# Loner: Pulp Heroes

***Loner: Pulp Heroes*** is a solo tabletop RPG adventure set in the shadow-drenched streets and smoke-choked cities of the 1930s, where masked vigilantes wage a relentless war against crime and corruption.

This minimalist Solo Role Playing Game is designed to plunge you into the dark heart of pulp heroism, where justice comes at the end of a gun and the only law that matters is the one you enforce yourself.

## Introduction

*Loner: Pulp Heroes* follows the following design principles:

1. **Portable**: to play you will need a few common (six-sided) dice and writing materials. Anything else is optional and not essential.
2. **Rules-Light**: the game relies on a few rules and only one solving mechanic, easy to learn and eventually to memorize.
3. **Tag-based**: characters and situations are defined only by qualitative descriptors and no quantitative characteristics.

With a focus on quick resolutions, **Loner: Pulp Heroes** throws you headfirst into the heart of noir action. Your character will be defined by thematic tags like *Shadow Walker*, *Truth Serum*, *Ruthless*, and *Twin .45s*.

### What is a Role Playing Game (RPG)?

A role-playing game (RPG) is a type of game in which players assume the roles of fictional characters and act out their actions and decisions within a narrative or imaginary setting. The outcome of these actions and decisions is often determined by a set of rules and game mechanics, such as dice rolls or statistical attributes of the characters. Players may also collaborate to create a shared story or narrative through their characters’ actions and interactions.

### What is a Solo RPG?

In a solo RPG a single player takes on the roles of one or more characters, while also simultaneously managing some elements of the game world. These games typically involve the use of a rule system and game mechanics to determine the outcome of actions taken by the player-controlled characters. Unlike a gamebook (such as the Fighting Fantasy, Lone Wolf, and Tunnels & Trolls series) a solo RPG is not a form of interactive, forked narrative in which outcomes are pre-determined and limited by the author’s choices.

Through the interaction of player, oracle, tools, and prompts, the character’s actions will build an **emergent narrative** within whose boundaries anything can be attempted, without predetermined limits.

### Safety Tools

You will play alone, but be sure to play in an environment that is comfortable for you, without overexerting yourself, and reserve the option to stop as soon as you feel uncomfortable for any reason, physical or emotional. Don’t be afraid to tackle new themes, but do so in full awareness of your boundaries.

### Minimum Requirements

To play *Loner: Pulp Heroes* you will need: - **4 six sided dice** (also known as d6s): two pairs of different colors - **Paper and writing tools**: at least a sheet of scrap paper and and pencil, but index cards or sticky notes are a fine addition - **Character sheet**: you may use the provided sheet at the back or a simple index card. - **Notebook**: *Loner: Pulp Heroes* is not a solo journaling game, you can easily play it in the “theater of mind”. But you can keep track of you game if you feel the need!

## The Dark City

The year is 1936. The Great Depression has left its mark on every street corner, but some wounds run deeper than economic hardship. In the sprawling metropolis where you operate, corruption flows like sewage through the gutters, and the line between law and lawlessness has been erased by those with enough money and influence.

• **The Concrete Jungle**: Towering skyscrapers cast permanent shadows over narrow alleys where deals are made in blood and bullets. Art Deco facades hide opium dens, speakeasies that never closed after Prohibition ended, and backroom meetings where the city’s true rulers decide who lives and dies.

• **Technology of Terror**: The modern age brings new tools for both hero and villain - radio networks span the city, zeppelins patrol the skies, and experimental weapons emerge from military contracts gone wrong. But for every innovation that promises progress, ten more serve the cause of corruption.

• **The Untouchables**: Police commissioners on mob payrolls, judges who auction verdicts to the highest bidder, and politicians whose campaign promises are written in disappearing ink. The system isn’t broken - it’s working exactly as intended by those who bought it.

• **Desperate Citizens**: Honest folks caught between the hammer of organized crime and the anvil of corrupt authority. They’ve stopped believing in heroes because heroes get bought, blackmailed, or buried. They need something different - something that can’t be corrupted because it never claimed to be good in the first place.

• **Occult Undercurrents**: Beneath the rational veneer of industrial progress, ancient cults and eldritch societies pull strings from the shadows. Their goals transcend mere money or power - they seek to reshape reality itself, one ritual murder at a time.

### Playable Themes

* **Vigilante Justice**: Operating outside the law because the law has been purchased
* **Dual Identity**: The constant struggle between public face and private war
* **Moral Ambiguity**: Choosing between lesser evils when there are no good options
* **Urban Gothic**: Horror that wears a three-piece suit and owns half the city
* **Pulp Action**: Over-the-top stunts, dramatic confrontations, and impossible escapes
* **Noir Investigation**: Following leads through a maze of lies, betrayal, and murder
* **Class Warfare**: The elite versus everyone else, fought in penthouses and slums
* **Occult Conspiracy**: Ancient evils using modern methods to achieve timeless goals

### Timeline

* **1929**: The Stock Market crashes, but some fortunes grow larger in the chaos
* **1930-1932**: The first masked vigilantes appear as conventional justice fails
* **1933**: The Crimson Brotherhood cult is exposed, then mysteriously forgotten
* **1934**: Police Commissioner Hayes is assassinated; his replacement is twice as corrupt
* **1935**: The Zeppelin Disaster covers up something much worse in the wreckage
* **1936**: Present day - the city bleeds, and only shadows can stop the bleeding

## Characters

In the world of *Loner: Pulp Heroes*, you are not a shining beacon of hope. You are a necessary darkness, a brutal remedy for a diseased city. Your methods are questionable, your morality is flexible, and your enemies know that encountering you means facing judgment without appeal.

### Everything is a Character!

In *Loner: Pulp Heroes* Non-Playing Characters (NPCs), Foes, Organizations, Monsters, and even relevant objects like vehicles are characters too!

Your Protagonist is described by some fixed traits:

* **Name**: The name should be iconic and consistent with the tone and setting of the story.
* **Concept**: A concise description of the character’s profession, background, and abilities. The best are adjective-name pairings, like *“Merciless Mentalist”* or *“Cloaked Avenger”*.
* **Skills** (x2): Abilities not necessarily character-specific but not characteristics common to all. *“Smart”* is not a skill, *“Mind Reader”* is.
* **Frailty**: Something that could potentially get in the way of the character, either physically, mentally, or socially.
* **Gear** (x2): Particular equipment supplied to the character in coherence with the setting. Everyday items are taken for granted and do not fall under this trait.
* **Goal**: The long-term objective.
* **Motive**: What drives the pursuit of the goal.
* **Nemesis**: A person or organization that hinders the protagonist. It can emerge during the first game sessions, it may or may or not be the direct antagonist of the story, ready to appear to make life even more difficult
* **Luck**: The measure of a character’s ability to avoid ill fortune or an inauspicious outcome. It applies only in Conflicts and automatically recharges when they end. Luck starts and caps at 6.

These **traits** are described by **tags**, descriptive words or phrases that can identify anything in the game world. Even the **details** of the environment in which the action moves and **conditions** (physical or mental) of the characters are tags.

**They are qualitative representations. They are not quantitative measures.**

### Character Traits

You can use these traits to create a character on the fly, mix them, or just use them as inspiration.

## Character Traits

#### Concepts

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Cloaked Avenger | Shadow Walker | Merciless Judge | Night Stalker | Grim Executioner | Masked Vigilante |
| 2 | Vengeful Sleuth | Truth Seeker | Relentless Hunter | Dark Detective | Justice Bringer | Phantom Nemesis |
| 3 | Brutal Enforcer | Terror Incarnate | Silent Death | Urban Predator | Moral Compass | Shadowed Crusader |
| 4 | Lethal Protector | Nightmare Walker | Guilty Conscience | Street Phantom | Merciless Angel | Righteous Fury |
| 5 | Broken Idealist | Reformed Criminal | Haunted Veteran | Dual Personality | Obsessed Avenger | Living Weapon |
| 6 | Master of Fear | Criminal Genius | Corrupt Official | Reluctant Hero | Tortured Soul | Urban Myth |

#### Skills

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Mind Reader | Master Disguise | Rooftop Runner | Lock Picker | Truth Serum | Shadow Blend |
| 2 | Intimidation | Martial Artist | Sharpshooter | Explosive Expert | Voice Mimic | Escape Artist |
| 3 | Criminal Network | Police Contact | Forensic Eye | Street Informant | Safe Cracker | Knife Fighter |
| 4 | Pain Immunity | Photographic Memory | Quick Draw | Lie Detector | Torture Techniques | Silent Movement |
| 5 | Chemical Knowledge | Trap Setter | Crowd Manipulator | Fear Projector | Evidence Planter | Wound Ignorer |
| 6 | Radio Operator | Hypnotist | Acrobat | Demolitions | Master Tracker | Combat Surgeon |

#### Frailties

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Guilty Conscience | Obsessive | Wanted by Police | Haunted Past | Double Identity | Trust Issues |
| 2 | Violent Temper | Substance Dependent | Physical Scar | Moral Rigidity | Paranoid | Social Outcast |
| 3 | Blackmailed | Family Hostage | Memory Gaps | Chronic Pain | Marked for Death | Code of Honor |
| 4 | Unstable Mind | Corrupt Contact | Old Enemy | Addiction | Nightmares | Reckless |
| 5 | Secret Exposed | Loved One Target | Authority Figure | Debt Owed | Mercy Weakness | Identity Crisis |
| 6 | Physical Disability | Emotional Trauma | Legal Troubles | Religious Conflict | Age Catching Up | Betrayed Before |

#### Gear

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Twin .45s | Smoke Bombs | Grappling Hook | Trench Knife | Truth Serum | Gas Mask |
| 2 | Armored Coat | Lock Picks | Throwing Knives | Disguise Kit | Radio Set | First Aid Kit |
| 3 | Rope & Harness | Brass Knuckles | Chloroform | Camera | Binoculars | Crowbar |
| 4 | Skeleton Keys | Flash Powder | Silenced Pistol | Caltrops | Wiretap Device | Emergency Cash |
| 5 | Poison Capsules | Bulletproof Vest | Signal Flares | Glass Cutter | Fingerprint Kit | Medical Supplies |
| 6 | Tear Gas | Steel-Toed Boots | Pocket Watch | Hip Flask | Handcuffs | Backup Weapon |

### Names

#### Female Names

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Diana | Victoria | Margaret | Eleanor | Catherine | Vivian |
| 2 | Helen | Dorothy | Frances | Ruth | Alice | Rose |
| 3 | Marie | Florence | Edith | Grace | Anna | Clara |
| 4 | Martha | Louise | Lillian | Gladys | Irene | Pearl |
| 5 | Ethel | Hazel | Mildred | Gertrude | Stella | Eva |
| 6 | Beatrice | Josephine | Agnes | Ruby | Mabel | Viola |

#### Male Names

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Richard | Charles | William | Thomas | Robert | Edward |
| 2 | Frank | Arthur | Henry | George | Walter | Harold |
| 3 | Albert | Samuel | Louis | David | Frederick | Ernest |
| 4 | Ralph | Joseph | Edgar | Raymond | Howard | Victor |
| 5 | Lawrence | Leonard | Vincent | Theodore | Kenneth | Eugene |
| 6 | Clarence | Bernard | Jerome | Maurice | Chester | Harvey |

#### Surnames

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Blackwood | Ashford | Sterling | Hartwell | Grimm | Kane |
| 2 | Steele | Cross | Stone | Sharp | Dark | Grey |
| 3 | Hunter | Walker | Knight | Bishop | Judge | King |
| 4 | Shadow | Raven | Crow | Wolf | Fox | Hawk |
| 5 | Winters | Storm | Rivers | Hill | Vale | West |
| 6 | Blake | Reed | Ward | Bell | Cole | Price |

#### Nicknames

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | The Shadow | Spider | Phantom | Wraith | Ghost | Specter |
| 2 | Reaper | Judge | Executioner | Avenger | Hunter | Stalker |
| 3 | Nightmare | Terror | Fear | Dread | Doom | Death |
| 4 | Razor | Blade | Steel | Iron | Stone | Bullet |
| 5 | Whisper | Silence | Echo | Voice | Truth | Justice |
| 6 | Mask | Cloak | Hood | Cape | Shroud | Veil |

## Rules

*Loner: Pulp Heroes* is a minimalist Solo Role Playing Game designed to be played with only one character (the Protagonist). You’ll guide them through the story that will unravel during the game, asking closed questions to an Oracle which will help you overturn your expectations.

Every now and then you will be surprised with an unexpected twist!

### Keep The Action In Motion

A game in *Loner: Pulp Heroes* is a succession of scenes. A scene is a unit of time in which a certain action takes place in pursuit of a certain short-term goal.

In *Loner: Pulp Heroes* at each scene: 1. **Identify what you expect from the scene**. Compared to traits, goal, and motivation determine the Protagonist’s action. What might be the reaction of the game world? 2. **Test your expectations**. When you are uncertain (or overconfident) about the reaction to your actions, [ask the Oracle](#consulting-the-oracle) a closed question (answer is Yes or No), considering the tags involved to determine if there is an [Advantage or Disadvantage](#advantage-and-disadvantage). 3. **Interpret the result**. Is the Oracle’s answer in line with your expectations? If not, in the context in which the scene takes place, how should an answer that subverts them be considered?

This sequence will come to you naturally after some practice. Use it as a guideline the first few times.

### Consulting the Oracle

When you need to test your expectations you’ll ask the Oracle a closed question.

You’ll need 2d6 in one color (**Chance Dice**), and 2d6 in another (**Risk Dice**).

To resolve a closed question, roll one **Chance Die** and one **Risk Die**: - If the Chance Die is highest, the answer is **Yes**. - If the Risk Die is highest, the answer is **No**. - If both are low (3 or less), add a **but…**. - If both are high (4 or more), add an **and…**. - If both are equal, the answer is **Yes, but…**. Add a point to the [**Twist Counter**](#twist-counter).

| Dice Value | Chance Die > Risk Die | Risk Die > Chance Die |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Both < 4 | Yes, but… | No, but… |
| Both > 3 | Yes, and… | No, and… |
| Mismatched | Yes | No |
|  |  |  |
| Equal | Add 1 to the Twist Counter |  |

### Advantage and Disadvantage

If circumstances or positive tags grant an advantage, add a **Chance Die** to the roll. Otherwise, when hindrances or negative tag cause a disadvantage, add a **Risk Die**. In both cases keep only the higher die of the added type when you check the roll.

Consider tags **intuitively and not quantitatively**, using the context of the situation at play. It is important to keep the flow of play fast and not accounting for advantages and disadvantages numerically!

### Twist Counter

The Twist Counter is a measure of the rising tension in the narrative. At the beginning is set to 0. Every time a double throw (dice are equal) happens, add 1 to the Counter. If the Counter is below three, consider the answer as “**Yes, but…**”. Otherwise a **Twist** happens and resets the Counter.

Roll 2d6 and consult the following Twist Table to determine what kind of twist happens.

| D6 | Subject | Action |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | A third party | Appears |
| 2 | The hero | Alters the location |
| 3 | An encounter | Helps the hero |
| 4 | A physical event | Hinders the hero |
| 5 | An emotional event | Changes the goal |
| 6 | An object | Ends the scene |

Interpret the two-word sentence in the context of the current scene. Twists will keep the plot and events going in unexpected ways.

### Pulp Hero Mechanics

#### Secret Identity

Your hero maintains a dual existence. When operating in their civilian identity, they gain advantage on social interactions but disadvantage on intimidation. When in their hero persona, the reverse is true. Switching identities takes a full scene and requires a safe location.

#### Terror and Intimidation

Pulp heroes inspire fear in criminals. When using intimidation against common thugs or corrupt officials, gain advantage. However, this reputation precedes you - organized crime and occult enemies are prepared for your methods and may have advantage against you.

#### The Code

Most pulp heroes operate by a personal code (never kill, protect innocents, truth above all, etc.). Following your code grants advantage on related rolls, but breaking it causes you to lose 1 Luck immediately and gain the “Guilt” condition until you make amends.

#### Investigation Chains

When investigating, successful oracle questions can create “leads.” Track these as tags. Having multiple related leads grants advantage on major revelation attempts, but false leads (from failed questions) give disadvantage.

### Conflicts

A *Conflict* is any situation in which opponents clash, attacking, defending, or wearing each other down in order to win. This applies both in a practical and metaphorical sense.

So, a Conflict is not only limited to combat (or fighting) in the strict sense but also to competitive situations (such as contests, duels, verbal confrontations, etc.) in which two or more characters (including vehicles, of course!) compete.

Conflicts can be resolved in different ways depending on preferences and context: 1. Ask a single closed question. The Oracle’s answer determines the outcome of the conflict. 2. Ask a series of closed questions to resolve current single actions. 3. Use the rules of Harm & Luck below.

Note that the Twist Counter **does not apply** to Harm & Luck. Instead, it is used regularly if the Conflict is handled with closed questions.

If the conflict is resolved by applying damage to the Luck trait, roll the dice to determine whether the protagonist causes damage to the opponent or suffers damage due to counterattack or failed defense. The rolls are player facing only.

The damage reduces the Luck of the target, whether protagonist or NPC. When the Luck runs out, the character has lost the conflict.

The final outcome depends on the context. Do you get caught? Are you seriously injured? You may even die if that fits the narrative.

| Answer | Do you get what you want? | Harm |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes, and… | You get what you want, and something else. | Cause 3 |
| Yes… | You get what you want. | Cause 2 |
| Yes, but… | You get what you want, but at a cost. | Cause 1 |
| No, but… | You don’t get what you want, but it’s not a total loss. | Take 1 |
| No… | You don’t get what you were after. | Take 2 |
| No, and… | You don’t get what you want, and things get worse. | Take 3 |

### Determine the mood of the next scene

At the end of the current scene sometimes you will be clear about the direction to take, other times you may need to determine the general mood of the next one. In this case roll 1d6 and consult the following table:

| D6 | Next Scene |
| --- | --- |
| 1-3 | Dramatic scene |
| 4-5 | Quiet Scene |
| 6 | Meanwhile… |

* A **dramatic scene** does not break the tension of the previous scene but carries it further forward, introducing further obstacles or difficulties.
* During a **quiet scene** there is time to take a breath, to heal, to make plans for the next steps and to deepen relationships.
* A **meanwhile scene** takes place somewhere else, other than where the hero is. It cuts to villains or other plot-important characters.

### Open-Ended Question or Get Inspired

To answer an Open-Ended question, roll 1d6 once on each of the Inspiration Tables (roll at least a verb and a noun, adjectives are optional).

### When the story ends

At the end of the adventure you may add another trait to the character. It is better that this is related to how the story just ended and can be either a Skill, Gear, a new Frailty, or even a new Nemesis! You can also modify an existing trait to better represent an enhanced expertise.

Also update the list of **NPCs**, **Locations**, and **Events** that may show up again in future adventures.

## Creatures & Foes

### Criminal Mastermind

* **Concept**: Brilliant Schemer
* **Skills**: Master Manipulator, Criminal Network
* **Frailty**: Overconfident
* **Gear**: Hidden Weapons, Loyal Bodyguards
* **Goal**: Control the city
* **Motive**: Power and wealth
* **Nemesis**: The hero who keeps interfering

### Corrupt Police Commissioner

* **Concept**: Bought Authority
* **Skills**: Political Connections, Evidence Tampering
* **Frailty**: Blackmail Vulnerability
* **Gear**: Police Resources, Planted Evidence
* **Goal**: Maintain position
* **Motive**: Greed and self-preservation
* **Nemesis**: Honest cops

### Cult High Priest

* **Concept**: Occult Fanatic
* **Skills**: Ritual Magic, Mind Control
* **Frailty**: Religious Obsession
* **Gear**: Ancient Tome, Sacrificial Knife
* **Goal**: Summon dark entity
* **Motive**: Divine power
* **Nemesis**: Those who deny the truth

### Mad Scientist

* **Concept**: Deranged Genius
* **Skills**: Chemical Expertise, Surgical Precision
* **Frailty**: Unstable Mind
* **Gear**: Experimental Serum, Laboratory
* **Goal**: Perfect human evolution
* **Motive**: Scientific advancement
* **Nemesis**: Ethical limitations

### Crime Boss Enforcer

* **Concept**: Professional Killer
* **Skills**: Expert Marksman, Intimidation
* **Frailty**: Loyalty Bound
* **Gear**: Tommy Gun, Bulletproof Vest
* **Goal**: Complete the contract
* **Motive**: Professional pride
* **Nemesis**: Rival hitmen

### Crooked Judge

* **Concept**: Corrupt Magistrate
* **Skills**: Legal Manipulation, Bribery Network
* **Frailty**: Gambling Addiction
* **Gear**: Court Authority, Secret Files
* **Goal**: Accumulate wealth
* **Motive**: Lifestyle maintenance
* **Nemesis**: Honest lawyers

### Foreign Spy

* **Concept**: International Agent
* **Skills**: Master Disguise, Sabotage
* **Frailty**: Divided Loyalty
* **Gear**: Code Book, Hidden Radio
* **Goal**: Steal military secrets
* **Motive**: National duty
* **Nemesis**: Counter-intelligence

### Industrialist Tycoon

* **Concept**: Ruthless Businessman
* **Skills**: Financial Manipulation, Political Influence
* **Frailty**: Public Image
* **Gear**: Corporate Resources, Private Army
* **Goal**: Monopolize industries
* **Motive**: Ultimate profit
* **Nemesis**: Worker unions

### Asylum Escapee

* **Concept**: Dangerous Lunatic
* **Skills**: Unpredictable Behavior, Pain Immunity
* **Frailty**: Medication Dependent
* **Gear**: Improvised Weapons, Straitjacket
* **Goal**: Revenge on doctors
* **Motive**: Twisted justice
* **Nemesis**: Mental health system

### Black Market Smuggler

* **Concept**: Underground Trader
* **Skills**: Contraband Networks, Bribery
* **Frailty**: Paranoid
* **Gear**: Hidden Compartments, Armed Guards
* **Goal**: Expand territory
* **Motive**: Easy money
* **Nemesis**: Federal agents

### Occult Assassin

* **Concept**: Mystical Killer
* **Skills**: Ritual Murder, Shadow Walking
* **Frailty**: Bound by Rules
* **Gear**: Cursed Blade, Protective Amulets
* **Goal**: Complete the prophecy
* **Motive**: Dark covenant
* **Nemesis**: Holy symbols

### Corrupt Reporter

* **Concept**: Bought Journalist
* **Skills**: Information Gathering, Public Manipulation
* **Frailty**: Alcohol Dependent
* **Gear**: Press Credentials, Camera
* **Goal**: Protect sponsors
* **Motive**: Career survival
* **Nemesis**: Honest news

### Gang Lieutenant

* **Concept**: Street Soldier
* **Skills**: Street Fighting, Territory Control
* **Frailty**: Hot Tempered
* **Gear**: Switchblade, Brass Knuckles
* **Goal**: Earn promotion
* **Motive**: Respect and fear
* **Nemesis**: Rival gangs

### Deranged Inventor

* **Concept**: Mad Tinkerer
* **Skills**: Death Traps, Mechanical Genius
* **Frailty**: Perfectionist
* **Gear**: Killing Machines, Workshop
* **Goal**: Perfect murder device
* **Motive**: Intellectual challenge
* **Nemesis**: Simple solutions

### Hypnotist Villain

* **Concept**: Master of Minds
* **Skills**: Hypnotic Control, Psychological Manipulation
* **Frailty**: Relies on Eye Contact
* **Gear**: Pocket Watch, Stage Props
* **Goal**: Control prominent citizens
* **Motive**: Ultimate authority
* **Nemesis**: Strong-willed individuals

### Socialite Spy

* **Concept**: High Society Agent
* **Skills**: Social Infiltration, Seduction
* **Frailty**: Luxury Dependent
* **Gear**: Jewelry Weapons, Social Connections
* **Goal**: Extract secrets
* **Motive**: Thrill of deception
* **Nemesis**: Suspicious rivals

### Rogue Detective

* **Concept**: Dirty Cop
* **Skills**: Police Procedure, Evidence Planting
* **Frailty**: Guilt Ridden
* **Gear**: Police Badge, Service Weapon
* **Goal**: Cover past crimes
* **Motive**: Self-preservation
* **Nemesis**: Internal affairs

### Cult Assassin

* **Concept**: Religious Killer
* **Skills**: Silent Murder, Fanatical Devotion
* **Frailty**: Blind Faith
* **Gear**: Sacred Weapons, Holy Symbols
* **Goal**: Eliminate heretics
* **Motive**: Divine command
* **Nemesis**: Religious authorities

### Political Fixer

* **Concept**: Behind-Scenes Operator
* **Skills**: Blackmail Expert, Vote Buying
* **Frailty**: Too Many Enemies
* **Gear**: Dirt Files, Cash Reserves
* **Goal**: Control elections
* **Motive**: Political power
* **Nemesis**: Reform candidates

### Underground Fighter

* **Concept**: Brutal Pugilist
* **Skills**: Devastating Punches, Pain Endurance
* **Frailty**: Fighting Addiction
* **Gear**: Weighted Gloves, Medical Supplies
* **Goal**: Championship belt
* **Motive**: Glory and money
* **Nemesis**: Faster opponents

### Fence and Forger

* **Concept**: Criminal Facilitator
* **Skills**: Document Forgery, Stolen Goods Network
* **Frailty**: Risk Averse
* **Gear**: Printing Equipment, Hidden Vault
* **Goal**: Stay invisible
* **Motive**: Steady profit
* **Nemesis**: Police raids

### Corrupt Priest

* **Concept**: False Shepherd
* **Skills**: Congregation Manipulation, Confession Secrets
* **Frailty**: Crisis of Faith
* **Gear**: Church Authority, Donation Money
* **Goal**: Maintain facade
* **Motive**: Fear of exposure
* **Nemesis**: True believers

### Experimental Subject

* **Concept**: Lab Creation
* **Skills**: Enhanced Strength, Regeneration
* **Frailty**: Unstable Condition
* **Gear**: Restraining Device, Medical Implants
* **Goal**: Escape containment
* **Motive**: Freedom from pain
* **Nemesis**: Creating scientists

### Nightclub Owner

* **Concept**: Entertainment Mogul
* **Skills**: Social Networks, Money Laundering
* **Frailty**: Public Reputation
* **Gear**: Establishment Resources, Armed Bouncers
* **Goal**: Expand empire
* **Motive**: Wealth and influence
* **Nemesis**: Temperance movement

### International Terrorist

* **Concept**: Political Extremist
* **Skills**: Bomb Making, Cell Networks
* **Frailty**: Ideological Tunnel Vision
* **Gear**: Explosives, Safe Houses
* **Goal**: Destabilize government
* **Motive**: Revolutionary fervor
* **Nemesis**: Federal agents

### Crime Family Matriarch

* **Concept**: Underworld Mother
* **Skills**: Family Loyalty, Strategic Planning
* **Frailty**: Protective Instincts
* **Gear**: Family Resources, Hidden Assets
* **Goal**: Protect the bloodline
* **Motive**: Maternal duty
* **Nemesis**: Rival families

### Occult Librarian

* **Concept**: Forbidden Knowledge Keeper
* **Skills**: Ancient Languages, Ritual Research
* **Frailty**: Obsessed with Learning
* **Gear**: Cursed Books, Protective Wards
* **Goal**: Preserve dark wisdom
* **Motive**: Academic pursuit
* **Nemesis**: Book burners

### Radio Villain

* **Concept**: Broadcast Manipulator
* **Skills**: Mass Hypnosis, Technical Broadcasting
* **Frailty**: Equipment Dependent
* **Gear**: Radio Station, Transmission Equipment
* **Goal**: Control public opinion
* **Motive**: Social engineering
* **Nemesis**: Counter-broadcasts

### Circus Performer

* **Concept**: Deadly Entertainer
* **Skills**: Acrobatic Combat, Animal Training
* **Frailty**: Show Must Go On
* **Gear**: Performance Weapons, Trained Animals
* **Goal**: Perfect the act
* **Motive**: Artistic expression
* **Nemesis**: Audience expectations

### Government Agent

* **Concept**: Federal Operative
* **Skills**: Investigation, Surveillance
* **Frailty**: Bureaucratic Constraints
* **Gear**: Government Resources, Badge Authority
* **Goal**: Complete the mission
* **Motive**: National security
* **Nemesis**: Corrupt politicians

### Opium Den Operator

* **Concept**: Vice Merchant
* **Skills**: Chemical Knowledge, Customer Control
* **Frailty**: Product Addiction
* **Gear**: Drug Supplies, Loyal Addicts
* **Goal**: Expand customer base
* **Motive**: Easy profits
* **Nemesis**: Anti-drug crusaders

### Vigilante Rival

* **Concept**: Competing Hero
* **Skills**: Similar Methods, Different Code
* **Frailty**: Refuses Cooperation
* **Gear**: Comparable Equipment, Secret Base
* **Goal**: Clean up the city
* **Motive**: Personal vendetta
* **Nemesis**: Other vigilantes

### Asylum Doctor

* **Concept**: Mind Breaker
* **Skills**: Psychological Torture, Medical Authority
* **Frailty**: God Complex
* **Gear**: Medical Equipment, Patient Records
* **Goal**: Perfect mind control
* **Motive**: Scientific advancement
* **Nemesis**: Patient advocates

### Art Forger

* **Concept**: Cultural Criminal
* **Skills**: Artistic Reproduction, Authentication Fraud
* **Frailty**: Artistic Pride
* **Gear**: Art Supplies, Gallery Connections
* **Goal**: Create perfect fake
* **Motive**: Artistic challenge
* **Nemesis**: Art experts

### Dock Worker Boss

* **Concept**: Labor Controller
* **Skills**: Union Manipulation, Cargo Theft
* **Frailty**: Worker Dependent
* **Gear**: Dock Access, Loyal Workers
* **Goal**: Control shipping
* **Motive**: Economic power
* **Nemesis**: Honest workers

### Society Blackmailer

* **Concept**: Secret Trader
* **Skills**: Information Gathering, Social Infiltration
* **Frailty**: Vulnerable to Exposure
* **Gear**: Compromising Photos, Safe Deposit Box
* **Goal**: Accumulate secrets
* **Motive**: Power over elite
* **Nemesis**: Private investigators

### Chemical Plant Owner

* **Concept**: Industrial Poisoner
* **Skills**: Chemical Production, Environmental Damage
* **Frailty**: Profit Obsessed
* **Gear**: Factory Resources, Chemical Weapons
* **Goal**: Maximize production
* **Motive**: Industrial dominance
* **Nemesis**: Environmental activists

## Adventure Tables

### Crime Scene Discoveries

| D66 | Discovery |
| --- | --- |
| 11 | Blood trail leading to a hidden passage |
| 12 | Cryptic message written in victim’s own blood |
| 13 | Missing finger with expensive ring still attached |
| 14 | Photograph of prominent citizen in compromising position |
| 15 | Vial of unknown chemical substance, still warm |
| 16 | Playing card with threatening message on the back |
| 21 | Bullet hole pattern suggests professional execution |
| 22 | Victim’s dying words recorded on dictaphone |
| 23 | Occult symbol carved into wooden floor |
| 24 | Expensive jewelry deliberately left behind |
| 25 | Police evidence bag already missing crucial items |
| 26 | Window locked from the inside, no other exit |
| 31 | Victim was tortured for information before death |
| 32 | False identity papers hidden in secret compartment |
| 33 | Chemical burn marks on furniture and walls |
| 34 | Professional safe cracked but nothing stolen |
| 35 | Multiple sets of footprints, one barefoot |
| 36 | Expensive fountain pen with initials not victim’s |
| 41 | Radio still tuned to mysterious frequency |
| 42 | Victim’s appointment book has today’s page torn out |
| 43 | Mechanical device with timer still counting down |
| 44 | Fresh flowers arranged in ritualistic pattern |
| 45 | Map with several locations circled in red ink |
| 46 | Telephone receiver off the hook, line still open |
| 51 | Victim dressed in clothes too expensive for them |
| 52 | Witness reports seeing victim after time of death |
| 53 | Door was barricaded from the inside |
| 54 | Foreign coins scattered around the body |
| 55 | Medical instruments suggest surgical precision |
| 56 | Victim’s personal effects replaced with identical fakes |
| 61 | Mirrors in room all turned to face the wall |
| 62 | Fresh cigarette ash from expensive brand |
| 63 | Victim’s shadow burned into the wall behind them |
| 64 | Anonymous threatening letter dated tomorrow |
| 65 | Victim appears to have died from extreme fear |
| 66 | Crime scene perfectly matches newspaper report from 1923 |

### Underworld Contacts

| D66 | Contact |
| --- | --- |
| 11 | Nervous pawn shop owner who sees everything |
| 12 | Retired boxer who runs underground gambling |
| 13 | Taxi driver who works exclusively night shifts |
| 14 | Corrupt morgue attendant who alters death certificates |
| 15 | Speakeasy bartender who remembers every conversation |
| 16 | Dock worker who knows which ships carry illegal cargo |
| 21 | Newspaper vendor who overhears police radio chatter |
| 22 | Hotel clerk who rents rooms to people with no names |
| 23 | Telephone operator who eavesdrops on calls |
| 24 | Janitor who cleans offices of powerful people |
| 25 | Librarian who tracks who reads what forbidden books |
| 26 | Seamstress who mends bullet holes in expensive clothes |
| 31 | Street photographer who captures compromising images |
| 32 | Ambulance driver who asks no questions about injuries |
| 33 | Theater usher who notices who meets in dark balconies |
| 34 | Bank teller who processes suspicious large deposits |
| 35 | Florist who delivers anonymous funeral arrangements |
| 36 | Shoe shine boy who overhears conversations |
| 41 | Diner cook who serves late-night meetings |
| 42 | Museum guard who knows which artifacts are fake |
| 43 | Church organist who sees who confesses what sins |
| 44 | Pharmacy clerk who fills prescriptions without questions |
| 45 | Radio repair technician who monitors private frequencies |
| 46 | Tailor who knows everyone’s measurements by heart |
| 51 | Gravedigger who buries more than just the dead |
| 52 | Elevator operator who knows everyone’s destinations |
| 53 | Hat check girl who reads the contents of coat pockets |
| 54 | Pool hall owner who arranges more than just games |
| 55 | Postal clerk who knows which mail never gets delivered |
| 56 | Ice delivery man who enters homes when no one’s watching |
| 61 | Street sweeper who finds what people drop deliberately |
| 62 | Theater prop master who provides realistic weapons |
| 63 | Veterinarian who treats wounds that aren’t from animals |
| 64 | Accountant who balances books that don’t add up |
| 65 | Locksmith who makes keys for doors that don’t exist |
| 66 | Fortune teller who predicts deaths with suspicious accuracy |

### Corruption Schemes

| D66 | Scheme |
| --- | --- |
| 11 | Police evidence room being robbed from the inside |
| 12 | Judge taking bribes through fake charity donations |
| 13 | Mayor’s office selling building permits to highest bidder |
| 14 | Fire department started fires to justify budget increases |
| 15 | City coroner falsifying cause of death certificates |
| 16 | Public works department using inferior materials for construction |
| 21 | Prison warden releasing dangerous criminals for payment |
| 22 | Health inspector ignoring violations in exchange for bribes |
| 23 | City councilman rezoning property for criminal enterprises |
| 24 | Police commissioner hiring criminals as informants |
| 25 | District attorney throwing cases for organized crime |
| 26 | Building inspector approving unsafe structures |
| 31 | Tax assessor undervaluing property for wealthy friends |
| 32 | City treasurer embezzling funds through ghost employees |
| 33 | Harbor master allowing untaxed cargo through customs |
| 34 | School board purchasing supplies from family businesses |
| 35 | Hospital administrator selling bodies to medical schools |
| 36 | Utility company overcharging customers and splitting profits |
| 41 | Public defender deliberately losing cases |
| 42 | City clerk selling birth certificates and death records |
| 43 | Transportation chief rigging public transit contracts |
| 44 | Parks commissioner selling public land to developers |
| 45 | Library director hiding banned books for private collectors |
| 46 | Post office supervisor intercepting mail for blackmail |
| 51 | Water department contaminating supply to force people to move |
| 52 | Housing authority condemning good buildings for kickbacks |
| 53 | Public health officer covering up disease outbreaks |
| 54 | City engineer approving faulty bridge and tunnel plans |
| 55 | Election official stuffing ballot boxes |
| 56 | Sanitation chief dumping waste in poor neighborhoods |
| 61 | Zoning board member taking bribes to change land use |
| 62 | Public safety director selling confiscated weapons |
| 63 | City auditor creating fake records to hide theft |
| 64 | License bureau selling permits to unqualified applicants |
| 65 | Social services director selling children to wealthy families |
| 66 | City planning commission destroying historical districts for profit |

### Occult Mysteries

| D66 | Mystery |
| --- | --- |
| 11 | Ancient symbols appearing carved into modern buildings |
| 12 | Missing persons all disappeared during the new moon |
| 13 | Library books rearranging themselves into ritual patterns |
| 14 | Photographs developing images of people who weren’t there |
| 15 | Radio broadcasts in dead languages during thunderstorms |
| 16 | Mirrors reflecting rooms that don’t exist in the building |
| 21 | Cemetery statues found in different positions each morning |
| 22 | Mechanical clocks running backwards in certain buildings |
| 23 | Fresh flowers wilting instantly when touched by specific people |
| 24 | Shadows moving independently of the people casting them |
| 25 | Animals gathering in unusual patterns around murder scenes |
| 26 | Rain falling upward in a perfect circle downtown |
| 31 | Museum artifacts aging rapidly when removed from display |
| 32 | Newspaper headlines changing when no one is looking |
| 33 | Telephone calls coming from numbers that don’t exist |
| 34 | Elevator buttons pressing themselves to go to floor 13 |
| 35 | Church bells ringing funeral tolls for people still alive |
| 36 | Street lamps flickering in sequence to spell out words |
| 41 | Bank vault found filled with sand despite being sealed |
| 42 | Hospital patients sharing identical nightmares |
| 43 | School children speaking in ancient languages fluently |
| 44 | Restaurant food spoiling in perfect geometric patterns |
| 45 | Theater performances continuing after all actors have left |
| 46 | Hotel guests checking out of rooms that were never occupied |
| 51 | Police station evidence room containing items from unsolved future crimes |
| 52 | City fountain running red with liquid that isn’t blood |
| 53 | Department store mannequins found in different poses each day |
| 54 | Subway trains arriving at stations that aren’t on any map |
| 55 | Office building elevators occasionally going to floors that don’t exist |
| 56 | Public park trees growing in perfect occult symbol formations |
| 61 | Weather patterns forming ancient mystical symbols over the city |
| 62 | Construction sites revealing buried temples underneath modern foundations |
| 63 | Radio static organizing itself into voices speaking prophecies |
| 64 | Automobile accidents occurring in patterns matching constellation maps |
| 65 | Multiple witnesses reporting the same impossible person in different locations |
| 66 | Time moving at different speeds in various neighborhoods |

### Inspiration Tables

#### Verbs

| Verbs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Stalks | Hunts | Tracks | Follows | Pursues | Corners |
| 2 | Betrays | Deceives | Lies | Tricks | Cons | Fools |
| 3 | Threatens | Intimidates | Menaces | Terrifies | Scares | Haunts |
| 4 | Investigates | Searches | Explores | Examines | Studies | Probes |
| 5 | Escapes | Flees | Runs | Hides | Vanishes | Disappears |
| 6 | Confronts | Challenges | Accuses | Exposes | Reveals | Unmasks |

#### Adjectives

| Adjectives | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Dark | Shadow | Hidden | Secret | Mysterious | Occult |
| 2 | Corrupt | Dirty | Rotten | Crooked | Evil | Wicked |
| 3 | Deadly | Lethal | Fatal | Dangerous | Harmful | Toxic |
| 4 | False | Fake | Forged | Counterfeit | Phony | Deceiving |
| 5 | Ancient | Old | Forgotten | Lost | Buried | Sealed |
| 6 | Bloody | Violent | Brutal | Savage | Ruthless | Merciless |

#### Nouns

| Nouns | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Evidence | Witness | Clue | Trail | Lead | Proof |
| 2 | Contract | Deal | Agreement | Bargain | Pact | Treaty |
| 3 | Weapon | Gun | Knife | Poison | Bomb | Trap |
| 4 | Document | Letter | File | Report | Record | Message |
| 5 | Identity | Face | Name | Past | Secret | Truth |
| 6 | Revenge | Justice | Judgment | Punishment | Retribution | Vengeance |

## Appendix: Inspirational Media

### Books

* The Shadow series by Walter B. Gibson
* The Spider series by Norvell W. Page
* The Avenger series by Kenneth Robeson
* Doc Savage series by Kenneth Robeson (Lester Dent)
* The Phantom Detective series by various authors
* Black Mask Magazine stories
* Dashiell Hammett’s Continental Op stories
* Raymond Chandler’s Philip Marlowe novels

### Films

* The Shadow (1994)
* The Phantom (1996)
* The Rocketeer (1991)
* Dick Tracy (1990)
* The Spirit (2008)
* Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow (2004)
* The Maltese Falcon (1941)
* Double Indemnity (1944)

### TV Series

* The Shadow radio show (1937-1954)
* Batman: The Animated Series (1992-1995)
* The Untouchables (1959-1963)
* Boardwalk Empire (2010-2014)

### Comics

* The Shadow comic series
* The Spider comic adaptations
* Batman: Year One by Frank Miller
* The Spirit by Will Eisner
* Sandman Mystery Theatre by Matt Wagner
* Criminal by Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips

### Games

* Call of Cthulhu RPG (1920s setting)
* GURPS Cliffhangers
* Pulp Hero (HERO System)
* Spirit of the Century (Fate System)
* Dime Adventures (Ubiquity System)

## License

Loner: Pulp Heroes

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