage track** between hale and impaired called hurt. Other than being one step closer to impaired, hurt imposes no changes to your character. Basically, you're sore and bruised, but it's nothing serious. Walk it off. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Stand Like Iron or Hidden Reserves as your tier 3 ability.

Stand Like Iron (4 Might points): The next attack (in the current encounter) that would normally inflict a serious injury on you gives 2 points of Stress instead. Enabler.



 **Hidden Reserves:** When you make a recovery roll, you also gain +1 to both your Might Edge and your Speed Edge for ten minutes thereafter. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Outlast the Foe:** If you have been in combat for five full rounds, you have an asset for all tasks in the remainder of the combat, and you deal 1 additional point of damage per attack. Enabler.

TIER 5

 **Not Dead Yet:** When you are debilitated, you can still act as though you are impaired. You are still only one step away from death, however. Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Final Defiance or Ignore Affliction as your tier 6 ability.

 **Final Defiance:** When you would normally be dead, you instead remain conscious and active for one more round plus one additional round each time you succeed on a difficulty 5 Might task. During these rounds, you are debilitated. If someone (not you) succeeds at a healing task with a difficulty of 5 to tend to your wounds, you remain debilitated. However, while you are in this state, if you move down the damage track to dead again, you cannot be saved. Enabler.

 **Ignore Affliction (5 Might points):** If you are affected by an unwanted condition or affliction (such as disease, paralysis, mind control, broken limb, and so on, but not Stress or moving down the damage track), you can ignore it and act as if it does not affect you for one hour. If the condition would normally last less than an hour, it is entirely negated. Action.

PRACTICALLY LIVES ONLINE

You remember the first time you opened up an internet browser the way other people remember learning to ride a bike. In your family, your group of friends, and at work, you were the internet person and always have been. Whether it involves websites and their coding, social media, searching for information, file sharing, wifi, online games, email, streaming, video chats, message boards, or mobile apps, you know the latest developments, the most current jokes and memes, and all the most important sites.

You probably dress very casually to the point where you wear clothing inappropriate to the situation, such as loose, colorful pajama bottoms to a business meeting. Let's face it, you might go for days without remembering to even look in a mirror.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. You met them online long before you ever met them in real life.
2. Pick one other PC. They claim that you spend too much time online and often encourage you to "touch grass." You'll have to decide if this is charmingly annoying or just annoying.
3. Pick one other PC. They seem to believe that you have used your skills to get their personal information. Are they right? You decide.
4. Pick one other PC. They are fairly unskilled technically and constantly try to get you to fix their computer or explain how something works.

Additional Equipment: You have a top-of-the-line laptop and smartphone. (Most modern characters have a smartphone and maybe a computer; this additional equipment represents especially state-of-the-art items that are out of the price range of the average character.)

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your next attempt to do anything involving computers is eased.

GM intrusions: Hackers can get hacked. Paying attention to the internet can lead to poor real-life actions or interactions, where you do or say the absolute wrong thing.

Major Effect Suggestion: Invigorated at how you'll be able to brag about the current situation to your online friends or followers, you restore $1d6 + 1$ points to your Intellect Pool immediately.

TIER 1

 **Online Research (1 Intellect point):** All research tasks are eased if you have access to the internet. Enabler.

 **Tech Skill:** You are trained in your choice of one of the following skills: electronics, engineering, programming, or researching. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Hacking (3 Intellect points):** You can impersonate someone else online. This might allow you access to their information, their funds, and their credit cards, or even allow you to alert the authorities to criminal activities that they (probably didn't) participate in. In a less nefarious hack, you could discover information about them, including their address, daily activities, and current location. This can take anywhere from one minute to many hours, and the task for succeeding is based on both the level of the person and any internet security precautions they might have in place. For example, it might be harder to read someone's emails than to learn their family history, and harder still to get into their bank account. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Online Contacts or Crowdsourcing as your tier 3 ability.

 **Online Contacts:** You have three contacts that you know virtually (but not in real life). Choose an area of expertise for each contact. When you have online access, you can ask them questions about their area of expertise and get an in-depth answer within an hour, and answers for any follow-up questions in another hour. Enabler.

 **Crowdsourcing (3 Intellect points):** You put out a question or request for information online and let others help answer it. If you wait for the information, which can take up to 24 hours, you ease any information-related task (including research, obviously) by two steps. Action to initiate.

TIER 4

 **Deep Dive (6 Intellect points):** By accessing the internet, you can ask the GM one question and get a general answer. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. Generally, knowledge that you could find by looking somewhere other than your current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. Gaining knowledge of the future is impossible. Action.

TIER 5

 **Better Hacking (5 Intellect points):** If you have electronic access to a system, you can attempt to take control of it. This can include surveillance cameras, security systems, electronic locks, tracking, email (not just of one person, but of entire servers), website backends, databases, and so on. The difficulty of this task is based on the protections the system has in place, but it probably runs from difficulty 3 to difficulty 9. Depending on the situation, this can take one action or hours of work. Action.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Read It Somewhere or Brain Food as your tier 6 ability.

 **Read It Somewhere (6 Intellect points):** With a round's concentration, you call up obscure facts you read somewhere on the internet, easing the task you attempt on the following round by three steps. Action.

 **Brain Food:** You gain 6 points to your Intellect Pool. Enabler.

RUNS AWAY

You don't always run away, but it's your first instinct. It's saved you more than a few times. Being cautious is the best policy, and you've developed it into something of an art form. If someone is going to put up their defenses, that person is you. Once a new danger is adequately assessed (from a safe perspective), you'll probably deal with it. You're no coward; you just want to be the one to decide when to engage an enemy.

You probably prefer comfortable clothes with neutral tones that allow you to run easily and, if necessary, hide.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. In the recent past, while running away from an active threat, you accidentally left that character to fend for themselves. They survived, but just barely. It is up to the player of that character to decide whether they resent you or have decided to forgive you.

2. Pick one other PC. Recently, they accidentally (or perhaps intentionally) put you in a position of danger. You're fine now, but you're wary around that character.

3. Pick one other PC. From your perspective, they seem even more nervous around a specific idea, person, or situation than you do. Through your measured approach to caution, you would like to teach them how to be more comfortable with their fears.

4. Pick one other PC. They are skeptical that you're thoughtful in your caution and chuckle when you explain how being judicious saves lives. They might have even called you a coward once.

Additional Equipment: You have a pair of running shoes that fit perfectly.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You can attempt a stealth task at any point before the end of the next round.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can take an extra action. You can use this action only to move a short distance or to attempt a stealth action, or move an immediate distance and attempt a stealth action.

TIER 1

 **Go Defensive (1 Intellect point):** When you wish, while in combat, you can enter a state of heightened awareness of threat. While in this state, you can't use points from your Intellect Pool, but you gain +1 to your Speed Edge and gain two assets to Speed defense tasks. This effect lasts as long as you wish or until you attack a foe or no combat is taking place within range of your senses. Once the effect of this ability ends, you can't enter it again until after you've made a recovery roll. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Enhanced Speed:** You gain 3 points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

 **Quick to Flee:** You are trained in [stealth](#) and [gymnastics](#). Enabler.

Stealth, page 18

Gymnastics, page 17

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Incredible Running Speed or Greater Enhanced Speed as your tier 3 ability.

 **Incredible Running Speed:** You move much farther than normal in a round. This means as a part of another action, you can move up to a long distance. As an action, you can move up to 200 feet (60 m), or up to 500 feet (150 m) with a successful difficulty 4 Speed-based roll. Enabler.

 **Greater Enhanced Speed:** You gain 6 points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Increasing Determination:** If you fail at a noncombat physical task (pushing open a door or climbing a cliff, for example) and then [retry](#) the task, you don't have to apply a level of Effort for retrying as is usually the case, but you still ease the task. If you fail again, you gain no special benefits. Enabler.

Retrying a task after failure, page 120

GM intrusions: Quick movements sometimes lead to dropped items, slipping on uneven ground, or going the wrong way by accident.

Quick Wits: When performing a task that would normally require spending points from your Intellect Pool, you can spend points from your Speed Pool instead. Enabler.

TIER 5

Go to Ground (4 Speed points): You move up to a long distance and attempt to hide. When you do, you gain an asset on the stealth task to blend in, disappear, or otherwise escape the senses of everyone previously aware of your presence. Action.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Burst of Escape or Skill With Defense as your tier 6 ability.

Burst of Escape (5 Speed points): You can take two separate actions this round, as long as one of them is to hide or to move in a direction that is not toward a foe. Enabler.

Skill With Defense: Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. Enabler.

SOLVES MYSTERIES

You are a master of deduction. With a keen eye for detail and a quick wit, you can use a selection of clues to figure out what really happened when others are left scratching their heads. While a character that solves mysteries might be conventionally thought of as a detective, a professor or even a scientist might also be a mystery solver.

You wear sensible clothing and comfortable shoes, walking that fine line between practical and stylish. You might carry a briefcase for all the tools you require to solve mysteries.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

- Pick one other PC. They are the true friend who got you started reading mysteries and detective fiction, which led to your current obsession.

- Pick one other PC. That character does not seem to trust or like you, but you feel compelled to win them over.

- Pick one other PC. That character is a good sounding board. After you talk to them for an hour, you gain an asset on any knowledge-based task you are trained in.

- Pick one other PC. You were rivals with them in some endeavor in the past.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You discover an additional clue about the mystery you are attempting to solve.

Major Effect Suggestion: When you solve a mystery in the presence of the target of your revelation, they are stunned by your dazzling wit, unable to move or act for a round.

TIER 1

Investigate: To solve mysteries, you must engage your mind and body in your deductions. You can spend points from your Might Pool, Speed Pool, or Intellect Pool to apply levels of Effort to any Intellect-based task. Enabler.

Sleuth: Finding the clues is the first step in solving a mystery. You are trained in perception. Enabler.



TIER 2

 **Out of Harm's Way:** No matter how careful, an investigator sometimes ends up in a scrap. Knowing how to survive is more than half the battle. You are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

TIER 3

 **Ability Choice.** Choose either You Studied or Skill With Attacks as your tier 3 ability.

 **You Studied:** To be able to put two and two together to reach a deduction, you have to know a few things. You are trained in two areas of knowledge of your choosing (as long as they are not physical actions or combat related) or specialized in one area. Enabler.

 **Skill With Attacks:** Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of attack. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Draw Conclusion (3 Intellect points):** After careful observation and investigation (questioning one or more NPCs on a topic, searching an area or a file, and so on) lasting a few minutes, you can learn a pertinent fact if you succeed on a difficulty 3 Intellect task. Each additional time you use this ability, the task is hindered by an additional step. The difficulty returns to 3 after you rest for ten hours. Action.

TIER 5

 **Defuse Situation:** During the course of an investigation, your questions sometimes elicit an angry or even violent response. Through dissembling, verbal distraction, or similar evasion (and a successful Intellect attack roll), you prevent a living foe from attacking anyone or anything for one round. Action.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose Seize the Initiative or Greater Skill With Defense as your tier 6 ability.

 **Seize the Initiative (5 Intellect points):**

Within one minute of successfully using your Draw Conclusion ability, you can take one additional, immediate action, which you can take out of turn. After using this ability, you can't use it again until after you rest for ten hours. Enabler.

 **Greater Skill With Defense:** Choose one type of defense task, even one in which you are already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type, or specialized if you are already trained. You can select this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.



I wanted to forget it, to ignore the dusty crater that waited in the middle of this tiny town, but I couldn't. Something about it rubbed at me, like a speck of dirt in my eye, but the more I tried to reach it, the deeper it went. I checked maps of the area, looking to see if any of them featured the odd landmark, but I found ones that went right up to 2008, and none of them had anything marked at that spot, even though the split in the road had clearly been there far longer than a year.

I tried to talk about it, see if anyone else had any idea about what the pit was or why it was there, but when I asked around Joe's—the only diner in town—everyone reacted just like Tommy.

Mishearing, misunderstanding or just straight-up ignoring me. It wasn't even like they seemed deliberately evasive; all their reactions seemed genuine, but no one was able to talk about the pit.

—MAG 97: "We All Ignore the Pit"

WEARS A BADGE

You're an officer of the law. It's a hard job, and one that's often thankless, especially when bad apples among your number abuse their authority. Sometimes the whole system feels rotten but you still take it seriously. It's your job to enforce the law, protect people and property, and keep the peace. Investigating crimes means questioning witnesses and suspects. Often, hard questions are all that's required to get someone to confess. With your badge or warrant card and your commanding presence, you're perfect for the job.

While on duty, you're in uniform, display your badge prominently, and carry self-defense gear on your belt. When off duty, you wear civvies but still usually carry your gear and badge, just in case.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. That character was once a cadet who trained under you (only if they agree they were once in law enforcement), but they've now gone their own way.
2. Pick one other PC. You know they spent several months behind bars, but you're not sure for what.
3. Pick one other PC. They're an old friend who hates the fact that you're a cop and sometimes tries to get you to quit.
4. Pick one other PC. You know there's a warrant for them on record, probably for unpaid parking fines (though you're not sure). You've chosen not to question them about it, but you could change your mind.

Additional Equipment: Police uniform and duty belt (containing handcuffs, radio, holster, and flashlight), a badge, a gun (medium ranged weapon, which you are licensed to carry), and a baton (light melee weapon).

Minor Effect Suggestion: The next time you attempt to command the same foe, the task is eased.

Major Effect Suggestion: The foe either surrenders or is influenced by your ability for twice as long as normal.

Driving, page 16

GM intrusions: *Onlookers react badly to revelation of authority. A higher-priority situation requires the character's immediate attention.*

BADGE OR WARRANT CARD

Having a real badge or warrant card requires ongoing employment by a police department. That said, you could be on a sabbatical, taking a leave from active duty, or simply on vacation for several weeks each year without fear of losing your standing. If your police badge is confiscated for any reason and you use a facsimile to gain the benefit of having a badge, there's a chance that someone will recognize it as a fraud (though most NPCs will be fooled).

TIER 1

Authority: Your air of authority is an asset for all social interactions. However, some people have the opposite reaction, depending on their experience with the police, including criminals and those wrongfully persecuted by the police, hindering your interactions instead. Enabler.

Driver: You are trained in *driving*. Enabler.

Armed Response: You are practiced with guns and suffer no penalty when using one. Enabler.

TIER 2

Command (3 Intellect points): Calling on your authority as a vested officer of the law, you issue a simple command to one target, who attempts to carry out your command as its next action if you succeed on an Intellect attack. The creature must be within short range and able to understand you. The command can't inflict direct harm on the creature or its allies, so "Stab yourself" won't work, but "Flee" might. In addition, the command can require the creature to take only one action, so "Unlock the door" might work, but "Unlock the door and run through it" won't. A commanded creature can still defend itself normally and return an attack if one is made on it. Action.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Cool Under Fire or Insider as your tier 3 ability.

 **Cool Under Fire:** You are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

 **Insider:** You have access to information known only to law enforcement. You can obtain information about previous cases and crimes, learn people's identity based on their car license plate, find details of missing persons, and so on. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Rapid Attack (3 Speed points):** Once per round, you can make an additional attack with your gun. Enabler.

TIER 5

 **Encouraging Presence (2 Intellect points):** For one minute, allies within short range gain an asset on defense rolls. Action.

 **Skill With Defense:** Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose Greater Enhanced Might or Speed or Close to the Chief as your tier 6 ability.

 **Greater Enhanced Might or Speed:** You gain 6 points to your Might Pool, or 6 points to your Speed Pool, or you can split 6 points between them. Enabler.

 **Close to the Chief:** You're well-respected and liked by the chief of police (or the equivalent). They are not just a contact for information; they'll also give you a lot of leeway should you need to bend or even break the rules. Through the chief, you can get access to virtually any case file in your department or any other, including other agencies (like the FBI, Interpol, and similar). You can also call in backup or assistance and keep their involvement confidential if need be. Enabler.

A character who takes advantage of being Close to the Chief is part of the problem, so to speak, because getting special treatment is probably a symptom of corruption.

I've been looking into Gertrude's arrest. I couldn't get through to Melanie, but Martin managed to find a few details online. Gertrude was arrested for trespassing but released shortly afterwards without being charged. I managed to track down the arresting officer, one J. Rebbicks, who said she'd been found over the body of Gerard Keay, reading from a large, strangely shaped book. They'd been unable to determine if the mutilations on Gerard's body had been done by her, and in the end she somehow talked them out of pressing charges. Officer Rebbicks didn't remember what she'd said, but he did recall that she never returned for the book. It was sitting in evidence for almost a year before, as far as Rebbicks was aware, it simply vanished.

—MAG 107: "Third Degree"



WORKS THE BACK ALLEYS

The thief, the burglar, the pickpocket: these are the individuals who haunt the back alleys of every community. Whether dangerous or desperate, you've worked as a thief in a city or town, getting by at the expense of the wealthy and unwary. Your talents, however, prepare you for all kinds of pursuits, even when you're not crouching in an alley or climbing into a window.

Usually, you dress to blend in with the crowd. When you're on a mission, black, form-fitting clothing allows you to swim in the shadows.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. The character knew you beforehand and helped you to leave your life of crime for other pursuits—at least temporarily.

2. Pick one other PC. A while back, you attempted to steal from them, but they caught you in the process.

3. Pick one other PC. You never seem to be able to hide so that they can't see you.

4. Pick one other PC. They know your real identity (if it's a secret) or that you work undercover (if it's a secret) and has kept the knowledge to themself so far.

Additional Equipment: You start with a bag of light tools that include lockpicks.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You can immediately attempt to hide after this action.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can immediately take a second action during this turn.

GM intrusions: Thieves are thrown in jail. Powerful enemies are made.

TIER 1

 **Stealthy:** You are trained in your choice of two of the following skills: deception, discerning motive, disguise, lockpicking, pickpocketing, or stealth. You can choose this ability multiple times, but you must select different skills each time. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Underworld Contacts:** You know many people in a variety of communities who engage in illegal activities. These people are not necessarily your friends and might not be trustworthy, but they recognize you as a peer and may even owe you a favor. You and the GM should work out the details of three or four underworld contacts. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Pull a Fast One or I Know a Guy as your tier 3 ability.

 **Pull a Fast One (3 Intellect points):** When you're running a con, picking a pocket, fooling or tricking a dupe, sneaking something by a guard, and so on, you gain an asset on the task. Enabler.

 **I Know a Guy (4 Intellect points):**

When presented with a difficult challenge that isn't particularly time-sensitive, you can call upon a person you know or have at least heard about that might have a solution. These people are almost always hiding at the edges of society, often as criminals, ex-convicts, or similar folks. Although they could help with any situation, theoretically, the aspects of their help often involve the following:

- Buying or selling illegal or stolen goods
- Getting forgeries made, including fake IDs
- Help breaking into a computer, smartphone, etc.
- Gaining confidential or not publicly available information
- Hiring criminals, including burglars, high-tech thieves, and hitmen

Finding the right person, setting up a meeting with them, and negotiating the terms of the agreement usually takes three to seven days. And of course, they will want to be paid for their services or expect a favor in kind. Enabler.

TIER 4

 **Master Thief:** You are trained in **gymnastics** and **lockpicking**. Enabler.

TIER 5

 **Dirty Fighter (2 Speed points):** You distract, blind, annoy, hamper, or otherwise interfere with a foe, hindering their attacks and defenses for one minute. Action.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose Alley Rat or All-Out Con as your tier 6 ability.

 **Alley Rat (6 Intellect points):** While in a city, you find or create a significant shortcut, secret entrance, or emergency escape route where it looked like none existed. Doing so requires that you succeed on an Intellect action whose difficulty is set by the GM based on the situation. You and the GM should work out the details. Action.

 **All-Out Con (7 Intellect points):** You put everything into it. You add three **free levels of Effort** to the next task you attempt. You can't use this ability again until after you've taken a ten-hour recovery action. Action.

Underworld contacts are long-term additions to the campaign, but they are limited to the knowledge and skill sets of the individuals as determined when the ability is gained. The resources made available by I Know a Guy are deliberately more open-ended but also transient.

Gymnastics, page 17

Lockpicking, page 17

Effort, page 11



GM intrusions: Books burn, get wet, or get lost. Devices break or lose power. Glasses break.

WOULD RATHER BE READING

Your whole life, people have been asking you why you read so much. Would you rather read about life than live it, they ask? Yes, you answer, probably inwardly. Books are your friends. You love fiction that gives you escape and nonfiction that enriches your mind. You're always learning new things. What's more important than knowledge? Nothing.

You probably carry a bag of books (or a tablet with ebooks, or a phone with audible books on it, or all of these) with you at all times.

Connection: Choose one of the following with your group.

1. Pick one other PC. They seem to understand you and know that you need your space and time alone to read now and again.
2. Pick one other PC. This character gave you a book that became one of your favorites.
3. Pick one other PC. They remind you a lot of the main character of one of your favorite books. You can't help but like them.
4. Pick one other PC. This character borrowed a book and never returned it, and doesn't seem to have a great story as to what happened.

Additional Equipment: You start with a couple of books on the topics of your choice.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You draw on your experiences and ease your next action.

Major Effect Suggestion: The foe is stunned and can't act on their next turn because of an interaction with a book; they slip on it, see it and are too surprised to act, or something else.

TIER 1

 **Knowledge Is Power:** Choose two noncombat skills in which you are not trained. You are trained in those skills. Enabler.

TIER 2

 **Greater Enhanced Intellect:** You gain 6 points to your Intellect Pool. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice. Choose either Applying Your Knowledge or Flex Skill as your tier 3 ability.

 **Applying Your Knowledge:** When you help another character undertake any action that you're untrained in, you are treated as if you are trained in it (thus granting two assets to their task instead of one). Action.

 **Flex Skill:** At the beginning of each day, choose one task (other than attacks or defense) on which you will concentrate. For the rest of that day, you're trained in that task. You can't use this ability with a skill in which you're already trained to become specialized. Enabler.



TIER 4

 **Knowledge Is Power:** Choose two noncombat skills in which you are not trained. You are trained in those skills. Enabler.

Knowing the Unknown (6 Intellect points):

By accessing the resources appropriate to your character, you can ask the GM one question and get a general answer. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. Generally, knowledge that you could find by looking somewhere other than your current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. Gaining knowledge of the future is impossible. Action.

TIER 5

 **Greater Enhanced Intellect:** You gain 6 points to your Intellect Pool. Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice. Choose either Tower of Intellect or Credible Hypothesis as your tier 6 ability. Whichever one you choose, you also gain Knowledge Is Power (again).

 **Tower of Intellect:** You are trained in Intellect defense tasks. If you are already trained, you are specialized in those tasks instead. Enabler.

Credible Hypothesis (4 Intellect points):

You examine an area and learn precise, useful details about the past (if any exist) if you succeed on a difficulty 3 Intellect-based roll. You can ask the GM up to four questions about the immediate area; each requires its own roll. Action.

 **Knowledge Is Power:** Choose two noncombat skills in which you are not trained. You are trained in those skills. Enabler.

AVATARS


 "Avatar isn't a *thing*, Martin! It's not—It's just a word. A word used by . . . fools like Smirke to try and sort everything into neat little boxes, to reduce the messy spray of human fear into a checklist: human, Avatar, monster, victim."

—Jonathan Sims, MAG 183:
"Monument"

The Entities sometimes grant people a modicum of their power and in so doing, increase fear in the world. The chosen recipient of this power is called an Avatar. Each Entity creates (directly or indirectly, depending on the Entity) their own Avatar, and it's entirely possible for an Entity to have more than one Avatar at a time (or no Avatars for a time). The Avatar might not be aware of the implications of the decision, but each makes a conscious choice to accept this "gift." Many Avatars willingly serve the Entity as one might serve a god or highly revered being. Unwilling Avatars find themselves in difficult ethical situations where they have amazing powers at their command, but they know that using those powers furthers the end of a malevolent Entity of fear.

To become an Avatar, one must have had a significant paranormal experience (or many such experiences) that affects their mind

The Entities, page 166

As the concept of an Avatar in The Magnus Archives has no formal definition—at least that humans can comprehend—some Avatars might be seen to break the rules. Some beings that were never mortal humans can be considered Avatars, for example, and can be assumed to have been created as such by the Entities.