

# THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE

••••• **ROLE PLAYING IN** •••••

## *The* MINISTRY *of* PECULIAR OCCURRENCES



A Fate Core RPG by  
J.R. Blackwell & P.J. Snyder



**ICK CHILDREN?**

**EEBLE GRANNY?**

**OT ONE PENNY  
O YOUR NAME?**

**OU POOR WRETCH!**

**THE ASHFIELD CLINIC**  
IS THE  
PERFECT  
PLACE  
AND YOUR LO

the illustrious DOCTOR SMITH  
the cutting edge of medical advances  
all free of any and all charges for the  
are most destitute & downtrodden

Our patients leave so fit the  
often seek employment abroad

YOU A CONCERNED CITIZEN WHO FEELS AS IF

**EMPIRE**  
AS FALLEN DOWN AND GONE TO SEED?

CITIZEN, DO YOU FEEL AS IF NOTHING HAS  
**IMPROVED**  
SINCE THE LOSS OF THE AMERICAN COLONIES?

**VE FEEL THE SAME!**  
**OU NEED THE PHEONIX SOCIETY!**

and your particulars to DR. DEVERAUX HAVELOCK  
Skyfall Estate, 1 Lionsgate Way.

are an exclusive, noteworthy & completely discreet  
society with nothing less than a priority dedication to  
concerns, destiny & well-being of the classic British  
gentleman.

Upon review, we find your lineage acceptable & your  
particulars are in order, we will contact you.

ITEM: Visit newly-opened RAVEN'S MASQUERADE  
your next costumed ball or other entirely legitimate  
reason to obscure your appearance! A selection of the  
highest quality mustaches, body-shape garments &  
added shoes of the wrong size that, when leaving any  
impression in the earth, will not give away your true size!

No request too bizarre! Ask for: THE BARON!

you need evidence for divorce, bigamy, county court,  
other cases? Do you feel you cannot turn to the local &  
conventional authorities? Have you lost something that  
more than precious and do not know to whom to turn?

**CALL ON SINGH**

Detective AISHWARYA SINGH and her staff of highly  
trained & inordinately perceptive lady investigators  
are at your service! No stone will be left unturned, no  
guilt unquestioned, no guilty party unapprehended!  
That's the SINGH DETECTIVE AGENCY promise!

ITEM: In hot water with the constabulary? Need to get  
out of town fast? Travel the Skies with THE BARON!  
Inquire with the old witch woman sitting at the bar at the  
Dusty Raven pub by the docks (do not mention her eye)

ITEM: John & Jane Doe found in Thames. No clothing.  
Palms were stitched together in "prayer" position &  
"HE IS HERE" was branded on each back. Inquiries for  
identification should be made at the CITY MORGUE

ITEM: 豪斯昨晚被攻擊的老婦人。這個女人是重要督察。請  
任何有關這次攻擊的信息，應當報倫敦警方盡快 不要害怕

ITEM: Any and all information concerning "BARON"  
DRAGOMIR is hereby WANTED. He is a Pirate,  
Larcenist, Kidnapper, Insurrectionist & Assassin. Last  
seen on the Island of Skye plummeting to his apparent  
doom. There is reason to believe the reports of his death  
is greatly exaggerated, as are the fabrications that he is a  
wizard, vampire or a werewolf. Authorities believe this  
"BARON" is currently at large & diabolically dangerous

# THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE

HONOURS: Paris, 1838; Sydney, 1840; Cairo, 1842  
Melbourne, 1843; Calcutta, 1844; Hong Kong, 1846

THE RAY GUN  
OF THE AGE

ONLY EFFECTS  
SPENT CARTRIDGE



The above is the latest improvement in "the Ray Gun of the Age" & is supplied from 25 to 40 amperes, other ejectors from 16 amperes. We now supply the Apollion, the X-J 3 & the Farmer's Pride, from 40 amperes, centrifugal bore, or cloaked. New 144-page illustrated Catalogue for the season ready, larger choice & better value than ever. Our stock of sporting ray guns, rifles, and pistols is the largest and most varied of any one maker. Over 200 Ray Guns & Rifles to choose from!

TSUI MAN-KONG, RAYGUNMAKER, SHANGHAI  
{Est. 1825} {Telegrams: "Period, Shanghai"}

**DO YOU WALK THE STREETS  
UNPREPARED FOR ASSAILANTS?**

"It is to meet eventualities of the kind, where a person is  
confronted suddenly in an unexpected way, that I have  
introduced a new style of self-defence, which can be very  
terrible in the hands of a quick and confident exponent."

--E.W. Barton-Wright, creator of Bartitsu  
and founder of the Bartitsu Club

**BARTITSU**

has been devised with a view to impart to peacefully disposed  
men the science of defending themselves against ruffians or  
bullies, and comprises not only boxing but also the use of the  
stick, feet, & a very tricky & clever style of Japanese wrestling,  
in which weight and strength play only a very minor part.



**SHOULD APPEAL TO  
EVERY MAN & WOMAN**

who desires a graceful figure combined with healthy  
comfortable support. The Dominator Belt Corset is  
specially suited to those inclined to corpulency.



Join us daily from grateful wearers

**FOR BELTS CO**

strand (Charing Cross), London

**LATVINSKY & COMPANY**  
ESTABLISHED IN THE LAST CENTURY

(see that you have none other)

**RUSSIAN** as used in Moscow

classic flavor **COFFEE**

ONE SHILLING  
per Pound  
included

**A LUXURY**  
**NO LONGER UNKNOWN**

This is the  
Choicest &  
most Carefully  
Selected Coffee,  
'Roasted on the Russian  
Principle' & mixed with the  
Finest Minsk Chicory

LATVINSKY & COMPANY,  
274 Regent Circus, Oxford St

ITEM: Need to Leave Town? Desire an Employer Who  
Doesn't Ask Questions? Booted from the armed forces?  
Trouble with the law? Need coin quick? Then you, Sir  
Madam, should make haste & Travel the Skies with THE  
BARON! THE BARON can help even those with the  
most salted background with Gainful Employment on  
sky vessel the likes of which you have never before seen.  
Inquires should be delivered to the Dusty Raven pub  
No dress code.

ITEM: Test subjects needed for next breakthrough  
scientific discovery. Must have no fear of heights &  
of original teeth. Inquire at the Ministry of Peculiar  
Occurrences. Ask for Axelrod.

**TOTAL BALDNESS**

Everyone in America has  
heard about the extraordinary  
case of Christopher Doulas,  
of Philadelphia who  
became totally bald  
through a violent  
attack of fever, &  
whose hair was  
completely restored  
in less than six months  
by Van Knickerbocker's  
HIRSUTINE, the great  
American Hair Producer.  
We guarantee that there  
is no preparation in the  
world that so rapidly &  
surely produces profusions  
of Hair, Whiskers,  
Moustachios, Eyelashes, &  
Eyebrows as  
Van Knickerbocker's HIRSUTINE.



Van Knickerbocker & Sons, 11 Red Lion Court, Fleet

**DOC CADAVER'S**



# THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE



*Galileo Games, Inc.*

**THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE**

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## Introduction

# THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE

## A ROLE-PLAYING GAME OF THE TABLE TOP VARIETY

 The World of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences and the Noted Fate Core Combine So You  
and Your Compatriots Can Create Your Own Secret Agent Steampunk Adventure. 

## A LETTER FROM WELLINGTON THORNHILL BOOKS, ESQUIRE

WELLINGTON T. BOOKS, ESQ.  
Chief Archivist



LONDON OFFICE  
United Kingdom  
Archives

Welcome, Recruit, to your first day with the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences.

My name is Wellington Thornhill Books, Esquire, and I am the Chief Archivist of the Archives, the depository of all cases once completed. We also provide logistics for future missions based on the successes and failures of previous agents who have traversed in the field in the name of Her Majesty.

I cannot impress upon you the astounding possibilities now held within your hands. You are about to embark on amazing adventures of derring-do, of explaining the unexplained, and of facing dark forces bent on the downfall of the Empire. THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE is your guide and your greatest weapon against those who would oppose you. Within the rules of the Fate Core Gaming System reside THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE, where you join your fellow agents in the field. Armed with the latest technological advancements from Research and Design, you enter the field and carry out missions that challenge everything you accept as reality. You will use this book to prepare yourself for what lies ahead, and we at the Archives will be here to offer our full support in logistics, in history, and in your most important asset in the field — knowledge.

On behalf of the Ministry Director, Doctor Basil Sound, I and my Junior Archivist, Eliza D. Braun, welcome you to the fold. Welcome to the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences.

With greatest respect,

*Wellington Thornhill Books, Esq.*

Wellington Thornhill Books, Esquire  
Chief Archivist



## THE HOOK

The Ministry Initiative is a secret agent steampunk role-playing game using the Fate Core system. Based in the world of the novels, *The Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences*, Players take on the role of secret agents fighting against secret societies, sky pirates, and anyone who might threaten the world.

Fate Core is a character-based roleplaying system where the descriptions of the characters have mechanical impacts on playing the game. Easy to learn and play, Fate Core puts the Player characters, their motivations, skills, troubles and goals first during play.

## AN INTRODUCTION FOR OUR AGENTS

In *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE*, every Player is an Agent of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences, serving to protect the Queen and the British Empire. Agents must maintain a state of readiness to be deployed on missions at a mere moment's notice to anywhere within the British Empire and indeed, beyond.

This book does not contain the full breadth of what you need to know, dear Player, in order to carry out your missions successfully. It does not focus on the various cultures you will encounter nor replace the governing laws of any place your missions may take you. Rather, this book is intended to provide you with the basic sets of skills and fundamental knowledge required to be successful. The rest, brave Player, is up to you and the resourcefulness of your team.

As you embark on your missions, this book will apply to investigation both within the heart of the empire and far afield. Keep this book close and refer to it often. It could mean the difference between compelling your Fate or being compelled by the Game Master's will.

## AGENTS AND GAME MASTERS

*THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE* is a 3-6 player game about steampunk secret agents. Players can create their own unique characters, or use pre-generated characters supplied by this book. The game is facilitated by a Game Master who, with the Players, will create their own story in the world of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences. Powered by Fate Core, *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE* focuses on characters that lead a life of steampunk adventure.

## MINISTRY SETTING OVERVIEW

This book places you in a steampunk version of the Victorian age. As an agent, you could embark on missions within an England balanced between the beauty of enlightened science and the steam-driven wonder of industrial ingenuity or you could travel afar to any of the British Empire's colonies and even unexplored territories.

The supernatural, paranormal, and unexplained are to be found everywhere. Whether investigating the haunting of an old English manor, a particularly suspect artifact worn by a warrior in the African bush, or a mysterious murder of impossible circumstance, it is within your power to learn the true nature of things otherwise unexplained. And in many cases, do so before an enemy to the British Empire harnesses such mysteries to wield against Her Majesty, the Queen.

This is *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE*.





## Chapter One

# THE WORLD OF THE MINISTRY

## WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF THE MINISTRY OF PECULIAR OCCURRENCES

 On Steampunk in the Victorian Age, the British Empire, and the Mission of the Ministry. 

### MINISTRY BASICS

#### THE MINISTRY OF PECULIAR OCCURRENCES

*Umbris occultati, contra furorem  
'concealed by the shadows, against the fury'*

Join us, good Player, in the world of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences.

The mission of the Ministry is to investigate the odd, the peculiar, and the unknown. Agents of the Ministry research mysterious happenings and solve uncanny crimes that baffle normal law enforcement officials around the world. They encounter the impossible, the improbable, and the unimaginable, searching out the non-existent and finding that which has been lost.

A clandestine agency, the Ministry stands to protect the citizens of England and her colonies from the occult, the paranormal and nefarious secret societies posing a threat to Her Royal Majesty Queen Victoria and her Empire.

Only the best, brightest, and the very bravest of men and women become agents of the Ministry. And their stories, every mission, every adventure, shall be catalogued in the Archives to aid future agents.

#### HISTORY

*"When these things call for the attention of  
the Crown or threaten the preservation of  
the Empire, this is where and when your  
new ministry will step in and intervene."*

*~ A Nocturne for Alexandrina*

The Ministry was formed in the year 1840 during the reign of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria. Professor Culpepper Source made the request to the Queen himself in 1839 on a rather stifling summer afternoon. In a bold move, the professor requested an audience and invited the Queen to join him, alone, for an evening out in Avebury Circle and advised her to dress *warm*.

It is possible that such a contradictory request was irresistible to Her Majesty and what events came to pass proved to the Queen without a doubt that a new ministry must be formed to face the dangers no normal authority could define. Professor Source would have the brightest and most resourceful men and women drawn from every corner of the realm to be engaged in the preservation of Queen, Country, and Empire.

Indeed the beginnings of the Ministry began with staunch support from the Queen, making use of royal funding to establish a ground-breaking research and development department and employing field agents from every walk of life. Status or country of origin was not of consideration so much as the particular skills, wit, and courage a person could contribute to the Ministry's mission.

Over the decades, the Ministry has risen and fallen in the favor of the Queen. But it has ever continued in its



## STEAMPUNK IN THE MINISTRY

Among the rapid changes and numerous developments of the Victorian Age, advances in science have taken a particular twist towards complex steam-driven technology, with lighter-than-air ships for transportation, clockwork automatons, and mechanical computers being at the forefront. Victorian inventors have assembled their creations from materials such as iron and brass, even incorporating more esoteric elements to harness electricity and aether. Such fantastic combinations of innovation and creativity aid the Ministry in their missions.

Unfortunately, enemies of the Ministry have ways of obtaining such advancements in technology for their own dark purposes. Agents may find themselves not only investigating inexplicable circumstances brought about by such devices, but even life-threatening danger as some of these weapons are wielded against them.

Behind the technology characteristic of all that is steampunk is a much more elusive element. It is the innate curiosity of the adventurer, the courageous fire at the heart of the champion, and the refusal to be limited by any neatly boxed definition. It is the “punk” of steampunk, perhaps touching on anti-establishment sentiments and most definitely appealing to the optimism of the many in the potential of humankind.

Perhaps considered peculiar or viewed as outright radical, no steampunk is limited by terms such as “normal” or “ordinary.”

mission from the shadows of secrecy as Parliament and the citizens of the Empire continue their daily routines, unknowing and blissfully unaware of the inexplicable dangers both great and small neutralized by the Agents of the Ministry.

The Archives, hidden deep within the Ministry's London Office, contain the case files of the work of over 50 years by agents representing the Ministry's interests not only in London but various locations across the globe.

Cases of particular note would be the events surrounding Phoenix Rising in 1895 and the Janus Affair that following year.

### FASHION IN THE TIME OF QUEEN VICTORIA

Field agents of the Ministry are expected to blend in accordance to the dictates of any situation, however unusual. Ladies may even be expected to wear trousers, should motility take precedence over the conventional skirts of Victorian fashion. Of course, the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences is a **secret** agency and as such, agents are encouraged to dress appropriately to blend in with English society, especially when stationed or visiting the London headquarters.

Men are expected to dress as gentlemen with proper jackets or coats depending on time of day, and fitted vest if the suit is of a particular style. The proper tying of an ascot and the use of appropriate cuff links is paramount. Remember the devil is in the details, so agents are strongly reminded to always look their best.

Ladies are issued bullet-proof corsets as the work of a field agent is often quite dangerous. (Gentlemen may also wear such items, but such information is between them and their tailors.) Additional combat training may be necessary to account for dealing with the extra bulk of petticoats and bustled skirts. Parasols, as part of a par-

ticular outfit, may also be used in altercations with enemy agents. When attending more formal events, gowns should be altered subtly to accommodate weaponry including but not limited to small daggers and pistols.

If at all possible, practicality should not be gained at the cost of aesthetics. Agents of the Ministry are, after all, representative of the Her Majesty's interests.

## OFFICES OF THE MINISTRY

### MAIN OFFICES

#### London

It is a time of good fortune, dear Player, under the rule of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

The population of England is enjoying an unprecedented increase as the citizenship enjoys the benefits of better living standards and advancements in science, especially amongst the upper and middle classes. Indeed, there is plenty of chance for prosperity with the opportunities presented by industrialization.

It is a time of expansion and change as well, not only for the British Empire, but also for the very structure of society in England. The once well-defined line between the upper and middle classes is blurred as landed privilege and aristocracy by blood are challenged by the increasing financial success and ambition of the middle class.

In such dynamic times, there are too many opportunities for enemies of the Crown to plot. More than ever, the agents of the Ministry must be vigilant, and must never be caught either unprepared or unawares. Capture can lead to a number of horrific outcomes such as interrogation, torture, and even death.



London leads the Empire with the latest in industrial technology, a true appreciation of the finer arts, and the most brilliant minds in the country. Not the least of which are the agents of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences, working from the hidden headquarters located alongside the river Thames.

## Edinburgh

Scotland, with its myriad of wild tales and open spaces for mad scientists to experiment, has the second largest Ministry office in the United Kingdom. It is also the only other office in the British Isles that has an R&D department—which also take advantage of those open spaces. Indeed, it is a bustling office with many agents coming and going on missions, but in some ways forgets that it has to report in with London HQ.

## Dublin

This most contentious of offices is situated near the magnificent Dublin Post office. They have a close working relationship with the Edinburgh office.

## Cardiff

The smallest and newest office in the United Kingdom, the Cardiff branch of the Ministry is located in the bustling area of Queen Street. Many field agents of the Ministry get sent to the Cardiff office to ‘cut their teeth’ on the job.

## BRANCH OFFICES

Applicants from any of the colonies are happily considered for entry into the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences and welcome to contribute their valuable intellect and skills. However, they may find their reception in London and other parts of the Empire to be icy or fraught with insensitive opinions to the extreme. While we have no doubt Agents will be able to rise above any such challenges, caution is advised when trying to maintain both cover and temper.

## New Zealand

This island country is a land of sharp mountain peaks and expanses of verdant countryside.

Agent Eliza D. Braun hails from the New Zealand colony, and indeed it seems the colonies result in a hardy breed of individual. Though to be fair, Ms. Braun is rather singular both in her particular idiosyncrasies and her penchant for leaving chaos and destruction in her wake.

The Ministry outpost in Wellington, New Zealand, has a sister relationship with the larger Sydney branch office in Australia.

## Australia

Australia has proven to be a colony of dynamic, even volatile, nature. Colonists take advantage of the open land and mild weather to establish quite valuable agricultural interests. The mining industry flourishes in this colony as well, supporting extremely profitable trade. With such

opportunity available to those unafraid of hard work, enterprising emigrants and ex-convicts alike are able to build substantial fortunes and start fresh.

Prior to his transfer to the London headquarters, Agent Bruce Campbell hails from Australia and was running the South Pacific Operations of the Ministry as senior agent in the field.

Agent Campbell’s particular history aside, the Ministry believes in judging a person on the whole of his actions over time and is willing to give reformed applicants the chance to prove themselves in service to Queen and Empire.

## UNITED STATES AND THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERNATURAL AND METAPHYSICAL

While there is no Ministry office in the United States, there is the Office of the Supernatural and Metaphysical (OSM). Shortly after the close of the Civil War, a case involving Methuselah’s Order was solved by an agent of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences on United States soil. When the U.S. government was informed of the existence of the Ministry, OSM was founded by representatives of law enforcement working in concert with the Ministry. Their mission is to investigate the strange and unusual on behalf of the United States of America.

## Canada

.....  
*“Pneumatic rope gun.” She tucked it  
away. “Standard in Québec.”*

*Jealousy needled him. So far as he could tell,  
Ontario’s R&D Department had devoted the  
last five years to creating the perfect Beaver Tail  
pastry. He doubted the Québec office ever needed  
to turn to the O.S.M. covertly for logistics.*

.....  
*~ Under Oak Island*

Ontario is the largest branch office in Canada and has its own R&D department. However, the resources within R&D tend to focus on less practical pursuits and field agents of this branch often turn to the Office of the Supernatural and Metaphysical for technological support.

There also exists a friendly rivalry between the Ministry’s Ontario branch office and Québec’s provincial organization, **le Ministère Officiel d’Occurrences Sans Explication** or MOOSE. Unofficially, MOOSE tends to operate autonomously though if pressed they would collaborate with agents of the Ministry.



## Cape Colony

As global powers scramble to establish governance over several portions of Africa, Cape Colony is a key branch office of the Ministry in the south.

Artifacts of great power have been recovered and agents have lost their lives in the process.

.....  
*"On his chest the blue amulet flared in a double pulse that looked like heartbeats, growing brighter with each beat, and Lumbwi glowed with the eerie energy. Slowly he raised one hand, palm out and started to chant."*

~ *The Astonishing Amulet of Amenartas*  
.....

## India

Located in Bombay, agents who have grown up on the regional beliefs seem to enjoy a longer lifespan than those who might be naïve to such long-standing traditions.

Agent Maulik Smith is one of the senior agents of this office, sometimes traveling to London to carry out his liaison duties as well as for specific missions.

## Hong Kong

The Hong Kong branch serves as headquarters for the South Asian region including Brunei, Malaya, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands. This branch also serves as a way station for agents traveling from region to region on the Asiatic continent and is a hub for covert activity within Chinese borders.

## Egypt

The largest branch in Africa, the Egypt office is connected via aethernet or telegraph to various satellite offices throughout Northern Africa in order to keep this vast region of the Empire connected.

Control over the various kingdoms—Sokoto Caliphate, for example—and city states such as Mombasa, Malindi, and Zanzibar provides quicker trade routes for the British Empire, as does control of the Suez Canal as an important waterway between the East and the West. Areas surrounding and including the source of the Nile River are of particular importance to British interests as well.

Where there is political unrest, there is also chaos. With such rich regional history, Agents often find themselves encountering mysterious powers and unusual artifacts.

## British Antarctic

The smallest of all the branch offices, the British Antarctic has the most limited and outdated resources. In fact, staff is a total of four agents (all male) and Bernard, the beagle of unexplained and indeterminate age.

As a note of interest, the primary communication between the British Antarctic and the nearest sister offices is via steam-technology enhanced penguin post.

## THE VICTORIAN EMPIRE AND RACISM

A hard truth exists in regards to the Victorian Empire. What can be termed, politely, as national self-confidence for the British has otherwise been labeled as bigotry and racism by outsiders. There has been a prevailing attitude amongst the British that its citizens have an obligation to enlighten 'less fortunate savages' of the world and should teach them the ways of proper civilization.

Such attitudes are not supported by the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences.

Indeed, many of the Ministry's agents are widely travelled with a breadth and depth of experiences that provide them wider perspectives on the world as a whole and deep respect for its many cultures. Such exposure, when added to the extensive wisdom to be found in the Archives, gives agents a greater understanding and encourages openness to the variety to be found in the world. One might also find that field agents are prone to encouraging cultural acceptance when out in the field and a sharing of perspectives, so long as such actions do not endanger their cover or their mission.

We encourage you, good Player, to do the same. However, it may be an interesting challenge to create a character with more rigid views. This is entirely up to you.

## MULTICULTURAL STEAMPUNK

The wonders of steampunk invention are not limited to the Western world. Indeed, China has long since mastered the art of pyrotechnics. They have also managed to design man-lifting kites and personal gliders. There are rumors of jetpacks combining the rocket propulsion science of the former with the aerial design of the latter.

Such gadgetry has a signature flare to it, marking it of obvious Asian origin.



It is rumored that requests for polar bear post would be received with a rather cross response.

## PLACES OF MYSTERY

Though there remain curiosities and strange happenings across the United Kingdom and Europe, and East Asia and Southern Africa provide numerous challenges by virtue of the sheer difference in culture and customs of the various peoples to be found in places like Cape Colony, India, China, Japan, and even smaller peninsulas such as Siam. Such distant locales are steeped in legends of gods and goddess, minor deities, and creatures of mischief. Folk tales of girls turned to roses and banana trees draining life force from young men may be simple stories or they may be much more. Agents of the Ministry may encounter the inexplicable and they would do well to keep their minds open to what most normal people would dismiss.

The celestial legends of China, for example, feature many types of birds and dragons. There are places of mythical import and entire pantheons of gods and goddesses. In Japan, monsters abound.

The Great Sphinx of Giza in Egypt is not only a statue, but a symbol of a creature rumored to be real. This mythical beast poses riddles to those who cross its path and devours those unable to provide a correct answer.

While proof of the actual existence of such beings is difficult to acquire, objects made by the hands of man and associated with them have proven to be the cause of any number of peculiar and even fatal occurrences. A field agent would do well to research the local mythology as it might relate to an assigned case.

One of the earlier cases found in the Archives reflects that Agent John M. Alvey benefited from such due diligence when he was sent to Siam. Agent Alvey brought back several items with unusual properties and additional depth to add to the Ministry's understanding of the local folklore. His mission was completed quite successfully and resulted in a rather unusual ally to the Ministry.

.....  
*"The kinaree are long-lived, Agent Alvey,  
and we have long memories. Should you  
return, you will be recognised as a friend."*

.....  
*~ A Swan in Siam*  
.....

Whether pursuing werewolves and will-o-the-wisps over the rolling hills of England or facing demigods in the waters of the Nile, agents of the Ministry should keep a level head and a sharp eye toward the human causes behind such paranormal activity.



## SECRET SOCIETIES, CULTS, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

It is, perhaps, not a surprise to find that the Ministry has its enemies. To be more specific, any threat to the Crown or danger to the citizens of Her Majesty's Empire would find the agents of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences in their way. Of course, detailed reports of any altercation with such enemies are recorded in the Archives for future reference to ensure the agents of the Ministry have the most comprehensive intelligence at their disposal. Though such individuals, and indeed, extensive organisations, may materialise at any moment, there are a few of particular note.

### THE HOUSE OF USHER

The House of Usher is an organisation cloaked in mystery. What little is known came at great cost. Many good agents were lost and innocent lives ended, either in the course of obtaining intelligence or simply caught up in the machinations of the House of Usher as collateral damage. Until the events of Phoenix Rising, a major base of operation of the House of Usher was located in Antarctica. In this instance, the House of Usher had employed a certain Italian mercenary, one Sophia del Morte, to abduct Wellington Thornhill Books (Esq.), the Head Archivist of the



Ministry. His rescue was accomplished by Agent Eliza D. Braun, accompanied by much gunfire, some rather devastating explosions, and the loss of said Antarctic base.

Wherever the House of Usher goes, chaos follows. They are anarchists, taking every opportunity to watch the Empire and the entire world ignite in flames and then swooping in to take advantage of the mayhem to profit and forward their future interests.

## THE PHOENIX SOCIETY

.....  
*"From Ashes and Chaos Arises  
Order and Balance"*  
.....

According to the Ministry Archives, the Phoenix Society could very well predate the Freemasons and perhaps even have its beginnings in the fall of the Roman Empire. United by a pure and singular goal of achieving order from chaos this English Gentlemen's society has steered the course of the British Monarchy, committed heinous acts of murder, and made use of the lower classes as nothing more than beasts of burden, good hunting sport, and pawns in their nefarious machinations.

The Phoenix Society is most secretive and extremely selective in its membership, accepting only the most purely aristocratic of bloodlines with skills and positions of benefit to the society's goals. Efforts to infiltrate the society's gatherings have turned up hints and rumors of opulent dinners and hedonistic evenings but cannot be confirmed outside notes in the reports of the Ministry's agents. What can be stated about the Phoenix Society's organisation with absolute confidence is its adherence to the concept of an elite fraternity and brotherhood, served and tended to by their wives and female relations.

The clearest record of interaction with the Phoenix Society was reported by Agents Books and Braun, following a rather explosive incident in the countryside later attributed to geothermal instabilities beneath a country estate.

## METHUSELAH'S ORDER

A generations old organization, Methuselah's Order makes use of a secret elixir to keep themselves young. They've amassed great fortune and significant military power over the millennia and are not to be investigated without extreme caution. They maintain hidden bases scattered across the globe.

Agent Books maintains maps of all known locations held and files on any suspected individuals believed to be a part of Order.

Commander Constance McGee led the Nefarious Explosive Response Faction, Ministry-commissioned shock troops, to the rescue of several Ministry agents during an altercation in Kashmir, when a hidden base was discovered to be on the ridge overlooking the Enclosure of Marttand.

## The Maestro

Equal parts cruel and brilliant, this nefarious mastermind operates from the shadows manipulating his extensive network of operatives to carry out intricate plans that remain, to date, completely and totally unknown. He demands the best from his henchman and does not tolerate failure. Often times, failure of any sort ends in death. Unfortunately, the death is not always guaranteed to be swift.

The Maestro has broad interests and nurtures technological advancements that may result in either tools or weapons to further his plans. People, to this man, are simply additional tools and extensions of his will. They are quite expendable and no person caught up in the employ of the Maestro can afford the peace of mind of thinking themselves invaluable.

## Sophia del Morte

.....  
*"Hush now, that was purely business."*

~ *The Janus Affair*  
.....

Both beautiful and deadly, this Italian mercenary is an accomplished assassin with a multitude of supplementary skill sets. She is an accomplished cat burglar and seductress. In addition to her known dealings with the Phoenix Society and her completed contracts for the House of Usher, she has been suspected of involvement with the Maestro.

Little material evidence exists, but the Ministry has reliable intelligence implicating her in the murder of Agent Harrison Thorne, the abduction of Agent Wellington Thornhill Books, and the assassination of several members of the nobility.

Chapter Two provides an introduction to the basics of the Fate system.





## Chapter Two

# FATE BASICS

## THE SYSTEM OF FATE ILLUMINATED

 Introducing: The Players Who Shall Serve as Examples Throughout This Volume. 

### ROLE-PLAY

Welcome, dear Reader, to the world of the role-playing game. Experienced Players may find this explanation repetitive, and may wish to skip ahead to the more detailed chapters that describe the Ministry Initiative's unique and peculiar features. However, for those who are new to role-playing, you have arrived at the right chapter.

Role-playing is a structure for telling a story with a group. In *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE*, you take on the role of an intrepid Agent of the *MINISTRY OF PECULIAR OCCURRENCES* as you solve mysteries and explore the world. This game is particularly focused on characters and their personalities, motivations, quirks, and abilities as they embark on steampunk adventures.

### TERMS

Veteran role-players may already be familiar with many of the terms *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE* uses, but for those not, here are a few important terms you will need to understand to play this game.

**Player:** Players are the individuals who take on character roles in the game. For *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE*, Players will take on the role of an Agent of the Ministry.

**Game Master:** The Game Master is the person who organizes the games, sets the scene, and runs many elements of the game including playing villains, allies, and setting the scene. Although the Game Master is an important role, the Players who take on the roles of the characters also contribute towards setting the story in motion. Together, as a group, you construct a creative adventure.

**Non-Player Character (NPC):** Non-Player Characters (NPCs) are characters that are played by the Game Master. These can be mustache twirling villains, beloved family members, new friends, informants, allies, or anyone the characters will interact with during a game. Instructions for creating these characters can be found on page 98.

### FATE

Fate is the system of mechanics *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE* uses to construct and run our steampunk adventure. Developed by Evil Hat Productions, Fate is an excellent rule set that helps to organize play and construct characters. It was adapted for *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE* due to its flexibility, simplicity, and focus on characters.

If you are familiar with Fate, you will find it very easy to simply begin playing *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE*. Fate is a system that allows you to construct interesting interconnected characters and the world they inhabit. Fate takes descriptions of characters and turns those descriptions into mechanics that allow you to resolve conflicts and challenges within the game. At Fate's heart is a mechanic called the "aspect". Aspects are descriptions of the characters you play that you can use to influence the outcome of the game. With characters at the heart of *THE MINISTRY OF PECULIAR OCCURRENCES*, it is characters that the *MINISTRY INITIATIVE* focuses on.



# WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

## AGENTS AND GAME MASTERS

THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE is played with 3-6 Players who take on the role of Agents of the Ministry. This includes the Players who take on the role of the Agents of the Ministry, and the Game Master, who takes on the role of the NPCs, composes the setup, and works with the Players to create a fulfilling adventure.

## FATE DICE

Fate Dice are six-sided dice with two plus sides , two minus sides , and two blank sides . These dice add a random element to game play so that stories may be shaped in surprising ways. Each Player should have four of these dice to play the game. (Fate Dice are available at <http://www.evilhat.com>)

If you don't have Fate dice, you can substitute the more common six-sided dice for the Fate dice. Simply declare that Numbers 1-2 are minus, 3-4 are blank, and 5-6 are plus.

Additionally, a product like the Deck of Fate (also available at <http://www.evilhat.com>) can be used, or other playing cards might be substituted and picked randomly if dice are unavailable. Some Players like to create their own cards from index cards. Whatever you use, cards and dice are used to add a random element to the game and provide a sense of tension and uncertainty about the outcome.

## CHARACTER SHEETS

Character Sheets (see page 121) record the description and mechanics of the Player characters. This is the reference when figuring out the best possible actions for characters. These sheets will also help track characters as they grow throughout the Campaign.

## TOKENS

Tokens will represent Fate Points. Any non-edible item can be used: pennies, small gears, poker chips, marbles, glass beads, or even toy soldiers as Tokens. A good Token is anything small, portable, and easily countable. At least thirty or more should be available for the game. These will be distributed among Players depending on their character sheets and actions within the game.

# PLAYERS AND GAME MASTERS

Players create the characters they will portray in the game. These characters are the leads and the center of the action. Some Players find it comforting to play a character very much like themselves, except with some special skills or gear. Others enjoy playing someone very different from themselves to explore what it might be like to live as another person. Others base characters off of characters they've enjoyed from some other medium, mixing and matching traits they particularly like. For example, a Player might cross the great detective Sherlock Holmes with the pickpocket caretaker Fagin, creating a thief who solves crimes for the poor and destitute, whose problems are so often ignored by corrupt police. These kinds of characters can be the most interesting, combining favorite elements of many characters, including their best attributes as well as their most interesting flaws.

Game Masters set the scene, work on the plots, guide the actions, involve the Player characters and take on the roles of NPCs. This role guides, but does not control, the action. The story is controlled by the group as a whole. The Game Master is supplied with characters and many conflicts, and must navigate and juggle these elements in constructing an engaging and fun story for everyone involved.

## WRITING IMPLEMENTS AND SCRAP PAPER

Be they quill pen, pencil, chalk, or the blood of your enemies, Players will need a writing implement to make marks on their character sheet, write scene aspects on paper, and pass notes to other Players. Scrap paper or index cards are also useful for recording scene aspects and passing notes.

# INTRODUCING THE FANTASTIC MINISTRY FOUR

Over the course of this book, there are examples of gaming that Players might encounter in their own campaign, and how those situations might resolve themselves. To demonstrate this, there are four invented individuals to be the Agents of Example, the Fantastic Ministry Four.

**Kennedy (The Game Master):** Loves action and mystery, and wants to roll it all into a fun campaign that her friends can enjoy. Also likes: Comic Books and Theater. Ideally, she'd really like theater adaptations of comic books.



**Mike (Wellington Thornhill Books):** Loves the aesthetic of steampunk, and is interested in exploring things from a historical perspective. Comes from a war-gaming background, and is interested in giving Fate a spin. Also likes: Costumes. He is probably wearing a costume right now.

**Samantha (Eliza D. Braun):** Superfan of the **MINISTRY OF PECULIAR OCCURRENCES** series of novels. This is her first time gaming, and she's excited to play her favorite character, Agent Eliza D. Braun. Interests include: Reading and the scientific pursuit of creating the best possible piecrust known to mankind.

**Nina (Doctor Josepha Raven Blackwell):** A big fan of live action gaming, Nina loves the Fate system and how it allows for some of the things she likes about live action. Interests include: Dismantling the patriarchy and podcasting.

## PLAYING THE GAME

### TAKING ACTION

Agents are often exposed to conflict in their adventures for the Ministry. This will often require you to roll dice. Dice rolls happen when you are opposing another character and when you face significant obstacles.

### ROLLING THE DICE

When you need to roll dice, pick up four Fate dice and roll them. When you read the dice, read every  as +1, and every  as -1. Add all the plusses and minuses together to get the final result. Add the results from your dice to the skill applicable to this challenge on your character sheet and you have the result of your roll. Rolls are judged on success with the Fate Ladder, a tool that helps determine what the result of a roll should be.

| Descriptor | Value |
|------------|-------|
| Legendary  | +6    |
| Epic       | +5    |
| Superb     | +4    |
| Great      | +3    |
| Good       | +2    |
| Fair       | +1    |
| Average    | 0     |
| Mediocre   | -1    |
| Poor       | -2    |
| Terrible   | -3    |
| Abysmal    | -4    |

The Game Master will set the difficulty for the roll based on the circumstances the Agents are in. Convincing a friend to help on a mission, for example, might only require a Good (+2) success, while convincing a hated enemy to assist may require an Epic (+5) success. More about skills and rolling the dice will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

### AGENTS: CAPABLE, RELIABLE, TALENTED, UNIQUE

Agents are assumed to be capable individuals. Otherwise, the Ministry wouldn't employ them. There is no need for Agents to roll dice to see if they can stroll through a park on a pleasant day, or to make idle small talk with a friendly stranger. Making Players roll for these actions can clutter the game and lead to the impression that the characters lack certain basic skills. Roll the dice only when there's action or something interesting going on that has the possibility of going wrong. Maybe that park suddenly fills with mechanical automatons bent on the destruction of London and the friendly stranger turns out to be a notorious con artist seeking to steal secrets from the Empire, then yes, dice must be rolled.

This next point of order is left to Game Master discretion. If an Agent takes **MOST FAMOUS BURGLAR IN WHITECHAPEL** as an aspect, then asking them to roll to pick a simple lock often holds up the action, and can undermine the character. However, this doesn't mean they should enjoy easy passage. Perhaps the lock is very complex, which is unusual for a small London townhouse. Is it possible that this hints at this house being more than it seems? Let the challenges themselves drop interesting hints about the story.

The most common reasons to use the dice in Fate are:

- To overcome an obstacle.
- To create an advantage for your character, in the form of an aspect you can use.
- To attack someone in a conflict.
- To defend yourself in a conflict.



## WIN OR LOSE: THE STORY OF THE DICE

Rolling the dice adds an element of risk, of uncertainty, of chance. When Players are faced with a conflict, sometimes they must roll dice to see if they can meet the challenge. When Agents of the Ministry roll the dice, or when the Game Master rolls the dice, they are attempting to get a roll high enough to match or surpass the opposition.

Rolling the dice during a challenge will be met with two types of opposition: Active and Passive. Active Opposition is a usually embodied by another character specifically trying to defeat another character in a challenge. This might be a boxing match, singing competition or anything where the challengers are trying to react to one another.

Passive Opposition usually comes from a person who is unaware that they are in a conflict or a challenge having to do with an object.

### THE RESULT OF YOUR ENDEAVOR

If the combined roll and skill surpass the opposition, the action is successful. A tie creates a mitigated effect, but not exactly the desired one. If the difference between the Player's number and the opposition is extraordinary (the Player's number is 3 or more above the opposition), then a bonus is added to the intended action.

### FAILURE

If the number for success isn't met, the roll fails and the desired outcome does not happen.

While many Players might fear failure, Agents of the Ministry are brave souls accustomed to taking risks. Failure is part of the game. It adds interest, deepens conflict, raises stakes, and does all sorts of wonderful things to make victory all the sweeter. Do not fear failure, oh Agents of the Ministry. Embrace it! With failure comes the experience, drama and depth that make an adventure all the more fun.

Doctor Josepha Raven Blackwell has found herself in a right mess. She's been captured by the Phoenix society and is being held in their dungeons. Nina, her Player, knows that Blackwell's highest skill is Invention, so she attempts to use the limited materials of the prison cell to construct a ray gun that Dr. Blackwell can use to blast her way to freedom. Unfortunately, all Blackwell has is a crystal from a necklace, metal wires from the bedsprings of the cell, and a few chemical concoctions from a hidden stash in her corsetry. Kennedy decides to set the difficulty high. It would be Epic (+5) if Blackwell was able to construct a ray gun out of the simple mate-

rials she has available. Nina rolls her four Fate die, and two come up negative, and two come up blank, for a total of -2. Adding that to her +4 Invention roll, she ends up with a +2 result, not enough needed for her Epic success. Blackwell's efforts to construct a raygun result in a small fire which attracts the attention of the guards. Nina decides Blackwell needs to use another tactic to escape the cell.

### TIE

This outcome should be determined by the Game Master. It may be that the character succeeds at their action, but at a cost. Or it may be that they didn't quite succeed, but manage to avoid a nasty outcome. This should be determined by the circumstances surrounding an action, and, most importantly, what would make for the most interesting result in the story.

Wellington Thornhill Books turns the corner of the airship and finds himself face to face with a stowaway pirate who somehow snuck aboard. The pirate lunges at Books with a cutlass. Books wants to parry the blow with his rapier and knock the pirate down. With a +2 in Fencing, Mike makes the roll, a +1, giving him a total +3 result. Unfortunately, the NPC pirate ends up with the same result as Mike. Kennedy thinks it over, and decides that Books is able to parry the blow and defend himself, but that the pirate gets past him, and is headed towards the engine room.

### EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS

Perhaps the character does not simply succeed, but experiences a success that far exceeds the number needed. In this case, the character has an Extraordinary Success. Game Masters should interpret this in accord with the degree the character has succeeded. This may mean that they not only open the lock, but discover a whole new type of lock they can master. Or perhaps the unlocked door leads not just to a room, but a major clue to unlocking the mystery the characters seek to unravel. Game Masters should use their judgment to best determine how to reward such a success.

Eliza D. Braun is at the pub, getting American inventor Walter Mills drunk. She wants him to reveal the location of his secret lab in London. Word is that he is a talkative drunk, but she needs to stay coherent while coaxing the information out of him. Kennedy decides this is a Physique roll with a +2 difficulty. Braun has +1 to Physique, and she rolls the die to get four +1s giving her a total of +5, an Epic result. Braun keeps her head while Walter Mills spills not only the secret location of his lab, but the name of the secret society funding his efforts.



Although the Game Masters are the final arbiter, it can be helpful to often turn to the Players, and ask them “So, you failed, why did that happen?” or “You experience extraordinary success! What does that mean for your character?” Often your players will have excellent ideas on what success and failure means and they can be satisfying and interesting for the both of you.

## FATE POINTS

Fate Points are representative of a character’s influence on the story. With Fate Points, a story can get a little “nudge” in certain directions. Fate Points are used for many things: to invoke an aspect, declare a story detail, create a situational aspect and activate powerful stunts.

The amount of Fate Points a character has at the start of the game is determined by their character sheet. However, Fate Points can be earned and spent throughout the game. Fate Points can be spent by the Players through invoking an aspect or can be earned from the Game Master by accepting a compel on one of your aspects.

### INVOKING

When Agents of the Ministry roll a skill, especially in a dire or urgent situation, and they feel an aspect would help them with that roll, they can spend a Fate Point to “invoke” that aspect. This is done when an Agent rolls the dice and feels the outcome is unsatisfactory.

Invoking the aspect allows Players to re-roll their dice or add +2 to the roll, whichever they choose. However, Players cannot simply invoke any aspect they choose. The aspect chosen must be relevant to the skills roll, and the Player must make a compelling case for how or why this aspect can be brought into play.

### COMPELLING

Agents are often sent into challenging situations, full of drama, danger and intrigue. Agents, though skilled, are not perfect, and there are times that try men’s souls. Often there may be situations that test a weak part of an Agent’s character, tempting them to do something that makes a good situation go sour, or a bad one to worse.

If a Player has an aspect that could be used to lure them into an action that is contrary to their goals, the Game Master can offer them a Fate Point to take that action. This complication may be dire, dramatic, or even minor, depending on the circumstances. When a Fate Point is offered based on an aspect in this manner, it is called a compel. The Player does not have to accept the compel, but if they deny it, they do not get the offered Fate Point and must pay one of their own Fate Points to prevent the complication occurring.

A compel can mean that an Agent automatically fails at an established goal, that they are distracted from the task at hand, their choices restricted, their judgment clouded, or that they perform their task poorly. The Game Master and Players decide together on what action would best fit the Agent’s aspect and the situation.

If an Agent agrees to accept the complication, she will receive the Fate Point.

Agents may suggest possible compels for their fellow Agents. This can be helpful if they see their compatriot is running low on Fate Points, or if they think the opportunity is too good to pass up. However, it is up to the Game Master to make the final call on when a compel is appropriate.

Often, compels happen as Players take on the roles of their Agents, playing out their skills and their faults. When an Agent acts out against their own interests, but within their character’s moral boundaries, to the point where they’ve made things more complicated, the Game Master may choose to award them Fate Points for their troubles.

## BAD MAKES IT BETTER

Players more used to traditional styles of play might balk at this section. Why, they may argue, should I allow my Agent to show any weakness at all? Why, she’s the best there ever was and perfect in every way! She should never fail, at least, if I can stop it!

We understand these feelings. It can be difficult to adapt to this style of play, where you actually **allow**, or even **welcome** bad things to happen to your characters.

Consider some of your favorite stories. Does the main character skip blithely through all their troubles, never experiencing pain or any challenge whatsoever? Do they avoid all those moments that test their beliefs or skills? Does everything come simply and easily? The truth is, characters with weaknesses make better, more interesting, and, frankly, more **compelling** stories. Characters struck down only to rise again, who face their weaknesses and overcome them, are far more interesting than perfect characters who never really have to struggle or get tested or even break a sweat in a story. When we tell stories of hardship and effort, we see ourselves, our own weakness, and, perhaps, show ourselves that we can overcome.



Nina is playing Doctor Josepha Raven Blackwell, who, due to her sheltered upbringing, has the aspect **INNOCENT IN THE WAYS OF THE WORLD**. Blackwell is at a scientific conference with Walter Mills, an American scientist interested in her work on explosive chemical materials. Nina is suspicious about Mills' motivations when he asks to see Doctor Blackwell's notes for 'purely scientific reasons'. "I'm not sure that Doctor Blackwell would just show her notes to anyone," she declares.

Kennedy offer a Fate Point: "But Doctor Blackwell is **INNOCENT IN THE WAYS OF THE WORLD**. After all, Walter Mills is a fellow scientist. Surely he's just in pursuit of knowledge!"

Nina takes the point: "This will certainly make things interesting later," she agrees.

## AGENTS OF THE MINISTRY

Agents of the Ministry are selected due to their impressive skills, spirit, and intellect. They are remarkable individuals recruited for tasks that require daring, training, and advanced technological equipment. These are heroes, selected from the greatest daughters and sons of the Empire.

Agents will not sit idly by while people suffer. They seek out dangerous situations, secret societies, dastardly villains, and anyone that would dare threaten Queen and Country. An Agent is a hero, someone who will take action against evil, and who doesn't run away from tough situations. Agents don't expect others to protect them; they understand that they are the defenders. Being an Agent is a great privilege, with even greater responsibility. Often Agents are the first and sometimes last line of defense but no matter where they go, they are there because of their skills and spirit.

Chapter Three examines Agents of the Ministry, their recruitment, their duties, and their adventures.





## Chapter Three

# AGENTS OF THE MINISTRY

## AGENT ASSIGNMENTS IN VARIOUS DEPARTMENT OF THE MINISTRY

 An Examination of Field Agents, Administration, Research and Design, and the Archives. 

### FIELD AGENTS

*"The best way to defeat the shadows of menace and evil is to become a shadow yourself."*

*-Phoenix Rising.*

Field Agents, with a few notable exceptions, move through the world undetected, protecting the empire in secret and skillfully completing missions directly under the noses of the unknowing public. Whether it be a lone widow trapped within a haunted mansion or hundreds of good citizens in the center of London, Field Agents have saved them all time and again in the name of the Queen and the Crown.

Every life is valuable and Field Agents are more than willing to lay their own on the line. Becoming a Field Agent is a worthy goal and is no small challenge. Once training is complete, one joins the Ministry as a Junior Field Agent. It is only with seasoning, experience, discipline, and a demonstration of a keen sense of doing the right thing at the most opportune time that a Junior receives promotion to Senior Field Agent. With promotion comes the expected higher rank, respect, and significantly increased level of danger to one's life.

The best of the best are assigned to London, the headquarters of the Ministry. These Agents not only cover cases in the immediate London area, but could also be assigned to high priority cases anywhere in the world with very short notice. As such, Agents should be prepared to leave with very little notice, packing necessities and consulting with Research and Design to requisition any appropriate armaments or gadgets to aid in the mission.

### ADMINISTRATION

*"The Director of the Ministry only commented on missions for two reasons: if they had been exceptionally smooth and successful, or if they had been a total disaster."*

*~ Phoenix Rising*

The Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences is led by the director of the Ministry, who in turn reports to the Prime Minister. From his office on the top floor of the London headquarters, the Director receives missives from a variety of locations via a network of pneumatic tubes. His assistant manages his affairs and guards the door to his private study to ensure absolute discretion as he speaks with members from the highest levels of government on matters of Crown and of Country.

Reporting to the Director are managers of each branch office located in every territory of the British Empire. The United Kingdom not only has the London office, but also offices in Edinburgh, Cardiff, and Dublin. Branch offices in the colonies and in foreign countries include but are not limited to New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Cape Colony, India, China, and Egypt. In each branch, there are Senior Field Agents, often native to the area. Most times, a Junior Field Agent is paired with a Senior for practical guidance and hands-on training.

In the London headquarters, there are not only liaisons from each of the branch offices, but also various support services or departments such as Research and Design and the Archives. Research and Design is headed by Engineer Agent Doctor Josepha Raven Blackwell and Engineer Agent Professor Hephaestus Axelrod. The Archives are purely the domain of Head Archivist Wellington Thornhill Books. Each of these department heads report to the Director.



## RESEARCH & DESIGN

*With the Research & Design deep in the bowels of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences, The Future was already taking place. Science was being done there, Science with a capital "S," which meant that Director Sound had often referred to R&D as a phoenix egg, from which The Future—you could hear the capital letters in his voice when he said this, there was no mistaking it—would arise, bright and brilliant, a beacon of the shining world to come.*

*—The Trouble with Phoenixes*

If Agents are the lifeblood of the Ministry, then Research and Design (R&D) is the heart through which they all pass. Want a new weapon that will stun quarry without killing them? Interested in a listening device that can detect a pulse through three floors? Research and Design is where all marvelous gadgets are created and chemicals are concocted for the use of Agents on their missions. It is the place of technological marvels, inventive gadgetry and ingenious transportation.

Agents of the Ministry stationed in Research and Design develop the new and cutting edge technology of the Steam Age. Agents assigned to this department usually have a background in the sciences, particularly engineering, chemistry and biology. These Agents have a reputation for eccentricity due to their wild experiments. An explosion would never be tolerated in the Archives, but Research and Design frequently extinguishes small fires.

### EQUIPPING AN AGENT

Field Agents are equipped from Research and Design according to their skills, specialties and the requirements of the mission. Research and Design is happy to supply inventive gadgetry, but Agents will have to justify the use of said equipment for official missions.

### Official Missions

For official missions, Agents will be assigned equipment that Research and Design believes will best fit the mission parameters. Research and Design considers the safety of the Agents to be of great importance, but they also will not assign excess equipment to a mission if they don't believe it is necessary. A Field Agent going to the opera to mingle in high society will have a difficult argument for checking out an electro-coil rifle, but will have no problem convincing anyone of the need for a listening device.

The Agents in Research and Design carefully watch over their equipment and will always be disappointed if it isn't returned in good working order. Agents may disagree, or attempt to negotiate for different equipment

## AGENT AXELROD'S MARVELOUS MACHINERY

*"Remember when I said this hat was full of rocket fuel?"*

*"I thought you were joking."*

*Eliza had balled her hands into tight fists, her cold gaze toward the oncoming throng of disgruntled boxing enthusiasts.*

*"I never joke about rocket fuel. It's just not safe. Forgive me." Axelrod enveloped Eliza's frame in a powerful bear hug. Before she could protest, flames erupted from the hat on his back, rocketing the two of them up into the air.*

*—The Trouble With Phoenixes*

The Research and Design Department in London is the largest and most accomplished in all of The Ministry. The most ingenious minds in the Empire are recruited (sometimes rescued or otherwise acquired) to work there. They are provided with unparalleled materials and frequently sent to universities all over the globe in search of new techniques they can apply in service of the Empire.

The head of Engineering in Research and Design is Professor Agent Hephaestus Axelrod, an Agent both brilliant and dangerous. His creations are cutting edge, and he can be persuaded to create devices for specific needs if he finds the project interesting. He may equip Agents with tools that are untested technology which could help them perform their missions, but just as soon could break down or explode. Such, he claims, is the price of scientific progress.

Agent Axelrod is a tall, muscular fellow with a blacksmith's arms and an engineer's brain. He can frequently be found in Research and Design, covered with soot. When he is not in Research and Design, he enjoys bare knuckle boxing, the illegal modification of hats, and attaching rocket packs to animals, objects, and other rocket packs.

Agent Axelrod's character sheet can be found on page 125. He can be used either as a playable character or an NPC.

than they are assigned, but doing so may require making promises to the Agents of Research and Design.



## Unofficial Missions

*"Is that what field agents are calling insubordination these days—snap decisions?"*

*-Phoenix Rising*

Agents embarking "unofficial" missions to protect the Empire are in a tough spot. They may need the carefully guarded equipment from Research and Design but have no official authority to request it. This may be a situation where the Agent disagrees with their superiors about priorities and the exact level of danger to the Empire, or it may be a mission so secret that even the Agents in Research and Design must be kept in the dark. In these cases, the Agents must find a way to get the proper equipment out of the department and later, back in without attracting notice. This may mean sneaking into the department, creating forged orders, or manipulating another Agent to provide the proper equipment.

### THE CHEMICAL CONCOCTIONS OF AGENT BLACKWELL

The lead Chemist in Research and Design is Agent Josepha Raven Blackwell (Ph.D.). As unstable as she is brilliant, Agent Blackwell can often be found tinkering with explosives and creating chemical cocktails for use in the field. Should an Agent require a smoke bomb to disguise their movements, or a knock-out potion that can be aerosolized, then Agent Blackwell is the person they will visit.

Born outside of the Empire, Agent Blackwell is, nevertheless, extremely patriotic. She dresses like a widow, though she is quite young and has never been married. Rumors that she is a supernatural creature, insane, or that she is a Baroness are considered rude and any attempts to find the truth behind these rumors are met with disciplinary action from Administration.

Agent Blackwell's character sheet can be found on page 124. She can be used as a playable character or NPC.

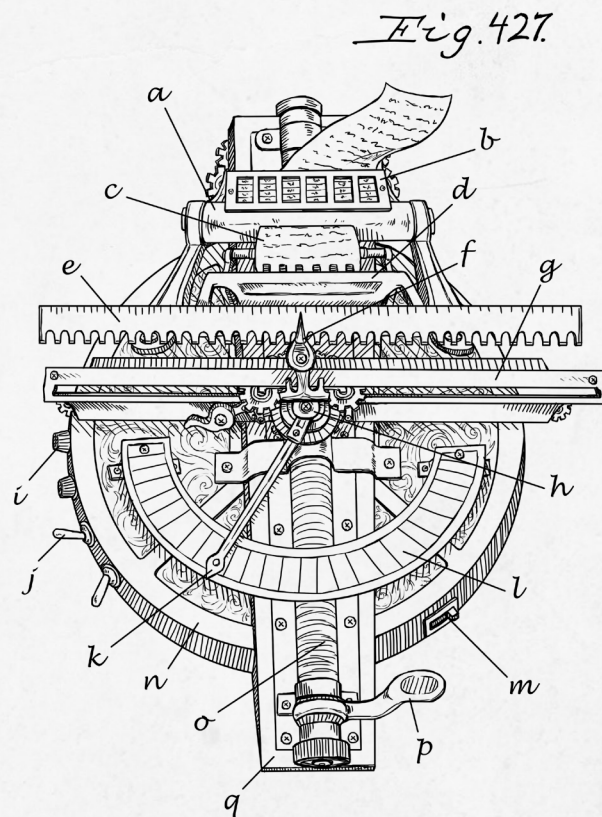
## SKILL GADGETS

Gadgets acquired from Research and Design are called Skill Gadgets, and, when used, will give a character a bonus to a skill roll. Examples of this type of Gadget can be found in Chapter Nine.

Players and Game Masters may wish to invent new Skill Gadgets. Discuss what the Gadget might do, and how the Agent may use it and assign it a bonus to the appropriate skill. Especially powerful or cutting edge technology should come with drawbacks as a method of limiting their power. This can be done by giving the gadget a skill prerequisite for use or giving it a Trouble aspect. Giving a Gadget a Trouble is an excellent way to mitigate its power. Perhaps it can only be used once, or is particularly heavy or unstable. During this time there were many new developments in technology. Within the Ministry, new developments do not always have time for adequate safety testing. This is simply another part of the danger Agents must face.

## AGENT GADGETS

During character creation Agents will invent a gadget created specifically for their character. Agents always have their Agent Gadget and do not need to visit Research and Design to acquire it for a mission. Agent Gadgets have two Aspects: a High Concept and a Trouble. The High Concept is a statement about what the technology was designed to do, its purpose. The Trouble is how that gadget might break or be misused. More on creating Agent Gadgets is outlined in Chapter 9.





## ARCHIVES

*"Here, items are catalogued, sorted, and stored until that operation arises wherein you will need logistics. And while there may be more things in heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Agent Braun, I assure you there are things far more wondrous-strange here in the Archives."*

*-Phoenix Rising*

The Archives of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences are the repository of detailed case notes and related artifacts. On first thought, one might dismiss them as naught but forgotten baubles and dusty reports dropped in the basement of the Ministry, out of sight and for some Field Agents, very much out of mind.

Quite to the contrary, case reports and accompanying notes are catalogued, filed carefully, and stored within the Archives alongside related items encountered, or rather, acquired by Ministry Agents in the course of their investigations. When considering the mission of the Ministry, a bright Field Agent can imagine these items are far from mundane. Such artifacts are items of myth and legend, wondrous-strange and in many cases quite dangerous.

### ARCHIVES ARE AN EXCELLENT REFERENCE TO ALLIES (AND ENEMIES) OF THE MINISTRY

Agents of the Ministry may encounter many persons of note in the course of each mission. Some become allies of the Ministry and even good friends. They may be unlikely sources of information, innovative engineers, or even beings of myth and legend. Others, in a rather unfortunate twist of fate, may prove a threat not only to the completion of a mission but to an Agent's life.

One and all are identified in the Archives as part of case files. Should an Agent encounter a mysterious personality, research in the Archives could mean the difference between recognizing a trusted ally or falling prey to a nefarious enemy.

Each mission ends for Field Agents with the completion of their case reports. The mission continues in the Archives with the research conducted on their findings. Long forgotten mysteries are solved, occurrences previously thought to be unrelated are connected in complex relationships to reveal fantastic secrets, and the means are sometimes discovered to find what once was lost.

### WELLINGTON BOOKS' ANALYTICAL ENGINE

Wellington Books designed and implemented the Analytical Engine of the Archives. Much more than a differential machine, only capable of mathematics, the Analytical Engine is based off Babbage's original schematics, enhanced by Wellington Books and provided with unlimited power by the River Thames. The Analytical Engine is capable of processing logic far beyond the simpler difference machines developed by the Ministry's Research and Development department and is illustrative of Agent Books' genius.

With a series of clicks and whirs, computations and bursts of steam, the Analytical Engine will locate the desired item and potentially bring the related artifacts via pulley system throughout the vast repository. Play a broad selection of classical music, and perhaps enjoy a cup of tea as you conduct your research. All of this, made possible by Books' Analytical Engine.

Oh yes, and should an Agent require the computational power of the Analytical Engine in the field, perhaps Books might be persuaded to allow the portable version out of the Archives. Compact and light of weight at a mere thirty-five pounds, it is indeed a work of wonder in itself.

A well-rounded Agent would do well to spend time in the Archives conducting thorough research in order to shed light on current missions. Put the treasure trove of information to good use and perhaps bring a few of those mysterious artifacts back to the light of day, if only for the length of the mission. However, brave Player, do so with the utmost caution and respect for artifacts whose power is not completely understood.

Chapter Four explains the character creation process to build a custom Agent of the Ministry to defend Queen and Country.





## Chapter Four

# CHARACTER CREATION

## THE CHARACTER CREATION PROCESS FOR STEAMPUNK SECRET AGENTS

 Choosing Themes, Aspects, Seniority, Home Office, Skills, Gadgets, Stress,   
and Consequences for Your Agent of the Ministry.

### CREATING YOUR OWN AGENT OF THE MINISTRY

*“We are a single unit, a collection of gears and  
cogs that work together in order to preserve  
the peace in extraordinary circumstances.”*

*~Phoenix Rising*

Character Creation determines the Agents who will be the main characters of your game, and sets the tone for the game itself. Agents are your heroes and the focus of the story.

### THEMES FOR THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE

Creating characters is a group effort where Players discuss the type of Agent they would like to play, and what might best fit into a group. In this process, the Players and Game Master create the mood of your game. The characters may lend themselves towards action, mystery, political intrigue, drama, comedy, or romance, or some combination of these themes.

Players may be interested in playing Senior Agents who are skilled infiltrators, but inexperienced fighters and must use their Stealth and Rapport to solve problems. Players might also be interested in playing a rough and tumble group of Junior Agents who enjoy a fistfight or a fencing match far better than a masked gala. Whatever your group decides, having an honest conversation about themes is vital to ensure that everyone is excited for the type of game you are playing.

### NOTE FOR GAME MASTERS ON THEMES

In THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE we suggest that Players and Game Master develop themes together. However, sometimes Game Masters get a Big Idea for an interesting theme that they would like to run for the group. Big Ideas, those concepts that strike Game Masters like lightning, that turn your water to steam and get your engines going can be great places to start a game. You might want to arrange a fabulous murder mystery, or lead characters through a maze of conspiracies.

In this situation, you will not be developing the themes with your Players. When you do this, it is important to be clear with your potential Players that you are skipping this step of character design. Directly address the themes of your Big Idea with your Players so they can design their characters appropriately. It does not give away all of your secrets to let Players know the general themes of the game you'll be running. It does, however, avoid the potential misunderstandings if a Player isn't in the sort of game they like to play. You and your Players will have much more fun if all of you understand and enjoy the type of story being told.



## BUILDING AN AGENT: CHARACTER CREATION

Character creation tells the story of how your Agent came to the Ministry and their relationship with their fellow Agents and the Ministry itself. Expect character creation to take an entire session. This process lets you develop your Agent's character motivations. Why did they become an Agent? What do they believe about the Ministry? What are their specialties? What do other Agents think about them? Character creation is vital for setting the stage of the game itself. It tells us who our protagonists are, and what will challenge them.

When creating your Agent, use a blank character sheet, provided on page 133 to record your name, level of seniority, department, home office, aspects, skills, Gadgets, stress, and consequences.

Character creation starts with aspects. As outlined in Chapter Five, aspects are a core component of your character. Aspects are expressed as short phrases that describe your character which can be used to influence the outcomes of your character's actions.

### PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS

This book provides a collection of pre-generated Player characters if you want to jump right into a game without going through the character creation process. These characters would be excellent to use during convention games as well. If you are a fan of THE MINISTRY OF PECULIAR OCCURRENCES, it may be fun to play out some of the scenarios of the novels and figure out what you would have done differently with the mysteries and adventures of Agent Books and Braun.

### CHOOSING ASPECTS: HOW TO DESCRIBE YOUR AGENT

Character creation centers on creating aspects. When you create an Agent, you will choose six aspects: High Concept, Trouble, Gadget, Recruitment, First Assignment, and Adventure. Together, these aspects help to describe the personality, background, Gadget and motivations of an Agent. Mechanically, aspects provide a way both to generate and spend Fate Points which can be used when your character takes action. For more information about how to use Aspects, see Chapter Five.

### CHANGING CONCEPTS AFTER CHARACTER CREATION

Players may wish to alter their characters a few sessions into the game. Sometimes Players find that a concept isn't as fun as they thought it would be, or doesn't quite fit into the themes of the game. Game Masters should be flexible with Players. It is perfectly acceptable to change an aspect in the first couple sessions in order for a character to be more interesting and enjoyable for the Player. Of course, Players shouldn't simply change their character sheet anytime a challenge doesn't obviously address their skills, but being flexible with characters can allow everyone to have more fun.





# YOUR CHARACTER: HIGH CONCEPT AND TROUBLE

## HIGH CONCEPT

High Concept is the heart of who your character is. It could be related to their job, their core beliefs or their life goals. Agents of the Ministry are fantastic individuals, selected from the very brightest stars of the Empire. Your High Concept should reflect this fact, and reveal something about what makes your Agent special. This is the most vital aspect for your character.

**Example High Concepts:** SECRET AGENT IN AN ARMORED CORSET, BEST CONMAN IN LONDON, MAD SCIENTIST WITH A HEART OF GOLD, GRANDE DAME OF THE UNDERWORLD, INVENTOR OF THE NEW AGE

## TROUBLE

*"Oh, perhaps you could argue 'for Queen and Country' and some such rubbish, but the fact you had to resort to such underhanded tactics? Disgraceful."*

*"Perhaps," Wellington said, "but considering your own callus regard for human life or your blatant disrespect to the Crown, it would seem that—"*

*"We are both utter cads," muttered Havelock.*

*He gave a curt nod. "Apparently."*  
*-Phoenix Rising*

No one is perfect, and perfect characters would make for a truly boring story. Every Agent has a problem that invades her story from time to time. This aspect is called Trouble. Troubles are a challenge, a wrinkle, a description that raises the stakes and complicates an Agent's life.

Troubles are not simple, and cannot be resolved easily. When choosing a Trouble, consider how it may be compelled and situations where it might come into play. If you cannot imagine it ever coming into play, it isn't a good fit. A good Trouble can stimulate drama, and create interesting conflicts, but it doesn't dominate an Agent's life.

There are two types Troubles: Personal Challenges and Relationship Challenges.

## AGENT OF THE MINISTRY

While "Agent of the Ministry" is certainly an Agent's job, it is not good for a High Concept, since it is a position Player characters have in common. However, that doesn't mean that it can't play a part in the construction of your High Concept. If you would like being an Agent of the Ministry to be involved in your High Concept, consider adding another descriptor to that statement such as **DISGRACED AGENT OF THE MINISTRY** or **HIGHLY DECORATED AGENT OF THE MINISTRY**. Both of these ideas hint at far more story ideas and make your character much more interesting.

## Personal Challenges

The personal challenge Trouble is an addiction, compulsion, trauma and the chaos that can breed in the heart of any human being. These struggles emerge from the personality of the Agent.

## Relationship Challenges

Relationship challenges are external forces, individuals or organizations (churches, secret societies, family) that can exert power over your Agent to complicate adventures. Did the Agent come from a life of crime to be redeemed in service to the Empire? Perhaps the Agent's family expects them to join in the family business, and can leverage their influence to attempt to make things uncomfortable for him.

## Darkest Before Dawn: Why Have a Trouble?

Troubles may seem like they would be unpleasant to play, but they also give depth to your Agent's strength. After all, it takes a strong person to deal with adversity, and Troubles are the fire that hardens the steel of your Agents inner (and outer) strength.

**Example Troubles:** DRAWN TO DRINK, HAUNTED BY THE WAR, HUMILITY IS FOR THE WEAK, IN DEBT TO THE MAESTRO

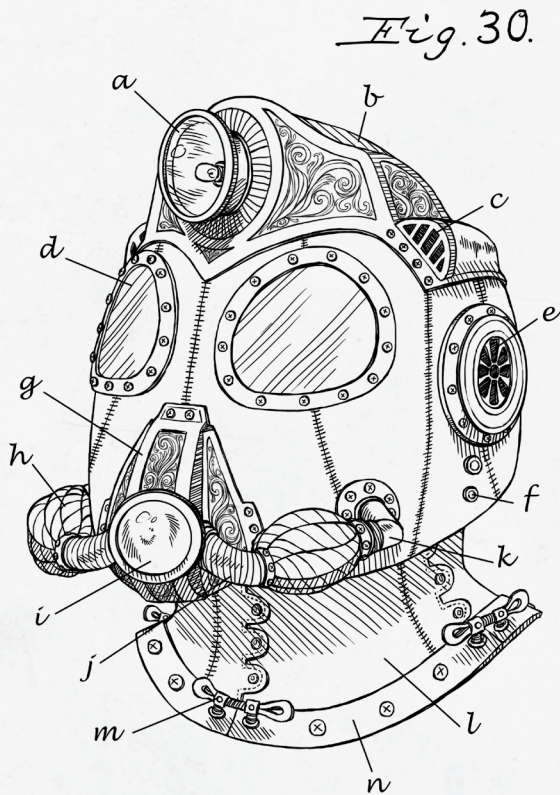
Having a difficult time choosing a High Concept and Trouble? It can be helpful to discuss character ideas with the group. Other Players can give suggestions to fit the themes of the game.



## GADGET ASPECTS

Steampunk stories are about how new technology intersects and interacts with society. Agents have a relationship with technology through their Gadget aspects. This Gadget is often related to an Agent's specialty, job, or greatest skill.

Each gadget has two aspects, a High Concept and a Trouble. The High Concept of an Agent's Gadget should relate to what it does, while the Trouble should describe the problems or limitations for that Gadget. Perhaps the Gadget is a highly effective weapon, but it quickly runs out of charge. Or maybe there is an effective listening device, but it is heavy and hard to carry. The problematic nature of the Trouble should be in direct proportion to how powerful the Gadget is.



### VERSATILE ASPECTS

A well-crafted aspect should be able to draw an Agent into trouble as well as help. **BEST CONMAN IN LONDON** for example, might help to pull off a con, but being the best at anything may mean having a reputation, which can be a disadvantage for a secret agent.

## THE PHASE TRIO

### PHASE ONE: RECRUITMENT ASPECT

Agents are recruited because of extraordinary skills and abilities that were noticed by the Ministry. The Recruitment aspect should relate to how an Agent attracted the attention of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences. What adventure, misfortune, luck, skill, or circumstance leads the Agent to attain the notice of a super-secret organization?

### PHASE TWO: FIRST ASSIGNMENT

First assignments for the Ministry are always character building. Players should briefly describe the Agent's first adventure for Queen and Country to the group. The aspect for this phase reflects the influence of this first adventure. This could be a hard lesson the Agent learned, or a reputation gained through this experience.

### PHASE THREE: ADVENTURE

This phase describes the history the characters have together, so it is important that the stories in the Adventure phase take place when the characters have already met each other. During this phase, Players should choose another Agent to connect with their own character. These Agents have been on a mission together. Players should briefly describe the adventure these Agents went on, and how it formed their impressions of each other. Each Player must narrate an adventure like this, and then write an Aspect that relates to that mission. Every Player must be connected with at least one other Player at the table.

### CHARACTER QUESTIONS

Answering questions can help to generate ideas for describing a character. This list of questions may help to develop details for an Agent.

**Personality Traits:** Does your Agent have a short fuse? Perhaps your Agent is overly conscientious bordering on obsessive or compulsive? Is your Agent open and outgoing or more self-contained and prone to keep her own counsel?

**Affiliations:** Where did your Agent grow up? What were his family dynamics? Did his family move in high society? Did they travel often? Did your Agent go to boarding school? Were any members of his family convinced of a crime? Did your Agent ever encounter a secret society?

**Quirks and Idiosyncrasies:** Is there a quirk that can come into play throughout a game? Perhaps a fondness



for pie? Is your Agent afflicted by an unusual phobia? Do they follow a specific routine?

**Recruitment:** Was your Agent a soldier that served with distinction? An inventor whose extraordinary work couldn't be ignored? A vigilante whose desire for justice has finally found lawful purchase?

**First Assignments:** What was the problem you were sent to solve? Was it a mystery? A betrayal? A crime? Were you sent in undercover or through the front door, guns blazing? What did your character expect and how did this experience conform with or defy expectations?

**Adventure:** How did you handle this assignment? What did you think of how your fellow Agent behaved? Who was the enemy? How did this experience influence you? Did you reveal another Agent's secret identity? Did you bring in the cavalry to help save the day? Do you have a new enemy or friend from your adventure?

## YOUR AGENT'S FILE

The next step is adding the details to the Agents file including their name, home office, department, and Agent seniority.

### NAMES

Character's names can reflect or defy their personality and background. Favorite characters from fiction can be excellent inspiration for naming a character.

### CHOOSE A HOME OFFICE

**Main Offices:** London, Edinburgh, Cardiff, and Dublin.

**Branch Offices:** New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Cape Colony, India, China, and Egypt.

### CHOOSE A DEPARTMENT

Every Agent works for a department in the Ministry: Administration, Archives, Field Agent, or Research and Design.

Administration runs the organization of the Ministry. Archives houses the record keepers. Field Agents perform operations out in the field. Research and Design constructs new equipment for Agents. More about these departments can be found in Chapter 3.

Your Agents need not all come from the same department. Perhaps they are thrown together in a special task force, or must unite against a secret threat. If you are unsure about what type of Agent to play, pick Field Agent, as they have excellent reasons to be out in the field and go on adventures.

## CHOOSE AGENT SENIORITY: JUNIOR OR SENIOR AGENT

Agents of the Ministry are either Junior or Senior Agents. Junior Agents are newer to the Ministry where Senior Agents are more experienced. Junior Agents tend to be younger, while Senior Agents are generally older. However, some older Agents may have been recruited late in life, or for various reasons, never promoted to Senior Agent status. Conversely, there are very young Senior Agents promoted quickly due to excellence in character or duty.

### Junior Agents

Junior Agents should add one more Physical Stress box to their character sheet.

### Senior Agent

Senior Agents should add one more Mental Stress box to their character sheet.

## HOW TO CREATE DIVERSE CHARACTERS

The Ministry respects individuality amongst its Agents. In any organization of worth, value is placed on particular strengths in each of its members. However, do keep in mind that all strengths and no weaknesses make for a very dull and predictable Agent. Instead, it is recommended to create an imperfect character, a person with unique traits to contrast and add a bit of spice to the game play.

Also, do not be afraid to give your character quirks. Personality quirks explained by backstory and character history don't have to be revealed at the outset of the mission, but can instead pop up at various moments and turn the flow of the game. These idiosyncrasies make your character memorable, and by extension, the game as well.

Try to balance a strength with a creative weakness, one that would affect your character in any number of circumstances and drive you toward a variety of improbable and unexpected actions. From such predicaments rise the most epic of gaming memories.

It is often said that the "punk" in steampunk is characterized by individuals going against the established norm, against convention, and by doing so have set themselves apart. Whether your character is a colonial striving for recognition from his peers in London, a suffragette calling for equality, or a working class person with ambitions to join the peerage, do so with conviction and drive. Who your character is will color every mission.



## HEROINES AND THE SUFFRAGETTE MOVEMENT

Activists in the movement for women's suffrage are dynamic women, unafraid to go against the expectations of society and often times against the wishes of law enforcement. These women should not be discounted as simple rabble-rousers. The majority of suffragettes are women of good breeding, born of the middle or upper classes and well-educated. One might argue it is the level of their education that allows them to see what improvements could be made to their social and economic situation if women were given a voice in government and the right to vote.

Suffragettes are the heroines of the age; their voices will be heard for decades and even centuries to come as they call for equality and women's rights. In what was once a predominantly patriarchal society, suffragettes are a force of change to mold the future.

Though the cause is predominantly driven by women, men may be sympathetic or even join the movement and lend their support.



## SKILLS

Skills describe a learned abilities or aptitude.

### YOUR LEVEL OF ABILITY: RATING YOUR SKILLS

Agents have these skills from basic training with the Ministry: Deduction, Fight, Firearms, and Stealth. Players should place these four skills and six others on the character sheet. Players may choose: one skill at Great (+4), two skills at Good (+3), three skills at Fair (+2) and four skills at Average (+1). All skills are described, in depth, in Chapter Six.

Skill List: *Arts, Contacts, Class, Deceive, Deduction, Empathy, Fight, Firearms, Invention, Medicine, Mythology, Notice, Pilot, Physique, Provoke, Rapport, Ride, Sport, Stealth, Theft, Will, Wealth.*

### SKILLS DURING PLAY

Players may choose to leave one or two skill boxes blank or change skills during the first few sessions as they come to understand their character and the campaign.

### GAME MASTERS: REGARDING BASIC TRAINING

Should a Player come up with a reason their Agent did not attend basic training, the group can discuss constructing a character that does not have these skills. The reasons for this should be worked into the Recruitment aspect of that Agent.

## BASIC TRAINING

All Agents of the Ministry go through basic training to teach them what will be required during their service. Some come to this basic training with excellent skills in these areas, while others develop rudimentary skills during their training. Though all Agents have the four skills they acquired during basic training, it is at the Player's discretion where to place these skills. For example, an Agent may have just picked up these skills during basic training and she only reached an Average level of competency, or perhaps an Agent was always a great fighter (+4 Fight) but the other skills learned in basic training are new to her.



## CHALLENGE WITHOUT SKILLS

Agents may occasionally come across challenges that they do not have a skill for. In that case, Agents will roll at -1.

### SPOILED FOR CHOICE

The whole universe out there with all of its variance sometimes makes it hard to narrow down on a single aspect. After all, aren't we all sparkling unique crystals? How can we possibly describe a whole character in just a few phrases?

Conversely, when creating a character, you've just met them. It's all awkward talk at the cocktail bar at the moment, and it's hard to talk about the trauma they had during the war when you've just met them. Perhaps they are only vague outline in the mind right now, and you simply cannot focus on them.

You are in the muck, but fear not, there are solutions.

#### ASK YOURSELF QUESTIONS

When stuck, ask questions about the Agent, and think of answers. These answers may or may not lead to an aspect, but the more you know about the character, the better you'll be able to create an appropriate aspect for them. See page 31 for a list of questions.

#### GOT FOUR OUT OF SIX?

Simply creatively worn out? After going through the whole character creation process, are you having trouble thinking about their Recruitment story or their Trouble? No worries. It's alright to hold off for a few games, keeping that space blank until you've had more time to get to know your character.

## CHOOSING STUNTS AND REFRESH

Stunts highlight your Agent's specialties. More details about picking, creating and using stunts can be found in Chapter six. Agents may choose three stunts for free. More stunts can be acquired at the cost of one refresh each.

## REFRESH

*What is it and what does it do?*

Refresh is the amount of Fate Points a Player receives at the start of each session. Every Agent starts with a refresh of three. When a Player adds more than three stunts to their character, it will lower their refresh. With four stunts, refresh is lowered to 2. Five stunts lower a refresh to one. Agents may not have more than five stunts at character creation.

## STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Agents are put in dangerous situations where they may be hurt, mentally or physically, during the course of duty. Stress and consequences are the methods for tracking this damage. Chapter Seven fully explains stress and consequences and how they are used in play.

### STRESS

Stress is the representation of the damage incurred during in a conflict, while consequences are the effects that remain after the conflict is over. Agents have two stress tracks, Physical and Mental, which track harm to your Agent. Every Agent begins with two (2) stress boxes of each. The more boxes in a stress track, the more resilient your Agent is.

#### Adding Stress Boxes: Seniority and Skills

Junior Agents receive an extra stress box in their Physical track, while Senior Agents receive an extra stress box in their Mental track.

Physique adds one Physical stress box if it is rated at Average or Fair (+1 or +2). A rating of Good (+3) or higher will add two stress boxes.

Will adds one Mental stress box if it is rated at Average or Fair (+1 or +2). A rating of Good (+3) or higher will add two stress boxes.

### CONSEQUENCES

Consequences represent the harm that cannot be dismissed easily after the conflict ends. Every Agent has three consequence slots: mild, moderate, and severe. Unlike stress, these slots can apply to either type of harm. Agents begin the campaign with three empty consequence slots.



## YOUR AGENT'S FILE

After going through these steps, Agent characters will have a character sheet with this information:

- Name,
- Home Office,
- Department,
- Junior or Senior Designation,
- Six Aspects (High Concept, Trouble, Gadget, Recruitment, First Assignment, and Adventure),
- Skills (one Great, two Good, three Fair, four Average),
- Between three and five Stunts,
- Mental and Physical Stress Track (2-5 each),
- Refresh (granting 1-3 Fate Points),
- Three Empty Consequence Slots.

## YOUR ADVENTURE BEGINS!

Now your Agents can jump into their adventures solving mysteries, uncovering secrets, chasing down criminals and get down to the serious business of saving the day.

Chapter Six describes in detail the skills and stunts mentioned in this chapter.





# ASPECTS AND FATE POINTS

## HOW FATE POINTS AND ASPECTS OPERATE IN THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE

 Creating and Using Character, Gadget, Game, Situation, Consequences, and Boost Aspects   
Within the Mechanics of Fate and the Economics of Fate Points.

### ASPECTS

This chapter describes aspects and Fate Points in THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE. An aspect is a phrase that describes what it's attached to. For example: Character aspects describe central motivations and personality traits about characters while Game aspects describe the important elements of the campaign. Aspects are the primary way Players spend and gain Fate Points. Aspects also provide a way for Players to influence the plot of the game.

#### THE FUNCTION OF ASPECTS

Aspects have two major functions: They tell you what's important and they help you decide when to use mechanics. Your Game and Character aspects are the phrases that define the game. These aspects are the focus point for characters, scenes and settings.

#### NOTE FOR GAME MASTERS

The aspects Players have created and the connections between them will suggest the conflicts that the characters will face, and will demonstrate how you draw them into those conflicts. They are the map for creating the kind of drama that will engage and entertain the Players, allowing them to be the focus of the action. It is highly recommended that Game Masters keep a list of their Players' aspects for reference.

### THE SEVEN TYPES OF ASPECTS

The Ministry Initiative has seven types of aspects: Character aspects, Gadget aspects, Game aspects, Situation aspects, consequences, and boosts.

#### CHARACTER ASPECTS

Character aspects are attached to a particular character. Players make these aspects during character creation. These kinds of aspects influence the game by describing the characters and their relationship to the world and each other. They create an opportunity for an Agent to get a bonus, complicate a character's life, or force a character to make a skill roll.

The Character aspects for a Player character are: High Concept, Trouble, Gadget, Recruitment, First Mission, and Adventure. These aspects are outlined in the Character Creation Chapter starting on page 30.

Important NPCs will also have aspects that describe their character. The different types of NPCs and when and how many aspects they have is discussed in Chapter Twelve.

#### Creating Character Aspects

Character aspects should describe the character to whom they are attached, specifically the elements of that character that are unique and special to that individual. For example, a Character aspect would not simply be **CARPENTER** but it could be **THE LAST HEIR TO THE SECRETS OF THE WEIR STREET CARPENTERS**. Aspects should suggest a deeper story.

Aspects are meant to bring character personality, profession, and major challenges into focus for the Game Master, group, and the trajectory of the game as a whole. Below is a list of examples for the types of aspects that can be used to generate character ideas.



Aspects can illustrate:

**Personality traits:** FULL OF FIGHTING WORDS, PATIENCE ISN'T ALWAYS A VIRTUE, QUESTIONS FIRST AND ACTION LATER

**Beliefs:** PRACTITIONER OF THE MIDDLE PATH, KEEPER OF THE OLD WAYS, SCIENCE HAS ALL THE ANSWERS

**Professions:** THE GREATEST SUPER SOLDIER YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF, PILOT IN AN ARMORED CORSET, AIRSHIP MERCENARY WITH A HEART OF BRASS

**Memberships:** SECRET MEMBER OF THE PHOENIX SOCIETY, MEMBER OF THE HUNTSMAN'S GUILD, MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES

**Backgrounds:** EDUCATED IN THE UNDERGROUND, OF THE COLONY BORN, A PROUD YORKSHIRE MAN

**Titles:** SECRET DUCHESS IN THE MINISTRY, EARL OF THE UNDERWORLD, CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE AIRSHIP CHROMATA

**Relationships:** RIVALRY IN THE HORSE RACES, DARLING OF THE SOCIETY PAGES, ADOPTED CHILD OF THE CRIMINAL UNDERWORLD

**Reputations:** VISIONARY INVENTOR WITH A TENDENCY TOWARDS EXPLOSIONS, BEST PICKPOCKET IN NEW YORK, HOTSHOT PILOT AND SURVIVOR OF SEVENTEEN CRASHES

**Obligations:** THE STREET CHILDREN LOOK UP TO ME, BOUND TO KEEP THE FACTORY OPEN, MY FAMILY NEEDS MY SALARY

**Problems:** FELL OUT OF ROYAL FAVOR, WELL KNOWN FACE, THEY BLAME ME FOR THE ACCIDENT

**Goals:** I SHALL DISAPPEAR FROM HIGH SOCIETY, I MUST PROTECT THE SECRET DUCHESS FROM DISCOVERY, I WILL BECOME THE BEST SHARPSHOOTER IN THE MINISTRY

Avoid creating multiple aspects that address the same concern. For example, if a character has **DARLING OF THE SOCIETY PAGES** do not also take **WELL-KNOWN FACE** as they address many of the same issues. Try to create aspects that address the individual facets of a character.

Avoid creating aspects that are all of a single type.

Character aspects can be invoked or compelled whenever relevant. Players can invoke or call for a compel on their own aspects if they believe the situation calls for it. Game Masters can always propose compels for any Agent. Though the Game Master always has final say, other Players can suggest compels on fellow Agents if they see a good situation arise.

Samantha is playing with the pre-generated character sheet for Eliza D. Braun, Field Agent.

The Game Master indicates that Braun and Books are deep within an enemy stronghold and have run down a dead end corridor with a locked door as their only means of escape. They've got no key to unlock the door and the minions of the House of Usher are closing fast. Books suggests that he try to pick the lock on the door. However, the Game Master has other ideas, and offers Samantha a Fate Point to invoke her aspect: **TEMPTED TO MAKE THINGS GO BOOM**. Samantha accepts the Fate Point and Agent Braun pulls out a few sticks of dynamite. "I think you might want to cover your ears, Welly," she says, before lighting the fuse.

*"The Ministry remains rather underfunded by the Crown, Books, and I was given the choice of either backup or more dynamite...I went with what I could trust."*

*~ Eliza D. Braun, Phoenix Rising*

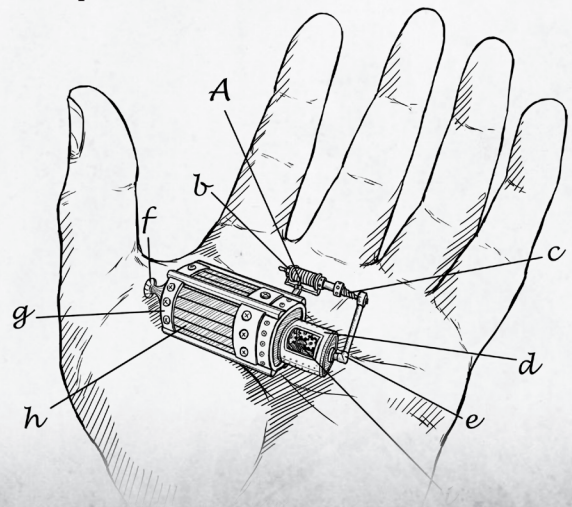
## AGENT GADGET

All Agents have a Gadget that is specific to their skills. This Gadget is an aspect that is related to the Agent's skills and abilities such as a raygun, a listening device, a portable engine, or a communications rig.

Each Agent Gadget has a High Concept and Trouble that describe what the Gadget is. The High Concept of this Gadget should relate to its function while the Trouble should connect to its limitations. Consider what would be useful to the Agent with their other Aspects and skills, and build a Gadget around those needs.

Unlike other aspects, that take major milestones to change, Gadgets can be swapped out mission to mission by any Agent going to Research and Design to request something new, or by inventing a Gadget of their own. No Agent can carry more than one Agent Gadget at any time.

Gadget aspects can be invoked or compelled like any other aspect.





## GAME ASPECTS

Game aspects are elements of the game that set the theme and genre of the game. These aspects may be altered in long games, but Game aspects never go away completely. Game aspects address challenges that exist in the world, problems the characters must solve, or threats to the Ministry. Players and Game Masters can invoke, compel, or create an advantage on a Game aspect. There are two types of Game aspects: Current Issues and Impending Issues.

**Current Issues:** The current problems facing Player characters. These are the fisticuffs in the face, rapier in the hand problems. These are related to the current mission or circumstances.

**Impending Issues:** These issues are on the horizon. They are secret societies gathering support among the upper classes, crumbling foundations under the Empire, or the rumblings of a revolution.

## SITUATION ASPECTS

Situation aspects describe important features of the scene the characters are currently in. They last only for a scene or session and attached to the environment where the scene takes place. Game Master and Players can attach these aspects to the environment, items, or specific characters in the scene. Situation aspects make scenes unique and allow Players to use the specific elements of the environment in their challenges. These aspects can also be generated to Create an Advantage for the Players. How to Create Advantages is discussed on page 67.

**Game Masters:** When starting a scene, write at least one Situational aspect about that scene on an index card. This will help the Players to engage with the game. You may also create aspects as they become relevant to the scene. For example, should the ceremonial cannons be fired at the royal picnic, you might add **LOUD BOOMS** to the scene. Players may add Situation aspects by Creating an Advantage (see page 67).

**Physical Features:** **THE HIGH CLIFFS OF DOVER, YOU CAN HEAR A PIN DROP IN THE LIBRARY, SMOKE-FILLED CLUB**

**Placement within the Scene:** **BOX SEATS IN THE OPERA HOUSE, LOST IN THE CROWD**

**Obstacles:** **RED-HOT DOORKNOB, BROKEN CARRIAGE WHEEL**

**Temporary Changes in a Character's Status:** **BLOWN COVER, BLINDED BY THE EXPLOSION**

## CONSEQUENCES

A consequence is a special type of aspect that describes lasting problems (usually injuries) for an Agent. Consequences are taken in order to avoid being removed from a conflict. These aspects will remain in play until they are resolved during the game. This might be from a few scenes to a scenario, depending on their severity and the actions the Player takes to resolve them. These aspects are likely to be compelled while in play, as they make the Agent vulnerable.

Example: **BROKEN WRIST, EXPOSED COVER, UNTRUSTWORTHY TEAMMATE**

## BOOSTS

Boosts are temporary aspects received when the Player achieves an impressive success. Players who receive a boost may invoke them without cost. Created boosts can also be invoked by other Agents. After a boost is invoked, it cannot be used again.

## FATE POINTS

### DEFINING FATE POINTS

Fate Points are a pool of points you use to influence the game. Players start with a certain number of Fate Points equal to their refresh each session. Game Masters receive points to spend in every scene. Fate Points can be spent to invoke aspects, which will help a character. Fate Points can be gained when a character's aspect is compelled, causing them to take an action that is contrary or complicating to their goals. These points are represented with tokens of some kind—chips, coins, small stones or pips, really anything inedible.

### WHEN IT'S APPROPRIATE TO USE MECHANICS

A role-playing book could be considered a collection of etiquette guidelines for describing what behavior is appropriate when, and how a group can genially and fairly tell a rather smashing tale of dramatic derring-do.

Aspects tell the Game Master and Players what is important about the characters, game, and scenes. Aspects also inform the group when it's appropriate to use the mechanics to resolve a situation. Game Masters must consider when it is appropriate to bring out the Fate Points and the dice. Many times, the Agents can simply describe what they do without reaching for the dice. We assume that all Agents are competent individuals recruited due to their outstanding ability, so it is unnecessary (and obnoxious) to make them roll to take a walk to the library.

If an action is uncontested and fully within a character's abilities, they do not need to make a roll for the



action. For example, if a sharpshooter known for their incredible abilities is taking careful, uninterrupted aim at target practice, and the Player wants to say that they hit the target every time—there should be no reason why this isn't the case.

However, if the sharpshooter is on horseback in a competition against their arch rival, trying to hit an apple off a tree—then, ladies and gentlemen, break out the bones and roll them.

## CREATING A BRILLIANT ASPECT

The best aspects are like excellently fitted trousers: They can be worn on many occasions and are well-tailored to your unique proportions but still allow a little bit of room to move. Great aspects are excellent descriptions that can be interpreted in multiple ways.

### Positive and Negative

An excellent aspect is something special about the Agent that also offers a hook for the Game Master or other characters to complicate their lives. When creating an aspect, consider the way it might be invoked to do something amazing, or compelled to receive Fate Points.

Game Masters should also consider the positive and negative features of aspects when creating them for scenes. Dastardly villains may use the **FOG FROM THE WEST** to disguise their movements as much as our heroic Agents might use it as cover for their escape.

### Building a Character Aspect

Creating a Character aspect is building a descriptive phrase. Think about what you'd like to say about the character. Perhaps the character is smart. While **SMART** certainly is a description, it is not one that is particularly interesting. It does not suggest a story or tell you something unique about a character. Even **THE SMARTEST** while it tells us more, does not tell us enough: the smartest what? Where? With who?

**BRILLIANT STRATEGIST** is more specific, and certainly points to a character's intelligence. However, we still don't know a strategist of what—of chess? Of culinary perfection?

**BRILLIANT STRATEGIST OF THE OLD GUARD** tells us more. It hints at a broader story, one that could be invoked or compelled. This suggests that the character is a brilliant strategist with a long history. It suggests membership to a group, and a broader story. The "Old Guard" hints that the character comes up with great plans—that would have worked well ten years ago, but not necessarily today, which opens up the opportunity for interesting compels.

Clarity and specificity are important when creating an aspect. Share the character aspects with the group as they are created and ask for feedback. If another Player has difficulty understanding the aspect, consider revising it. Avoid being too general and creating aspects with only positive connotations.

## 5 WAYS TO KNOW YOU'VE MADE A GOOD ASPECT

1. You can use it to invoke or compel.
2. Other Players understand it.
3. It implies a story.
4. It is different than the other aspects you or other Players have.
5. It makes other people at the table smile.

## INVOKING ASPECTS

When an aspect is invoked by a character it is used to benefit that character in a challenge. If the Game Master calls for a roll, and the Player believes that an aspect is relevant to that role, they can choose to invoke it. This can be done before or after a roll is made. For example, **BEST PICKPOCKET IN LONDON** will be rather useful when attempting to lift the sealed letter from the pocket of Lord Bigglesworth.

Players should explain how their aspect relates to the situation they are in. Game Masters must understand how this aspect applies to the particular situation. If it does not make sense, they are free to refuse the use of it in this situation. Other Players may feel free to suggest the use of an aspect for other Players, and give strategy ideas on how aspects may be used in a challenge.

Game Masters, use a light and interpretive hand with aspects; if a Player can make a decent argument as to why it can be used, we suggest you allow its use.

To invoke the aspect, explain why the aspect is relevant in this situation, spend a Fate Point, and choose one of these benefits:

1. Take +2 on the current skill roll after you've rolled the dice.
2. Re-roll all the dice.
3. Give a +2 benefit to another character's roll, if appropriate.
4. Add +2 to any source of passive opposition, such as reinforcing a lock or wall.

Multiple aspects can be invoked on a single roll, but the same aspect can only be invoked once. If the re-roll fails, Players may choose another aspect, and spend more Fate Points, for a second reroll or +2.



## INVOKING AN ASPECT FOR FREE

There are a few circumstances that allow Players to invoke an aspect without spending any Fate Points. When Players succeed at Creating an Advantage (page 67), you can place a free invocation onto an aspect. If you Succeed with Style (page 66), Players receive two free invocations.

Unlike regular invocations, Players can use the aspect twice (once free, and once if they spend a Fate Point) to create a +4 bonus, or allow for two rerolls. After the Player has used the free invocation, the aspect can still be invoked by spending Fate Points.

You may also place a free invocation on any consequence you are responsible for in a conflict. Players may also give a free invocation to another character. There is no limit to the amount of these kinds of gifts. Lavish them all on one Agent or gift them to an Agent in trouble. Teamwork is delightful.

Samantha, Braun's Player, attempts to rig the door with dynamite to blow their way to freedom using her Explosives skill. Unfortunately, she rolls a -2 and fails the attempt.

What to do?

She tells the Game Master she chooses to spend a Fate Point to invoke her **TEMPTED TO MAKE THINGS GO BOOM** aspect and re-rolls the dice with a more successful outcome.

■■■■

The dynamite is successfully attached to the locked door. Books and Braun take what cover they can behind several barrels against the wall. As the fuse burns, they hope for the best.

## COMPELLING ASPECTS

As much as an adventure contains fabulous displays of competence, adventures can also serve as temptations and unfortunate events can conspire against an Agent's weaknesses. The better angels of their nature leave for an instant, and Agents are drawn into dens of iniquity. When this happens to characters in a Ministry game, the events are often attached to compels which can lead to complications, which add drama and conflict to an adventure.

## WHAT ASPECTS CAN BE COMPELLED

Compelling aspects applies to Character, Gadget, Situation, Location, or Game aspects and happens when a situation arises that calling that aspect into play would make things far more interesting, dramatic or challenging.

## THE GAME MASTER'S ROLE DURING COMPELS

Usually the Game Master will compel a Character aspect when they believe an aspect about a character, place, or game can serve to make things way more interesting, and then the Game Master can compel that aspect into play. However, Players may suggest a compel or offer a Fate Point to directly compel another character. Players may do this to any aspect in play, including aspects on fellow Player characters.

### WHY WOULD I WANT BAD THINGS TO HAPPEN TO MY TEAM?

Why pay Fate Points to make bad things happen to fellow Agents? After all, this seems counterproductive to the whole Adventuring Heroes for Justice and Good nature of the game. However, taking a few hits and making things interesting can result having the points later to do the things you need to do to win the day. If you have a lot of Fate Points, but notice a teammate running low, you might suggest a compel that will get them (and you) in a bit of hot water so that later they can land a big blow for the Empire. Getting caught now might give them the points to swash and buckle their way out of trouble later.

It's up to the Game Master to make the final call on that compel, and to reject it if it doesn't make sense. Any Player whose aspect is being compelled can also choose to reject the compel if they wish, though they must pay a Fate Point to do so. A Player may also compel their own characters, for free, if they feel the situation is appropriate.

## Compelling Characters and Fate Points

Game Masters should examine the situation for good compels for characters that are running low on Fate Points and Players should feel free to propose compels for their characters if they want to build up points.

Aside from mechanics, compels simply make the game interesting. They connect the characters to the challenges of the world, and they allow Players to delve into the flaws of their characters. compels are a ways of making things personal. Yes, the Game Master may have a bunch of goons jump out of the shadows just for fun, but isn't it far more interesting if you are compelled to steal the Emerald of Nasgoy off Lady Flufferin's neck because **THAT BELONGS IN A MUSEUM?**



## COMPEL COSTS

**Game Master:** 1 Fate Point to Player

**On Yourself:** Free (Game Master must provide 1 Fate Point)

**On Other Players:** 1 Fate Point to Player

## TYPES OF COMPELS: EVENTS AND DECISIONS

There are two types of compels; Events and Decisions. Events happen to Agents when the world around them responds to one of their aspects to create a dramatic situation. Game Masters and Players can use both types of these compels, though it is up to the Game Master to make the final judgment on when they apply.

For example, an Agent with **DUKE OF THE UNDERWORLD** who has gone undercover and finds himself in a meeting the shadiest of characters under a bridge just before dawn, might be recognized by someone who happens to know him. The Game Master may then say : You are a **DUKE OF THE UNDERWORLD**, so Leroy, who is a bodyguard for the contact, recognizes your face at the meeting.

Event compels are the Game Master's way of bringing the world close to the characters. Players may be scorned for who they are or what they look like, praised by admirers, or simply nagged by family at inconvenient times. compels need not always be on Trouble aspects. Being **DUKE OF THE UNDERWORLD** might be useful under most circumstances, but the Game Master may find a way to bring it into unexpected and dramatic play.

Decision compels come into play when the compel proposed is internal to the character. It comes into play due to the characters complex inner life, their goals, temptations and failings.

Agent Taylor has the aspect **I WILL BECOME THE BEST SHARPSHOOTER IN THE MINISTRY** and right now, with the false Baron standing in the courtyard below, he has the opportunity to prove it. The Game Master offers the Player a Fate Point to take the shot, and the Player accepts. Even though it will blow his cover, it makes sense that Agent Taylor will try. Of course, it shall all go wrong when his guards notice the sun gleam off the metallic finish of the raygun.

This requires a strong understanding of the characters in the game, which is why the Game Master should keep a list of the characters' aspects to review and everyone should consider if the Event or Decision is "in character" before proposing a compel. The Game Master should consider being light-handed on compels early in the game, and not charging a Fate Point if the Players feel that the actions proposed are out of character for their Agent.

## COMPELLING CHARACTER ASPECTS

To compel an aspect, explain why the aspect is relevant to a particular situation, and decide on what the complication is. A complication is the result of a particular aspect being called into play. The Game Master can propose a compel and a complication, but another Player can spend a Fate Point to propose one on another character, and a Player may propose one on themselves for free.

If a character is **LOST IN THE BOTTLE** then the complication might be that they are hung over during the mission briefing the next day.

The Agent who is being compelled may:

### 1. Accept the complication and receive one Fate Point.

Once this is done, the complication happens regardless of the actions of the Player who accepted the Fate Point or any other character playing the game. It is a bargain; a contract signed and paid for by Fate Points, and once accepted, cannot be undone.

### 2. Pay a Fate Point to prevent the complication from happening.

If a Fate Point is paid to prevent the complication from happening, the Player who paid it, and the group, describe how it's avoided. Perhaps it was a great act of willpower. Or perhaps the other characters covered up for any misstep, provided cover or distraction. Whatever is decided, the Player, or the group, should narrate how disaster was avoided by our heroes.

Books is down in Research and Design attempting to convince Agent Axelrod to let him check out a thermal imager for an upcoming mission. Axelrod isn't sure that the gadget will actually be useful for the mission, and attempts to bait Books by claiming that the only real use of the gadget is to search for ghosts, and he won't let Books have it unless Books admits that's what he's looking for. Kennedy, the Game Master, offers Mike, the Player, a Fate Point.

"Since we know Books is a man of logic and there is **NO SUCH THING AS A PETTY DIFFERENCE I**



would bet that Books is feeling very annoyed right now. Annoyed enough that he might say something he regrets.”

“Books doesn’t believe in ghosts,” says Mike, “But he knows how important it’s going to be for him to have the thermal imager for the mission.” Mike hands Kennedy a Fate Point. “He’s going to suck it up, swallow his pride, and tell Axelrod that yes, he needs it to look for ghosts.”

## COMPELLING SCENE, SITUATION, AND GAME ASPECTS

You may use Scene, Situation, and Game aspects for compels. A circumstance of an environment such as fog, ice, or hostile upper crust might create a situation where a compel would come into play. As you may notice, these will be Event compels, based on situations that happen outside of the characters inner lives. Just like Character aspect compels, the characters affected will receive Fate Points for the compel on a Scene, Situation, or Game aspect.

## RETROACTIVE COMPEL

Sometimes Players stumble into compels by accident, or Game Masters organically propose a compel and a consequence without realizing the mechanical implications of that compel. If the Game Master or Players notice this has happened later, and that they did not receive Fate Points for this, they may point it out and receive a Fate Point.

This may just be a function of playing the game and playing it well. Often Players get so wrapped up in the situation that mechanics may fall to the wayside, until much later, when the Players or Game Master realize that points should have been exchanged. There is no penalty for realizing this later; the Game Master should simply hand over the owed Fate Points. The final arbiter of this is the Game Master. Though Players may act as solicitors to argue the point, consider the narration and if the aspect was played appropriately, it is the Game Master who makes the final call.

The Game Master slides a Fate Point token onto the table and looks at Books and Braun, played by Mike and Samantha. She suggests a compel based on the same aspect, **TEMPTED TO MAKE THINGS GO BOOM.**

“The locked door is armed, a booby trap. Adding the dynamite triggered the explosives already hidden in the door and blew it off its hinges. However, an ominous rumbling has begun all around you. There’s a chain reaction spreading throughout the entire cavern system and

the whole enemy stronghold is coming down around you.”

Books and Braun can choose to face the approaching minions of the House of Usher and the danger of being buried alive or rush out into the cold and risk exposure to unknown numbers of enemies with no cover to speak of.

.....  
“*That was quite invigorating.*”

~ Eliza D. Braun, *Phoenix Rising*  
.....

## USING ASPECTS FOR ROLEPLAYING

Aspects are descriptions, narratives that suggest stories, depth and drama. They are a guide to playing the character. If you were an actor taking on a role, they would be the notes handed to you before you looked at the script. They lead the character through the story, suggesting actions. These are the quintessential truths about the character, not only what makes them unique, but the core of who they are. If you are unsure about what the character might do, look to the aspects as guides.

Game Masters should know the aspects of their Players not only to create interesting compels, but to design a game and situations in a game that directly touch who the characters are. They are a map from the Players to you to get to the heart of their characters. They tell you who the characters are, and how the world around them should react.

Writing down the aspects of an NPC can be a guide for a Game Master as well. Much of being an excellent Game Master is reacting to the actions of the Players. Creating a few aspects for an NPC can give you hints on how that NPC might react to the actions of the Players.

## REMOVING OR CHANGING AN ASPECT

### Character Aspects

Agents learn as they go on missions, gain experience, and advance in skills. Over a long campaign, you may find that the character’s priorities, goals, memberships and failings change. Once you may have been the **DUKE OF THE UNDERWORLD** but now you’ve left behind that life to be a respected pillar of the community. When you play a long campaign (page 113) the aspects will change with the character.

### Situation Aspects

Situation aspects are temporary by nature, and they can be removed in three ways.

**1. Roll to Overcome:** Roll an Overcome action for the purpose of getting rid of that aspect.



**2. Roll to Act:** Roll an action that would remove the aspect.

**3. The aspect no longer makes sense:** The situation is over or things have changed in such a way that the aspect no longer applies.

If a character actively wants to prevent removing the aspect, they may roll active opposition. Game Masters may also set passive opposition, or simply allow a character to disregard the aspect should it no longer make sense.

The night is **DARK AND FOGGY** and Agent Blackwell makes her way through the gloom until she reaches a cozy cottage. She enters a well-lit drawing room and meets up with Books and Braun. The Situation aspect, **DARK AND FOGGY** does not apply as long as the characters are in this cottage. But, when a scream draws them back outside into the night, the aspect returns.

## CREATING AND DISCOVERING NEW ASPECTS

During the game, you will be able to create and discover new aspects.

### Create an Advantage

Most new aspects will be generated when a character Creates an Advantage. When Players describe the action that provides an advantage, the narrative should suggest if it should require a new aspect, or if it connects to an existing one. The group should decide what is applicable, and either create a new aspect, or use an existing one.

### Creating an Advantage Using a Character Aspect

Some skills will allow the savvy Player to Create an Advantage that will be placed on a Character aspect. Players may do this with a PC or an NPC, who would provide active opposition to keep them from using that aspect. See page 67 for more information about Creating an Advantage.

### Suggesting a New Situation or Game Aspect

If a Player comes up with an aspect that the group believes makes sense for a particular situation or the game as a whole, they might suggest it, and if the group agrees that it makes sense, they can add it to the game without cost. These suggestions may be small “Hey, this must be a popular opera we’re at, can we add **CROWDED WITH OPERA FANS** to the situation?” or it can be as large as a Game aspect: “That last fight went really well for us, but I imagine we now have **ENEMIES AMONG THE PHOENIX SOCIETY**, don’t we?”

## Declaring Story Details

Fate Points gives Agents the power to change the story to their advantage. To declare a story detail, an Agent simply makes the declaration, and spends a Fate Point. The Game Master has the final right to say if this story detail is true or not. These details become aspects that can be compelled in game. If the Game Master doesn’t want it in the scene, they can simply reject the Fate Point, which returns to the Agent. The story detail needs to be connected to one of the character’s aspects.

A character who is **DUCHESS OF THE UNDERWORLD**, declares that she knows the bookie at the underground boxing match the Agents are attending.

Agents might declare a story detail about the setting **I KNOW ALL THE REGULARS AT THIS PUB**, their knowledge of a situation **I’VE READ ABOUT THE ANCIENT CREATURE LIVING UNDER THE THAMES**, or that they happen to have just the right equipment for the job **I NEVER FORGET MY TRUSTY LISTENING DEVICE**.

Wellington Thornhill Books has been tied up by a group of automata who have been programmed with dastardly purpose. He’s been left alone, for now, as the machines fetch their masters. Mike knows that Books would prefer not to be tied up when whoever is coming for him returns, but Books had prepared for a night out at the opera, not a field mission. Mike hands over a Fate Point “Books **NEVER LEAVES WITHOUT HIS BOOT KNIFE**,” he declares. “Sounds reasonable,” agrees Kennedy, taking the Fate Point.

## FATE POINTS

Fate Points are the currency that allows you to use aspects. While there may be certain circumstances where you may use the aspects without cost, often, and especially under adverse circumstances, Fate Points are required to activate a useful aspect.

At the beginning of every session of game play, each Player should receive a number of Fate Points modified by their number of stunts. This is called the refresh rate. For a beginning character the default refresh rate is 3, however, during character creation, Players can spend up to two refresh to buy additional stunts.

- Three Stunts = Refresh of 3
- Four Stunts = Refresh of 2
- Five Stunts = Refresh of 1

Characters may end a session with more Fate Points than refresh. If that happens, you don’t lose the addi-



tional points when you start next time, but you don't gain any either.

A character has gained five Fate Points during game play, and they have a refresh of 3, they remain at 5 without adding more. However, if a character ends play with 1 Fate Point, but they have a refresh of 3, then the Game Master would provide them with two more at the start of the next session.

## EARNING FATE POINTS

You may earn Fate Points by accepting a compel, having your aspects invoked against you to Create an Advantage, and conceding a conflict.

**1. Accepting compels:** When you accept a compel, you gain Fate Points. This is done when you agree to the complication associated with the compel and accept the Fate Point from the Game Master, or the fellow Player. See page 22 for more information about compels.

**2. Create Advantages based on aspects:** If someone pays Fate Points to create an advantage on an aspect your character possesses, you may gain the Fate Points they spent to do so at the end of the scene.

**3. Conceding a conflict:** Characters will receive one Fate Point when they concede a conflict. See page 75 for more about conceding conflicts.

**4. Consequences:** You will receive additional Fate Points for each consequence you took if you concede a conflict. See page 75 for more about consequences.

## SPENDING FATE POINTS

We have discussed the compels that allow you to gain Fate Points, but now we shall discuss the ways that you can spend Fate Points to your advantage. Spending can be done by invoking, powering a stunt, or refusing a compel.

**1. Invoke an aspect:** Invoking an aspect costs one Fate Point. Occasionally invocation is free, such as when a character has managed to Succeed with Style. See page 66 for details.

**2. Power a Stunt:** Powerful stunts cost Fate Points to activate. Such stunts are noted in the text.

**3. Refusing a compel:** If a Player wants to refuse a compel, they can pay Fate Points to avoid the proposed

complication. Players should describe the appropriate narration for how the complication was avoided.

## EARNING REFRESH

Refresh can be earned when characters develop and learn through their experiences. This refresh can be spent on gaining more stunts, or to increase your starting refresh total. See page 87 for information about achieving major milestones and when characters can earn refresh.

## THE GAME MASTER'S HORDE OF FATE POINTS

Game Masters use Fate Points in a different way than Players. When Game Masters award Players Fate Points, they can do so without limits. It does not matter if Game Masters are compelling Players, or they have conceded a fight, or they have conceded a fight with complications, all of it comes from a bottomless fountain from where Fate Points spring eternal.

Although Players must spend a point to compel other Players, the Game Master and the bottomless fountain may do it for free. You are the world, and as such, the resources are without limit. However, though the world has unlimited Fate Points, NPCs do not.

## THE FATE POINTS OF NPCs

NPCs do not have bottomless fountains of energy from which to draw their will and strength. When a scene starts, the Game Master will receive one Fate Point for every Player in that scene. These Fate Points belong to a general pool that can be used on behalf of any NPC in that scene. Save them all up for the true villain, or spread them out, it's all up to the Game Master. Fate Points go away at the end of this scene, and at the beginning of a new scene, a new pool is generated.

## NPCS EARNING FATE POINTS

An NPC can earn Fate Points the same ways Players do. They can be compelled by the Game Master or a Player or concede a conflict. However, these Fate Points will evaporate at the end of a scene. For more about NPCs and how to play them, see page 98.

Fate Points should be a constantly traded commodity, traveling freely between the Game Master and Players. Players may hoard them like misers to spend in a crucial moment, or spend them throughout the game to achieve their goals. Characters should be compelled though the game session when appropriate situations arise to charge the drama.

Hold onto your pith helmets because in the next chapter we'll be diving headfirst into Skills and Stunts.





## Chapter Six

# SKILLS AND STUNTS

## DEFINING SKILLS, STUNTS AND HOW TO APPLY THEM

From Performing at the Opera to Owning a Mansion, Skills Rate What You Are Good At.  
Stunts Are Specialties That Customize Your Agent's Skills.

*The Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences was  
unique in Queen Victoria's government, and  
it was unlikely any other place would suit  
Miss Eliza D. Braun's skills as well.*  
—The Janus Affair

## SKILLS

### DEFINING SKILLS

Skills in THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE are descriptions of competency and are what Players will base rolls on when confronted with a particular challenge. All Agents are skilled individuals, selected for work in the Ministry due to impressive achievements or potential.

### LIST OF SKILLS

Below is a list of skills for the quick reference. The "Agent Skills", that is, those an Agent will have gained a point in during basic training, are starred.

- Arts
- Contacts
- Class
- Deceive
- Deduction\*
- Empathy
- Fencing
- Fight\*
- Firearms\*
- Invention
- Medicine
- Mythology
- Notice
- Pilot

- Physique
- Provoke
- Rapport
- Ride
- Sport
- Stealth\*
- Theft
- Will
- Wealth

### SKILL LADDER

Skills in the Ministry are rated on an adjective ladder that corresponds to an appropriate number. The higher your rating, the more skill your character has. Like aspects, Skills also inform the Game Master and Players about who the character is and what they are good at. When it comes to the rolling, adding and subtracting, skills are where you look.

| Descriptor | Value |
|------------|-------|
| Legendary  | +6    |
| Epic       | +5    |
| Superb     | +4    |
| Great      | +3    |
| Good       | +2    |
| Fair       | +1    |
| Average    | 0     |
| Mediocre   | -1    |
| Poor       | -2    |
| Terrible   | -3    |
| Abysmal    | -4    |



## GAME MASTER'S PREROGATIVE

Game Masters may look at an action, and the skill level of a character who is taking that action, and declare an automatic success for that character. If a character is dueling a twelve year old child who has never picked up a blade before, and they have five points and a stunt in that skill, it can be easier to simply declare success if rolls would just slow down the action. However, if that kid is older than she looks, and has studied the Agent's weaknesses from afar, then declare the roll. Rolls need not be made for every little action, but when a roll is taken, it should signal a challenge for the character.

Skills allow characters to take certain game actions under certain situations. Below, we will lay out the basic game actions, which are Overcome, Create an Advantage, Attack, and Defend. Under each skill description will be an explanation of when it is appropriate to use these basic game actions. See page 66 for more about actions and outcomes.

### BASIC GAME ACTIONS

**1. Overcome:** This describes taking action of a challenge related to your skills. This may be a difficult task or an obstacle. When you succeed, you overcome this challenge and achieve your goal.

**2. Create an Advantage:** This action is all about giving the character for their fellow Agents, might use to their advantage. It's snow in the eyes of an enemy or knowing of their secret affair. Creating an Advantage gives Players the opportunity to create aspects and gain free invocations.

**3. Attack:** When characters use a skill to Attack, they are attempting to harm another character. This harm need not be physical; it can affect social standing or psychological well-being.

**4. Defend:** When characters use skill to Defend, they are attempting to keep someone from harming them during an Attack, getting past them, or creating an advantage against them or another Player.

### PHYSIQUE AND WILL

Physique and Will are special skills that can give additional stress boxes to a character. Physique can provide additional physical stress boxes, while Will can give additional mental stress boxes. More information is available starting on page 34.

## AGENT SKILLS

All Agents of the Ministry must attend basic training in order to qualify for service. Though Agents often come to the Ministry with many skills, they all attend this program that fills them in on Ministry procedure and protocol. During this training all Agents acquire four skills: Deduction, Fight, Firearms, and Stealth.

However, not all Agents take to this training at the same level. For some Agents, they may be entirely new to these skills, and may choose to take only +1 to these skills. Other Agents may be quick studies, or may have already had some of these skills when they were recruited. A great detective recruited into the Ministry may not have added to their +4 Deduction, but may have picked up Fight and Firearms at +1 and learned a few things about Stealth to put them at +2.

Players receive ten skills in total: the four Agent skills should be distributed with the six others on the character sheet in this formation: one skill at Great (+4), two skills at Good (+3), three skills at Fair (+2), and four skills at Average (+1).

## STUNTS

### EXPLANATION OF STUNTS

While skills are generalities, stunts are specifics. They are areas of expertise at which a character shines. Stunts enhance the way a skill works for a character, and indicate an exceptional level of mastery in a particular area. This could be expertise with a particular martial art, an understanding of high society, or facility with steam engines. Players never have to use a stunt if they don't want to, a stunt is always optional.

Each skill has a list of stunts. When a Player creates a character, they can choose from example stunts to complete their Agent. However, Players are also free, with Game Master approval, to make their own stunts.

Upon character creation, each Player will receive three stunts, which gives them the basic refresh of three. They may take four stunts, but then their refresh will be reduced to two. With five stunts, refresh is reduced to one. Refresh cannot go lower than one. See more about refresh on page 34.

### HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN STUNT

Scholars, secret Agents, and engines of creativity may view our list of stunts and find it lacking a particular stunt they believe their unique character should possess. If a Player has a particular fighting style that they would like to add, a subsection of arts a character has mastery over, or any other particular circumstance we did not address, then create your own special stunt.



If a Player is creating their own stunt, they should craft them in such a way as to make sure that the circumstances of their use are narrow in application. This is the balancing act of crafting stunts—they must be specific enough to be special, but broad enough that the circumstances of their use are likely to happen sometime over the course of a few sessions. All new stunts are subject to the approval of the Game Master.

Stunts can do three things.

1. Add a new action to a skill.
2. Add a bonus to an action.
3. Create a rules exception.

## ADDING A NEW ACTION TO A SKILL

Adding a new action takes two forms: swapping one skill for another, or adding an action that isn't available to any skill. When you swap one skill for another with a stunt, you are describing how a specific skill might, under certain circumstances, actually act like another listed skill.

### NEW ACTION STUNT

**Weak Spot:** You can use Deduction to make physical Attacks when you have at least one minute to view your opponent's fighting style and make an analysis of their weaknesses.

When a new action is added, it means that it is adding an ability that isn't available under any other skill, and makes the specific skill unique.

**Horse Whisperer:** Your skill with Ride relates to your ability to communicate with your horse, and is so good that you can successfully communicate with your animal even when you are not on your horse. If your horse can see or hear you, you can communicate a simple command to them.

## ADDING A BONUS TO AN ACTION

Stunts may also create an automatic skill bonus under unique circumstances. The circumstances under which you apply these bonuses should be narrower than what the normal action of the skill permits. The bonus to the action will be +2 to the skill total.

This type of stunt is an excellent device for demonstrating how your character's skills are unique from other characters. It is their specific area of specialty. Those with the Firearms skill may come from a hunting background, a sports background, or a military background. They may have been trained by their mothers or by another kid on the streets.

### BONUS EXAMPLE USING THE FIREARMS SKILL

**My Right Arm:** Your specially modified gun is dear to you, an extension of your right arm itself. It is noticeably different from other weapons, and nearly impossible to conceal. However, when you use this weapon, you gain +2 to your Firearms skill roll. This disappears if your weapon is damaged, modified, or taken from you.

### EXAMPLE USING THE INVENTION SKILL

**Chemist:** You are an expert at the mixing of chemicals. When your invention centers around chemical concoctions (poisons, gases) you receive +2 bonus to their creation.

## THE RULES EXCEPTION

Stunts may permit Players to create a rules exception, under specific circumstances, for any other game rule that doesn't specifically fit into the category of an action. Chapter 8: Challenges, Contests, and Conflicts will demonstrate rules about how and when a skill can be used. Stunts can break those rules in certain unique circumstances.

### RULES EXCEPTIONS

**Bolster:** When you use Empathy to Create a mental Advantage for another character, you can actively oppose any Overcome rolls to their mental well-being, provided that you are in their presence.

**Knowing the Right People:** You are a person of Class, and therefore you know not just people but the Right People. You may use this stunt as a Contacts roll, in addition to Contacts, allowing you to use Contacts twice in the same challenge.

## WHAT WOULD YOUR CHARACTER DO: DECEIVE, EMPATHY, PROVOKE, RAPPORT

Skills such as Deceive, Empathy, Provoke, and Rapport are skills that allow characters to change the emotional state of another character. This means that these skills can evoke a reaction.

When characters succeed with Deceive, Empathy, Provoke, or Rapport, they have not succeeded in forcing another character to act in a way they choose. Players should narrate what characters have done and suggest a reaction, but the Player affected can decide what that success looks like.

THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE isn't about forcing character choices on others, it's about building a fascinating adventure.



## MINISTRY SKILLS

The rest of the chapter details the skills and stunts for THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE. When creating a character, Players should review these skills and decide what best fits their character. Stunts are listed below the skills they are associated with.

### ARTS

*"I just don't understand why you would ever think I would enjoy that," Eliza D. Braun said, as she angrily left the theatre. She fussed with the layers of satin ruffles on her skirt, and mentally cursed the fact that she had decided not to bring a weapon with her this evening. If anyone deserved a gutting, it was that last soprano. "It was worse than the opera!"*

*-The Trouble With Phoenixes*

Ah, the Arts. Painting, dance, playing a musical instrument, acting, sculpting, counterfeiting large sums of money, creating paste diamonds. Often indefinable, notably subject to opinion, nevertheless a popular pursuit of anyone with enough leisure time to invest in them.

Victorian art reflects the fast growth and prosperity of the Empire, often focusing on high fashion and elegance of the upper class in England, especially London.

Although Agents of the Ministry often have less transcendent skills to describe the human condition, the arts were of great importance in the time of the Ministry. Entertainment was often friends gathering in a home, playing an instrument and singing together. Dancing was a popular pastime. Facility with the arts can open doors, demonstrate class, and bring you into excellent favor. Not to mention any time an Agent has to travel undercover as a visiting acting troupe performing Hamlet. Or the forging of fake emeralds to replace the royal ones that were stolen by an influential secret society.

**Overcome:** Arts allows you to perform or create art. Actions with Arts often take place as one component of a greater plan, such as dancing with the Duke to gain his favor.

**Create an Advantage:** You may use Arts to create Aspects that represent features of a piece of art that works to your advantage. This may be a sculpture that **DEMONSTRATES YOUR CLASS**, **HIDES YOUR SECRETS**, or **CONVINCING COUNTERFEIT**.

**Attack:** The Arts cannot be used to Attack.

**Defend:** Arts doesn't Defend.

### Arts Stunts

**Forgery:** In situations where you must forge a convincing signature or document, you are at a distinct advantage with your +2.

**Art in the Class:** When you are dealing with high society types, you can use Arts to impress and bring yourself into a select crowd. This means that you may use Arts in place of a Class challenge.

**All that Glitters:** +2 to the creation of an object that is meant to represent precious stones or metals.

**Perfect Performance:** When you succeed with style on an Overcome action to impress with a performance, you can create a new situation aspect (with a free invoke) reflecting how you have swayed your viewers to your favor with your impressive display.

Advancements in technology of the time made a distinct impact on Victorian artists and the way the public viewed their work. Of particular note is the emergence of photography and the practice of taking portraits, not only by the upper class but also the middle class. The more affluent could afford to commission painted portraits. While still expensive, photography made it possible for the slightly less wealthy to obtain portraits as well.

Upon the death of a loved one or family member, memento mori or post-mortem photographs were not uncommon to serve as keepsakes in remembrance of the deceased.

Additionally, photographs taken in the Orient gave those in London a chance to see the distinct differences in culture between the Far East and the West.



## CONTACTS

You know people who know people. Or perhaps you know people who have information. You understand the web of social networks that connects us all, from the palace to the gutter. Agents with this skill know people or can find people who can get them in, out or at least know the path.

**Overcome:** Contacts is used to find someone you need to find. This may be that you know a gentleman who can point you in the right direction of someone, or you know how to search the archives for useful people.

**Create an Advantage:** You know just the gentleman who can help. When you Create an Advantage with Contacts you already know of the ideal person to talk to regarding whatever is needed. Contacts may also be called upon when you wish to create an aspect that represents knowing the correct person to spread rumors and plant information that will lead in the right direction.

**Attack:** Contacts is not used in Attacks.

**Defend:** Contacts may be called upon to Defend against people creating social advantages, provided that your Agent can bring your information network into play for the situation. You may also use your Contacts skills to keep someone from using Deceive or Contacts to evade capture. Contacts can be helpful in disappearing yourself, generating rumors that you moved in a different direction, or perhaps highly exaggerating your death.

### Contacts Stunts

**Knowledge is Power:** You have contacts among the ladies and gentlemen in pursuit of scientific truth. Whenever you are searching for someone who knows something about a particular scientific discovery or field, you gain +2 to your contact rolls.

**Known Scoundrel:** Use Contacts rather than, or in addition to, Provoke to Create Advantages based on your rakish reputation for being a scoundrel. This means that you may roll Contacts in this capacity and then try again, at no cost, with Provoke if you have that skill.

**The Ministry Seven:** You know a collection of street children who seem have their eyes and ears open to the movements of the underworld. Though they may occasionally ask you for food and a wash, they know when something big is going down, and can tip you off about it. +2 to any rolls having to do with the movement of the criminal underworld in London.

**Key to the Archives:** You know the Archives well, you are familiar with the many Agents and cases of the Ministry, and if there is an Agent of the Ministry present, you have, at the very least, read about them enough to know the basics of their file.

## CLASS

.....  
*"Take note, Wellington," he could hear his father in his head. "This is a man of fine character."*

.....  
*-Phoenix Rising*  
.....

The British Empire's rapid growth supported a flourishing economy and wealth trickled down from the upper class to the middle class. Technology and industrialization contributed to the growth and prosperity of the middle class as well, blurring the lines between upper and middle a bit. However, industrialists and even colonists having made their fortune found themselves able to move among the upper class but not necessarily recognized as equals by their financial peers for lack of esteemed family bloodlines.

While social class might not seem like a skill to the modern Player, it was a vital part of life and understanding one's place in the age of the Ministry. In this time period, being born into any class meant that you were trained with certain understandings of the world due to your social group. In certain situations, Class can be used to your advantage, and therefore applies as a skill. With each point, your status is raised in society. Characters that do not take any Class are assumed to be from the middle or lower classes, at their discretion.

Game Masters and Players who do not wish to explore issues of class in their games are welcome to leave this skill out. We here at the Ministry understand that for some, this may raise uncomfortable issues that they do not wish to explore in a more lighthearted game.

**Overcome:** Class is used to persuade and manipulate others into getting your way. Class is the privilege of being considered a person worthy of care, where the assumption is that you deserve to do whatever you are doing, simply because of who you are. It can be used to convince the police that you are innocent simply because of who you are, or that no one need ask why you are wandering around backstage at the opera because surely you are a very important person.

**Create an Advantage:** Class may be used to Create Advantages for the player or their allies. A character with class may create an aspect that makes it harder to Attack



them **KILL ME AND EVERYONE WILL COME LOOKING** or an aspect that might get another character without as much Class into a location **IT'S ALRIGHT, SHE'S WITH ME**.

**Attack:** Class is not used in Attacks.

**Defend:** Class is not used to Defend.

## Class Stunts

**Knowing the Right People:** You are a person of Class, and therefore you know not just people but the Right People. You may use this stunt as a Contacts roll, in addition to Contacts, allowing you to use Contacts twice in the same challenge.

**Authoritative Tone:** It must be true, because you've said it, and you have Class. You may roll Class instead of/in addition to Deceit to convince someone that you are an expert, or have specific knowledge of something of which you know little to nothing. You may do this even if there is a true expert present who contradicts you.

**Stiff Upper Lip:** Those of your class must maintain a sense of decorum, no matter the circumstances. Once per session, you can avoid taking a mental stress even if you are confronted with something that is truly terrifying. This does not mean that you do not recognize that the situation is stressful, simply that you do not let it affect you.

**Nobility Obliges:** Due to the way you speak and act, many people just assume the best of you. You may use Class in place of Rapport in any situation where you must gain the trust of an individual or a group to justify your presence in a location where you may not be allowed under other circumstances, such as gaining entrance to a private party.

## CAN CLASS REALLY BE RAISED?

You may wonder: If Class is a function of birth, can it really be raised in a long game? Can a character buy Class if it is all about the circumstances of your birth? Indeed, you CAN purchase Class. Long lost roots can be discovered, relatives may die elevating your station, advantageous marriages can be arranged, and social skills learned. When buying Class, Players should consider what has happened in your character's life to justify achieving more Class. Perhaps a childless second cousin died leaving you in possession of a title and lands, or perhaps you have learned skills that raise your perceived Class.

## DECEIVE

There may be no more important skill for a secret Agent than Deceive. This skill allows your character to misdirect, lie, bluff, distract, and disguise. Deceive is the skill that is used for creating a convincing disguise for yourself or others. Unlike a misdirection, bluff or lie, disguise requires that you have the proper supplies and time to create a convincing disguise.

### GAME MASTERS NOTE

If Players wish to create a disguise, improvising from incomplete materials or working under a tight time constraint, they may do so, but the difficulty should be much higher than a character that has the proper resources.

**Overcome:** Your lie is convincing, your disguise gets you through the door, the bluff works and they really do think you have all Aces. For nameless NPCs (the poor dears) this will be a simple Overcome roll for an Agent, but for PCs and named NPCs, this skill will be a contest and the target will oppose with Empathy.

**Create an Advantage:** Deceive can be utilized to create distractions, cover stories, false identities and trick someone into revealing an Aspect or other information. Your Advantage might be that you **CREATE A CLATTER** when you throw a cup, so that your enemies go to investigate that, rather than you. You can feint in a boxing match, **FLOATING LIKE A BUTTERFLY**. You can construct an identity as a **LOYAL GOON** to gain entrance into the criminal underworld.

**Attack:** Deceive is not used for Attacks.

**Defend:** Deceive may be utilized to Defend in Empathy rolls to discern your true identity or motives. It may also be used to Defend against Deduction.

## Deceive Stunts

**Carriage:** You appear to be a person of class, due to the way you speak and carry yourself. Perhaps it was very important to your mother than you speak "correctly", or perhaps the Lord of the Manor took you under his wing. Whatever the background, you can pass for social classes above your own and may use Deceive in place of, and in addition to, any Class rolls that are called for. There should be an aspect associated with this stunt.

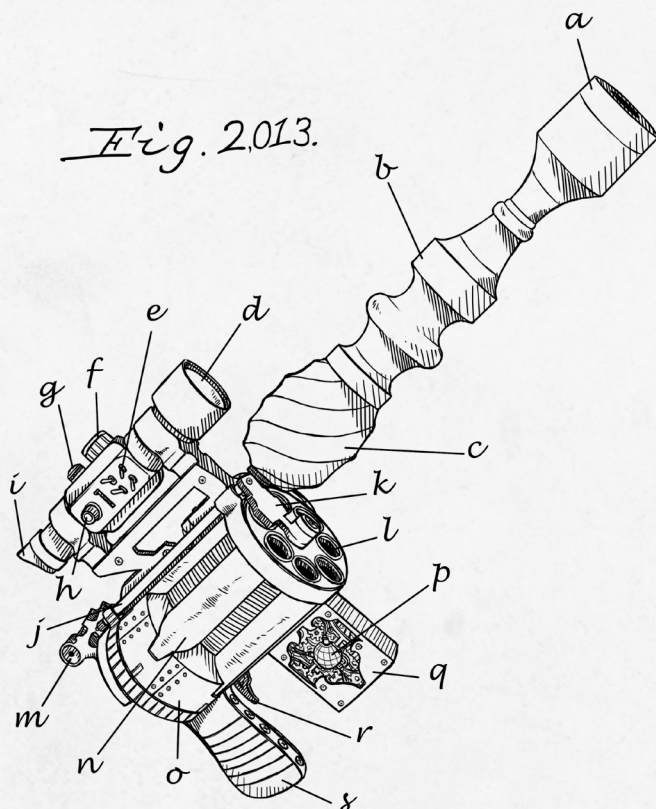
**The Brodrigg Deception:** You bear a striking resemblance to a well-known individual who you have been studying carefully. With time to prepare, you can pass



yourself off as this individual even to their close associates. With this stunt, challenges to your disguise are simple. Overcome rolls, rather than active opposition, even for named NPCs and PCs unless the individual you are impersonating appears – then Deceive rolls act as normal.

**Institutional Support:** The Ministry is an organization that has employees that are skilled at creating false identities that are designed to pass inspection. If you are on a Ministry Approved Mission, you may have documents that confirm whatever lie you need to tell in order to prove your identity during that mission. This must be done at a time where you are at Ministry Headquarters. Under these circumstances, you may generate the aspect **OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS** with a single free invocation on that aspect. These documents are not forgeries; they are identical to official documents because they ARE official documents.

**Prepared for the Eventuality:** You are incredibly forward thinking, and anticipated that events might take the direction that they have. Once per-game, you can generate **OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS** with a single free invocation for the circumstances that have arisen, even if you did not do so when you were at Ministry Headquarters. **Requires “Institutional Support” as a prerequisite.**



## DEDUCTION\*

Deduction is the science of concentrated observation. Ministry Agents are taught to observe results and reason backwards, evolving the train of events that lead to a particular result. This involves gathering evidence, making observations and making theories based on data and reason.

Agents who have achieved excellence in this area approach an investigation with blank minds, open to the facts and data of a case, not allowing prejudices or assumptions to guide the results.

The new police force is still finding its footing in London and the British Empire. Within the city of London, there are a limited number of inspectors and constables keeping their headquarters with Scotland Yard. The Criminal Investigation Department is unparalleled in regard to its fine detective work, second only to the Ministry itself in instances of the unexplainable or the mysterious.

Deduction is a required skill for Agents of the Ministry.

**Overcome:** Deduction is required when searching for data that is difficult to discover. Analyzing a text for information, finding clues at a crime scene, discovering evidence on a mission all require Deduction. Time constraints can also impact Deduction, when a room must be searched before Agents are missed at the ball, or a destructive weapon must be found before the bridge is detonated.

**Create an Advantage:** Deduction allows you to Create an Advantage to discover information about people, groups, places and objects. This may be searching the Archives for records from a mission, discovering clues at a crime scene, and researching an individual's past.

**Attack:** Deduction may not be used to Attack.

**Defend:** Deduction may be used to Defend in Deceive rolls involving a physical disguise or false documents.

## Deduction Stunts

**Eliminate the Impossible:** Once per session, you can take a failed Deduction roll and despite the failure, you learn something where the Game Master will eliminate one thing as a potential outcome. You may not have discovered the truth about what happened, but you can rule one possibility out. “You don't know who left these footprints, but it couldn't have been the Duchess.”

**Weak Spot:** You can use Deduction in place of, and in addition to, Fight to make physical Attacks when you have at least one minute to view your opponent's fighting style and make an analysis of their weaknesses.



**Uninterrupted Observation:** Once per session, if you are able to observe a room in silence, without interruption for a period of at least ten minutes you can reconstruct the last series of events that took place in that room. The Game Master should narrate a short scene where they describe what you see connected to the evidence in the room and then you may create an aspect with a free invocation about the events that took place in the room.

**Walking Archive:** You are a walking archive of the Ministry. If it's filed in the Archives, there is a high possibility that you know about it. +2 to any rolls involving a fact or person that may be in Ministry records.



## EMPATHY

Empathy is the art of human compassion, the ability to read the emotions in another person and respond to them appropriately.

**Overcome:** Empathy allows you to assist other characters with their emotional wellness, reducing mental stress when you achieve success. When a character has taken a mental consequence, you can help them begin emotional recovery by using this skill. This does not make the consequence go away, but it starts the process of healing, setting up the circumstances that allow for the resolution of that consequence.

**Create an Advantage:** Empathy is used to observe a person's emotional state and determine who they are. This can be used to assess aspects on NPCs and PCs or to create new aspects on an NPC. Targets who become aware of your observation can Defend with Deceive or Rapport.

**Attack:** Empathy may not be used to Attack. However, Empathy can be used to Create an Advantage for a mental Attack when you determine their weaknesses through interaction and observation.

**Defend:** Empathy allows you to Defend against Deceive and Defend against those who Create social Advantages against you. When you use it to Defend against deception, you are reading true emotions and breaking through the veil of lies.

### Empathy Stunts

**Bolster:** When you use Empathy to Create a mental Advantage for another character, you can actively oppose any Overcome rolls to their mental well-being, provided that you are in their presence.

**Student of the Mind:** You are a student of the new science of psychology, the observation of mental states of the mind, dreams, and relationship networks. Once per session, if you have at least a half hour of uninterrupted time with another character, you may reduce a mental consequence by a single level if you succeed on an Empathy roll.

**Trousers Aflame:** You have a knack for spotting liars. If you are in the presence of a liar who is actively lying to you or your fellow Agents you receive +2 to Empathy rolls to discover that lie.

**Water off a Duck's Back:** Your empathic abilities extend to yourself, and your ability to recognize and control your own reactions to events. Once per session you may ignore mental stress caused by a successful Provoke roll.



## FENCING

Fencing is the skill of fighting with non-projectile weaponry, such as swords, canes, umbrellas, or axes. This skill is often acquired through formal instruction, either with a tutor or in the military.

Though often thought of as fighting with swords of various types, one is not always armed with bladed weapons. Ministry Agents are, however, adaptable and versatile. This skill can be applied to other objects at hand of similar weight and shape, such as a gentleman's cane or a lady's parasol. Bartitsu, a variable and dangerous form of mixed martial arts, incorporated many combat styles.

**Overcome:** Fencing may be used for contests between Agents demonstrating their skills and abilities with a bladed weapon.

**Create an Advantage:** During physical conflicts, Fencing may be used to perform a variety of moves involving bladed weaponry. Creating an aspect such as **SABRE RATTLING**, could describe how a skillful display with a sword might intimidate opponents into giving up on an Attack.

**Attack:** Fencing can be used to Attack within one zone.

**Defend:** Fencing may be used to Defend by blocking unarmed attacks or attacks with a bladed weapon.

### Fencing Stunts

**Sabre:** You specialize in light, edged swords and wield them primarily for cutting and thrusting. When you are using this type of sword, you can +2 to your roll.

**Bartitsu:** You have studied Bartitsu, a mixed martial art designed for the modern gentleman. This form incorporates a walking stick into this martial art. If you happen to have your cane on your person, you gain +2 to your fight in Attacks where you use your cane.

**Down in the Gutters:** You weren't trained in any fancy schools with tutors, you learned on the street, and your cuts and bruises came with experience. You don't know fancy styles; you know what works in the shadows of a darkened alley. You may use Fencing rather than Stealth in any situation where you are attempting to surprise your target and Attack with a bladed weapon.

**The World Is a Weapon:** In your hands, nearly any object is a weapon. Even when your weapons are taken from you, you can create a free aspect with a free invocation for a new, improvised weapon, as long as the materials are nearby for you to do so.

## FIGHT\*

.....  
*It was at that moment Axelrod was clocked by the back of a fist harder than a blacksmith's anvil. The man of Science, of the Future, of things that would not involve people named "Mad Dog," staggered to the packed earth, only to catch the steel toe of his opponent's boot right in the stomach, sending him back to the wall where Eliza watched from.*

*"I'm not...sure...those...are Queens-bury...rules," he wheezed out.*

*"This is a bareknuckle match in Camden Row!" Eliza shouted over the din. "There are no rules!"*

*"No rules, eh?" Axelrod managed to straighten up, regardless of his body's protests. "That changes everything."*

*—The Trouble With Phoenixes*  
.....

Agents of the Ministry, particularly Field Agents, often must fight during missions. While Agents are taught to use Stealth to avoid fights if possible, they are trained to Fight and are often recruited from the professions of fighters. Fight covers close-quarters combat.

Various forms of unarmed combat would include boxing, some forms of wrestling or jujitsu learned from various corners of the Empire, and French savate.

Fight is a required skill for Agents of the Ministry.

**Overcome:** Fight may be used to demonstrate or display fighting forms or in a sparring match contest where Agents try their skills against each other.

**Create an Advantage:** Fight may be used to Create Advantages in a physical conflict such as special moves, targeting another fighter, and spotting weaknesses.

**Attack:** Physical Attacks at close range are made with Fight.

**Defend:** Fight may be used to Defend against attacks or attempts to Create Advantages with Fight.

### Fight Stunts

**Martial Arts:** You have studied a martial arts form so that you understand how to use an opponent's own body against them. Receive +2 in any fight where you are fighting an opponent who hasn't been formally trained in a fighting style.



**Fisticuffs:** You fight dirty and you do it well. When you are in a scene where there are potential objects that you can throw, kick, hold, or break during a fight, you may declare one free situational aspect with a free invoke on that aspect for a conflict.

**Queensbury Rules:** You were formally trained in boxing under certain rules and regulations. If your opponent is operating under these same rules, gain +2 to your Fight.

**Mau rakau:** You have studied the way of the warrior in the martial art of the Maori of New Zealand, which focuses on using weapons in combat. In situations where you are armed with a cane or bladed weapon, you may roll Fight rather than Fencing.



## FIREARMS (SHOOT)\*

*"Go on, lad, pull the trigger," scolded his father  
"Every proper gentleman knows how to shoot."*

*—Phoenix Rising*

Firearms is the use of ranged, often explosive weaponry. This weaponry may be fueled by gunpowder, aetheric energy, or an alternate power source. They are often used in conflicts, but many Agents enjoy making a wager or two on contests with targets.

In terms of portable guns, rifles, and pistols are commonly carried by Field Agents of the Ministry. Size and number vary from Agent to Agent depending on the nature of the case. Inaccurate, unreliable flintlock rifles were replaced during the Victorian era with much more accurate, simpler bolt action rifles. Agents of the Ministry embrace such improvements.

When greater firepower is needed, Agents of the Ministry do have access to fully automatic weapons such as the gatling gun. These much larger weapons are still considered mobile, though not portable by a single person.

Other firearms combine the use of gunpowder and ammunition with steampunk technology to deadly effect. However, this combination is far more volatile and presents as much a danger to the wielder as the target.

Firearms is a required skill for Agents of the Ministry.

**Overcome:** Firearms may be used for contests between Agents demonstrating their skills and abilities

**Create an Advantage:** During physical conflicts, Firearms may be used to perform a variety of moves involving explosive weaponry and energy weapons. Creating an aspect such as **SUPPRESSIVE FIRE**, **BLINDING ENERGY BLAST**, or another such description to describe the type of atmosphere created by the use of your firearms.

**Attack:** Firearms can be used to Attack up to two zones away.

**Defend:** Firearms may be used to Defend in situations where cover fire would be helpful, such as preventing an Attacker from approaching closer.

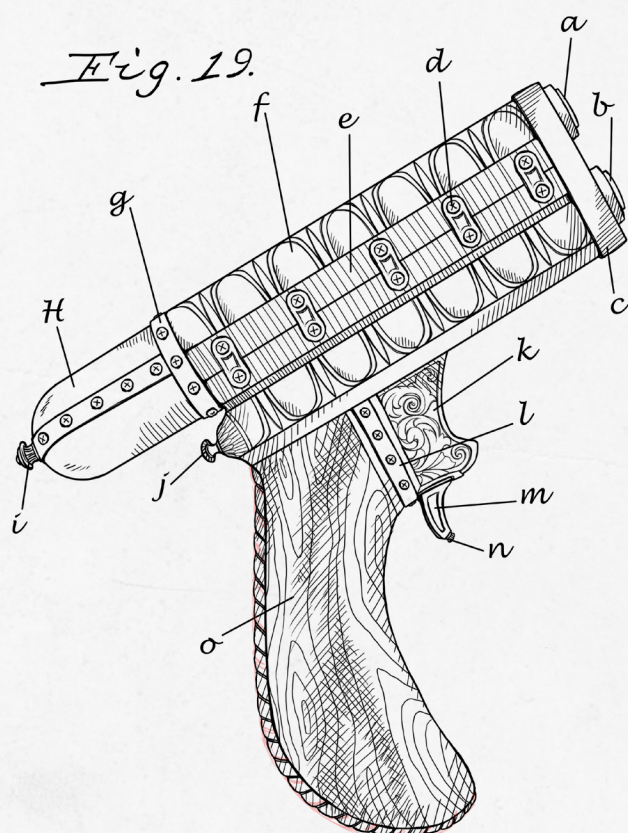
### Firearms Stunts

**Urban Sniper:** You were trained to use your firearm on the streets and when you are outdoors an urban environment, you get a bonus in situations where you are acting as a sniper, aiming carefully far away from your target.

**My Right Arm:** Your specially modified gun is dear to you, an extension of your right arm itself. It is noticeably different from other weapons, and nearly impossible to conceal. However, when you use this weapon, you gain +2 to your skill roll. This disappears if your weapon is damaged, modified, or taken from you.



**Bowler Hat Combat:** You can use your bowler hat as a ranged weapon. With its sharpened edge that is cleverly disguised under the rim, you have a unique and well-disguised weapon that is unlikely to attract attention. However, though your skill with this weapon gives it an excellent accuracy and range, it is, unfortunately, only a one-time use weapon until it can be retrieved. In close range, where a Fight skill would normally be called for, you may use your Firearms skill for this hat.



## INVENTION

*Dr. Blackwell took off the gloves. "It is urgent. I need you to allow me to restrain you into this chair," she motioned to the high backed chair with straps, "and allow me to use your body for my experiments."*

*—Women of the Empire*

This is the era of invention, and this skill allows you to create machines that you can work to your own purposes. This can be the improvisation of a weapon or the development of a brand new technology that can assist your Agents in the pursuit of justice. It's listening devices, engines, the manipulation of energy, the development of anti-toxins and building ray-guns. Invention can also be used to repair broken devices.

Within the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences, Research and Design is headed by Engineer Agent Doctor Josepha Raven Blackwell and Engineer Agent Professor Hephaestus Axelrod. These two brilliant minds are responsible for numerous inventions field tested by the Agents.

The portable cannon affectionately referred to as "Katherina" by Agent Eliza D. Braun and the *Phures Ornamentum* gauntlet are both creations from Research and Design.

Invention is not limited to the Research and Design department though, and the Ministry's own Wellington Thornhill Books is the creator of the Analytical Engine used in the Archives.

Enemies of the Ministry have their own makers and engineers. Often times, Agents find themselves face to face with mysterious machinery and extremely dangerous weaponry. Major advancements were made in the design of pistols and other firearms, often combined with the ingenuity of steampunk creativity.

**Overcome:** You may create, destroy, or repair technology. The amount of time you have, the type of technology you are working with and your tools will all influence the difficulty of this pursuit. Creating a smaller version of existing technology, given the resources of the Ministry and plenty of time, may not even necessitate a challenge. However, creating a weapon out of half a broken ray gun and a metal spring from a bed will be a greater challenge.

**Create an Advantage:** Invention may be utilized to create aspects that represent features of technology. This may take the form of pointing out a useful feature of your own work, or a vulnerability of technology that belongs to your enemy. You may also use Invention to creatively sabotage an existing piece of technology, especially if you wish the sabotage to remain unnoticed for any period of time.

**Attack:** Invention is not used to Attack.

**Defend:** Invention is not used to Defend.



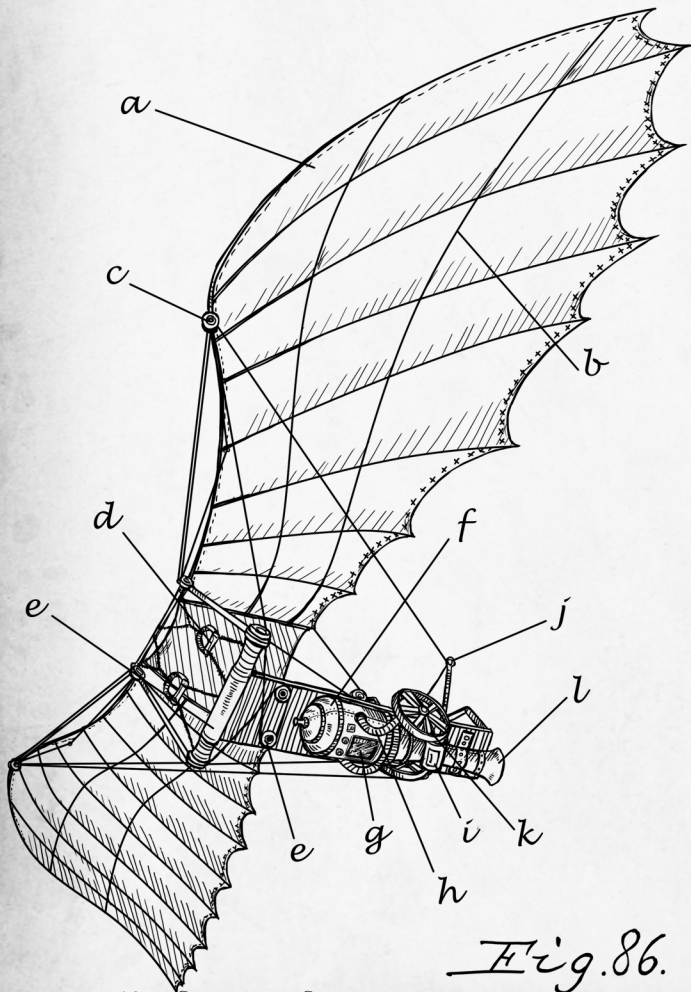
## Invention Stunts

**Lab Master:** When you have access to the full facilities of the Ministry lab, or another laboratory of equivalent facilities, you may add +2 to your roll.

**Airship Engineer:** Airships speak to you, and the more you customize them, the more you can do. If you succeed with style on an invention specifically related to the improvement of an airship, you may create an aspect related to that invention and get a free invocation on that aspect once per session.

**Chemist:** You are an expert at the mixing of chemicals. When your invention centers around chemical concoctions (poisons, gases) you receive +2 bonus to their creation.

**Anything Is a Weapon, in the Right Hands (Your Hands):** If you have time to alter, tinker, and invent, you can turn any piece of technology into a weapon, regardless of the tools on hand. This may mean turning a listening device into a bomb, or turning the stays in a corset into a slingshot. Use this stunt to use Invention rather than Firearms for as long as your newly retooled weapon exists.



## MEDICINE

Medicine is the skill of healing, from first aid on the battlefield to surgery in a hospital. A high skill level in medicine generally indicates the character is a medical professional.

**Overcome:** You may use Medicine to Overcome any obstacle that requires medical knowledge to achieve. This may mean properly bandaging a wound to stop the bleeding, or figuring out how a character was wounded and what the best treatment would be. It can also mean improvising a treatment with available materials.

**Create an Advantage:** You may create aspects that physically assist yourself or others, such as adding an aspect to armor so that it protects vital organs.

**Attack:** Medicine is not used to Attack.

**Defend:** Medicine is not used to Defend. You may assist in preventing or healing physical Attacks, such as providing the antidote to a poison with success in an Overcome roll.

## Medicine Stunts

**Animal Husbandry:** Your abilities extend beyond humans to animals, and you know may use the Medicine skill to heal animals at +2.

**I Have A Device for That:** You may use Medicine rather than Invention if you are creating a gadget that has something to do with the function of the human body.

**Walk It Off:** If you Succeed with Style on an Overcome roll to assist yourself, or another character, you may allow them to ignore a minor or major consequence for the period of one session. The consequence will return next session, and this cannot be done two sessions in a row.

**Jekyll:** Although you possess the skills of a healer, you have a special knack for devising poisonous concoctions. +2 to creating liquid or gaseous poisons that would cause harm when ingested or inhaled.



## MYTHOLOGY

Mythology is about book knowledge. It can relate to literature, history, language, geography, or religion. The Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences is particularly interested in the supernatural and unfortunate events surrounded by mysterious circumstances. The Archives are full of case files documenting encounters with ghosts, artifacts of unusual properties, and even creatures thought to be the stuff of myth and legend. In many situations, knowledge has been key to resolving such cases successfully.

*“...indulge me as I tell for your Archives a story of a direct descendant of Manora, far from her home in the forests and mountains of the Himapan, and how a King and his court is protected in secret by the only swan in Siam.”*

—Phailin, *A Swan in Siam*

**Overcome:** Mythology is used to answer questions relating to knowledge. You may use Mythology to Overcome obstacles related to acquiring or applying knowledge to achieve a goal.

**Create an Advantage:** Mythology can be used to create aspects if the character has had time to study the subject.

**Attack:** Mythology is not used to Attack.

**Defend:** Mythology is not used to Defend.

## Mythology Stunts

**Living Library:** You are incredibly well educated, and this means that you've read about a wide variety of topics. You may spend Fate Points to use Mythology in place of Deduction, Invention, Fight, or Medicine.

**Occultist:** If it has to do with the supernatural, you know about it. +2 to any rolls having to do with the supernatural.

**The Professor:** You are excellent at explaining what you know, even to the untrained. When you Succeed with Style on an Overcome roll, you can award +1 Mythology about a specific topic to the allies who can hear you expound on that topic for at least five minutes. This effect lasts for the duration of one session.

**Academic Community:** You may use Mythology in place of Contacts if the contact you are searching for is in the academic community.

## NOTICE

*No matter the size or girth of an opponent, there were certain vulnerabilities everyone despite their carriage shared. For this one brief opportunity, that vulnerability was the nose.*

-The Fanus Affair

Notice is about quick observation, gut instincts, and the prickle at the back of your neck. Game Masters will use it to determine if you see a detail that will immediately impact your situation. It's the moving shadow on the wall, the weapon that springs to hand, the noise down the hall.

**Overcome:** Notice is used to perceive something in a scene. It's spotting something small or concealed that immediately impacts the scene.

**Create an Advantage:** Notice can be used to create aspects that allow you to declare something about the environment or people that can be used to your advantage. It's an escape route, a broken board next to your attacker, or noticing the bulge in their coat pocket that would be just the right size of the royal emerald.

**Attack:** Notice isn't used for Attack.

**Defend:** Notice may be used against Stealth. This would be effective in situations where you are being observed, either by another character, or technology, or when another character is attempting to launch a surprise attack.

## Notice Stunts

**We're Being Watched:** You have an incredible ability to tell when you are being watched by another party. +2 to detect any observation by a person or piece of technology.

**Carrying Concealed:** You keep a careful eye on armaments and have a knack for detecting them, even if it's not immediately perceptible. +2 to any rolls that involve noticing a hidden weapon.

What about Deduction? Notice and Deduction are similar skills but their differences have to do with time and depth. Deduction is about taking the time to truly understand a situation, to studying and focus. Notice is about quick perception of superficial things that immediately impact the situation. Deduction will note the dirt under her fingernails, Notice will see the gun in her skirts.



**Ill Intentions:** You may use Notice in place of Empathy to roll to see if an individual intends to harm you in the near future. This is about a character's current intentions, which can be changed when true identities are revealed, or when circumstances change.

**Spring-Heeled Jack:** You have an incredible sense when danger is about to strike you. You may make a free action to avoid taking stress before danger strikes. This can be a falling timber beam, or someone drawing a firearm. You cannot use this to warn any other characters, only to save yourself.



## PILOT

Pilot is about controlling the movement of vehicles over land, air, or sea. Mechanical vehicles are fairly new inventions, and operating them is complex.

Modes of transport were numerous in the Victorian era. If one could not afford the more luxurious and faster airships or steamships then stagecoaches and steam locomotives were available. Public transportation was well-established and quite accessible so long as one could afford the cost. Some of the more militant organizations made use of submersibles for both transport and more nefarious purposes.

**Overcome:** Pilot allows you to successfully accomplish movement under challenging circumstances, such as evading fire, difficult terrain, incredible speed, or any feats at the limit of the machine's technology. Pilot may also be used in contests that involve races.

**Create an Advantage:** Pilot may be used to create aspects that determine the best route, good positioning, fancy actions, or creating aspects that impede your opponents. Pilot is frequently used to determine the best, shortest, or safest route and declare aspects associated with that route.

**Attack:** Pilot may be used as an Attack when the vehicle is directly used to hit another character or vehicle. However, when it is used in an Attack, it will also take stress associated with that Attack. Using weapons mounted to a vehicle will generally involve the use of Firearms.

**Defend:** You will Defend when you are avoiding potential damage to a vehicle during a physical conflict. You may also use Pilot to Defend against the aspect created against you.

### Pilot Stunts

**I Am an Airship Pilot:** You can drive one of those new-fangled automobiles, and figure out the controls behind a tank, but where you really shine is the airship. You are born to fly with your heart in the big blue sky. +2 to any Pilot rolls involving an airship.

**I Need More Power:** During a conflict or contest, you can push your vehicle past the limits issued by the manufacturer for greater speed. +2 to Pilot in any situation involving moving very fast.

### The Agent in the Machine Piloting Track:

There are cases where an Agent has one particular vehicle that is special to them. They get to know this vehicle



so well that it becomes like their own body. Agents who wish to take these special Pilot stunts must declare this vehicle exists during, or a few games after, character creation. These stunts can only be used with that vehicle. If that vehicle is destroyed, these stunts will disappear until the character develops a close relationship with a new vehicle in the course of the game.

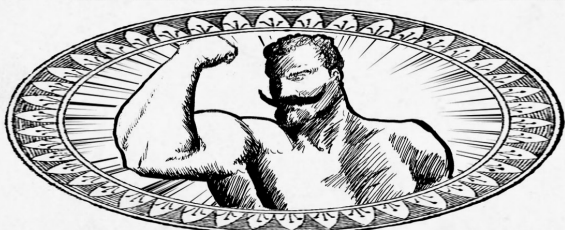
**Wiz Bang:** If your vehicle has mounted weapons, you may use Pilot instead of Firearms to operate the weapons on your vehicle.

**One With the Ship:** You are a pilot who has memorized the body of your vehicle, and though your skills outside this vehicle are limited, you know her so well that you can enhance or repair any potential problems. With this vehicle, you may use Pilot instead of Invention to repair or alter your machine. **Must take Wiz-Bang as a prerequisite.**

**Watch Me Soar:** If your vehicle is being Attacked, you can choose to take mental and physical stress to yourself rather than the vehicle taking stress until all your stress boxes are checked. **Must take One With the Ship as a prerequisite.**

EXPERIENCE THE HEALING POWER OF

# STRENGTH



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## PHYSIQUE

*Lady White flexed her considerable muscles. "I used to be a strongwoman!" she said, "In the Traveling Circus of the Oswalts."*

*He coloured. "You! A Lady?"*

*"Oh tosh," said Lady White. "We all have pasts."*  
~The Mystery of the Thrice Dead Man

Physique is about strength, stamina and health. It is lifting a heavy load, the resistance to poisons, walking for miles in the heat, and staying awake despite the chloroform.

**Overcome:** Physique is used to Overcome challenges that requires strength and stamina.

**Create an Advantage:** You may Create Advantages with Physique by grappling your target to make them **HELD IN PLACE** or by using your strength to change the environment: **BENT PRISON BARS, SMASHED ENGINE.**

**Attack:** Physique may not be used to Attack.

**Defend:** You may use Physique to Defend against Attacks in a situation where you can use your body to block.

### Physique Stunts

**Strongman:** Does it have to do with lifting heavy things? Take +2 to anything having to do with lifting, lugging, heaving, or dragging.

**Is That All You've Got?:** Ignore any stress from the first hit in any unarmed combat. It just doesn't matter to you. You don't notice. You are that tough.

**Lead Stomach:** You've spent your life toughening up your stomach, to the point where your stomach is lead and your liver is steel. +2 to any challenges to resist the effects of poison, including any kind of sedative.

**The Explorer's Skin:** You have been all over the Empire, experiencing terrible cold and withering heat, and have built up a tolerance to all sorts of difficult environments. +2 to any challenges that relate to tolerating difficult environments. (Hot, Cold, Humidity, Smoke)

Physique, along with Will, is a special skill that allows you to add more stress boxes or consequence slots to your character sheet. Average to Fair will give you a 3-point stress box. Good or better gives you a 4-point stress box. For each level at Superb or above you will gain an additional mild consequence slot.



## PROVOKE

*The painful emotions of that event were something she thought she'd gotten under control—but apparently it only took Douglas Sheppard's handsome face to undo all that good work.*

*—Agent Braun, The Janus Affair*

Provoke reflects your ability to elicit a whole host of negative emotions including fear, fury, grief, embarrassment and despair. You can use it to elicit that first punch and to intimidate your targets to terror.

**Overcome:** You may use Provoke to move your target to do what you want by eliciting a negative emotion. This is a simple Overcome roll unless you are rolling against named NPCs or PCs. In such a case, the characters have the opportunity to oppose your Provoke with Will.

**Create an Advantage:** Use Provoke to create aspects to place on other characters that represent momentary emotional states. As with Overcome, characters use Will to oppose you.

**Attack:** Provoke may be used to make mental Attacks. However, you must know something about the target in order to justifiably cause them harm.

**Defend:** You may not use Provoke to Defend. However, before active Attacks are made, Provoke may be used to say, draw an opponent's attention away from an ally on to yourself.

### Provoke Stunts:

**The Soft Touch:** It's not that people believe that you will hurt them, it's that they believe you are connected in some way, to someone or some organization, that will simply ruin them, should things fail to go your way. +2 to any rolls where you are attempting to intimidate your target with consequences that will happen in the future.

**Go Ahead, You Know You Want To:** You are irresistibly punchable, and it doesn't take much to turn someone's attention away from another target on to you. +2 to Provoke rolls where you are attempting to turn violence away from an ally on to yourself.

**Mask of a Killer:** You are terrifying. People believe you are very capable of hurting them, and will not hesitate to do so. +2 to any rolls to terrify someone into leaving.

**Soft Spot:** You instinctually figure out people's soft spots, without ever having exchanged a conversation with them. Just a quick once over will give you the ammo you need. You do not need to know your target in order to Attack them mentally.

## RAPPORT

*Her voice was clear and lovely in the meeting room, bringing some of the women to tears, and straightening the spines of all.*

*~The Janus Affair*

Rapport is the skill of making friends, influencing people, and eliciting adoration. Rapport is about creating positive social connections. It is the skill of leaders who inspire their troops and good hosts who charm their guests. It is talking your way into the ball, not because you lie about who you are, but because it appears you'll be a pleasant addition to the party.

**Overcome:** Rapport may be used to gain support or to motivate people to take action in your favor. This is a simple Overcome action on a nameless NPC, but a contest with a named NPC or PC.

**Create an Advantage:** You may use Rapport to create a positive emotional aspect to place on an environment or another character. Use this to make a **DELIGHTFUL PARTY** or make an NPC **READY TO TALK**.

**Attack:** Rapport may not be used for Attack.

**Defend:** Rapport may be used to Defend against Attacks against your relationships, the mood aspects you've created in an environment, or attempts to cause you embarrassment. It does not Defend against mental Attacks.

### Rapport Stunts

**Letter of Introduction:** Once per session, you may declare that an NPC has received a Letter of Introduction for you, from someone they respect which was a positive missive in your favor. The Game Master gets to create this aspect, though you may have one free invocation on it.

**Life of the Party:** When you are in a social atmosphere that is intended to be pleasant such as a ball, tea-party, or sporting event, you may create a free aspect related to creating a positive mood with one free invocation to use that aspect.

**Con Artist:** While Rapport isn't usually used to Deceive, you have the ability to make people believe things that may not be true, but that they really want to hear. +2 to convince a target of some fact that they want to be true, such as that you won't be any trouble, or that his car is waiting outside with the money.

**Leadership:** Once per session, you can give an inspirational speech to your allies that will temporarily give them an extra mental stress box for the duration of a scene.



## RIDE

Ride is the skill of mounted travel, the ability to ride horses, ponies, camels, and to drive carriages and other vehicles without engine that require the use of an animal.

Horses were kept as the riding animal of choice in England during the Victorian times. However, in the colonies, other indigenous animals such as elephants or camels were used as the native beast of burden as they were better suited to the climate and terrain.

**Overcome:** This is the skill that allows you to Ride an animal for transport. Challenges occur when circumstances are difficult, such as a race, steep terrain, or avoiding harm to your mount.

**Create an Advantage:** Ride may be used create aspects that determine the best route, good positioning, or fancy tricks. It may also be used to create aspects that allow an animal to trust you or aspects that impede your opponents.

**Attack:** You may Attack with Ride, using your animal to cause damage. However, this will also frequently result in damage to your animal as well.

**Defend:** You may use Ride when you avoid potential harm during a physical conflict. You may also use Ride to Defend against the aspect advantages created against you.

### Ride Stunts

**Horse Whisperer:** Your skill with riding relates to your ability to communicate with your horse, and is so good that you can successfully communicate with your animal even when you are not on your horse. If your horse can see or hear you, you can communicate a simple command to them such as “stop” or “run”.

**Cowboy:** The saddle is where you belong, and you are better here. +2 to Fight and Firearms when you are mounted.

**Jocky:** You are a fast rider. +2 to any challenge that requires speed.

**Animal Knowledge:** Animals can instinctively sense ill will, and you are particularly attuned to animals. You may use Ride rather than Empathy to sense that ill will in situations where you are with your animal and a character present intends you harm.

## SPORT

Sport is about moving your body with skill and grace. It is fitness, athleticism, and physical ability. If it involves running, jumping, swimming, or climbing, it falls under the Sport skill.

Knowledge of sports popular to each of the social classes would be key for an Agent of the Ministry seeking to blend into various company. The upper class had the time and leisure to pursue many sports such as lawn tennis or croquet. Fishing was a popular pursuit as well as game hunting and fox hunting on horseback or on foot. Horseback riding was not only a mode of transportation but also a sport.

Cricket, rugby, and football (known in the Americas as soccer), as well as rowing, became competitive sports of popularity.

**Overcome:** Sport is the skill you roll when you encounter a challenge or obstacle that requires athleticism. Sport allows you to move between zones in a conflict even if the Environment or Situation aspects block your path. You may also use Sport to block someone’s path through speed. Sport can also be used in contests of ability, such as a race.

**Create an Advantage:** Sport allows you to Create Advantages for yourself that place the situation in your favor.

**Attack:** Sport may not be used to Attack.

**Defend:** Sport is commonly called upon to roll for Defense during a physical conflict. It may be used for Attacks from any zone. If you are dodging a punch or diving for cover, it’s Sport that you’ll roll.

### WHAT ABOUT PHYSIQUE?

Though Physique and Sport are related, they are two different skills. Physique is about general health and raw power, while Sport is about finesse. For an example, let us travel to the circus. Though the tightrope walker may be an excellent gymnast, (Sport) he may not be able to take a punch. A circus strongwoman (Physique) will lift a heavy load, but she may lose her balance on a tightrope.



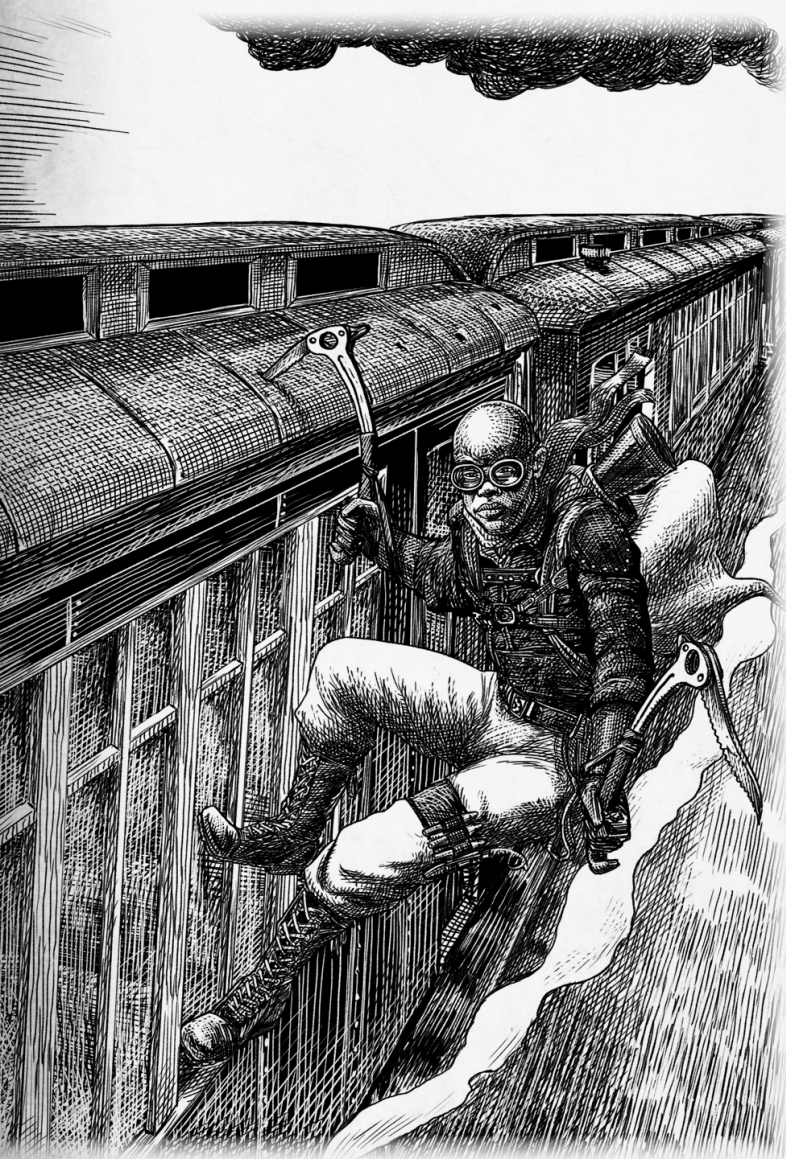
## Sport Stunts

**Student of Sandow:** You are a student of the great Eugen Sandow, strongman and all-around athlete. Strength is important to you, but you have always paired this strength with flexibility and skill in sport. When Physique rolls are called for, you may use Sport instead.

**Bigtop Born:** You can fly on the trapeze, climb a bolt of silk, and walk on a tightrope. If a challenge involves anything that relates to these skills, you can a +2 to your roll.

**Over Hill and Dale:** You are a practiced long-distance runner, and this has given you impressive stamina. In cases that involve pressing your body past exhaustion, you may roll Sport rather than Physique.

**Sports Mastery:** If it has rules, and, ideally, some kind of clubhouse, it's your area of expertise. +2 to any contests involving a recognized sport, from rugby to horse-racing.



## STEALTH\*

Stealth is a vital skill for any Agent of the Ministry. Agents are expected to know how to move silently, to avoid detection, to hide and to leave no trace. Anytime you must avoid detection, Stealth is the skill you'll call on.

Stealth is a required skill for Agents of the Ministry.

**Overcome:** Stealth is used in challenges that involve evading detection. This may be hiding in a room or sneaking into a manor.

**Create an Advantage:** Stealth is an excellent skill for generating aspects that give you advantages in avoiding detection, such as finding an **IDEAL HIDING PLACE**, or making your footsteps **SILENT AS GRAVES**.

**Attack:** Stealth may not be used to make an Attack.

**Defend:** Stealth may be used to Defend against Notice or Deduction attempts to discover or track your location.

## Stealth Stunts

**Just Like Everyone Else:** You have an incredibly forgettable face, and therefore, if you are in a crowd such as a ball, arena, train station, or busy street, no one will notice you, even if they have met you before, unless you are within one Zone of them, or the crowd dissipates.

**Friend of the Shadows:** Under the cover of darkness, you are especially effective at disappearing. +2 to all Stealth rolls performed under cover of darkness.

**The Holes in Old Houses:** The old houses of the Empire are full of passageways and hidden holes where secrets are hidden. You just happen to know the signs of such passageways. Once per session, if you are inside of a home, manor, or castle, you can declare the aspect **SECRET PASSAGE** for free with one free invocation.

**Harmless:** Your form of Stealth is all about appearing to be totally harmless. In situations where guards are on the lookout not simply for anyone, but for specific individuals, you escape notice not because they don't see you, but because they judge you to be totally innocuous.



## THEFT

Though it may seem gauche for anyone in the employ of the Empire to have such a skill as Theft, for a secret Agent, the stealing of items is of utmost importance. Many former pickpockets have come into the employ of Queen and Country, and now use their talents at burglary in service of their fellow man. The Ministry does not judge the colorful histories of its Agents.

**Overcome:** Theft allows you to infiltrate, steal, pick-pocket, open locks, and disable traps. Use Theft anytime you are facing a challenge to bypass security, whether it be a properly buttoned trouser pocket or a delicately calibrated safe.

**Create an Advantage:** You may use Theft to Create an Advantage by researching the person or place you are attempting to steal from, and creating an aspect based on that research.

**Attack:** You may not use Theft to Attack.

**Defend:** You may not use Theft to Defend.

### Theft Stunts

**You've Got to Pick a Pocket:** When it comes to lifting something small out of someone's pocket, you are a master. +2 to any challenges involving pickpocketing.

**Know Your Own:** You know the tracks of a thief, and you can tell where they've been. You may use Theft rather than Deduction to determine if an object is missing from a scene if it should be there.

**Contraption:** You may use Theft rather than Invention if you are engaged in repairing or creating a Gadget that can be used to secure an item or group of items, from Theft, such as developing a secure safe.

**Ignore Me!** If you are pretending to be a workman, member of the help, or police officer in order to gain entrance to a location that you intend to take something or someone from, you may use Theft rather than Deceive to make the roll for your disguise.

## WILL

Will is the mental counterpoint to Physique, representing strength of character, bravery, control, and the indomitable spirit.

Will, along with Physique, is a special skill that allows you to add more stress boxes or consequence slots to your character sheet. Average to Fair will give you a 3-point stress box. Good or better gives you a 4-point stress box. For each level at Superb or above you will gain an additional mild consequence slot.

**Overcome:** Will is the application of mental fortitude to challenges that require impressive effort, such as cracking a secret code, solving the maze in the labyrinth, and deciphering the ancient maps to buried treasure. Will is used where supreme concentration is required.

**Create an Advantage:** Will may be used to create aspects for your character that represent your mental fortitude such as **EYES ON THE PRIZE** or **DEEP MEDITATION**.

**Attack:** Will may not be used to Attack.

**Defend:** You may use Will to Defend against Provoke Attacks.

### Will Stunts

**The Countless Chambers of the Brain:** You are particularly adept with solving secret codes. Anytime there is a code, you can +2 to any skill rolls to solve it.

**Heart of Steel:** You have seen it all, or, at the very least, most of it, so very little gets to you. +2 to Defend against all Provoke Attacks designed to make you angry or afraid.

**Equal at the Feet of God:** You believe, without fail, that humans are all equal in the eyes of a higher power, and that, as such, the perceptions of Class are nothing but an illusion. This belief reflects in your bearing, and allows you to roll Will in challenges where Class would normally be called for.

**Mind over Body:** Our physical bodies have limits that are far beyond what we believe them to be. It is the mind that truly determines our limits. In a situation where you would be called upon to save another Agent from harm, you may use Will rather than Sport or Physique in your roll.



## WEALTH (RESOURCES)

The fast expansion of the British Empire combined with the many modes available to transport goods from the colonies in trade contributed to exceedingly profitable times. While the upper class certainly benefited, the middle class experienced a significant increase in standard of living as well. Despite difference in social class, the opportunities to build one's fortune were many.

Wealth is a reflection of your money, lands, resources and investments. Though your Wealth may not always be liquid, it is still an asset that you can draw upon, should you require it.

All Agents have a basic salary that allows them a simple, but comfortable middle-class lifestyle. It is a salary that would allow for the basics, and some savings to allow for an extravagance now and then. Wealth reflects the resources beyond that basic level.

**Overcome:** Wealth may be used to purchase, to bribe, and flaunted to impress. Challenges may include coming up with enough to successfully bribe a guard or get a table on a booked airship restaurant.

**Create an Advantage:** Wealth may be used to create aspects that allow you to declare that you have something you need, or can use your wealth to acquire something important.

**Attack:** You may not use Wealth to Attack

**Defend:** You may not use Wealth to Defend.

## Wealth Stunts

**Old Money:** You may not be anywhere in the royal lineup, but you come from an old wealthy family, and that gives you standing regardless. You may use Wealth in place of Class in situations where you need to gain entrance to an exclusive location.

**New Money:** You are new money, the toast of the society pages, and your ability to flaunt your wealth can gain you friends in a party. You may use Wealth rather than Rapport in situations where your new money can grease the wheels of commerce and make fabulous promises.

**Palms and Silver:** Your instincts for who and how much bribe is appropriate at any given time is impeccable. +2 to any situation where you must give a bribe to get what you want.

**Bells and Whistles:** Often what makes a particular invention special requires something expensive and rare, which can only be acquired the use of Wealth. You may use Wealth rather than Invention to improve an existing Gadget.

In Chapter Seven we will discuss Taking Action, how to put all of these lovely aspects, skills, and stunts into practice.





## TAKING ACTION

### ADDRESSING TYPES OF ACTIONS AND THEIR POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

👉 To Fail, Tie, Succeed, or Succeed with Style: An Agent's Guide to Actions and Consequences. 👈

#### AGENTS TAKING ACTION

Every Agent of the Ministry feels a call to action. That action might be solving a puzzle or getting into a fistfight, but Agents will always step up to Defend the innocent and fight for Queen and Country.

When Agents take action in THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE they must choose a skill, roll the dice, calculate the results and, if desired, invoke an aspect.

#### TAKING AN ACTION: STEP BY STEP

**1. Choose the skill that is appropriate to the action:** Game Masters may call for a specific skill roll, or Players may suggest a skill that fits with what they are trying to do. Game Masters will set the result needed for success for this roll on the skill ladder. This is decided based on the difficulty of the task the Player is attempting to accomplish.

**2. Roll four Fate dice:** See page 19 for alternates to Fate dice.

**3. Calculate the results:** Add together the pluses and minuses on the dice.  $\oplus = +1$ ,  $\ominus = -1$  and  $\blacksquare = 0$  Add the number on the roll to the skill rating to get the result.

**4. Find the result on the skill ladder.**

| Descriptor | Value |
|------------|-------|
| Legendary  | +6    |
| Epic       | +5    |
| Superb     | +4    |
| Great      | +3    |
| Good       | +2    |
| Fair       | +1    |
| Average    | 0     |
| Mediocre   | -1    |
| Poor       | -2    |
| Terrible   | -3    |
| Abysmal    | -4    |

**5. Invoke an aspect (this is entirely optional):** If a Player chooses to invoke an aspect spend one Fate Point to add +2 to the result or reroll the dice. The Aspect must be applicable to this challenge in order to Invoke it.

Suppose your Agent is sneaking away down a hallway trying to escape her pursuers. The GM has told you that the hallway is crowded with a lot people screaming, because someone happened to set off a lot of explosives. The GM asks you to roll Stealth, which your Agent has listed as Good (+2). You roll your dice, and get a result of  $\oplus\blacksquare\blacksquare\blacksquare$ . Adding the +1 from the dice to the +2 from the skill gives you a total result of +3, which hopefully is enough to elude anyone chasing you.



## ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES

When characters take action, as described above, Players and Game Masters roll the dice. Dice rolls will have four outcomes:

**1. Fail:** The opposition may be active or passive, but if the dice do not roll in the favor of the character, and the number is below the one needed to succeed, the character fails in that action. This could have several potential results.

A. The character doesn't achieve their goal.

B. The character achieves their goal, but at a serious cost or ramifications.

Players may choose if they wish to pay the cost or simply if they do not achieve their goal, but it is the Game Master's prerogative to establish the cost of success.

**2. Tie:** If a Player rolls the same as the opposition, the roll is a tie.

A. The character achieves their goal, but at a minor cost.

B. The character gets a lesser version of the goal.

**3. Succeed:** If a Player roll higher than the opposition by 1 or 2 shifts (see page 21 for an explanation of shifts), the character has succeeded and achieves the goals with no cost.

**4. Succeed with Style:** If the character succeeds in the roll by 3 or more shifts, the character has officially succeeded with style. This means that the character achieves the goals, but with an added benefit such as gaining a boost or creating an aspect with a free invocation.

## WHEN TO ROLL DICE

Dice are brought into play when there is notable opposition keeping you from your goals. Mundane activities such as walking down the street, riding a tame horse, or writing an important letter do not require a dice roll, as they are assumed to be well within in the realm of abilities for an Agent of the Empire.

Indeed, even specialized skills such as equipping properly for a mission, finding the blueprints to a building, and observing the movement of the guards from the street do not require a roll. Agents are assumed to be extraordinary individuals with impressive skills. Unless there is opposition, or failure would have some interesting outcome, the Agents just accomplish whatever they set out to do. The dice should be brought out for challenges to an Agent's ability and character. The dice are present when action is confronted by challenge.

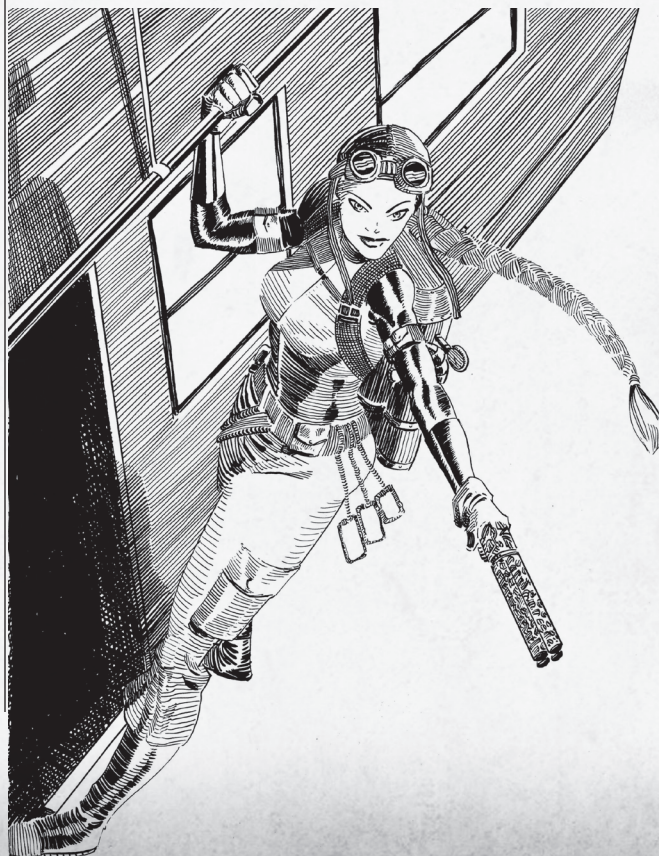
## THE FOUR ACTIONS

The four actions are: Overcome, Create an Advantage, Attack, or Defend. These are listed with every skill description, along with their application in game.

### RULES! RULES! RULES!

If this is your very first time reading a role-playing game, it might seem overwhelming to figure out what you can do and how you can do it. Skills to actions to results and shifts—there may seem to be a lot to learn in this book. However, many Players find that when they start to play, it becomes rather intuitive. You may find that you understand innately that it wouldn't be practical to Attack with Arts, but that it would be practical to create a painting so moving that it impresses viewers, creating the aspect **AWE OF THE CROWD** in the gallery. Some Players may choose to read the book all the way through first, and then construct a game. Others will want to read only as much as they need to start, and then muddle their way through, looking up rules as they need them. Both are appropriate approaches. The important factor is that you are telling a story that everyone at the table can enjoy.

When the player chooses a skill, they must decide which type of action their character is trying to take. Chapter Six has notes about which actions can be taken with which skills.





## Overcome

Overcome can be used with any skills, and is the most flexible of the actions one can take. The Player is using an Overcome action when they are using a skill to get past an obstacle. The opposition may be active or passive.

For example, an Agent using Theft may face active or passive opposition, depending on the situation. If Agent Braun is attempting to pick-pocket the Grande Dame of the Underworld, she would face active opposition from the Grande Dame and her phalanx of thugs. However, if Agent Braun is attempting to unlock a bolted window, she would face passive opposition.

Below are the potential results of an Overcome action.

**Fail:** Failing an Overcome action may have one of two results:

- The Player fails to attain the stated goal.
- The Player succeeds at the goal, but at a serious cost.

**Tie:** A tie will result in achieving the goal, but at a minor cost.

**Succeed:** When the Player succeeds, they reach their goal without cost.

**Succeed with Style:** Succeeding with Style allows the Player to achieve a goal and earn a boost.

## Create an Advantage

Creating an Advantage is the aspect action. It allows Players to use their skills in order to gain benefits from the environment or situation. When a Player chooses to Create an Advantage, they are creating a situation aspect or claiming a benefit from an existing aspect. These aspects will give you a benefit in your current conflict.

Creating an Advantage is the action taken when a character knocks a table down to block a pursuers path, it's when an Agent declares that drinks are on the house and the crowd decides they like that character, and it's a Player declaring that Agent Braun has met old Bill the Sailor before and that would make him more inclined to tell her where the pirate captain is hiding out.

When rolling to Create an Advantage, decide if you are creating a new situation aspect or if you are taking advantage of an existing current aspect, such as an environmental aspect declared by the Game Master. If you are creating a new aspect, will it be attached to the environment, or a character?

Creating an Advantage may face active or passive opposition. The Game Master will consider the circumstances of this action and make a decision which applies best. In general, objects and environments are passive, while characters are active. However, some pieces of technology, such as a tomb with traps or an automaton, might actively resist efforts. If the target is another character, their roll will be a Defend action.

Outcomes to Creating an Advantage are the same as opposition, but with slightly different results.

**Fail:** When the Player fails to Create an Advantage, the results will sometimes work to someone else's advantage. This benefit may be to the enemy, their henchmen, whoever would twirl their mustache at the characters failure.

- The Player fails to create the aspect.
- The Player creates the aspect, but someone else gets the free invoke.

**Tie:** When the Player rolls and ties, they will receive a boost. The Player may name the aspect and invoke it once for free, but after that, the aspect disappears.

**Succeed:** Success allows the Player to create a situation aspect with a free invocation.

**Succeed with Style:** Succeeding with style allows the Player to create a situation aspect with two free invocations. Good show.





## Attack

Attack is the action of causing harm. This harm may be physical or mental. You may use it to harm a character in a conflict or to remove them from a scene. Opposition to an Attack will always be a Defend action, and may be active or passive.

Active opposition is most common in Attack situations. It is used with named NPCs and PCs aware that you are taking action against them.

Passive opposition is the order of the day with unnamed NPCs or in situations where characters are caught off guard, such as when you have successfully used Stealth to make a sneak Attack. It may also be used when a character is restrained.

**Fail:** If the Player fails at an Attack, the target has succeeded on their Defend action and the Player has caused no harm. Success on the Defense may also have some results. See page 21 for further details.

**Tie:** The Player does not cause harm but gains a boost.

**Succeed:** Success means that the Player inflicts a hit on the target equal to the number of shifts (see page 21) received. The target may attempt to mitigate the effects of the hit by taking stress or consequences (see next page). Should the target be unable to take the stress or consequences, they are removed from the conflict.

**Succeed with Style:** Succeeding with style allows the Player to inflict a hit on the target equal to the number of shifts received. The Player may also reduce the value of the hit by one to gain a boost.

The target may attempt to mitigate the effects of the hit by taking stress or consequences (see next page). Should the target be unable to take the stress or consequences, they are removed from the conflict.

## Defend

When the Player is Attacked or an individual attempts to Create an Advantage the Player will always get a chance to Defend. Attacks may be physical or mental, and Creating an Advantage may be placing an aspect on your character or the environment in some way that acts to your disadvantage.

Rolls to Defend against Attack from characters are active opposition. The environment and unnamed NPCs will have passive opposition.

**Fail:** If the Player fails at a Defensive action, they will take the fallout of whatever action they were attempting to Defend against. This may be a hit that requires the Player to take stress, consequences, or be removed from the conflict. In the case where an opponent is trying to Create an Advantage against the Player, it may mean that the Player has a negative aspect attached to their character or the environment.

**Tie:** When the Player ties at Defense, the opponent gains a boost.

**Succeed:** Success at Defense allows the Player to successfully avoid the Attacks or attempt to Create an Advantage on the environment or the character.

**Succeed with Style:** Success with style allows the Player to avoid an Attack or attempt to Create an Advantage against them, while also giving the Player a boost.





# STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

## STRESS

In any conflict, there is only so much anyone can take before they are worn down, and the effects of the conflict begin to take their toll. Stress is evading a blow, dodging a blast, and holding your upper lip as stiff as possible. Stress is just how much a character can take before they start to suffer.

Every Agent begins with two boxes for physical stress and mental stress. The more stress boxes the character has, the more the Agent can take before the cracks begin to show. When Agents take stress, they must check off a stress box with a value equal to or greater than the shift value of the hit. If there are no more stress boxes, you must take a consequence. If you cannot take a consequence, you are removed from the conflict.

### Mental Stress

Mental stress represents the will. It is the ability to take an insult, to endure the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, to keep your mind when all about you others are losing theirs and blaming it on you. The character endures, and stands tall. At least, till the stress boxes are gone.

All Agents begin with two mental stress boxes. Senior Agents will add another mental stress at character creation. The Will skill can add more mental stress boxes. page 63 has more details.

### Physical Stress

Physical stress boxes allow a character to take a punch, to stay awake despite the knockout gas, and have another shot of rye whiskey with the pirate king.

All Agents begin with two physical stress boxes. Junior Agents will add another physical stress at character creation. The Physique skill can add more physical stress boxes.

After any conflict, when a character gets even a moment's rest, the Player may uncheck all of their stress boxes.

## CONSEQUENCES

If a character is out of stress and takes a hit, they must take a consequence. Consequences are negative aspects that represent the harm that remains after the conflict ends. Every Agent has three consequence slots: mild, moderate and severe.

Unlike stress, these aren't designated mental or physical, they can apply to either type of harm. This means that if a character is suffering with many mental consequences, they will be less adept physically, and the opposite will serve true as well. Consider that when a person is injured, they may not be as much the life of the party as if

they are well. Individuals who have taken a blow to their confidence may be impacted physically as well.

Consequences can be mild (two shifts), moderate (four shifts), severe (six shifts), and extreme (eight shifts, and can only be taken once per game). When characters take a consequence, they reduce the shift value of the Attack by the value of the consequence. Stress and consequences can be combined to do this as well. A heavy Attack may require the use of both stress boxes and consequences.

When you take a consequence, the opponent whose Attack forced the character to take that consequence gets a free invocation on that consequence.

At higher levels, Physique and Will can add consequence slots. At Superb (+5) or higher, Physique and Will can provide another mild consequence slot, but unlike the other consequence slots, these will be restricted to mental or physical consequences, depending on the skill.

### Consequences Are Aspects

When characters take a consequence, they are taking a special kind of aspect, and, as such, the Player must come up with a name for that aspect. This is much like how the Players developed the aspects that represent the characters during character creation. Naming the consequence should depend on what the type of Attack was, what it's results were, and the severity of the consequence. Players and the Game Master may have suggestions as to what a good name would be. Frequently the circumstances surrounding taking a consequence will suggest their names.

### Recovering from Consequences

Consequences will remain on the character sheet until the Agent has recovered. Like any other aspects, they can be invoked and compelled.

In order to recover, Agents must succeed at an Overcome action that justifies recovery, and wait an appropriate amount of game time. The Overcome action need not be performed by the Agent, an ally can take on this action on their behalf. This time is determined by the severity of the consequence. Physical injuries will require medical attention. Mental injuries will involve social intervention.

After a successful Overcome action, the consequence may be renamed to show that the Agent is actively recovering. If an Agent had a bleeding wound, perhaps the recovery would be **BULKY BANDAGE**. However, this new "recovery" aspect may still be invoked or compelled as a normal aspect would be until the allotted time is complete.

### MILD CONSEQUENCES (2 SHIFTS)

Mild consequences are injuries to the body or spirit that hurt, but bear no lasting mark. Mild physical consequences do not require any trips to hospital, and mental consequences are embarrassments, rather than lasting harm to an Agent's reputation.



**Physical Examples:** FLESH WOUND, RINGING EARS, SORE

**Mental Examples:** SCARED, TEMPERAMENTAL, ANNOYED

Recovering from a mild consequence requires an Overcome action with a difficulty of Fair (+2) and a whole scene.

### **MODERATE CONSEQUENCES (4 SHIFTS)**

These consequences represent serious medical or mental injuries that demand significant time and effort toward recovery.

**Physical Examples:** POISONED, LACERATED, CRACKLING BURN

**Mental Examples:** EXHAUSTED, HORRIFIED, FURIOUS

To remove a moderate consequence, the Player must wait an entire session after a recovery action at a difficulty of Great (+4).

### **SEVERE CONSEQUENCES (6 SHIFTS)**

Severe consequences are obvious, detrimental, and terrible. Physically, a severe consequence requires immediate medical attention and is likely to remove the Agent from active duty for a while. Mentally, a serious consequence is a devastating revelation, public shaming, or mental illness.

**Physical Examples:** MANGLED LIMB, SHATTERED RIB, INTERNAL BLEEDING

**Mental Examples:** CRIPPLING GUILT, RUINED REPUTATION, INTENSE PARANOIA

Recovering from a severe consequence requires a recovery action at a difficulty of Fantastic (+8) and a wait of an entire scenario (three to four sessions).

### **EXTREME CONSEQUENCE (8 SHIFTS)**

If there was one aspect that we would label Use With Caution in this book, it would be this one. The extreme consequence is the last effort available to stay in the fight. It can only be used once between major milestones, so use it with great care.

When you take an extreme consequence, remove one of the Agent's aspects from the character sheet (any aspect except your High Concept) and replace it with this consequence. This consequence changes who you are, permanently. You are now **CRIPPLED BY THE FOUR-FINGERED WOMAN**, **FUGITIVE FROM THE LAW** or whatever your consequence happens to be.

Recovering from an extreme consequence is far different than the mild to severe consequences. Those represent something that happened to a character, whereas this changes the very fundamental description of who the character is.

During the next major milestone, an extreme consequence can be changed to a new aspect that reflects how the character has learned, changed, and developed from this incredible setback. However, the Player may not go back to the old aspect. The old character is gone, never to return. Now the Agent is a new person, perhaps a stronger person, but they will never be the same.

Chapter Eight describes the three different kinds of oppositions you can encounter when you take action: challenges, contests, and conflicts.





# CHALLENGES, CONTESTS, AND CONFLICTS

## HOW YOUR AGENT MIGHT PICK- POCKET A BARRISTER, TIP OVER A GIANT DINING TABLE TO PROVIDE COVER, AND THEN DIE IN BATTLE

The Explanation of the Multiple Overcome Actions of Challenges, the Actions That Are



Not Intended to Cause Harm of Contests, and the Attack and Defend of Conflicts.



Also, Surrender, Character Death, Zones and Hiding a Listening Device in a Bustle.

## CHALLENGES, CONTESTS, AND CONFLICTS

This Chapter examines challenges, contests, and conflicts. While Chapter Seven explained the types of actions Players can take, this Chapter introduces the types of situations Players might encounter where their Agents must take action.

Generally, a skill roll is entirely enough to decide how an entire situation is resolved. Perhaps a single roll of Ride may determine how well a fox hunt with Lord Bathory went. However, it may sometimes be inappropriate to use a skill to resolve the actions of an entire afternoon, especially when that time could be filled with juicy details, dramatic scenes, and interesting failures.

In the case where the twists and turns of fortune could take the story in different and fascinating directions, it can be helpful to zoom in on the action and call for multiple skills rolls. Zooming in on the action takes the form of challenges, contests and conflicts.

### CHALLENGES

Challenges are multiple Overcome actions strung together to accomplish a complex goal or series of goals.

### Challenges: Player File

If the goal is simple, only a single Overcome action is required to test the mettle of an Agent. This might mean pickpocketing the barrister, setting up a listening device in an opera box without attracting notice, or searching the Archives for an obscure bit of information. An Overcome action is called for when a failure would result in an interesting cost to the characters.

A challenge is a series of Overcome actions that characters become involved in to resolve a complex, dramatic situation. Perhaps Agent Books must put on a disguise to gain access to the court, where the barrister's personal guard is keeping close watch, and only then can he attempt to pickpocket the barrister. In this situation, there would be a series of Overcome actions, each one dealing with a specific part of the whole effort and the results will determine if, or how, Books could reach his goal.

### Challenges: Game Master File

When Players announce their goals, it is up to the Game Master to determine if, and when, to call for a challenge. Players may have ideas about what skills they wish to roll, and how they might wish to go about their tasks, but it is up to the Game Master to take their narrative and break it down into challenges.

In many cases, it is not appropriate to call for a challenge. If the task is small, simple, or would be easy for an Agent, there is no reason to call for a challenge just to roll the dice. Too many rolls for small actions



may make your Players feel as if their characters are not competent.

When deciding to package Overcome actions into a challenge, determine what tasks require an Overcome action. Certain task may be so simple as to be dismissed, while others may be difficult enough to be interesting and dramatic to the characters.

To pickpocket that Barrister, Books will need a disguise to enter the courthouse, bypass the bodyguard, and then, finally, accomplish the pickpocketing task and get those secret papers.

When Players determine what actions the characters should take, they should identify the goals the characters have for that situation, and roll for each Overcome action. While Players can suggest what skills would be appropriate for their goals, it is up to the Game Master to make the final determination what will be rolled and what skills will be used.

## CONTESTS

Races, competitions, games, contests are situations when two or more characters are trying to accomplish a goal, but they aren't attempting to harm each other directly.

### Contests: Players File

Players are in a contest when their character is trying their skills against another character, and their goals are mutually exclusive to one another. Only one character can get first place or win the prize. Perhaps an Agent's mortal enemy challenges them to a chess match, or a Senior Agent to takes a Junior Agent to the range to test their Firearms skill. Any of these situations are contests.

Contests are series of exchanges. In each exchange, Players make a skill roll to determine how well they do in that section of the contest. This is rolled as an Overcome action.

Follow these instructions when making a contest roll.

1. Take a piece of scrap paper and draw three boxes. These will represent the number of successes you need to win your contest.
2. Make your skill roll as a normal Overcome action.
3. Compare your results to other characters in the contest.

**Tie:** When there is a tie, no one has succeeded during this section of the contest.

**Succeed:** You are victorious and have succeeded in this section of the contest. If you get the highest result, you have won that exchange, regardless if you are rolling in active participation against other participants, or in passive opposition with the environment. Describe how your character takes the lead in this section of the contest.

**Succeed with Style:** If you are the only character to succeed with style during this section of the contest, congratulations, you have won two sections of the contest. Describe your cleverness and acts of daring do.

4. The first character to achieve success three times wins the contest.

### Contests: Creating Advantages

Players may attempt to Create an Advantage during a contest before their contest rolls.

1. When it is your turn to make a contest roll, first, make a roll to Create an Advantage, as you normally would.
2. If you are targeting another character, they get to Defend as normal.
3. Evaluate your results.
  - If you've succeeded, you Created your Advantage.
  - If you've failed, you forfeit your contest roll.

### Contests: Attacks

If a character decides to Attack during a Contest, the contest ends without any winners and the characters must

## CONTESTS: GAME MASTER

Contests are less common than challenges, but they can add subtle variants to a game. For example, not all conflicts with others are about causing harm. Many personal goals involve becoming the best at something, such as being the valedictorian, winning a race, or winning at poker. Contests provide a method of involving characters in a competition that can increase tensions without every conflict involving fist fights, explosions, or life and death.

When deciding what should be rolled, consider first what skill or skills are appropriate for this contest. What is the opposition like? Where is the contest taking place?

prepare for a conflict.

## CONFLICTS

Conflicts are the gloves coming off, the swords being drawn, and saying the words you can never take back. During a conflict, characters are actively attempting to harm one another. Success in a conflict will involve the marking of stress boxes, the taking of consequences, and yes, even possible character death.

Conflicts are fencing the Pirate Queen on the balcony of an airship or when Agent Axelrod bare knuckle fist-



fight in the ring. It's actively shaming Agent Campbell at a party in front of everyone. If it will lead to mental or physical harm, it's a conflict.

## Physical Conflicts

Physical conflicts involve guns, explosives, and fists. They will knock down physical stress boxes and can end in broken bones and internal bleeding.

## Mental Conflicts

Mental conflicts are interrogations, public ruin, and psychological trauma. They may result in grief, outbursts of fury, and mental illness.

## Steps in a Conflict

Follow these instructions during a conflict to determine the victor.

1. The Game Master describes the environment and any Aspects that exist in that environment.
2. The Game Master determines what characters are actively participating in the environment and whose side they are on.
3. The Game Master determines what zones all the characters are in. See page 76 for descriptions of zones.
4. The Game Master and the Players figure out the turn order: who will go first, second, third, etc.
5. Players begin the first exchange.
6. Every turn, the Players take an action and determine the results.
7. If an Attack is made, resolve that Attack and determine the stress or consequences, if any.  
During other character's turns, Defend from their actions as necessary.
8. After everyone has taken a turn, begin again until the conflict is over.
9. The conflict is over when everyone on one of the sides has conceded the conflict or been Taken Out.

## Turn Order

After the Game Master helps to establish the environment and the participants in a conflict, determine the turn order. The turn order in a conflict is based on skills.

Game Masters should choose where their NPCs go in the same method as Player characters do, but instead of choosing for each NPC, simply determine the skill level of the best NPC, and group them all to act at that time. Game Masters are able to take an action for every NPC in the conflict, as determined by the NPC with the highest skill level.

## Physical Conflicts: Notice

To determine the order of turns in a physical conflict, Players should compare their Notice skill. Whoever has the highest Notice will go first. Everyone else will go in descending order. Should there be a tie, compare Sport, and if there is a tie there as well, compare Physique.

## Mental Conflicts: Empathy

To determine the order of turns in a mental conflict, participants should compare their Empathy skill. Whoever has the highest Empathy goes first. Everyone else will go in descending order. Should there be a tie, compare Class, and if there is a tie there as well, compare Rapport.

## Turns

During a Player's turn, they are able to take an action. Taking an action may be rolling for an Overcome action, Attacking another character, or Creating an Advantage. Players will only be able to make one skill roll per turn, unless an Aspect is activated for a re-roll, or a special stunt is used.

## Movement

When the Game Master describes the environment, they will also describe the zones where the action is taking place. This does not require mapmaking or measurements, though a quick sketch is helpful for visualization. This is as simple as declaring that the ballroom is zone 1, and the balcony is zone 2. Moving inside a zone is free and does not require an action.

If there is no obstacle preventing a character from moving from one zone to another, Players may choose to do so during their turn in addition to their action.

If Players wish to move more than one zone, or an aspect creates an obstacle to free movement, or another character is blocking their path, then they must make an Overcome action with Sport in order to move. This action will be their turn.

If a Player fails their roll to move between zones, they are kept from moving. If there is a tie, they may move, but an opponent may make a free Attack. If the player succeeds, they move freely. If they succeed with style, they may move and claim a boost.

## Creating Advantages in a Conflict

Aspects Created as Advantages become situation aspects that, in some circumstances, may be claimed by any side of the conflict. There are two kinds of advantages the Player may create during a conflict, those that apply to the environment and those that apply to characters.

## Creating an Environmental Advantage

When Players create an environmental aspect, they are either describing something an Agent did to the environment, or something that was already there. Players may create obstacles and create cover with these aspects.



These aspects are harder to remove and anyone in the scene could potentially take advantage of them. If Agent Braun kicks the fire to create a **SMOKE-FILLED ROOM** it may benefit her, but it may also benefit the secret assassin as well.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL ADVANTAGE EXAMPLES

**BLINDING FLASH:** Agent Books set his weapon to overload, which creates a blinding flash in the room. Enemies and allies both see spots.

**TIPPING THE DINNER TABLE:** With a great shove, Agent Braun tips over the giant dinner table in the main room, providing both cover and an obstacle.

### Creating a Character Advantage

When the Player Creates an Advantage to place on an opponent, they are doing something to the opponent that limits them in some way. The disadvantage is that these aspects generally do not last as long, and characters can take actions to resolve them. However, unlike an environmental advantage, they only affect the character on which you placed them. Players may have their Agents disarm, stun, temporarily blind or deafen another character. Players may also declare that their Agents have achieved strategic positioning in their advantage.

#### CHARACTER ADVANTAGE EXAMPLES

**SQUEEZE OF LEMON:** When a fight breaks out over dinner, the only weapon Braun has on hand is the lemon slice on her plate. Not to be dissuaded, she gives it a good squeeze in Earl Von Wilt's eyes and temporarily blinds him.

**BETWEEN BLADE AND SKY:** Agent Books has no choice but to fight Baron Blackwell when the Baron's goons corner him on the balcony of the airship, placing him between the tip of a fencing blade and the wide open sky.

### Actions During Conflict

During a conflict, Agents must frequently split up the team between fighting their assailants and doing another task, such as searching for evidence, finding an escape route, picking a locked door, or putting out a chemical fire.

In such a case, Players must successfully Defend themselves till their turn, when they will be able to take an action related to their goal. As long as no one has successfully Attacked, or Created an Advantage that prevents the Player from using their skill, the Player may use their action to roll for their goal.

### Defense

Defend rolls take place during the turns of another character, and do not count towards the action during a roll. Players may also forgo an Overcome, Attack, or Creating an Advantage action to focus on defense. In this case, the Player may not do anything proactive, but will be able to roll all Defend actions at a +2 bonus. This is especially useful if the character is injured or attempting to Defend attacks against another character.

### Resolving Attacks

If a Player makes an Attack, unless it is a sneak attack, the character being Attacked gets an opportunity to Defend. This is an active opposition roll that should be compared to the Attack roll.

Successful Attacks land a hit equal to the shift value on a target. If a Player receives two shifts on an Attack, they will land a two-shift hit.

If a character is hit by an Attack, the Player may choose to absorb the hit using stress or consequences. If the character cannot absorb the hit, they are Taken Out.

In limited circumstances, characters may choose to forego defense and take a hit. Perhaps the character has stepped between the ray gun and hostages. In this case, where the Player chooses not to Defend, the Attacker rolls against a +0 opposition.

Characters may choose to concede a conflict before they are Taken Out. This has certain advantages discussed on page 75.

### Absorbing a Hit

Characters are allotted two options for absorbing hits and preventing themselves from being removed from a conflict: Stress and consequences. Stress is a manifestation of the actions the character took to avoid being hit, despite the successful Attack. Stress represents the nimble dodge or the witty comeback. However, characters only have so much stress they can take before Attacks begin to take their toll.

Stress boxes have a shift value. All characters get a 1- and 2-point box. Junior Agents get an extra 3-point box for physical stress. Senior Agents gain an extra 3-point box for mental stress. Certain skills will improve stress. For more on the mechanics of stress, see page 69.

### Taking Stress in an Attack

If a character takes stress during an Attack, the Player should check off a single stress box equal to or greater than the shift value of the hit. If the hit was a physical Attack, check off a physical box. If it is a mental Attack, check off a mental stress box. If there are no more stress boxes or consequences available, the character is Taken Out of the conflict.

When the conflict is over, all stress boxes become available again. However, this is not so for our next method of mitigating Attacks, the consequences.



## Taking Consequences

After the stress boxes are filled up, Players have one other, more extreme option: the consequence. Consequences can be mild, moderate, severe, or extreme.

When Players create a consequence, they reduce the shift value of the Attack against by the value of the consequence. Players may need to take both stress and consequences, and may even need use more than one consequence at a time.

Unlike stress, which evaporates after a conflict has concluded and the characters have had a moment to recover, consequences remain with the character that took them. In addition, those who inflicted the consequence get a free invocation on them. The aspect will remain on a character's sheet until they, or an ally, have taken steps to resolve it, and even then, the character must wait a set period of time depending on the severity of the consequence.

While the consequence is on a character's sheet, it is treated like any other aspect, and can be invoked and used against that character. Consequences are negative, so these invocations will rarely be good, and enemies in a fight will not hesitate to exploit any known consequences.

There is only one set of consequences that encompass both mental and physical effects. A mild physical consequence will fill the mild slot, and mental hits after that must be related to the moderate slot. For more about creating, resolving, and managing consequences, refer to page 69.

## Conceding the Conflict

Surrender is always an option. A good Agent may choose a strategic surrender rather than defeat. Any character can declare that they are conceding the conflict before they take action during their turn. They may not concede the conflict simply because a roll fails, at least, not until it is their turn again.

When conceding a conflict, Players receive a Fate Point. Additionally, if Players have taken any consequences during the conflict, they receive one Fate Point for each consequence taken. Fate Points from conceding may be used once the conflict is over.

Surrender allows characters to lose while avoiding the worst possible outcome. Agents may be captured by the enemy, left for dead, robbed of Gadgets, but alive, and will fight another day. The Game Master and the characters surrendering should work out what this looks like. It should not be as bad as being Taken Out would have been, but it should still be a significant loss.

## Taken Out

When Players have used up stress and consequences, and still have not taken all the shifts off a hit, they are considered Taken Out. When a character is Taken Out, they cannot decide what happens after the conflict or what the loss looks like.

**Note:** You do NOT need to use the extreme consequence in order to be Taken Out. That is a once-per game choice that is entirely up to the Player.

## Death

All Agents that sign up for the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences know that there is a risk of death in these dangerous assignments. A life of action is also a life of risk, and operations performed by the Ministry are against powerful opponents.

If a character is Taken Out, there is certainly a possibility that the character will be killed. However, that is only one option of many for the end of a conflict. Groups playing the game should talk about character death before they begin the game. If this is a serious campaign where the Empire is in shambles and evil lies behind every door, then the mood of the campaign might dictate a few character deaths.

However, if everyone agrees that they want to play up comedy, action, and extended relationships, death is not the only option. There is capture, injury, embarrassment, the loss of wealth and reputation. Consider the themes you wish your campaign to have, and if you want to include death as a possibility.

## GAME MASTERS' RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CONFLICTS

### Setting the Scene

As with regular scenes, Game Masters are also in charge of setting up the environment for a conflict. This means deciding on who is present for the conflict, what sides they are on and what the environment is like. There may already be aspects for the scene on the table, but this is also an opportunity to add any aspects to the scene that may become relevant to the conflict. It may not have mattered, for example, that the room was smoky when the characters arrived, but since it may affect their ability to see in a conflict, it would be good to add it now.

### Establishing Sides

What do all your characters want? This applies to what the Players want, and what the NPCs want. Before your conflict begins, ask your Players what their goals are, and decide what your NPCs desire out of the conflict.

In a situation where the Players are fighting NPCs, the sides may be perfectly clear. The Players want to rescue the young Duke, and the NPCs want to stop them.

However, Players may also come to blows with each other, and NPCs might be foes or allies with their own motivations. If Players are fighting one another, have a short discussion about what they each want to happen to establish the lines of conflict.



## Taking Turns with NPCs

Establish what turn your NPCs will go on by the highest skill level in the group of NPCs—all of them will go on the same turn. Each NPC will get to go once during the conflict. If there are many nameless NPCs in the conflict, consider treating them as passive opposition, or treating them as a mob, rather than individuals.

## Establishing Zones

Zones are the “where” of a conflict. Players will need to know where they are in relation to their targets. If a conflict takes place in a small room, there will be no need to establish zones. However, if a conflict is taking place in and out of a two-story barn and the characters are scattered over this landscape, draw zones to help Players visualize their locations.

A zone is a representation of immediate physical space. If you are in a zone, you may interact with someone directly. Outside that zone, you have to move to reach them. Conflicts should be limited to two to four zones. If you could reasonably say that the characters are more than four zones away, then split the conflict up into two parts, resolve each before moving on.

When you are declaring the number and location of zones, create any aspects that would be appropriate to those zones, noting if any of them would limit movement between them. For example, in a barn, we might have a **RICKETY LADDER** that connects the lower part of the barn (zone 1) with the upper story (zone 2).

## The End of a Conflict

Conflicts end when all the members of one side have either conceded the conflict or been Taken Out.

## Conceding the Conflict

If all the Agents surrender, the Game Master can pass out the Fate Points that were earned by that concession, and work with them to narrate what that concession means, and how it might be different from being Taken Out. Perhaps the Agents fake their own deaths, allowing the Phoenix Society to get away with the treasure, or maybe they are captured and brought to the White Tower. Whatever the result, Players and Game Masters should collaborate to figure out what comes next.

## Taken Out

As noted, before the conflict you and the Players will establish what the goals are of all the characters in the conflict. Perhaps this was to capture smugglers or prevent Baron Dragomir Negrubine from robbing the airship. If the Player characters are Taken Out, their enemies achieve their goals and what the Agents feared has come to pass.

## TEAMWORK

Agents are trained to work together as a team, and frequently Agents are chosen for specific missions where their combination of skills will assist them in reaching their goal. There are two methods for assisting each other towards a chosen goal; characters may combine skills, or stack advantages.

## Combining Skills

The act of combining skills is when all the characters are attempting to use one skill together to accomplish a goal. If Agents are working together in the lab, using Invention, to improve their recording device to be small enough to hide inside a bustle, they would combine skills.

First, they should determine who on the team has the highest skill level. This is the individual who will actually roll the skill. Each other team member who has at least Average (+1) on the same skill will add +1 to the skill level for the character with the highest skill. If this roll fails, all the characters who worked on the team share the ramifications of that failure.

Agent Axelrod has the highest Invention skill (+5) to create a recording device that can be carried in a bustle, but Agent Blackwell (+4) wishes to help him to make sure it's perfect, Agent Axelrod would make the roll, but Agent Blackwell would be able to add +1 to his final result.

## Stacking Advantages

When characters stack advantages, they are pooling their skills in order to help one character succeed. One character will make an Overcome roll, while all the others make Create an Advantage rolls that, if they succeed, the character making the Overcome roll can get a free invoke on.

If Agent Blackwell, tiny recording device ensconced in her bustle, is trying to get the Duke of the Underworld to confess his terrible crimes (within range of her bustle, of course) Agent Axelrod might buy a few rounds of drinks using Rapport to create an aspect for **IN VINO VERITAS** while Braun uses her Rapport to distract his lead henchwoman with **SCINTILLATING CONVERSATION**. In this situation, Blackwell may use the invokes for free if they succeed, but consequences of failure fall entirely on her.

In Chapter Nine, we will address Gadgets, how to use them, what can be done with them, and the many types available to Agents of the Ministry.





# GADGETS

## AGENT GADGETS AND SKILL GADGETS

✎ Various Types of Gadgets and Their Uses, Including Weaponry and Inventive Tools for the Modern Secret Agent. ✎

### AGENTS AND GADGETS

*"I know," said Dr. Blackwell, "It IS amazing, isn't it?"*

*Books felt his cheeks boil. "It is—"*

*She took the box in her arms and held it to her chest. "The salvation of so many women across our little island. I know. I received many accolades for its invention."*

*—Women of the Empire*

There are two types of Gadgets in a Ministry Initiative game: the Agent Gadget and the Skill Gadget.

### AGENT GADGET

The Agent Gadget is designed during character creation and specifically relates to the skills and specialties of the Agent using it. Each Gadget is unique to a particular Agent. The Gadget can be a weapon or it can be a tool that an Agent can use to their advantage. The Gadget can be a raygun, a listening device, a portable engine, a communications rig, a vehicle or another useful device.

### Gadgets and Aspects

*"I was testing a bit of material to see what happened when I over-heated the light cache coils, and it turns out that they will explode."*

*—The Mystery of the Thrice Dead Man*

Each Agent Gadget aspect has a High Concept and a Trouble. The High Concept of the Gadget relates to what it does, while the Trouble should relate to the problems or limitations for that Gadget. The problematic nature of the Trouble should be in direct proportion to how pow-

erful the Gadget is. Just like any other aspects, these can be invoked or compelled.

Unlike other aspects, where only major milestones can change them, Gadgets can be swapped out mission to mission by any Agent going to Research and Design to request something new, or by inventing a Gadget of their own.

However, no Agent can carry more than one Agent Gadget at any time.

### How to Create Your Own Agent Gadget

Creating your own Gadget for your Agent can help define the personality of your Agent, as well as creating something specific to their needs.

The first step is creating your Gadget's High Concept. This is what your Gadget does when it is operating optimally. Gadgets should have one, and only one main function. If a Gadget fires a lightning bolt, it should not also create a lightning shield.

The next step is creating your Gadget's Trouble. The Trouble might be simply a drawback to the Gadget that exists all the time, such as the Gadget being heavy, or difficult to conceal. The Trouble can also be in the temperament of the Gadget, perhaps it is difficult to reload, time consuming to operate, or troubling to aim. The Trouble might also relate to the Gadget's propensity to breaking. New technology may be a fabulous advantage, but sometimes the bugs haven't quite been worked out yet.

When constructing your Gadget, the advantage of its High Concept should be balanced by the disadvantage of its Trouble. A powerful Gadget should come with a notable Trouble. More moderately powered Gadgets' Troubles might simply be inconvenient.

### SKILL GADGETS

Skill Gadgets add to skill rolls. These Gadgets are usually acquired through Research and Design or designed by the Agent themselves. Below are a list of Gadgets that



Agents can use, including tools and weapons. Some of these Gadgets require that the Agent has a particular skill for their use. When this is the case, it is noted below the Gadget's description.

Mike is playing Wellington Thornhill Books. Together with Field Agent Braun, they are infiltrating an abandoned church suspected to be the meeting place of certain enemies to the Crown. It is rumored that these conspirators have obtained an object of darkly peculiar properties, capable of mass fatality when used in creative ways.

In order to assess the situation and gain intelligence on exactly how the conspirators intend to use the object, Books has brought the Aural-scope. They've positioned themselves on an upper level of the abandoned church, in a dark alcove. Mike rolls Notice   , with +2 to Notice from the Auralscope, a tie.

The Game Master informs Books and Braun that they've determined the time and location of the planned assassination attempt, but at a cost. The faint light from the Auralscope has alerted the conspirators and several are now headed toward the upper level to capture or, more likely, kill them.

## How to Construct Your Own Skill Gadget

Directors and Players who wish to construct their own Skill Gadget for a particular mission should write up a brief summary of what they want the Gadget to do, and what skills it might take to operate that technology. The inventions in the world of the Ministry require that Agents understand their inner workings so that they can be maintained and repaired in the field.

The more powerful the weapon, the more skills it should require to operate and maintain, and the less ability it will likely have to be concealed. Create a tool whose power is balanced by the level of skill that is required to operate it.

Damion is making an Agent Gadget for his character. Damion's Field Agent character specializes in infiltration and escape, so he's made his Gadget's main function help him reach things that normally wouldn't be in reach.

He's begun by jotting notes about the Gadget:

**Description:** A mechanized arm brace with grappling hook and super lightweight cable, up to 25 meters, equipped with a firing mechanism. Grappling hook is able to engage and disengage remotely via controls on the arm brace, automatically retracting the cable.

### High Concept: REACH THINGS OTHERS CAN'T

What Damion has thus far is a good foundation for his Agent Gadget. However, that much cable takes time to retract. If Damion doesn't take the proper time to allow the arm brace to retract, his character could be running about with a length of cable training behind him snagging on random objects. Damion adds to his notes:

### Trouble: TAKES TIME TO RETRACT

When his Agent Gadget is working properly, Damion's character is able to get into and out of places undetected. However, Damion has to consider the level of fitness required for his character to use such a grappling hook system. When he sets the advantage of the Gadget, there should be an additional skill requirement. Also, the Gadget requires aim similar to the use of a gun. Damion adds two skill requirements.

+2 to Stealth (Requires Physique +2, Firearms +1)

## LIST OF SKILL GADGETS

### TOOLS

#### Illuminati

A useful tool for venturing into dark places, these glowing sticks are actually fashioned of a tiny vial of phosphorus suspended within the fluid of a larger glass rod. The phosphorus remains inert until needed. At such time of need, a hard rap against a solid surface breaks the inner vial and a quick shake allows the phosphorus to mix with the suspension liquid, producing a **BRILLIANT EMERALD GREEN GLOW**. The light produced from the Illuminati is quite sufficient to see by, but lasts only a limited amount of time before dimming. They are also a one-time use.

Agents should note that light to see by also carries the danger of providing a **CONVENIENT TARGET FOR ENEMIES**. If you can see them, likely they can see you.

+2 Notice rolls having to do with sight when it is otherwise dark.

#### Auralscope

A Gadget designed by Agent Wellington Books, this steam-powered device is able to facilitate surveillance by allowing an Agent to overhear conversations in adjacent rooms.

Contained in a small to medium-sized suitcase, this clockwork apparatus is activated by two keys and has two glass orbs which illuminate and cast amber light when powered up. A small control panel is set into the steam-powered apparatus and the Auralscope can be cal-

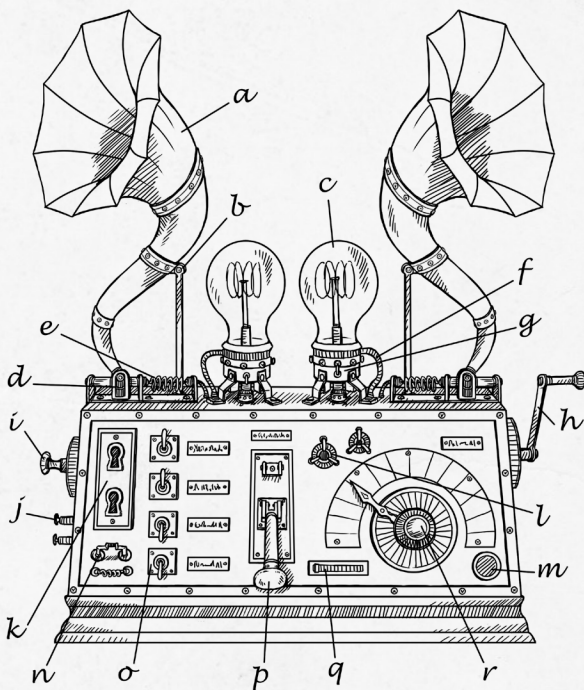


ibrated using a series of dials and switches set into the carry-case to filter out such ambient sounds as opera or concert music. A listener is able to use one of a set of listening cones attached to coils set to either side of the device to listen in on a conversation.

The Auralscope is also capable of recording captured conversations on standard-sized phonograph cylinders as evidence or for record to be stored in the Archives.

+2 Notice rolls having to do with sound over distances.

*Fig. 15.*



## Aural-Defenders

These devices are quite handy in that they are portable and designed to protect Ministry Agents from mind manipulation devices. Mimicking the shape of the human ear, these countermeasures slip over the top of the Agent's ears and are held in place by tiny clamps. Upon activation by flicking a tiny lever behind each ear, the whirring of clockworks generate a faint grinding sound akin to a music box gone awry. Mind manipulation devices reliant upon sound as a mode of control are effectively disrupted.

They are rather heavy and dampen one's natural hearing, though. An Agent should proceed with caution, utilizing other senses to be aware of potential dangers.

+2 Will in cases of audio attacks.

## Thermal Imager

These goggles have an adjustable range of sensitivity, allowing the wearer to detect temperature variations in a room. The lenses are tuned by turning the tiny side gears on the goggles. They are quite handy for identify-

ing either "hot spots" or the cold areas generated by paranormal activity. More specifically, they allow the wearer to see spectres or ghosts upon manifestation.

*"Here is where he whispers to me. All night.  
Every night. He whispers dreadful things to me.  
Horrible, improper things, Agent Boswell. Not  
befitting a gentleman. Not even to his wife."*

*—Dust on the Davenport,  
Tales from the Archives Vol. 1*

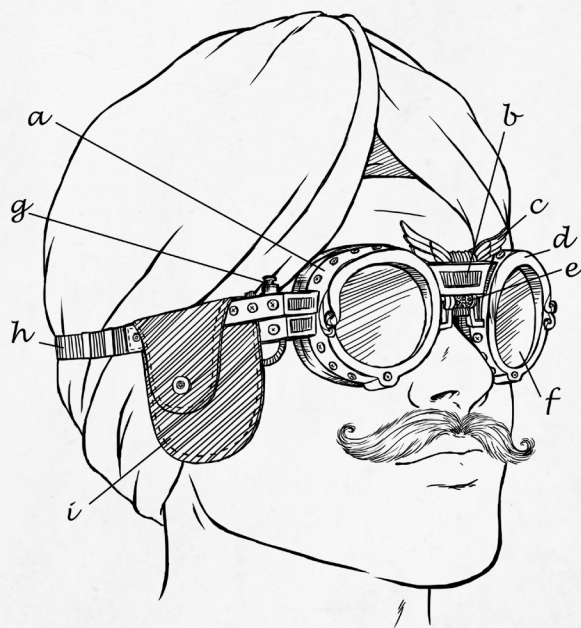
+2 to Deduction rolls having to do with sight.

## Breathing Apparatus

This apparatus is quite portable and easily stashed in the inside pocket of a dinner jacket. Composed of a tiny bronze cylinder and an oddly shaped top, it fits into the mouth and over the nose of the wearer. Acting as a kind of gas mask, this device filters the air of poisons or other dangerous particles rendering the air safe for the wearer to breathe. It does not, however, contain an independent air supply and thus would not be of help in conditions where air is not actually available.

+2 to Physique for resistance to airborne pollutants and poisons.

*Fig. 68.*



## Starlight Goggles

These goggles come equipped with multiple lenses to augment the wearer's vision in low light and night time, even absolute darkness. In addition to night vision, these lenses provide adjustable magnification for examination of objects from afar. They are rather bulky though and currently under redesign by the R&D department.



.....  
*"He reached into his dinner jacket again, and Phailin wondered for a wild moment how many Gadgets the man had squirreled away within it. This time he pulled out an odd set of goggles, bulky with multiple lenses.*

*"Night vision, you see."*

*—A Swan in Siam,  
 Tales from the Archives Vol. 2*  
 .....

+1 to Notice in low light conditions, +1 to Deduction.

## WEAPONS

### Katherina, the Portable Cannon

This experimental weapon was designed to fire three heavy shots. Reload is not possible in active combat. While not quite enough to cause a cave-in, each shot does considerable damage to heavily armed opponents or barricades.

Katherina is quite portable, for the Agent traveling light. She fits in a holster and is easily carried or concealed.

+2 to Firearms (Requires at least +3 in Firearms).

### Lapel Pin Trigger Device

Only fractionally larger than a man's thumbnail, this tiny bomb appears to be a delicate lapel pin comprised of intricately interlinked clockwork gears and cogs. When used in conjunction with a stick of dynamite, the results are rather explosive.

### Plures Ornamentum

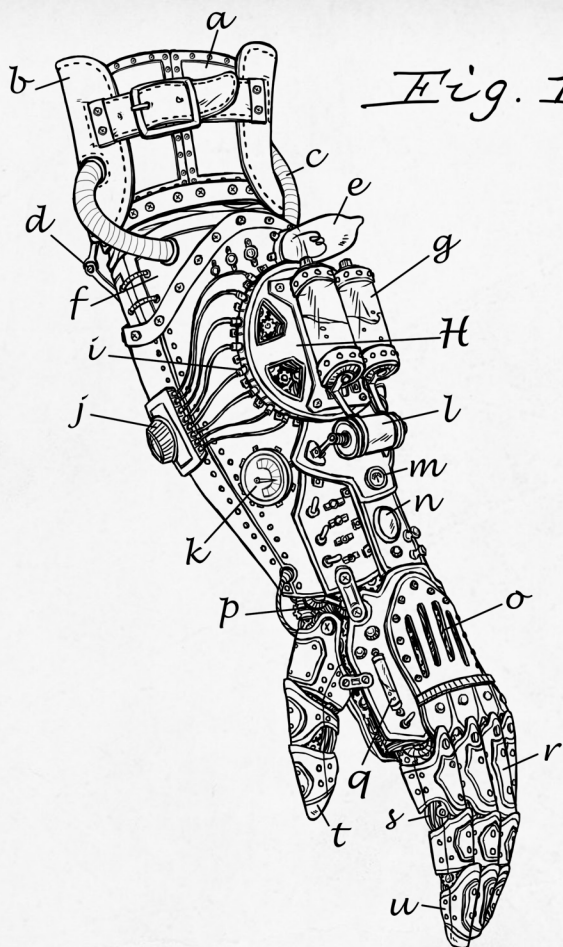
A gauntlet fashioned of brass, this weapon encases the hand up to and including the elbow. It is built with cogs and gears at each point of articulation aided by steam-driven hydraulics to boost the strength of the wearer. It is also capable of firing weighted bolas from the fore-arm casing.

+2 to Firearms (Requires at least +1 in Invention and +1 in Firearms).

## AGENT ELIZA D. BRAUN'S PISTOLS

Agent Braun carries many pistols in a variety of sizes and calibers. She is, in fact, quite fond of weaponry—most especially firearms.

She carries a particular pair of pistols with her: barrels of gleaming brass with handles of ivory inlaid with pounamu, a deep green stone held sacred in New Zealand. The inlay design is a Hei-Hei, powerful symbol for good luck.



### 1881 Remington-Elliott Derringer

This pistol is a favorite of Ministry Agents, and sadly, for adversaries as well. It is approximately the size of the palm of one's hand, making the weapon easily concealed in a sleeve, a handbag, or the inside pocket of a jacket. The 1881 Derringer has three barrels mounted in a triangle-formation—two barrels on the bottom, one on top. On account of the pistol's compressors, it does have an increased range over other Derringers, but it is still a close-quarters pistol, best used for up-close eliminations and debilitations.

+2 to Firearms (Requires Firearms +2).

### Lee-Metford-Tesla Mark IV

This bolt-action rifle was made popular through the British Army service. It combines the rear-locking bolt system from previous models with a ten-round magazine (for bullets) and an electric pulse cannon capable of firing high-voltage blasts. This was a perfected model following the unreliable Mark III which earned a bad reputation for frequent jams on account of electromagnetic feedback from the Tesla modification. The electric-pulse is a powerful mid-range stun device while the bolt system and magazine combination ushered in a challenge of firing 15 aimed bullets into a target at three-hundred yards within one minute, called the "Mad Minute" by the riflemen.

+2 to Firearms (Requires Invention +2 and Firearms +1).



## The “Ricky” (The Smith & Wesson Maverick Mark II)

The “Ricky” is a popular sidearm on account of its easy maintenance, easy conversion from firing high-calibre bullets to launching small explosive projectiles, and reliability. Officially known as the Smith & Wesson Maverick Mark II, the “Ricky” has a design that can be best described as a common Smith & Wesson pistol “in reverse” with the chamber in the front of the pistol. The Ricky is well-known for its stopping power, whether it is using the high-calibre or long-range ordnance.

+1 to Firearms (Requires +1 Firearms).

## Samson-Ensfield Mark III

A shotgun, the Samson-Ensfield Mark III measures approximately the length of an average man’s forearm. The Mark III is deceptive in its small size. It can be dismissed at a glance, but its twelve-gauge shells deal quite a lot of damage, both at close and at mid-range. The compact build of the Mark III allow the shotgun to be concealed easily, particularly in small, tight places. However, on account of this compact build, it can only hold three shells total. When using the Mark III, it is advised that shooters should have many spare shells within easy reach either on their own person or accessible on a partner’s gear.

+2 to Firearms (Requires +2 Firearms).

## The “Jack Frost”

This weapon is an original invention from the Ministry’s Research and Design department. The “Jack Frost” is a pistol-class weapon, but the actual pistol is twice the size of a standard Smith & Wesson pistol. A distinctive detail in the Jack Frost is the small tube of liquid attached to the barrel. This solution is a proprietary substance designed by Agents Axelrod and Blackwell. The “Jack Frost” projects concentrated beams of cold, best used in close-range situations. While the cold generated can bestow everything on its victims from a nasty head cold to extreme frostbite, Jack Frost is a wonderful appliance for infiltration and bomb diffusion. **WARNING:** Do not break the glass containing the Axelrod/Blackwell proprietary solution. Results are fatal.

+3 to Firearms (Requires Invention +3 and Firearms +1).

## Winchester-Edison 96X

While carrying the Winchester name, the Winchester-Edison 96X was originally designed by Browning as the first pump-action shotgun for the firearms manufacturer. In 1896, American Inventor Thomas A. Edison offered to the Winchester Company a modified concept rifle that could generate and fire projectiles super-charged by DC-generated electricity. This shot appears as bursts of blue-white light, dealing not only fatal damage to targets but also deal stun shocks to surrounding targets within the vicinity. As this rifle is still in experimental stages and undergoing exclusive field testing from the Edison Company, this model has been designated with the 96X distinction.

**NOTE:** Ministry consultant Nikola Tesla suggests the 96X would prove itself a more reliable and controllable field asset provided the electricity flow were switched from *direct* to *alternating* current. R&D continues to test and explore options

+1 to Firearms +2 to Fight (Requires Fight +1, Firearms +3).

.....  
*“The coil gets out a burst somewhere  
in the range of two hundred kilo-  
volts to five thousand megavolts.”*

*“Five thousand megavolts?!” Wel-  
lington exclaimed. “That’s a range  
between stun and incineration!”*

*Bill shrugged. “Told you it was a prototype.”*

*—Dawn’s Early Light*  
.....

## Sophia del Morte’s Gauntlets

This set of gauntlets must be custom fitted. Each is triggered by the action of thrusting an arm straight out in a swift and decisive motion. One gauntlet launches a pair of cogs, their edges sharpened to lethal effect. The other extends a deadly stiletto.

These are quite useful to carry concealed weaponry and provide some protection for the forearms in the case of hand to hand combat.

+1 to Fight +1 to Physique +1 to Fencing (Requires +3 Fight).

In Chapter Ten we will examine the types of airships and vehicles your Agent may encounter on their adventures in the world of the Ministry.





# AIRSHIPS AND OTHER TRANSPORTATION

## TRAVEL BY AIR, SEA, LAND IN THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE

 All Manner of Airships, Submersibles, Land Vehicles, and Mechanical Conveyances,   
Including Instructions on How the Innovative Player May Create Their Own Vehicle.

*Wellington clung by his fingertips to a freezing metal pipe on the outside of the giant airship Hammarström as it zipped through the sky. He chanced a look down, to see the clouds floating below him, and below that, the wide expanse of the rolling ocean.*  
—*The Mystery of the Thrice Dead Man*

### AIRSHIPS

More than just balloons floating through the air, airships differ in that they are not at the mercy of the winds and air currents. They have steering capability and in some cases, propulsion. Airships carry more than simple baskets, and though size and design may vary from an enclosed gondola to a full seafaring pirate ship taken to the skies, airships do have certain principle characteristics in common: a container filled with lighter-than-air gas of some sort, a vessel of some sort attached to the container, steam engine-driven propulsion system, and rudders of some sort for steering.

### TYPES OF AIRSHIPS BY GAS

#### Hot Air

Easy to create, a clever airship design could make use of the steam let off by the steam engine-driven propulsion in addition to other hot air generating mechanisms in order to generate enough lift to carry the airship. This is the most inexpensive and arguably safest type of gas to use.

However, the air must be constantly heated and thus, such airships would be limited in range of travel based

on the amount of fuel the airship could carry.

#### Hydrogen

Quite possibly the most commonly used gas and the lightest of the lighter-than-air lifting gases, hydrogen can be produced in industrial quantities. Airships lifted by hydrogen can fly high and remain aloft much longer, so long as the container is tight enough to keep this elusive gas contained.

Hydrogen is capable of leaking out of woven cloth that would keep hot air contained and so containers of fabric tend to be silk treated with some sort of proofing such as rubber or turpentine. Considering the high flammability of hydrogen, the combination of silk and rubber is most often preferred.

#### Methane

Methane is naturally occurring and a cheaper alternative to hydrogen with longer lift than hot air, though it is the heaviest of the gas options. Natural deposits can be found by the traveling airship crew and tapped to replenish supply.

However, methane, like hydrogen, is highly flammable and would require a similarly constructed container.

#### Coal Gas

Already in use for street lights in many towns, coal gas is the most readily available in any location or destination. It has better lift than hot air and is cheaper than hydrogen. Primarily composed of carbon monoxide though, this is an extremely dangerous gas to use in airships, both toxic and flammable.



## TYPES OF AIRSHIPS BY USE

### Commercial Airships

Much like their sea-going steamship counterparts, commercial airships are built large and equipped with cabins and staterooms for the comfort of wealthy passengers. Amenities are included with an eye for luxury and the interior of the airship is as pleasing to the eye as the outside is built for defense. Passengers fly in comfort high above both land and sea.

These larger airships sacrifice maneuverability for size and luxury. Safety and the comfort of passengers is of primary concern in the design of these airships, with defense a very close second.

### EXAMPLE COMMERCIAL AIRSHIP

#### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *The Belle of the Air*

TROUBLE: *Slow Glider*

DESCRIPTION: *All the Amenities of Home*

#### SKILLS

FAIR (+2): Class

AVERAGE (+1): Arts, Pilot

#### STUNT

HIGH CLASS: Paid passengers aboard this vessel gain +1 to Class merely for being present on the airship. Just flying aboard her gives you temporary class.

### Military Airships

These airships vary in size, but all carry weapons. Some may have cabins for captain and high-ranking passengers, but non-commissioned crew bunk in communal quarters. Weight allowance on board is reserved for weapons and ammunition, with very minimal set aside for the personal belongings of crew. Maximum efficiency has been incorporated into the design to allow for speed and maneuverability.

### EXAMPLE MILITARY AIRSHIP

#### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Top of the Line*

TROUBLE: *Only the Necessities*

DESCRIPTION: *Tough Old Bird*

#### SKILLS

FAIR (+2): Pilot

AVERAGE (+1): Explosives, Firearms

#### STUNT

BATTLESTATIONS!: When the crew of your airship are at their battlestations, gain +1 to Pilot.

### Airship Pirates

Like military airships, pirate airships carry weapons and they come in every shape and size. Indeed, some pirate airships may have been of military origin before being acquired. They are not so well maintained, in most cases, and often in need of various repairs. Safety takes the lowest position on the priority list for these airships. Speed and maneuverability—either for attack or retreat—are the airship's primary functions in terms of design and upkeep.

### EXAMPLE PIRATE AIRSHIP

#### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Terror of the Skies*

TROUBLE: *One Broken Part Away from Failure*

DESCRIPTION: *She'll Always Bring You Home*

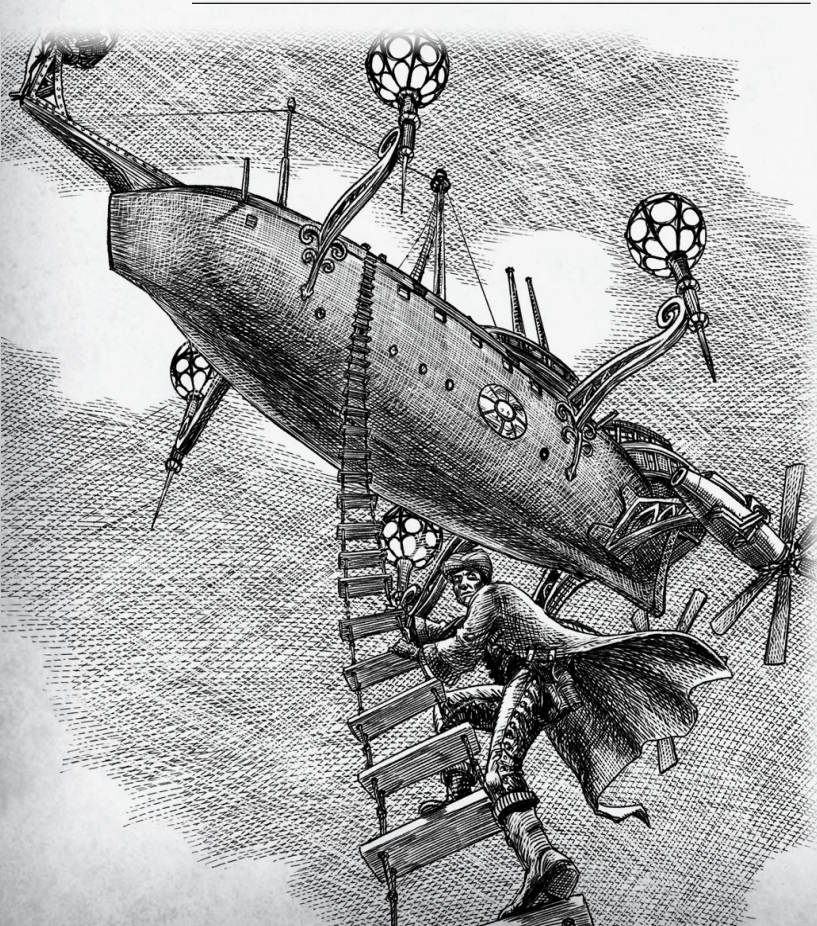
#### SKILLS

FAIR (+2): Stealth

AVERAGE (+1): Deceive, Firearms

#### STUNT

CONVENIENT STORM: If you fly into a storm, you will immediately lose any pursuer, regardless of the power of the storm. You will, however, still have to contend with any of the damage the storm may cause.





## OTHER TRANSPORTATION

### STEAMSHIP

The British Empire holds naval supremacy via steamship, maintaining a dominant position in world trade and governance over its colonies.

Steamship services are fast, arriving and leaving port at regular scheduled intervals. The shipping routes are both safe and reliable for citizens and trade goods traversing the seas by water. Protection of these routes and their supply ports is a primary directive for the British Royal Navy.

While larger steamships are equipped with luxuries for the comfort of the privileged, these ships travel at a slower pace across the oceans. Equipped with cabins and staterooms for longer journeys, dining rooms, and amenities intended for leisure, these ocean liners are very expensive and accessible primarily to the wealthy. Passage on these ships for the more common folk does not include access to most of the wonders of technology and comfort the upper class enjoyed.

Smaller steamships travel faster. Amenities are fewer, but the savings in cost might be considered worth the shorter time in travel. Such ships are more vulnerable to piracy though and speed is weighed against safety.

### TRAINS

When traveling over land, steam-driven locomotives are the fastest and most comfortable means of travel. Indeed, many have the modern convenience of restroom facilities as well as a dining car. Cost of travel is quite reasonable, though the average Field Agent is usually not approved to book first class passage. Blending with the coach class passengers is often more conducive to the resolution of a case as well. Many British citizens opt to travel via train and thus, persons of interest to the Ministry can be easily followed by our Agents under cover.

British-made steam locomotives are not limited to the British Isles and are, in fact, spreading across the British empire accompanied by the associated railway equipment. Traveling across continents is quite feasible.

The newest innovation in steam rail technology are the new hypersteam express trains. These use powerful new steam engines to propel the train at nearly twice the speed of a standard steam engine. They can travel on the standard tracks, but a hypersteam engineer should survey the route beforehand. Curves that fall within safe parameters for a standard engine can be lethal if a hyper-steam carriage attempts to take them at full speed.

Field Agents should be aware of the risks involved in attempting to pursue and capture a target on a moving locomotive. Passing between passenger cars is dangerous enough. Climbing atop the various cars is very risky, especially as the train could enter a tunnel at any time.

While pursuit and capture is possible, one would then be faced with the dilemma of restraining the target until the train reaches the next station.

### EXAMPLE TRAIN

#### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *The Edinburgh Express*

TROUBLE: *Locked to the Track*

DESCRIPTION: *Elegant Travel for a New Age*

#### SKILLS

FAIR (+2): Pilot

AVERAGE (+1): Class, Medicine

#### STUNT

AUTO PILOT: This train can be locked into an autopilot in case of injury to the conductor that will be effective until the train reaches the next available station.

## AUTOMOBILES AND STEAM-DRIVEN CARRIAGES

Steam-driven automobiles of the Victorian Age are a combination of expedience and personal luxury. Owned by many of the upper class, these are a convenient mode of transportation across the countryside. Not as fast as trains or airships, still, they make for a pleasant trip and perhaps, more private. They differ in design based on manufacturer, of course.

.....  
*The chugging of the loco-motor  
hardly seemed reassuring.*

*Eliza glanced at it. "Then why are you not taking an airship? You could be there tomorrow morning instead of all this fuss and bother..."*

*Kate slipped her goggles over her eyes and adjusted them, "Because, my dear girl, both commercial fleets are owned by men unhappy with what we are trying to do. Simply put, they have informed all their offices not to sell tickets to us. We may even have a kind of wanted poster out. Very American. So it is this or Shanks' pony."*

.....  
*~ The Evil that Befell Sampson*

Many are simple carriages driven by steam as opposed to drawn by horses. These steam-driven carriages are capable of achieving speeds of two to two-and-a-half miles per hour. Passenger limit is quite intimate, as these steam-driven carriages are only able to carry two, perhaps four, people at a time depending on the amount of luggage they've brought with them.



Steam-powered stagecoaches are able to carry more passengers, up to six people. These conveyances are also able to achieve faster speeds. However, they have become rather a nuisance on the public roads for slower travelers on horseback and on foot. There are threats to ban these from the public roadways of England.

The major limitation, and perhaps greatest concern, when using a steam-driven automobile is the need for a supply of water to replenish the boiler. One cannot take the risk of not being able to find water along the way and carrying a stock of water for the boiler can be quite heavy, taking up much storage space in the vehicle.

### EXAMPLE AUTOMOBILE

#### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Steam-Powered Stagecoach*

TROUBLE: *Frequent Stops*

DESCRIPTION: *Steel, Steam, and Fire*

#### SKILLS

FAIR (+2): Pilot

AVERAGE (+1): Class, Physique

#### STUNT

THE HEIGHT OF LUXURY: With its sumptuous velvet interior and minibar, this automobile is built to impress. Free re-roll on Rapport rolls when made inside the vehicle.

## SUBMARINES AND SUBMERSIBLES

Predominantly used for military purposes, submarines and their more limited underwater submersible counterparts make it possible to navigate the oceans beneath the water's surface. As a mode of transportation, travel underwater allows an Agent or enemies of the Ministry to move from one waterside location to another unseen.

Submersibles are generally smaller, intended for one to two-man crews. These are designed to move beneath the surface but incapable of the reaching the same depths or travelling the same distances as the larger submarines. For purposes of stealth and smaller operations, a submersible could be quite useful to an investigating Ministry Agent.

Submarines designed specifically for war are in use by the Americans and are also supplement the naval powers of various other countries. Such attack submarines add significant advantage to naval resources. Were one to fall into the hands of enemies of the Ministry, Agents would find themselves embroiled in very dangerous circumstances.

Travel by submarine is dangerous under the best of conditions, especially at such depths as a man cannot

withstand unprotected. Should some mishap befall the submarine, the entire crew would be in danger. While this is a concern for the Ministry, enemies of the Queen and empire may not assign an equivalent value on the lives of the crew.

### EXAMPLE SUBMARINE

#### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Deep Sea Submersible*

TROUBLE: *Fire in the Water*

DESCRIPTION: *Cramped Efficacy*

#### SKILLS

FAIR (+2): Pilot

AVERAGE (+1): Firearms, Stealth

#### STUNT

IMPERCEPTIBLE FROM THE SURFACE: When underwater, the submersible is almost undetectable. +3 to Stealth from attempts to discover the location from the surface.

## AUTOMATONS AND MACHINES OF WAR

The types of automatons in the world of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences are limited only by imagination and ingenuity.

**Purpose:** Automatons are built with a purpose in mind, whether the purpose is combat, defense, or industrial. The military is most interested in automatons for combat potential. Mercenaries and pirates are also interested in automatons for an edge against each other or the military. Entrepreneurs might back the creation of automatons to enhance the collection of ores or harder to obtain precious minerals in high risk mining operations. Whatever the purpose, the automatons should be designed specifically to fulfill it.

**Mode of Movement:** Mode of movement is also a defining characteristic of automatons. They can move on two legs or more, or on wheels, or perhaps make use of the railways. Some automatons may even have wings for gliding or limited flight. When steam-driven, the same feedwater considerations should be taken into account to replenish the boiler.

**Power Source:** Power source is another characteristic. These great machines may be steam-driven or powered by a different energy source such as Tesla's alternating current. Power is often finite and a limiting factor in how far and how fast automatons may travel.



**Manned vs. Unmanned:** Finally, automatons may be manned or unmanned. Manned automatons might require one or many pilots working in tandem. Unmanned automatons may be pre-programmed or remotely controlled.

## EXAMPLE AUTOMATON

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Mechanical Spider*

TROUBLE: *Loud, Obvious, and Heavy*

DESCRIPTION: *Eight Legged Machine of War*

### SKILLS

FAIR (+2): Firearms

AVERAGE (+1): Explosives, Stealth

### STUNT

FIRE IN THE HOLE: +2 to hit any target your size or larger with your internal firearms.

## CREATING YOUR OWN VEHICLE

Vehicles in the Ministry should have stats related to their importance in the story. One-time use vehicles do not require any particular stats—the Pilot skill used to operate them should determine the results of any challenges. However, some vehicles may be used often enough to warrant creating aspects for them that Players can invoke or compel during play. If a vehicle is central to the game, it should have a vehicle character sheet. This is an abbreviated character sheet, much like that of an NPC. An Agent can take a vehicle as their personal Gadget with the approval of the Game Master.

To create your own vehicle with its own aspects, think of a High Concept for that vehicle—this is what the vehicle does or is notably good at. **FASTEST LITTLE SHIP IN THE AIR** is a good starting point for a vehicle. Then create a Trouble aspect for your vehicle such as **UNARMED UNDERCARRIAGE**.

## WHEN IS A VEHICLE IMPORTANT?

If the game centers around Agents who travel the world in an airship, then that airship warrants special attention. If there will be five sessions played in a submarine, make the submarine a character sheet. If the Player will be riding a motor bike in chase of a rogue Agent for a single scene? Just make a skill roll. If the Agents are traveling across the Americas on motorbikes they augmented for a scenario where they are pursuing a man intent on blowing up the rocky mountains in search of a dream of gold? Go ahead and give those bikes a vehicle character sheet.

Vehicle character sheets should have three aspects, three skills, and one stunt.

## TEMPLATE FOR A VEHICLE SHEET

**Aspect:** A *High Concept*, a *Trouble*, and another *Description*.

**Three Skills:** One at +2, two at +1. These skills can be added to the skill rolls of whatever character is operating the vehicle.

**One Stunt:** This stunt should be connected to the highest skill.

## ADVANCING YOUR VEHICLE

During minor and major milestones, characters can choose to advance their vehicle by making a successful invention (this roll does not need to be made by the owner of the vehicle, another character can assist in a vehicle's advancement) to give the vehicle a Fate Point of its own (these can only be used during challenges that relate directly to the vehicle), to add a skill, add a point to a skill, or add an Aspect.

Chapter Eleven will discuss character advancement, how characters in a game can grow, heal, and change through a campaign.





# CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

## MINOR AND MAJOR MILESTONES

 An Examination of How Characters Will Advance Over the Course of a Campaign,   
Including Details on When Those Advancement Should Take Place.

### ADVANCING A CHARACTER

Characters, both Players and Non-Player, will change during a campaign, reflecting the many events and lessons learned. Relationships will grow and disintegrate, characters may find themselves specializing in new directions, and the consequences that remain with them will change who they are.

Characters will also have an effect on the world as they play. Agents may knock out the Duke of the Underworld, leaving a vacuum that new NPCs will compete to fill. Agents may destroy the Phoenix Society only to discover that there are deep fissures within the Ministry itself.

Characters may change in two ways:

- 1. Replacement:** The characters may replace a skill, stunt, or aspect with something new and equivalent.
- 2. Learning something new:** The characters may add something new to their file.

Characters will change at points in the story called milestones. These are significant events that happen at the end of an adventure that strongly affect who the character is.

### MILESTONES

Milestones are moments of significant dramatic change in the narrative of the game. There are two types of milestones: minor and major. When a milestone happens, it is an opportunity to change or advance a character. These milestones usually take place at the end of a scenario and a story arc.

Game Masters will announce to Players when they reach these milestones. They may occur when a dramatic moment reveals something about the world or the characters in it. Milestones may also occur at the resolution of a major storyline. It is up to Game Masters to decide when a milestone occurs.

Milestones allow Players to make adjustments to their characters based on the skills they've been using, what they find interesting about their characters and what their characters have learned.

### OPENING THE GAME

When you begin playing with your group, there is often a time of adjustment during the first 3-5 games when Players are learning about what it's like to play these characters, what your style is like as a Game Master, and what they truly want to get out of gaming. During this time, it is a good idea to occasionally offer the Players opportunities to tailor their characters. During the first few games, offer Players to make changes to their characters from List A, even if they have not passed any important game events.

### Minor Milestones

Minor milestones take place at the end of a scenario or the conclusion of an important plot point. (See page 106 for information about scenarios) They are the end of a chapter in the book of your story. Minor milestones are about making changes to a character based on what has become vital to the character, what the Player would like to pursue with them, and what the character has learned.



Players may find the character they set up to play has changed, or turned out to be different than they expected. Perhaps the Player wanted to play a grizzled old detective who has no love left in his shriveled heart, only to discover that he holds a soft spot for the young man who reminds him of the son that never came back from the war. Minor milestones are the chance to make these adjustments.

Players should discuss the changes they intend to make with the group, explaining how the changes they make reflect the narrative of the story. If the character has been fighting often, it explains why fighting might be switched with deduction. This is especially applicable with changes made to aspects, which are core descriptions of who the character is.

During a minor milestone, you may pick two changes to make from List A and one change to make from List B.

### **LIST A: CHANGE, SWAP, AND REPLACE**

1. Switch the rank values of any two skills.
2. Replace one Average skill with one that isn't on your sheet.
3. Change any single stunt for another stunt.

### **LIST B: LESSONS LEARNED**

1. The character may gain one new Average skill.
2. The character may increase one existing skill by one rank.
3. The character may rename any severe consequences to begin the recovery process.
4. Purchase a new stunt, provided the character has the refresh to do so.
5. Rename one aspect that isn't a High Concept or extreme consequence.

## **Major Milestones**

Major milestones are when big, important events happen in the narrative. If minor milestones are the end of a chapter, major milestones are the end of the book. The characters have defeated the secret society, or a major NPC sacrificed their lives, or perhaps a character had a wedding. Whatever the event, it is an important one for the characters and their world.

Players may use this opportunity to change their characters to reflect the lessons learned. Having defeated the bad guys and set things right, the characters have learned important skills, defeated inner demons and saved the day.

When there is a major milestone, Players may alter their characters as they would with a minor milestone, but may also make any of these changes. Major milestones may change the character of the game. Agents who have successfully completed missions will be trusted with more important and more dangerous missions. Characters will attract the attention of dangerous enemies who now consider them a threat.

These changes and additions should make sense to the Players and the Game Masters within the logic of the story. This is especially true with aspects, which are important reflections of the character's identity.

## **MAJOR MILESTONE CHANGES**

1. Rename a High Concept.
2. Advance a skill.
3. Take an additional point of refresh, which will allow the Player to buy a new stunt, or keep it so that they may have more Fate Points at the beginning of a session.
4. If the character has an extreme consequence, rename it to reflect that they are in recovery.
5. Change departments.
6. Change home office.

## **GAME MASTER'S RESPITE**

A major milestone is a good opportunity to check in with your group and decide if you want to continue to play. You have come to the end of a story, so it is a good time to end, should the group agree. It may also be a good time to take a respite, play another game, and return later. This can be an excellent opportunity to discuss what themes and ideas worked during the game, and what the group might want to see played differently in the next story. The group may have enjoyed the action of the first story arc, but be interested in playing up the themes of romance in the second arc. This is an excellent opportunity to discuss those changes.



## ADVANCING SKILLS

During a milestone, Players have the opportunity to change and advance the skills of their characters. Players may advance skills as long as they conform to the skill pyramid.

During the process of character creation, skills are organized into a pyramid. There may not be more skills at a certain rank than the rank below them. There must always be the same or more skills in Average than at Good. These lower skills are supporting the higher ones, like bricks on a wall.

Agents of the Ministry often have areas of specialty, but Agents are expected to have a variety of skills, as they are frequently confronted with the unexpected. Agents, particularly Field Agents, will learn from their peers, their environments, and gain important training from the Ministry itself. The skill pyramid allows the Agent to advance in an organic way, developing a wide variety of skills over their adventures.

## CHANGING ASPECTS

Aspects define a character as descriptions of motivations, abilities and their own personal truths. Changing aspects should be done when major game events take place that change a character's personal beliefs, motivations and core-character traits. Changes in aspects might come from a loss of faith, a change of allegiances, a personal betrayal, a terrible tragedy, a new appointment, or a revelation.

These developments can also reflect in-game accomplishments, such as the development of abilities or fame. For example, **BEST PICKPOCKET IN LONDON** might evolve to **BEST PICKPOCKET IN THE EMPIRE**. Aspects are the heart of a character, describing their motivations, desires, flaws and relationships. Consider the impact of the story on the character when making changes to aspects.

In Chapter Twelve, we will address how to run a game of **THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE**.





# RUNNING THE GAME

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## THE ROLE OF THE GAME MASTER: CREATING A GAME ABOUT STEAMPUNK SECRET AGENTS

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On Themes, Assisting in Character Creation, Building an Interesting World,  
Summoning Your Inner Magistrate, Adjudicating Challenges, Invoking, Compelling,  
Playing Non-Player Characters, and Killing Your Darlings.

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### RUNNING A GAME ABOUT STEAMPUNK SECRET AGENTS

THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE is a steampunk extravaganza filled with secret agents, secret societies, and gadgets galore. Game Masters gather Players who create their fabulous secret agents, help design the themes and issues of the world and the group embarks on an adventure together. As a Game Master your employment in this endeavor is to use this book to design a world in which you and your Players can enjoy a fantastic adventure. You will create the mysteries, puzzles, allies, and the villains of the game.

#### WHAT MAKES A GOOD MINISTRY GAME?

An excellent Ministry game begins with the Players and Game Master having a conversation about the themes and characters they'd like to play. This is typically the group generating ideas based around character creation. It can also be the Game Master pitching an idea to the group. Either way, having a discussion to decide if this is going to be an action-comedy, a mystery-romance, or the Players examining socio-economic themes through the lens of an Agent trying to protect the society that oppresses them.

### SETTING UP THE GAME

Game Masters should pay special attention during character creation to the types of characters that the Players design, their aspects, skills, and the story of their lives. Character creation will take an entire session of game play. Afterwards, the Game Master will consider the characters' aspects and the Players interest to design the adventure.

If the Players create characters who are excellent investigators with skills at infiltration, deception and stealth, this suggests a game with a lot of sleuthing, where mysteries abound behind every corner, and solving crimes committed in the shadows will be the primary goal.

Or perhaps Players to create characters with excellent fighting and piloting skills, who take vehicles as Agent Gadgets. This suggests a high flying adventure on an airship, where pirates of the skies Attack at every turn, and few are the days between fantastic swordfights.

### FACILITATING CHARACTER CREATION

The Players should feel enthusiastic about their characters. Going through character creation to build aspects and choose skills is an important step in creating engaging characters that the Players will enjoy exploring and developing through play. Take time to connect these characters together in relationships that will be interesting to roleplay.

Excellent Game Masters facilitate this creation by giving guidance on rules, giving suggestions, and asking Players questions that facilitate character creation.



Some questions to ask your Players include:

- What does your character want the most in this world?
- What was your character's family like?
- What drew your character to join the Ministry?
- What is your character's greatest fear?
- What is your character's greatest skill?

## SCALE

Decide on the scale of your game. Is this a world-changing adventure where Empires hang in the balance, or is it about a manor on the hill, where a mystery threatens a revered family? Game Masters should consider input from the Players when deciding on the type of game to play. The game may also change with the Players as the characters themselves gain experience and notoriety in their world.

Games that take place in a small scale will concern places and events closely connected to the Players. Large scale games are about the actions of countries, political movements, and social change.

When Game Masters determine the scale of the world, they must take the time to prepare materials in advance that reflect the type of adventure they wish to play. This book provides resources for NPCs and setting.

Characters may begin a game at a small scale, where the missions they are assigned are small and of minimal importance. However, over time, they may grow in skill and influence and find that they are assigned missions of greater importance. As they grow, they may make friends and create enemies, so that by the time the game ends they have the ear of Kings and Queens.

Characters may also vacillate between missions of major importance to the world, and small mysteries. They may grow in skill, but find themselves professionally disgraced. Or they may find themselves on adventures that are personal, and then influential, moving between the large and small scales.

## ISSUES

Issues are aspects that describe the overall threats, movements, large groups, and themes important to your game. These are the elements that are likely to challenge the characters and bring them to action. Issues should be applied to important setting elements such as the city the game takes place, the major groups involved in the campaign, and even the Ministry itself. Two or three issues to start a game are acceptable.

Issues may emerge though the game. It is quite acceptable to apply issues to parts of the setting that did not have them before. Issues may also be resolved as characters solve mysteries, subdue threats, and change their world.



## Important Places

Consider the locations that will be important to your story, and write these locations down where you and your Players may see them. Important locations are places where you and your Players may imagine multiple scenes taking place. Such locations may be unveiled during the course of the game. Should this happen, add them to the list of locations as you play.

If a game location is central to the action, give it an aspect that you or the Players might use during the game. This would describe some central element of that location. This will give a method for the Players to use locations mechanically, while also giving them a descriptor to assist them in imagining the location.

## ASPECTS, ASPECTS EVERYWHERE

While it may seem that you can attach an aspect to everyone, everything, and every place in the Ministry, you need not always do so. Aspects are aids for you and your Players. Add them when a person, item, or location becomes important enough to justify them having an aspect.



# THE MAGISTRATE'S HANDBOOK

In this section we will discuss the mechanics judgments a Game Master will have to make when running the game. When you are running THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE, you craft the world and the Non-Player Characters that occupy it. A Game Master designs and implements challenges, and, importantly, you adjudicate disputes between your Players and the world you have created. You are the Game Master, the judge of the interaction between Players, their characters, your characters, the setting and the rules themselves.

Your role as the judge also means deciding when the dice are broken out, how conflict is resolved, and the time and locations of action. While Players give significant input into these things, you have the role of the arbiter.

## THE RULES

After character creation, when the group has set up the characters and the world they live in, it's time to dive into the story. When you are playing THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE, consider what you want to do, and then consult the rules to decide how that happens. The rules are tools that you can use to present the game, adjudicate challenges, and create an interesting story.

As the Game Master, you also judge when the rules are serving your game, and when they detract from the story. If a rule stated herein makes the story less interesting for your group, disregard it. The rules should never be in opposition to an excellent story.

## ACTION

When deciding on actions, consider first what you want to do, what the characters in the scene wish to happen, and then decide on your course of action. The goals of your characters, and the Player characters, will guide the action.

When characters are attempting to solve a problem that doesn't relate to harm, it's an Overcome action. If a character intends to harm someone, the action is an Attack. If characters intend to avoid an Attack, the action is a Defend. When a character wishes to alter the situation to their favor, they are Creating an Advantage.

## SETTING DIFFICULTIES

Setting the difficulties for Players is a Game Masters most frequent responsibilities in THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE. Difficulties should be set depending on the level of challenge of the obstacle. The story should have a good reason for the difficulty. For example, if the characters are attempting to restrain an unarmed, untrained opponent, the difficulty for doing so should be lower than if the opponent is armed and trained. Setting the difficulty level higher should let the characters know about the world around them. So if they believe an unarmed opponent

is untrained, and the difficulty is much higher than they thought it would be, this should be the Game Master sending a message that the opponent isn't as untrained as the characters imagined. It is important to have a justification for the difficulty that is rooted in the narrative, rather than simple mechanics. Do not set a difficulty just to make a Player lose; set it so that it makes sense within the story.

Situation aspects that describe the environment can assist the Game Master in setting difficulties and discovering the kinds of challenges that Players face.

## SCENES

As the Game Master, it is your duty to decide when a scene begins and ends.

### STARTING SCENES

A scene should begin and end when a significant moment, conversation, event, or challenge is about to occur. When considering when to start a scene, skip the boring parts. We might not need to see the characters alight from the carriage and walk uneventfully up the stairs. Allow the characters a moment to see the scene and then charge, headfirst, into that moment.

### ENDING SCENES

It will often be obvious when a scene comes to its natural close. The characters leave the area, a conversation is resolved, or a fight ends. However, there are times when a Game Master must step in and prompt the Players as to what occurs next. It is important to be reactive to the needs of the Players on this. Do not cut off excellent conversations simply because what you wanted to happen occurred during the scene. Allow for the characters to breathe, to explore the scene before drawing it to a close.

### CONSTRUCTING THE SCENE

As the Game Master, it is your responsibility to set the scene for the Players. This will involve the following steps:

**Describe the Environment:** Tell the Players about the type of environment they will be in during the scene.

**Situation Aspects:** Consider the environment where the scene will take place, are there any significant situational aspects that should be placed on the table.

**Describe Non-Player Characters:** The Non-Player Characters present should be described, noting their important aspects.



## CREATING ZONES

Zones are a rough representation of physical space. If two characters are in the same zone, they are near each other and may interact. If they're not in the same zone, they need to move in order to reach one another.

Zones are not about exact measurements, they are about giving the characters a way to conceptualize a space during an Attack. For example, a bedroom may be a single zone. If you have to cross a doorway, or climb stairs, then you would be crossing into another zone.

### WHEN ZONES ARE CALLED FOR

Zones are important to note during challenges, especially those dealing with Attack and defense. Conflicts are limited to two to four zones. If you could declare that the characters are more than four zones away, split the conflict up into two separate scenes.

When you are declaring the number and placement of zones, create any aspects that would be appropriate to those zones, noting if any of them would limit movement between them. For example, in the garden of Versailles, we may have a **HIGH GARDEN HEDGE** that connects the Fountain of Spring (zone 1) with the Winter Plaza (zone 2).

### WHEN ZONES ARE NOT REQUIRED

There is little need to determine zones unless an Attack or Defense is taking place. If a conflict takes place in a small area, there will be no need to establish zones.

## ROLLING DICE

When the Players push their characters into the thick of action, as in a challenge, conflict, or contest, they will be picking up the dice and trying their luck at the old bones. The basics of taking action, with the various types of challenges and outcomes are described in Chapter Seven.

It is your duty to judge exactly when the challenge is of high enough difficulty to justify the use of dice. A challenge should take place when the Players are being opposed by a force that where the outcome may be uncertain. An Agent preparing a cup of tea does not require a challenge, they simply do it. Preparing a cup of tea that must impress the discerning Pirate Queen while being assaulted by an automaton? Challenge.

When your Players take Action, they must choose a skill, roll the dice, calculate the results and, if desired, invoke an aspect. See page 65 for more on taking action. Your job is to determine the difficulty of the task, roll when there is active opposition, and decide the course of the NPCs who oppose them.

## SETTING DIFFICULTIES

One of your core responsibilities as Game Master is to set the level of difficulty for the actions your Players will take. You are deciding just how high that wall is, and how tough the NPC thug will be.

Setting difficulties should reflect how much the characters will be challenged during that point in the story. When the stakes are high, when your characters have fought to be where they are, when everything is riding on this one move, the difficulty should be high. For low importance challenges, set the difficulty lower.

Below, we will examine the circumstances when the difficulty should be high, medium and low.

### HIGH CHALLENGE

A high difficulty should be rooted within the circumstances of the story. When the characters are facing their greatest enemy, when there are high stakes on this one moment, when the narrative hangs in the balance, or when it's a moment that has been building for several games, then the difficulties should be raised.

Powerful opponents should also provide high levels of difficulty. Difficulty can represent an opponent's degrees of preparation. An adversary that has been expecting opposition to her plans will have built in defenses and fail safes that the characters will have to cope with. High difficulties may also reflect situations that are less than ideal.

Mechanically, difficulties two or more steps above a character's skill level will cost them Fate Points in order to succeed, and should be considered a high level of difficulty.

### MEDIUM CHALLENGE

For a moderate challenge, set the difficulty level exactly at the PCs skill level. This provides the possibility of failure or success and allows the character to properly gauge their skill level within the world. This provides an element of risk without a challenge so great that a sacrifice is required for success. Many challenges in the middle of the story will be at this level.

### LOW CHALLENGE

The astute Game Master might ask: Why have a low level challenge at all? Especially when this book has been quite emphatic about the narrative being core to the story?

Indeed.

Setting a low difficulty is when there is an element of tension to the proceedings, and an interesting consequence for failure, but it is within the skill ability of the character. This is an opportunity to let the Player characters shine, to show off their skills and abilities with flair. If the characters are constantly pushed to their very limits, the Players may begin to forget what made them extraordinary in the first place. This is the chance to reclaim that.

Unopposed efforts to Create Advantages or environmental aspects must never be harder than Fair (+2)



Mechanically, an easy challenge for a character would be anything that is two or more steps below their current skill level. Below four steps and the Game Master should consider simply giving them a success, as the challenge would clearly be within the character's skill level.

## ARBITRATION

You are the final arbiter of what should happen as a result of rolls. When there is a success, this judgment is simple. What the character wanted to happen takes place. They will Overcome an obstacle, win during a conflict, or succeed in their goals. You may find that the Player knows exactly what is going to happen during a success, such as opening a lock or successfully applying a disguise. However, your description may be a joint one, as you tell them what was hidden in the safe, or how very impressed the nobility is with a false beard.

When there is a failure, your skills as Game Master are challenged. Sometimes the loss is obvious, the lock doesn't open, or the beard doesn't stick. However, this can be a simplistic method of failure. Consider what will move the story forward when determining the results of failure—what will make things more dramatic and interesting? Perhaps the character opens the safe—but the map to the secret treasure is gone? Or the beard is applied, but falls off halfway through the opera.

## EXCELLENCE IN FAILURE

The proper arbitration of failure is one of the key elements of a successful Game Master. Failure should increase excitement, tension, and drama. Consider the following methods for making failure interesting for your Players.

## CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

Agents are individuals with skills that exceed those of a typical citizen. They wouldn't be recruited to the Ministry otherwise. Agents face buried secrets, elaborate mysteries and brilliant adversaries. Rather than a failure being the fault of the Agent's skills, consider making failure the result of the incredible opponents that the Ministry Agents face. If the Agent fails, perhaps the challenge was simply greater than it appeared. The simple henchman was a master swordsman, or the cellar you were searching is, in actuality, an underground maze.

Agent Books has been captured by sky pirates and is locked in a room. Fortunately, Agent Blackwell, played by Nina, has managed to stow aboard and remain hidden in storage. With most of the pirates asleep, she has snuck to room where Agent Books is being held. The guard on duty is asleep, and his keys hang on a large metal ring around his wrist.

"I've got +1 to Stealth," says Nina "And he's

already asleep. I figure I'll just slip that giant ring off his wrist and open the door, no problem."

Kennedy agrees "Let's say the difficulty is 2, there's a chance you could wake him up, but you have the skills for this."

Nina rolls, and unfortunately, it's , giving her a result of -1. Kennedy thinks on her feet, Nina has had a series of bad rolls this session, and she doesn't want Nina to be discouraged with her character's skills. Kennedy smiles, and begins to narrate what happens next:

"The guard had on a large hat covering most of his face. He looks up, and you realize that he was never asleep, just faking, waiting for you to approach. You see his face, and you know him, it's the pirate leader, Baron Dragomir Negrubine! "I knew you'd never leave your friend in the hands of pirates, dear sister, and now you have walked right into my trap!"

He springs to his feet.

## COLLABORATIVE FAILURE

Rather than simply dictate the circumstances of a failure, Game Master can ask the Player how, exactly, their character failed. The Player has poured time and energy into the creation of this character, and frequently they have excellent ideas regarding their own failings. This will allow failure to stay in character, and give your Player a sense of control over their outcomes.

Agent Books is on a rooftop trying to fix a broken raygun. Agent Braun is trying to barricade the door to the rooftop so that the rogue Agent Saunders can't break through and kill them. There's nowhere to go, they don't have any weapons but that broken raygun. And it's raining. Mike has just failed an Invention roll for Books to fix the raygun.

"So, what was it Mike?" asks Kennedy "The rain clogging the gears?"

Mike shakes his head. "Nah, he's too good of an inventor for that. I think he was distracted." He looks across the table at Samantha. "Agent Books looks up from his raygun and asks: "What did that mean earlier, when we kissed?"

"Really, we're doing this now?" narrates Samantha for Braun.



"If we die up here, I want to know the truth!"

Braun pulls Books into a passionate kiss. "We're not going to die up here," she says.

Steeled by the moment, Braun flexes her muscles. "You know, I don't think I need a raygun to take this guy out."

## SUCCEED AT A COST

One method of dealing with failure is to let the characters achieve their goals, but at a price. This can allow characters to maintain character integrity without sacrificing consequences for failure. This will also allow the Game Master to place interesting developments in the path of the Players.

There are two types of costs: a minor cost and a serious cost. You can determine which to offer your Players by the degree of failure. A failure by two shifts or less should only be a minor cost. More than two shifts and the failure should result in a serious cost.

A minor cost should complicate the character's mission in an interesting way.

**Foreshadow Imminent Peril:** You've managed to convince the guard that you are, indeed, the Duchess—but now the Prince wants to meet you, and he knows the Duchess personally.

**Rewards with Complications:** You manage to fix your weapon, but now it makes a loud whirring noise, making it impossible to hide.

**The Rock and the Hard Place:** The character must choose between two difficult choices.

**New Scene Aspect:** Sure, the rocket pack works, but now the lab is **ON FIRE**.

A serious cost should have a serious outcome in the moment. You may enact this by taking minor consequences up a notch by making the consequences present in the moment, rather than impending. You may also consider the following options:

**Minor Consequence:** You save Serena from the blast by shielding her with your own body, giving you the minor consequence **BURNED**.

**Gifts for the Villains:** Give an opposing NPC an edge by improving one of their skills by one step, adding a new aspect with a free invocation, or clearing their stress boxes. You may also give them backup, bringing in their cavalry of reinforcements.

## GAME MASTERS: PERCHANCE TO DREAM

Players pour time and imagination into their characters, so choosing death is an extreme reaction to a conflict. However, sometimes it can be a dramatic one.

Before you begin playing the game, communicate with your Players about the type of game they'd like to play. If the possibility of character death adds to the tension, by all means, allow it. If it simply makes your Players frustrated, consider other options for defeat.

Conflicts that involve character death should be dramatic high points, moments of the story that impact heavily on the narrative. Players should be aware that their characters are getting involved in conflicts that may result in character death, and the death itself should be meaningful for the character and the story. There are times in longer campaigns where some Players may feel that a character has reached a point in the story when death could add to the narrative in an important way. In these cases, you can honor the character and the story itself by making the death interesting, important, and dramatic.

## THE CHALLENGES OF SUCCESS WITH STYLE

The success with style is the opportunity for characters to shine. Characters with this kind of success should enjoy something far more than discovering a secret or unlocking a vault. They uncover a deep mystery hidden for a thousand years, and in opening that vault, they discover not just the treasure, but they save a life as well.

A success with style is when a Player character rolls a success in excess of the difficulty. In many situations, it is clear what a success with style means. However, there are situations where you, as the Game Master, may have to think about how to articulate such an event.

**Ask the Player:** If you are stuck for what a success with style might mean, ask the Player what their goals were, and ask them questions about what a success with style would mean to them.

**Add an Aspect:** Add an aspect to the scene or to the character with a free invocation that will give them an advantage later.

**Reduce Time:** The challenge takes much less time than expected, allowing the characters to move on to other things.



In addition to these options, it's important to also narrate the success fully, to bring in details and describe the action completely. This is a time for the characters to celebrate, allow them to relish in this moment.

## ARBITRATION OVER THE USE OF SKILLS AND STUNTS

Game Masters determine if the use of particular skills and stunts is appropriate for certain challenges. In most cases, this is obvious, and the skill description is enough to demonstrate what skills and stunts are appropriate.

However, there are times when a Player may make an argument for the use of a skill which doesn't quite fit, but is compelling enough to consider. In this case, consider making a new stunt to apply to that skill that fits this situation. The Player may use a point of refresh to buy the skill if they want it, or wait for a major milestone to pick up this new stunt.

## CONFLICTS

Conflicts are where fists meet faces, and as secret Agents, Players may be involved in quite a few. They will require you to note zones, stress, and consequences all while keeping the narrative in mind. Making simple maps can help everyone visualize the action, and preparing your NPCs for action in advance will help you in the moment. The section on NPCs will help you to prepare for action.

Conflicts need not only be one on one. Players may wish to affect multiple targets in a scene. In this case, encourage them to create an advantage for the scene, which will mean that NPCs will have to take a skill role in order to take action.

## ASPECTS

This section will cover the relationship of the Game Master to aspects and Fate Points. Chapter Five covers the game mechanics of these elements, but this section will go into more detail for their use for the Game Master.

At the beginning of the game, the Game Master will assist Players in creating interesting aspects, and helping them to understand how to use them in the course of play. The Game Master is instrumental in compelling aspects, prompting Players with their Trouble aspect, or suggesting useful aspects during challenges.

As the Game Master, you have an important role in controlling the flow of Fate Points. It is important to give your Players the opportunity to earn Fate Points when they are low, and to spend it when they are challenged. This means that a Game Master must be familiar with the aspects of the Player characters, and consider them when building scenes.

## CREATING ASPECTS

### Assisting Players in Creating Aspects

Good character aspects imply interesting stories and within them are the seeds for interesting compels and invocations. When a Player gets stuck for an aspect, consider asking them leading questions about their character that might help them to build an interesting aspect. Below are a group of questions that may help your Player in creating a character:

- Who is this Agent?
- Why did they join the Ministry?
- What do they hope to accomplish?
- What does she hope for the most in the world?
- What kind of old woman does she hope she'll be?
- Where was she raised?
- When did she have her first kiss?
- What is her favorite food?
- What does she like to wear for a night out on the town?
- What is her favorite weapon?
- Who would she jump out of a boat to save?
- Who did she fail to save?
- Who is her hero?
- What does her rival have on her?
- What is the most expensive thing she owns?
- Where was she educated?
- Who is her most useful contact?
- What fictional character does she most resemble?
- What does her last partner think of her?
- What did her supervisor write in her file?
- Has she ever cheated at cards?
- What does she think about colonialism?
- Does she carry a parasol?
- Who was the last person she loved?

### Creating Aspects During the Game

Game Masters will need to create aspects for NPCs and scenes during the game. You can do this beforehand by considering the people and places your Player characters might go during the game or you can improvise aspects in the moment. You can read about NPCs, and creating aspects for them, on page 39.

### Situational Aspects

Situational aspects describe the parts of the scene the characters are in that they can use mechanically in a challenge. When describing a scene, create two to five aspects to apply to that scene. If it is a very important scene, consider adding more aspects than for scenes with less narrative importance.

These situational aspects do not have to be complicated. The Duke's ornate and crowded ballroom can simply have the aspects **ORNATE BALLROOM** and **CROWDED**.

When describing a scene, Players may also suggest aspects, or spent Fate Points to add an aspect to the scene.



Agents Blackwell, Books, and Braun are attending the Duke's Ball. Agent Blackwell has arranged a distraction while Books and Braun sneak away to listen to the Duke as he holds a secret meeting in his study.

Mike hands a Fate Point to Kennedy. "I'd like to make a Situation aspect. Can there be **THICK RED CARPETING** in the hallways to muffle our footsteps?" he asks.

"Sure," says Kennedy, accepting the point.

Game Masters can use situational aspects to decide if there is a valid reason for the Player characters to make an Overcome roll. If the aspect suggests some challenge for the characters, and there would be an interesting consequence for failure, suggest a roll. If you can't imagine an interesting outcome for success or failure, simply give the PC's what they want.

### **EXAMPLE TYPES SITUATIONAL ASPECTS**

**Weather:** VIOLENT STORM, HEAVY FOG, WHIRLING SNOW

**Mood:** ANGRY MOBS, JUBILANT CROWDS, BUSY MARKETPLACES

**Lighting:** ROMANTIC CANDLELIGHT, THIN MOONLIGHT, BRIGHT SUNSHINE

**Movement Restriction:** STICKY MUD, BOLTED DOOR, HEAVY CHAINS

**Level of Cleanliness:** DIRTY WORKSHOP, STERILE LAB, OILY MACHINERY

**Sounds:** MECHANICAL CLANKING, LOW MURMUR, DISTANT WAILING

## **INVOCATIONS AND COMPELS**

In this section, we will discuss how Game Masters should interact with invocations and compels. The mechanics for invocations is discussed on page 39, and compels are explained on page 40.

### **INVOCATIONS**

To review, aspects can be invoked by a character to benefit that character during a challenge. When the Game Master calls for a skills challenge, and the Player believes that they have an aspect relevant to that challenge, they may invoke a particular aspect by spending Fate Points. This may be done before or after a roll is made.

As the Game Master, you must judge if these aspects are relevant to the roll. Game Masters should be lenient in their allowance for use of aspects, as their use keeps Fate Points passing between the Player and Game Master, allowing for interesting opportunities later in the game. If you don't understand how the aspect applies to the challenge, ask the Player for an explanation before dismissing the use. It is possible they have a creative or new interpretation of the aspect.

Multiple aspects can be invoked in a single roll, but the same aspect can only be invoked once. The aspect must apply to the situation at hand, and the Player should explain just how the character is using this aspect to their advantage.

New Players to Fate may be unsure of when it is appropriate to invoke an aspect. Game Masters should encourage Players with relevant aspects to invoke them. If a Player fails a roll that is clearly important to them, open up a dialogue and discuss their aspects, trying to think of how a relevant aspect could be applied to this role. Other Players at the table may also have ideas about how an aspect could be brought into play. Failure need not be the precursor to the use of an aspect; Players might also wish to invoke an aspect in order to make their roll a success with style.

### **COMPELS**

Game Masters are responsible for compelling Player characters towards actions that will make the story more interesting and dramatic. Players may compel one another, certainly, but it is primarily the responsibility of the Game Master to find opportunities for compels based on the aspects of the characters.

The Trouble aspect is usually where most compels will come from, but do not eliminate the possibility for other aspects to be used for compels as well. For example, noble intents do not always imply success in all situations—a noble intent without restraint could complicate things for the Players as much as their trouble.



The Gadget aspects also provide ample opportunity for compels with their dual aspects. If a raygun overloads at the wrong moment, or a listening device makes a loud noise when silence is the order of the day, the results could be most dramatic.

There are a number of situations during which compels would be appropriate. Consider offering compels for the following:

- If success at a skill role would lead to a dull result.
- When a Player has one or no Fate Points.
- When a situation seems particularly relevant to a character's Trouble.
- When the malfunction of a Gadget would make a situation more interesting or dramatic.

Compels may occur when an event happens as a result of what a character does or simply when a character is in the wrong place at the wrong time.

When you compel a Player's aspect, you do not get to decide how that compel will affect the character, simply that there must be some effect and complication. The Players must retain their control over how a character acts. You may suggest particular reactions, but it is up to the Player how that trouble should play out. Decide with the Player what the results of accepting the Fate Points will be, and when both of you agree, give them the Fate Points. When they accept the Fate Points, there is no backing out from the agreement, the event has now occurred.

Players may propose their own compels for their characters. It is up to the Game Master to decide if they are strong enough to warrant a Fate Points. Be generous with this point, Game Masters. Fate Points should flow freely over the table; impressive actions take place together with interesting complications.

However, this does not mean that compels should be without consequence. If a Player suggests a compel with little dramatic weight, negotiate for something stronger. The consequences of compels should call for action. Internal reactions are rarely enough to warrant a compel. A good compel results in action from the characters that will prompt reaction from the NPCs or the environment.

Players may also compel NPCs and each other. This can lead them to provoke reactions and engage in a trade of Fate Points that brings them into the creation of the adventure. At first, you may need to encourage or suggest Players to compel one another, pointing out weaknesses in appropriate situations, but over time, Players will learn to compel one another, allowing you all to build the story as a team.

As the Game Master, you are charged with making many of the decisions about what actions are appropriate and what is not. You are the official interpreter of the rules and the applier of common sense. You must decide when a roll should take place, what kind of action that roll is, and what the difficulty should be. Consistency

and fairness, applied with consideration to the fun your Players are having and the overall story of the game is key to making solid decision that your Players will respect.

## NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

As the Game Master, it is your duty to take the roles of the Non-Player Characters (NPCs) and the world of the Ministry. This book has references for the world, including maps, the Ministry, example Agents, allies, and antagonists. All can be used as resources in constructing your game.

During gameplay, it is your responsibility to decide how these NPCs and the environment respond to the actions of the Player characters. You speak for the NPCs, deciding on their personalities, moods, motivations and reactions. Your NPCs may motivate the Players to action, and will provide drama, interest and challenges during the story. Playing the NPCs well is important to the creation of a good story.

### CREATING AN NPC

Although this book gives you several NPCs to work with, you may find that you need to create your own. Perhaps you have a great idea for a powerful antagonist, or your Players have made up an interesting contact that they will frequently be in touch with. NPCs do not require the same character sheets as Players. They are not the heroes of the story, and therefore do not require as much flesh and bone as the Player characters. For a recurring NPC, start with a name, an aspect, and a skill. You are free to add to this as the character becomes more important, or to leave it at that level if they do not grow in importance.

### THE MECHANICS OF NPCS

There are three types of NPCs: Nameless NPC, supporting NPC, and main NPC.

#### Nameless NPCs

Nameless NPCs are the people in the crowd, the audience at the show, the clerk that shuffles the paperwork, and the barman serving the drinks. They are individuals that you might mention as part of the scenery but are insignificant to the story. They are characterized by their temporary nature, the Players are unlikely to meet with them again, and they are present because the scene calls for an individual in that location.

Nameless NPCs are unlikely to provide a challenge to the Player characters. Challenges with them should be at a low-difficulty level. These are the ordinary people who are simply going about their day.

In a conflict, nameless NPCs may be a distraction, hostages or henchmen of a greater villain. When a nameless NPC is called into action, pick two skills (each at +1)



for them based on what actions they might be called to take during the scene. If they will not be called to take any action, there is no need to create skills for them.

### EXAMPLE SKILLS FOR NPCs

- Service Staff: Notice, Rapport
- Police: Deduction, Fight
- Airship Pilots: Pilot, Notice
- Brigands: Fight, Theft
- Shopkeepers: Rapport, Empathy
- Engineers: Invention, Mythology
- Doctors: Medicine, Rapport
- Hunters: Ride, Firearms

Nameless NPCs do not require aspects, but should they grow in importance, during or after the scene, you may assign them. They will have two stress boxes to absorb both physical and mental harm.

Players may find themselves visiting the same bar over and over, and the bartender may gain a name and further depth as a result. Or the characters may find themselves going back to the same informant, or you may encounter a brigand, who despite his low skills, simply will not go down due to excellent rolls. In this case, feel free to expand these characters, giving them aspects and further skills as they are promoted to a supporting role as a Named NPC.

### The Crowd

*"Eliza, darling, you don't understand. It is perfectly fine," Axelrod tried hard to enunciate, but his rapidly swelling right cheek was making it polished conversation very difficult. "I won. I don't have to leave. I won."*

*"That's exactly why you have to leave," she insisted. "All the people here? They bet against you. And they don't take kindly to losing."*

*Axelrod turned his dwindling focus on the crowd. What he had once assumed were cheers celebrating his victory were now clearly yells of anger and discontent. He could just make out makeshift weapons in hands of the angry mob. "*

*-The Trouble With Phoenixes*

Game Masters may choose to place identical nameless NPCs of three or more into a crowd and treat that group of people as a single unit. Rather than rolling dice individual for each member of the crowd, simply roll once for the entire group.

When a crowd is harmed, shifts in excess of one NPCs stress boxes are applied to other NPCs in the crowd, one at a time. If there is only one NPC in a crowd left, they will attempt to flee.

### Named NPCs

Named NPCs are those characters who will be important in the story of the Player characters, or who you expect to re-encounter often. They should have a unique trait that helps the Players to remember them, and will be worth more detail during play. These can be allies or enemies or in that wide grey area between.

These NPCs can be informants, soldiers, right-hand women, skilled butlers, lords and ladies, professors, engineers, and Ministry staff.

Named NPCs should have at least one aspect, three skills (+3, +2 and +1), and two stress boxes.

### Creating Allies

The Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences is supported by a wide network of Ministry staff, informants, and governmental resources. Ministry Agents themselves will have friends and family who are willing to support and help them. Many Agents, especially Senior Agents, have a network of contacts.

Game Masters may be called upon to create these allies on the spot, with little warning. Often, a Player may say that they are visiting someone in their network of contacts. It can be helpful to ask that Player what that contact looks like, and how they might have interacted in the past, and draw up aspects and skill from there.

Other times, an ally may be called for and you may have to draw them up from scratch. In such an instance, we have provided rough molds for you to draw from should they be needed.

### The Allies

Friends and family can provide emotional, financial and physical support to a Player character. When the Players have been hurt or abandoned, these may be the characters they turn to for shelter and care. Characters may hide in their basements, ask them for a loan, or even just ask them for advice.

These NPCs can also be an excellent source of drama and interest as they may call upon the Player for support. Friends and family may be intimidated, kidnapped, or blackmailed and require the intervention of our heroic Agents.

Consider skills such as Contacts, Rapport, Empathy, Wealth, and Provoke for these characters.

### The Informant

Agents of the Ministry often employ informants, spies from the underworld, the upper class, and secret societies that divulge secrets. Informants may have various motivations including the patriotic desire to do what is right for the Empire, to avoid entanglement with law enforcement or simply the need for money.

Skills such as Contacts, Class, Deceive, Empathy and Stealth are excellent for informants.



## Friend in High Places

Agents hold operations on all social levels of society, and may find themselves with a useful contact of high class, wealth, or with governmental influence. These individuals may be able to move in social circles that would be difficult for an Agent to access.

Friends in high places may have skills such as Contacts, Class, Mythology, and Wealth.

## The Fellow Agent

Agents of the Ministry frequently work in teams. The Ministry has Agents with various specialties who may guide the Player characters through territory unknown to them, weather that is a country with a Ministry outpost, or a secret society where the Agent is in deep cover.

The basic skills of every Agent are: Deduction, Firearms, Fight, and Stealth.

## The Powerful Friend

Player characters may be extraordinary individuals, but not all helpful Non-Player Characters they encounter will be less powerful than themselves. The world has many heroes, and our Players may find themselves in contact with impressive inventors, incredible warriors, and outstanding artists. There should only be one of these per scenario and their role should be supportive, rather than active. It can be tempting to create a beautiful support character and simply play them alongside the NPCs—but this runs the danger of the campaign becoming about an NPC, rather than the Player characters.

Powerful friends can be a senior Agent who sends the

Player characters on a mission, or an influential member of the underground who may occasionally dispense information, or the leader of a social movement who has valuable advice. In these cases, it is the Player character who should take direct action. The Agent who sends the characters out on missions may have far more important missions to perform, and the influential member of the underground won't want to be caught helping the government while the leader of the movement will be too busy running the movement to take direct action. Any way you can, you should remove the powerful friend from direct action to a more advisory role.

These powerful allies should have a High Concept, a Trouble and two more additional aspects. They should have five skills (+5, +4, +3, +2, +1), one stunt, and two stress tracks with two boxes each and one mild consequence slot.

### AMAZING AGENTS

*"I had hoped for a good fight out of him." He shrugged and unsheathed his sword, "But I'm sure even a bad fight is better than no fight at all."*

*—The Mystery of the Thrice Dead Man*

After suffering a startling defeat, or in need of some heart-pumping action, it can be acceptable to throw a couple of easily dispatched brigands and ne'er-do-wells into the path of the Player characters, to allow them to demonstrate their excellence.

While this does not provide much of a challenge for the Player characters, it can be satisfying, now and then, for the Players themselves. These demonstrations of competence allow the Players to remember how impressive their Agents are, and can help recover confidence after a defeat.





## Creating Antagonists

*Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things  
As willingly as one would kill a fly;  
And nothing grieves me heartily indeed  
But that I cannot do ten thousand more."*

*—Aaron, William Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus*

Much of this book has been devoted to the construction of excellent Player characters, and creating an interesting world for them to inhabit. However, one of the pillars of a fun adventure is excellent opposition. Antagonists are what challenges the Players, what brings them to action and creates drama and interest. One of the duties of a Game Master is the creation and development of these characters.

Antagonists can be the street corner thug or the professor who runs an empire of crime. They can be mustache twirling villains who chew delicious scenery or nuanced characters who truly believe that they are doing the right thing, even if the PCs (and the rest of the world) disagree. They may tempt Players away from their personal moralities or help them to define what their ethics truly mean. Antagonists might be dark mirrors of the Player characters, demonstrating the disaster the characters could cause if they used their powers for evil, or individuals with skills and abilities vastly different from the Player characters.

### GAME BALANCE

Antagonists should be worthy of the Player characters, providing them with interesting opposition to their goals. Game Masters will need to construct these villains with careful consideration for the Player characters. The Players should experience a challenge, but they should not be so challenged that failure is inevitable.

Much of the opposition to the Player characters should be nameless NPCs with one or two supporting NPCs and one main NPC per scenario.

### GOALS OF THE OPPOSITION

When creating antagonists, consider what their goals are and how the Player characters might stand in the way of those goals. Do they wish to operate an expanding underground criminal empire? Do they want to overthrow the Queen? Are they attempting to steal or develop dangerous technology? Are they robbing a bank?

### NUMBERS

When creating opposing NPCs for your Player characters in a particular scene, keep in mind their numbers. A large number of NPCs should have less ability than a small number to provide the same degree of challenge. Do not outnumber the Player characters unless the NPCs have comparatively lower skills.

## SUPPORTING ANTAGONISTS

*"These gentlemen are not my colleagues,"  
Havelock said, his voice touched with  
annoyance. "They are competent minds  
that share my own vision, but they are  
not my equals—An equal would have mas-  
tered this design much sooner than this."*

*—Phoenix Rising*

### LIEUTENANTS, RIGHT HAND-WOMEN, ASSASSINS FOR HIRE, JOURNEYMEN THIEVES, AND RED HERRINGS

Between the nameless thug and the Pirate Queen exists a wide expanse of antagonists who will oppose the PCs. These may be the Duke of the Underworlds right hand woman, who does his dirty work in the dark. They may also be pirate captains of airships, who aren't orchestrating entire underworlds, but who have an impressive skill set for mayhem and theft.

Construct these characters with at least two aspects, a High Concept and a Trouble, and a skill level at least as high as the highest skill of one of the Player characters, and a descending column of skills below that (For example, if the highest skill level of a Player is +5, give them that and a +4, +3, +2, +1). Allocate stress boxes and consequences to equal about the level of the PCs.

### THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE SUPPORTING NPC

Supporting NPCs may eventually become main antagonists as the campaign evolves. Especially in the case of a long campaign, these characters may grow in skill. An NPC with a long narrative history with the Players can be a dramatic opponent. One day that Pirate Captain will become Pirate Queen, and grow into a main character with an enmity for the Player characters.

### CONCEDING CONFLICT

Supporting NPCs should often concede conflicts, especially early in the story. Conceding should often take the appearance of escape. Escaping villains are a fabulous plot device to foreshadow future conflicts. They may be carrying information back to the main villain of the story, or simply nurturing their grudge against the Player characters.

### Creating NPC Advantages

Non-Player Characters can Create Advantages that can be used in conflict. This can be used during a conflict to Create environmental Advantages, such as lighting a place on fire or setting off an explosion that creates rubble. NPCs also have an advantage if a conflict takes place in their territory. If the conflict is in their home or lair, they should have some free invocations on aspects to reflect that fact.

NPCs can also create scenes that are about gathering information on the Player characters and gathering



free invocations. Perhaps the NPCs spy on the Agents of the Ministry to gather information about their strengths, throwing a few easy targets their way to gauge their abilities. Or perhaps they arrange a cocktail party, bare knuckle boxing match, or high society ball to socialize and gauge the characters' true intentions. These events can help to create tension as the Player character investigate various mysteries and evaluate their villains.

## Powerful Opponents

.....  
*"Doctor Havelock," Wellington began, "What you have shared with me in confidence is most..."*  
*Terrifying? Monstrous? Delusional? Instead, he chose, "...impressive—I will not deny that."*  
*—Agent Wellington Books, Phoenix Rising*  
.....

Like the powerful friend, there should only be one powerful opponent per scenario. These characters are the big bads, the true powers, the highly skilled antagonists who will be truly challenging to the Players to oppose. These characters are like Moriarty, the Phantom of the Opera, and Mr. Hyde.

The most powerful opponents of the Player characters should receive a full character sheet. These characters are very influential in the lives of your characters, representing their greatest challenges. With a full spread of aspects, these characters can be invoked or compelled like a Player character. The aspects give the opportunity to craft an interesting character with lots of hooks for drama for the Players.

These villains should either be exact peers of the Player characters who will gain power as the scenario progresses, or superiors to the Player characters who remain static while the Player characters grow in strength to eventually oppose them.

If they are the peers of the characters, give them the same skill distribution that the Player characters currently possess, and upgrade them whenever your Player characters upgrade.

If they are of superior skill, give them two skill levels higher than the highest skill of the Player characters. They should also have skills below those high skills that match the Player characters. So an antagonist with a +6 should also have two +5, three +4, four +3, five +2, and six +1.

These characters will rarely concede conflicts, and will often fight to the bitter end, attempting to take the Player characters down with every action. These are the great antagonists for the characters, so the care you pour into their creation will be reflected in the Players' enjoyment of them.

## THE GAME MASTER'S DUTY

You are a judge and arbiter of the rules, but this does not mean that you are the only individual with input on the game. You should keep careful watch on the Players and

the fun that they are having playing the game. If some rule or personal policy is preventing the Players from having a good time, do away with it with great prejudice. If there is disagreement about the use of some skill or the invocation of an aspect, encourage your Players to have a brief discussion and prevent their views. You are the final judge of the rules, but you are also the moderator of the campaign, and responsible for the voices of the Players being heard.

Ensuring that Players are having a good time and experiencing the sort of game that they want to, while you are also running the sort of game that you want to run can be a difficult task. Chapter 14 shares some techniques that you may find useful in running your very own Ministry game.

# TECHNIQUES FOR THE EXCELLENT GAME MASTER

## ENGAGING YOUR PLAYERS

The characters the Players create are the stars of your show, the central characters around whom the action will resolve. You may have a dense, rich world and multidimensional NPCs, but the story concerns the Player characters. Keep this concept central, and you will have a far more satisfying game.

## COMFORT AND SAFETY

One of your responsibilities is to make sure that you and your Players feel safe and comfortable during games. It is in environments where people feel safe that creativity can truly blossom.

## INSPIRATION

If you or your Players are unfamiliar with steampunk, or if you just want a refresher in the genre, it can be fun to read books such as *Soulless*, *The Difference Engine*, and *Leviathan* to get inspiration for your game.

Or hold a double feature movie night, and invite your Players to watch films such as *Hugo*, *Stardust*, *Wild, Wild West*, *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, *The Time Machine*, *Steamboy*, or *The Assassination Bureau*. This can help your Players to get into the mood and gain some inspiration for characters they'd like to play.

Even not liking some element of a movie or book can provide inspiration for the sort of games and characters you want to play. Perhaps a character would have been cooler with more agency, or a cybernetic arm, or more believable flaws. Even discussions about what you don't like can lead to the creation of characters you adore.

## COMMUNICATION

Discuss with the Players, at length, the kind of game they are interested in playing, and what they'd like to do



in game. Do they want to solve mysteries, infiltrate secret societies, charge into knock-down barroom brawls, be a part of epic romances, or all of the above?

Some Players will only feel satisfied if a fight breaks out each game. Others will want to spend time sneaking in dark alleys, observing secret goings on, others will want deep social interaction, with terrible betrayals, declarations of true love, and intrigue. It can be helpful for Players to list favorite movies or television shows that they would like to emulate in tone for the game. This can help you design your game to best suit your Players.

## CONNECTION

Connecting the characters can lead to interesting game dynamics even if there is no mechanic effect. A relationship chart is a diagram of the relationships between the Player characters. This can help Players to visualize their connections to one another and to the world around them. This is especially helpful for longer games.

For THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE, we suggest creating a chart after character creation is complete. Take a piece of paper and write down the names of the Player characters. Go around the room and have the Players draw a line between their character and another Player character in the game, and have them write one or two words on that line that details how their character feels about that other character. This can be “best friends” or “excellent inventor” or “respected colleague”. Not everyone needs to have lines that connect them. Simply connecting some of the characters can give Players an idea of how they can interact with each other.

Next, add one or two NPCs to this chart, and ask the Players how their characters feel about this NPC. I suggest having a contact such as an informant and another Ministry agent to start. Not every Player needs to draw a relationship with these characters. This can help the Players connect their characters to the world. Keep this chart in the middle of the table for quick reference.

## DEPOSING THE POWERFUL ALLY

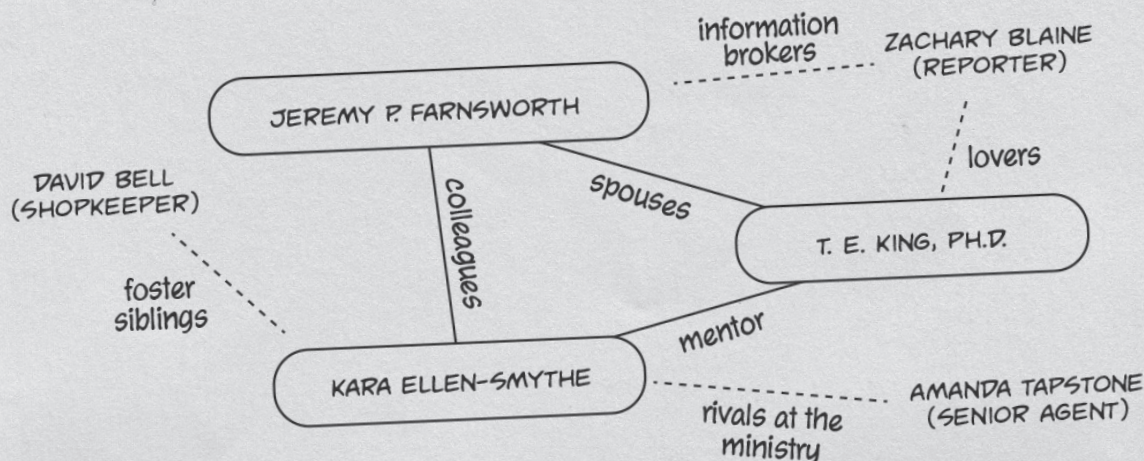
The powerful ally can be a fascinating character, so long as they do not take the focus on the Player characters. Should they begin to overshadow the Player characters, do away with them as dramatically as possible. This is an excellent method for changing the world when the characters get more powerful and are better able to face challenges themselves. The loss of an ally can be an important and dramatic moment that allows the central characters to realize they are now on their own, and returns the focus where it should be—on them.

## NAMES

One simple way to improve the game is to make small name cards for the Player characters. This can be as simple as folding an index card in half and writing a character's name on the front, facing out, so that the other Players can see it. This will help your Players to feel confident about addressing one another and interacting. It is embarrassing, and easy, to forget a character's name, so this simple tool can be helpful in getting Players to converse with one another.

## LINES AND VEILS

We advise all role playing groups to have a discussion about topics that are out of bounds for all participants. steampunk can be a great setting in which to confront issues of racism, sexism, and imperialism that were endemic to the time period. However, many Players may





feel uncomfortable with addressing such issues. Have a discussion with your Players about what they absolutely do not want in their game.

**Lines:** Lines are a Do-Not-Cross sign. They are issues, concepts or characters that the Players absolutely **do not** want to have in their games. Some might declare a line because of personal discomfort with an issue, but others might declare a line against a trope that they feel is over-used. This can be declaring a line for violence against a particular group of people to declaring that pandas will not be in this game. This lets Players engage fully in the game without worry that they will be made to feel uncomfortable or unwelcome due to the content of the story.

**Veils:** A veil is a way of closing a scene if any member of the group feels uncomfortable with its content. If someone feels uncomfortable, they can ask for a veil to be drawn over the scene and the scene will stop. The person who stopped the scene does not have to explain why they wanted the scene to stop, and the group should do everything they can to make that person feel comfortable before resuming play.

## ASPECT ADVICE

When NPCs have aspects, it demonstrates their importance, and what facets of their character the Players can compel. Understanding aspects is vital to running a good game of *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE*. Though Chapter Five demonstrates what aspects are and how to use them for you and your Players, there are a few tricks you can use with aspects to make them even better.

## Improvising Aspects

Though you may plan out a campaign, there will always be parts that you must improvise when elements take an unexpected turn. You can use your Players to help you improvise aspects by asking them what aspects they would like to have on the scene or NPC when they roll to Create an Advantage. If they tie or succeed, write down aspects similar to what they were looking for. If they fail, write down a scene or NPC aspect that will not be helpful to their Players—perhaps the very opposite of what they had hoped for.

Remember that aspects do not need to be complex. If they are in a flooding dungeon, **FLOODING DUNGEON** is perfectly okay to write down.

## Secret Aspects

There is often a time, in the life of every good Game Master, where they might wish an NPC to have a secret. Secrets are aspects that, if revealed, would have negative consequences for a character. PCs and NPCs should all have their character sheets out on the table with all the skills and aspects apparent to any viewer. However, sometimes an NPC has a secret. What then?

Secret aspects are an excellent way to give NPCs a secret, but also give the Player characters a mechanical way to find out what that secret is. If an NPC has an important secret, write it down on one side of an index card. On the other side, write an aspect that relates to that secret.

Every secret should have a relevant skill attached to it that will lead to its revelation. That will frequently be Rapport, Empathy, or Investigation. Set the difficulty in relation to the importance of the secret, and you will have a plot hook that gets the characters engaged with the NPCs and the world around them.

## KILL YOUR DARLINGS

Gentle Reader,

If you find that one NPC is addressing another, such that you are speaking to yourself, while the Player characters watch silently, then things have gone wrong. Horribly wrong.

It is a giant red flag. Covered in blood.

Kill your darlings. Kill them now.

Or, at the very least, send them on a mission to Antarctica. Or perhaps early retirement. Or murder. Dear Reader, murder is always an option.

## ON NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

As the Game Master of *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE*, it is your job to cast the characters of the world. You create and bring to life a host of creations, from the other Agents the Player characters work with, to the enemies they face, to the shopkeeper who saw a thief run by in the night.

Whatever you do, dear Game Master, do not fall in love.

Of course, everyone gives the impression that the Players' characters are front and center in their hearts, and of course, the NPCs mean nothing to them. But you created them, from nothing, and so there is the temptation to protect them, to give them victory.

Resist this temptation. Your NPCs are servants of the story, and must be played accordingly. Play them hard, drive them forward. Let them burn like roman candles. Drive them to madness, to fury. Let them seek their goals. Murder them when it's interesting; bring them home when it will bring satisfaction to your Players.

If you must fall in love, do so first with the characters, then with the story, and last with the world. Let the NPCs be pawns in your game. This does not mean that your NPCs must be one-dimensional paper cutouts. Having NPCs who are fascinating characters in their own right is an excellent impulse, but you must be ready to dispose of them when it is called for. To defeat them when the actions of the characters merit it, and to make them suffer when appropriate.



## PLAYING VILLAINS

This section has a few tips and tricks about making your villains interesting to the Players.

### Make It Personal

The enemies of your characters may not even know that the Agents oppose them early in the game, but the sooner you can make the enmity personal, the more engaging it will be for your Players. Not only do the villains want to overthrow the Queen, but they should also really dislike a particular Player character. Perhaps they want to be an Airship Pirate, but for some reason, your pesky Agents keep showing up and defeating them. The villain can be a colleague thought dead, a long lost sister, or a friend who has betrayed them. Whatever the connection, making it personal makes the story stronger.

### Many Roads to Rome

Though it may be tempting to simply engage the Players in physical conflict, it can be far more interesting and satisfying to villains to attempt to take them down in other ways. Physical fights are only one tool in your villain's belt, and there are many roads to taking a character down.

Villains may try to discredit our heroes, to reveal them as secret agents, or mount a smear campaign of their characters. They may try to embarrass them by besting them in a contest, or by picking at a weakness. The enemies of our characters may try to tempt, bully, threaten, seduce, out-earn, provoke, or disgrace our heroes. Their first move might not be a fistfight, but out-dancing them at the ball. There are many roads to defeat, think about exploring a variety of challenges along with the physical.

## The Ensemble

It can be tempting, especially for the creative among us, to establish a grand host of NPCs, all with detailed back stories, interesting quirks, and their own fascinating goals. This is not a bad impulse for a Game Master as it demonstrates creativity and devotion to the game.

However, remember that it can be difficult for Players to remember a large number of NPCs, and sometimes these characters can start directing the attention of the game onto themselves, rather than the Player characters. Consider limiting the number of NPC speaking roles per scene.

The action should always be focused towards the Player characters, as they are the stars of the story. Having a well-rounded and motivated NPC can be great fun, but only when it adds to the story of your lead characters.

Chapter Thirteen will examine the units of time in THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE: Scenes, Sessions, and Scenarios. the overall campaign will be discussed in Chapter Fourteen.





# SCENES, SESSIONS, AND SCENARIOS

## UNITS OF TIME WITHIN THE GAME

 Conflicts within Scenes, Sessions and Scenarios and Integrating a Plot into the Arc of the Story. 

### INTRODUCTION TO UNITS OF TIME: SCENES, SESSIONS, AND SCENARIOS

#### SCENES

Scenes are a unit of time in a game, usually defined by characters entering a new space and facing a challenge there. This might mean traveling from London to Paris or from the ballroom to the study. A scene in a game is very similar to a scene in a play, it is a unit of time defined by a central theme in which the participating characters pursue a goal.

#### SESSIONS

Sessions are a single game, defined from when the Players begin to play to when they stop. Sessions are usually two to four hours, and typically contain multiple scenes.

#### SCENARIOS

Scenarios usually last one to four sessions, and are defined by having a united storyline. During scenarios, the characters will grow and change, so that at the end of a scenario, characters reach a milestone.

During a scenario, Player character must achieve goals, face challenges, and resolve conflicts that all center around one theme. This may be small, such as finding out who is stealing sheep from the mountain people, or as broad as uncovering a conspiracy between secret societies to overthrow the Queen.

Scenarios will have NPCs who will challenge the Players and oppose their goals. Players will have to take action, such as performing research, building new gadgets to deal with unique problems, infiltrating an enemy

### GAME MASTERS NOTE: DELIGHT IN SURPRISE

As the Game Master, you may spend quite a bit of time crafting a scenario for your Players, considering the options, and even thinking about ways that your characters could succeed against your NPCs. This is excellent, but allow yourself room to be surprised. Your Players may come up with novel solutions to the challenges you gave them. They do not need to take your path to success, simply a path. Allow yourself to be surprised and delighted by their innovative approaches and both of all shall come out the better for it.

network, or rescuing hostages in order to succeed in their goals and reach the end of the scenario.

When the Players confront their challenges and reach their goals, the scenario has been resolved and is over. The next session, the Players should start a new scenario. This may be as simple as returning to Ministry headquarters to receive their next assignment.

### CREATING SCENES

Scenes are a unit of time during which the Players attempt to achieve a goal that is relevant to the larger scenario. The collection of scenes make up a session, which together, make up a scenario, which make up an arc and a campaign. When the action changes to a new goal, moves to a new location, or makes a jump in time, the last scene has ended and the next scene has begun.



Most often, scenes will take place in a linear fashion. However, flashbacks and jumps in time during the story are always possible. The Game Master may decide that while the characters spend three days doing in-depth research at the monastery, there really isn't much need to spend hours of game time role-playing that, and the Players can skip ahead to the next challenge. However, if, on day two of research, the characters are attacked by airship pirates, then that may be where the next scene begins.

## Flashbacks

Flashbacks can be a useful tool for establishing relationships with NPCs or other Player characters. You can create a situation that illustrates the relationship in a small scene and briefly play it out with the involved parties.

## Scenes: Carrying the Plot Forward

Game Masters are in charge of setting up the environment in a scene. This means deciding on who is present, what sides they are on and what the environment is like. Game Masters should create a few aspects that describe the environment that the characters can invoke, as well as describing any NPCs that are present. Game Masters should start the scene with a description, and, if needed, prompt the Player characters towards action.

When creating scenes, the Game Master should consider why the scene is necessary and interesting. The scene should not be implemented unless it is important to carry the plot of the game forward. Simply holding a scene where the characters walk down a hallway unimpeded isn't interesting, and can be boring to Players. The scenes should have conflicts that need to be resolved, goals to be achieved, and challenges to face.

## Starting Scenes

Scenes should begin when the conflict becomes interesting. Characters should appear just when the plot thickens and challenges arise. Players can help Game Masters with the purpose of the scene as they narrate what their characters want and how they plan to achieve their goals. The Players often know what will come next, and an excellent Game Master moves with their desires, helping flesh out the world around the characters as the Players lead. Scenes may come from the Players' ideas on what they want to do next, or a Game Master's idea about what sinister scheme the villains are cooking up. Game Masters should also consider the Players aspects when constructing scenes. Is there an aspect for a Player that applies to the current plot? Consider structuring a scene around that aspect to draw your Players further into the action of the game.

When setting up the first scene in a campaign, Game Masters should consider the story questions devised with the Players. Integrate those questions into the first scene to set the thematic tone for the campaign.

## In Conflicts

When setting the scene for a conflict, Game Master should add any new aspects to the scene that may become relevant to the conflict. Then the Game Master should establish sides for the scene. The Game Master should already know what the NPCs want, but the start of a conflict is a good opportunity to ask the Player characters what they want, and what their goals are. When this is determined, the sides of the conflict are set.

NPCs in a conflict will go on the turn of the NPC with the highest skill level applicable to the challenge. All of the NPCs will act on that character's turn.

## Ending Scenes

Scenes should end after the interesting action concludes. Scenes must have a clear purpose, be that a specific goal or achieve or challenge to face, and once that is done, it should draw to a close, on to the next exciting scene. Win or lose, characters will have new challenges to face at the end of the scene, and the Game Master should promptly move them towards that next goal.

## SESSIONS

Sessions represent a group of scenes that are organized by the time the group has played together. Like a short story in a serialized column, sessions often have an overall theme or story question that they are addressing. Each session should move the story along in a significant way.

## THE SCENARIO

Scenarios represent a grouping of sessions that represent a larger story. Like a novel, these sessions may not be the entire story of the characters, but they represent the characters facing down a large problem.

The problem the characters face in the scenario should be relevant to their characters and should not be resolved without their involvement. The scenario can hook into the characters' aspects to invest them in the story.

Scenarios should be grouped together by a central problem the characters must face.

- Facing a master villain working against the PCs.
- An organization is conspiring against the Empire.
- Trouble from within the Ministry itself prompts the characters to action.
- One of the Player characters' aspects from their past returns and threatens everyone.
- Facing a secret society of villains.
- A person connected to the Player is in danger, and in need of help.
- Have two NPCs connected to the Players in direct competition with each other, with disastrous results.



## Story Questions

When you have your scenario conflict, you can develop story questions for that scenario. Examine your problem and break it down into a smaller set of conflicts or obstacles the Players will have to confront. Each one of those conflicts is a specific story question. Sessions should each be structured around resolving one or more of these story questions. The number and difficulty of these story questions will determine the length of your game. More questions indicates a larger game.

## Resolving the Scenario

A scenario comes to a close when you've answered most or all of the story questions you've developed when preparing your scenario. Occasionally, a story question may remain unresolved even when the scenario concludes. These can come back into play in later scenarios. The end of a scenario is a significant milestone and indicates a change within the world of the game.

## CREATING CONFLICTS

Some representatives working in the service of the Crown may prefer an uneventful, straightforward investigation in which all is as it seems and events unfold as would be expected. The Ministry is quite happy to leave such mundane cases to other departments.

A mission worth investigation by Field Agents of the Ministry is one fraught with conflict. For it is conflict that is the herald of great actions, be they for good or for evil. Junior Field Agents may seek out conflict simply for the excitement of it all, but more seasoned Field Agents recognise it in more subtle forms.

Simply described, conflict is a clash of opposing forces.

## CONFLICT SCOPE

When defining a conflict, give it scope. On a grand scale, Field Agents might find themselves embroiled in raging wars in faraway lands. Such circumstance could sweep up your Agents for months, years, all the while struggling to resolve something much bigger than themselves.

Closer to home, and more intimately experienced, Field Agents may find themselves face-to-face with an adversary. This personal confrontation need not be overt or even verbally acknowledged. It could be a match of wills from afar, a test of intellect across a game of strategy, or mayhaps a contest of strength at close quarters. And yet, the investigation that changes a Field Agent's life for all of time is the turning point when the Agent finds herself caught between matters of the heart and carrying out her mission, testing her resolve and loyalty to Ministry, Queen, and Country. Such heart-rending conflict causes permanent change and the way it manifests can be every bit as singular as the conflict that caused it.

## CONFLICTS PROVIDE DRAMA

Conflict should be a significant stress on Field Agents. Conflict might be physical, hand to hand combat with a deadly attacker. It may be intellectual, a subtle strategy game to determine the opponent's end goal and foil nefarious plans. Or it may be emotional, a heart rending test of inner strength and moral character. It may be all of these things, but it should not be easy.

Varying in scale and diverse in form, conflict is the lens that sets the focus on the action to follow with suspense and mystery to draw out every breath, every moment. One theme common to all those touched by conflict is the exacting price, the consequence, the thing that leaves them forever changed.

Create conflict for your Field Agents to drive them to heroic acts of ingenuity and creativity. Such challenges develop them, compel them to grow. Make no mistake, the drama of it all keeps things interesting.

## THE ARC OF THE STORY

In many cases, the most satisfying story is the simplest. For most basic purposes, a complete story has three basic elements: a beginning, a middle, and an end. Storytellers can build in greater complexities, layering multiple arcs over the base story arc for each character/Player or even for NPCs and enemies.

## THE BEGINNING

A beginning is not simply a gathering of Players. There must be an inciting incident, a trigger, to bring them all together in a common cause. In point of fact, depending on the size of the party, there can be a series of triggers progressively building the group and allowing wildly varying characters to join together for the coming adventure.

Such an event begins the adventure with immediate excitement, action, and tension. Often times, in the case of Agent Eliza D. Braun, such events are accompanied by copious amounts of gunpowder and rather impressive explosions.

## THE MIDDLE

The danger of the middle of any story is banality, a loss of momentum, and a rather dull completion of task after task. Truly, the journey from point A to point B must be filled with meaningful moments to force characters to grow in order to keep the adventure alive. It is not simply a progression through a maze of decisions or a climb up levels of enemies. Characters must be compelled to make decisions that will change them forever. New allies could be introduced, side plots could be explored. Never underestimate the value of a light-hearted excursion to lift spirits, inject a bit humor, and refresh the characters in preparation for darker times to come. Variety in stories is key to keep Players engaged and makes a story memorable.



## THE END

Venture forth, brave heroes, into the darkness. The end is often the greatest battle, the climax, for all of the Players in the game. It is all or nothing, in which they will enter and emerge victorious or lay strewn across the battlefield like so many broken toys. But the final battle is not the end of the story, unless everyone dies. There is an aftermath to be told, in which loose ends are tidied up and plot lines are brought to a close. Whether the endings be happy or tragic, ominous foreshadowing of a future campaign or a simple parting of ways, pay close attention to the details.

## VICTORIAN EMPIRE AND THE STEAMPUNK AESTHETIC

The sun has been said to never set on the British Empire during the reign of Queen Victoria, so far is its reach. As you craft your scenes, sessions, and scenarios, please keep in mind the aesthetic of the time and the unique characteristics of steampunk.

Britain holds naval supremacy over the globe by steamship, maintaining a dominant position in world trade. In addition to formal governance over its own colonies, the British Empire effectively controls the economies of many far away countries via trading interests.

Indeed, British ports are teeming with ships arriving from all parts of the globe laden with trade goods and exotic merchandise. Steamship services are not only fast, but also regularly scheduled and the shipping routes reliable. The British Royal Navy holds protection of these trade routes and their supply ports as a primary directive. In addition to trade goods, citizens of Queen Victoria's empire are able to travel far and wide to destinations such as America, Egypt, South Africa, India, China, Japan, Siam, Australia, and New Zealand.

Of course, piracy exists on the lesser trade routes and around the smaller colonial settlements. Pirates and their allies are punished severely once the British Royal Navy catches up with them. Steamship technology is advancing, as most technologies do under strife and when men are challenged to innovate. Agents of the Ministry may be called upon to supplement the Navy should particularly unusual nautical challenges arise.

Nevertheless, the profitable balance of trade supports the expanding empire and the quickly rising middle class of merchants and industrial entrepreneurs. More than enough wealth is to be had, much of it funneling into the pockets of enemies of the Ministry and the Queen. Never before has the Ministry been so needed to keep those enemies in check.

Speed is of the utmost importance in order to investigate unusual incidents and also to mitigate issues arising across the empire. In addition to traveling by steamship,

field Agents may travel by railway on steam driven locomotives, or in the new hypersteam trains. In fact, travel by railway is quite affordable and relatively comfortable so long as an Agent remains within the passenger cars. The occasional extenuating circumstances do occur when in active pursuit.

*"The train rocked Lena back and forth  
as she descended, as if trying to shake  
her free of it, but still she managed  
to drop safely onto the gangway."*

*—The Janus Affair*

British-made steam locomotives are spreading across the British empire accompanied by the associated railway equipment. Closely linked to this network of railways is the electric telegraph. Technology of the telegraph is rapidly evolving with one of these instruments in every post office. Agents are encouraged to send properly encoded secure messages by this extremely fast mode of communication when distance would otherwise make the sharing of reports and other information impossible.





The Ministry's Research and Design department may have useful tools to increase the security of telegraph communications. Be sure to maintain a working knowledge of such technologies as communication is key to the success of many a mission.

As an alternative to the telegraph, the analytical engines have an optional addition to allow them to aether messages. This communication network, known as the aethernet, uses technology that is presumed to be restricted to the Ministry. It is rather slow and unreliable, but can be invaluable when in the field.

.....  
*Van's thoughts scattered when the signal returned to red. She flipped the switch underneath, and the display began to assemble itself, line by line. In an hour's time she would have the face of her latest assignment. Even the telegraph could not offer that.*

.....  
*—Dawn's Early Light*

Lastly, for secure communication within a single facility, offices within major cities such as London and Cairo often use a pneumatic delivery mechanism. The pneumatic tubes are a series of pipes using high pressure to deliver small paper notes within local areas. This method of communication, while quite secure, is impractical for us on the large scale.

.....  
*A sudden metallic crack made all three of them jump with a start. From the pneumatic messaging system, wisps of steam were seeping from one of the "Incoming" tubes.*

.....  
*—Silver Linings*

Airships, hypersteam locomotives, and aethernet communications are major strengths, not only for the British Empire, but for the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences. Advanced technology above and beyond these key tools is largely responsible for the safety and the success of Agents in the field. The exemplary Field Agent uses technology with a proper balance of respect, forbearance, and daring.

## MINISTRY AGENTS CHAMPION MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS

### British Supremacy Attitude

The Victorian Empire may have been driven by trade and a need to support continuing expansion, but the British worldview remained somewhat narrow in terms of cultural acceptance. Many advocates of the British foreign policy for imperialism justified these policies by taking a paternalistic and indeed, patronizing, point of view. Some might make reference to "the white man's burden" and claim British colonisation was for the benefit of more primitive peoples, incapable of proper self-government and in need of British guidance in order to establish a civ-

ilized way of life. Colonials faced prejudice and dismissal of their abilities. They found themselves underappreciated, labelled as uncivilized. Among the ranks of British nobility, a colonial would never be welcome nor would they be accepted in the social circles of the elite.

There are, of course, advantages for the peoples brought under the rule of the British. Access to greater technology, medicines, and education are distinct benefits. An improved standard of living and protection from piracy or invasion are significant factors to be appreciated. Such valuable contributions cannot be ignored.

And yet, the proud should never become so confident as to close their eyes to what might be learned from others. The British attitude of supremacy might be earned, but it need not prevent an Agent of the Ministry from learning the wisdom to be found in other cultures or ways of life.

### Benefit of the Archives

For the Ministry Agent at headquarters in London, the Archives are not only an excellent resource for investigation but also provide a broad foundation of information from which to gain perspective. Field Agents around the world have established case files and reports, sharing experiences and insights. The astute Agent might gain a deeper understanding of any given culture and is encouraged to view other peoples and their beliefs with respect.

The folklore and mythology of a particular region could be quite valuable in the investigation of a mysterious occurrence. And for every myth or legend, there are lessons to be learned from the perspective of the native culture. Understanding the lesson may clear a path and open avenues of communication otherwise closed to an investigating Agent.

Agents of the Ministry are encouraged to open their minds and approach other cultures as a meeting of equals. Allies are most helpful and more than once friends of the Ministry have saved lives and provided much needed aid in the defense of Queen and country.

Dear Agents, remember that technology can only do so much based on features and functionality. It is the creative mind of a good Agent that thinks beyond the original specifications and finds new applications in an expression of the innovation largely respected in the steam-punk subculture.

Think outside the box and perhaps set Schrodinger's cat free.



## STEAMPUNK: IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE GADGETS

Beyond speculation on the development of steam-based technology or alternative histories, we encourage Players to explore the “punk” subculture of steampunk. The Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences has many Agents who have stepped outside the traditional roles for which they may have been intended at birth. Certainly Agent Eliza D. Braun is the embodiment of a non-traditional woman of the Victorian Age. Not many could wear trousers or wield dynamite with her sense of style.

.....  
*“All we want is an answer to a question, a moment to ask our leaders ‘Why?’ when their decisions are, most assuredly, our concern...”*

*...We want our voice to be counted, and our questions answered.”*

*—The Janus Affair*  
.....

Refuse to be limited by any neatly boxed definition. Explore, if interested, the ideas of suffragists and the role of women in Victorian society. Consider slaves and their place both before and after the abolition of slavery. Blur

the lines of the middle class and the nobility.

Anti-establishment does not have to be at odds with the interests of Queen and Country, but instead can have potential to support the evolution of the British Empire.

Beyond gadgets and weaponry, steampunks can explore the creation of independent media and “underground” networks of news and information. They can be hands on, or do-it-yourself in any number of crafts. And of course, steampunks are well-known for fashion and styles distinct from those of popularly accepted culture. Lift your skirts, wear trousers, or go without a cravat and jacket. Wear your bullet-proof corset on the outside of your ensemble.

Be daring, if you will, but always temper your passion for individuality with the needs of the mission. Be flexible and adapt to whatever the mission may require whether it be blending neatly into high society or winning over the loyalty of a rogue pirate ship. Above all else, be open-minded or if you choose not to be, make sure you’ve made a conscious decision to do so.

Chapter Thirteen details the campaign, including the example protagonists and non-player characters.





# THE CAMPAIGN

## THE SCOPE OF THE GAME

Choosing a Short Story, Novel, or a Series.

### THE SCOPE OF THE GAME

Creating a campaign is about making a series of decisions that will best suit the kind of game the group wants to play. The group should decide if they want the game to be a single mission with a simple objective or an ongoing epic opera that spans lifetimes. Neither one of these is the “right” choice, simply the choice that best suits the tastes and time commitment for the group. For our purposes, we have grouped types of games into three categories: Short Story, Novel, and the Series.



### SHORT STORY

This sort of game takes place in an hour to three hours. It is a small-scale game that takes place with one location, issue, and major protagonist. To best make use of time, consider using pre-generated characters.

The Short Story is best used during one-shot or convention games.

#### DRAGON FIRE

**Location:** London Office

**Current Issue:** The Society of Dragonis has stolen an experimental weapon from a kidnapped Ministry Agent. Fortunately, the Ministry has gained intelligence as to where they are hiding out. The pre-generated characters, Books, Braun, Axelrod, and Blackwell must either infiltrate the secret society at their meeting tonight, or find a way to sneak into their headquarters, rescue the kidnapped Agent, and recover or destroy the experimental weapon before it can be sold into the wrong hands.

**Major Antagonist:** The Society of Dragonis, a small, but violent section of the nobility who seek to keep the Empire “pure” by any means necessary.

The Short Story model game is a quick and easy introduction to THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE that allows the Players to enjoy a short adventure in a limited timeframe. However, this sort of game gives little time for character development and world exploration.



## NOVEL

This game is a series of four to six one to three hour sessions. This is a longer story that still takes place in a single location with one main issue and one major protagonist. Players can make their own characters for a game of this type, the first session will most likely be character creation unless they wish to use pre-generated characters.

The Novel is best used for games among friends who wish to play regularly for a couple of weeks or months.

### THE DEPOSED BARON

**Location:** The Carpathian Mountains

**Current Issue:** The Mysterious Baron. A mysterious man, claiming to be a Baron, has seized a castle in the mountains, and kidnapped villagers to work on its restoration. He appears to have supernatural powers. The Agent who was sent to investigate disappeared. The Ministry has sent out a group of Agents to find out more.

**Major Antagonist:** Baron Dragomir Negrubine, Agent Blackwell's deposed brother who seeks to reclaim his royal lands by any means necessary.

## SERIES

This game is a long-term series of one to three hour sessions. It would consist of several Novel-length adventures taking place in multiple locations with several issues and more than one major protagonist. Players should make their own characters for a game of this type since it will explore character growth and change.

The Series is for friends who wish to play regularly for quite some time.

### PIRATES, PHOENIXES, AND DOUBLE AGENTS

**Locations:** London, New York, The Airship of the Pirate Queen

**Current Issue:** Infiltrating the Crew of the Pirate Queen. The Agents are on a mission to infiltrate the crew of the Airship Pirate Queen to find and destroy her secret fleet.

**Impending Issue:** The Phoenix Society. The Society is a secretive organization uniting the rich and powerful. They claim it is for benevolent purposes, but do they have a more sinister scheme?

**Impending Issue:** Corruption Within the Ministry Itself. Requests for equipment are denied and sometimes it seems as if the bad guys know you're coming. Could there be a double Agent within the Ministry itself? Can the Agents seek out the corruption and destroy it without being expelled themselves?

**Major Antagonist:** The Phoenix Society, a secret society that seeks to destroy the Empire and rebuild, only with themselves in power.

## DEFINING ARCS

An arc is a complete story with a beginning, middle, and end. It has a theme, conflicts, and antagonists. The longer the arc, the more complex it can be with additional phases to reflect transitions between the basic beginning, middle, and end. During an arc, the central characters develop and change. The characters should be changed by their experiences in the story, regardless if the change is a small one, or a large character shift. They should grow.

At a high level, it should be decided whether the story will consist of a single, main arc or also have embedded a series of smaller arcs. Such decisions are often governed by how long game play is intended to last and whether game play will consist of a single session or multiple.

Identifying the number of arcs desired in advance will allow you to build each arc with the others in mind, intertwining character development and adding complexity to engage the Players. Think of this as a high level outline of the game to be played.

Deciding the order of the arcs is also critical. When planning game play with multiple arcs, there is often the overarching story to consider and each arc should build with hints and clues toward the overall story.

Once it has been decided how many arcs there will be and in what order they will occur, more in depth building of the story can proceed.

## BUILDING AN ARC

An interesting story arc is more than a planned series of events. It includes conflicts and consequences, and draws the Players in such that their characters become emotionally involved. Earlier, we discussed the basic story arc: a beginning, middle, and an end. Here, let us discuss how story arcs are driven by specific elements. When setting out to create a story arc, decide whether your story will be character driven or concept driven.

### Character Driven

These are well-suited as smaller arcs nested within the overarching campaign or as the main theme of a shorter game.

A triggering event presents one or more characters with a decision. The decision drives the story forward into further events and how the Players (and their char-



acters) react to those events. The consequences of their decisions develop their characters.

Through the progression of the story, the entire group learns more about the characters. Backstory is revealed and the character's personal canon is further developed.

A character-driven plot will often follow the Hero's Journey, a concept introduced by Joseph Campbell's *HERO OF A THOUSAND FACES*. The basic outline below serves as a guide and has seen many revisions from storyteller to storyteller. Some steps might occur in a different order or be labelled differently than presented here.

**The Ordinary World:** The character's daily life, his/her normal world.

**Call to Adventure:** The inciting incident, or triggering event (note: often times, the triggering event is the beginning of the story and the Ordinary World is revealed through backstory discussions).

**Refusal of the Call:** The character hesitates, doubts, considers staying in a stable state.

**Meeting the Mentor/Supernatural Assistance:** The character meets someone inspiring, gathers their courage, and jumps off the decision cliff.

**Crossing the Threshold:** The character finds herself in a completely new world, where all the rules are different. This could literally be a different country, planet, or universe. It could be a different culture. Small town girl finds herself in the middle of a bustling city.

**Tests on the Road:** These further serve to build up the character, allow her to level up. The character meets new friends, gains allies, perhaps meets a few new enemies along the way.

**Preparing for Danger:** The character and allies plan for the dangers ahead.

**Hero Confronts Greatest Fear:** Near the middle of the story, this is the highest point of tension and drives the character towards her lowest point. The character has plunged into the depths of despair, in which all seems lost.

**Object Received:** A candle flame is lit in the dark. The character receives some clue, some inspiration, or some treasure to bring renewed hope.

**Chase:** The brave character and her allies are on the hunt, charging forward in a final glorious gambit to win it all.

**Final Confrontation:** Our Agents, especially the main character, go head to head with their enemies. Blood may

be drawn, secrets are revealed, and if certain red-headed Agents from New Zealand are present, explosions may occur.

**The Return:** Emerging from the Final Confrontation, the character is forever changed. Even if she returns home, things aren't the same and perhaps she has grown too much to fit back into her former place in normal life.

## Concept Driven

There are many ways to describe a concept driven story arc. In the context of game play within *THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE*, it will be presented as a miniature theme or a story hook. It will be the definition of the mission for the Agents.

- Will the Agents be sent out to foil a plot to assassinate the Queen?
- Perhaps the Agents will set out to rescue a captured comrade.
- Is there a bomb hidden somewhere in the city?
- The Agents may be investigating reported disembodied voices heard in a particular manor, is it paranormal or a secret society?
- A ghostly apparition is said to appear just before a person dies. The Agents begin to investigate a series of deaths. Are they searching for a mythological banshee or a serial killer? Perhaps both?

Concept-driven stories are adaptable. They can be focused and finite, for a single arc, or they can be broad on epic scale for the longer campaign.

A word of note, storytellers: The Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences is defined by its name. Each concept should take this into account and incorporate some element of mystery at the very least, if not the paranormal or fantastic.

## DEFINING CAMPAIGNS

The Campaign is every session and scenario that encapsulates the entire story of the game you are playing. This may be a single night of game-play, a weekend, or several years.

The Game Master may mention that Players spend three weeks in the archive performing research, but during the game, this is not played out, only mentioned. Conversely, rolling a complex combat may take ten minutes, but only encapsulate a few seconds of game time. It is important for Game Masters and Players to be clear regarding the amount of time within the game they are spending on a task or scene.

Campaigns are usually built with several small arcs as well as an overarching story that runs through the entire campaign. Campaigns are often long, whether they are played out in one long, intense weekend, or over several months. Some Players may choose to play a campaign for



years, developing their characters and building a complex, detailed world.

## BUILDING A CAMPAIGN

Players often have a large role in shaping the way games are played, however, the storyteller can design a campaign by deciding on the recurring themes the Players will have to deal with. These themes can help guide a game and keep it thematically coherent, while still allowing Players to have free will in their choices for play.

## ISSUES WITHIN A SETTING

The issues for a campaign are the threats, challenges, and pressures within the setting that send the Players into action. Issues are the people, places, promises, and goals the Players care about.

Before the game begins, the Players and Game Master should come up with two issues as a group. Write these issues down on index cards and place them on the table. These issues are game aspects and will be available to invoke or compel any time in a game. These issues should be problems that the Players find interesting, and that they have an active reason to pursue. If an issue does not appeal to the Players, do not use it. Issues will lead the direction of the game.

There are two types of issues in a Ministry campaign:

**1. Current Issues:** Current issues are problems or threats that already exist in the world. Players who take on these issues are trying to heroically change the world for the better.

Examples: Taking down a tyrant, ending the discriminatory policy of a powerful group, bringing attention to an important social issue, exposing the criminal underground.

**2. Impending Issues:** These are issues that have not yet occurred, but are threatening the world. The Players who create these issues will be trying to save something or someone.

Examples: A secret society is attempting to overthrow the government, that criminal underground makes a bid for more power in high society, a new piece of technology tips the balance of power towards war.

We suggest creating one current issue and one impending issue. However, the very best policy is to create issues that interest your Players.

## STORY ISSUES ARE ASPECTS

The issues that you create for your campaign are aspects that can be compelled or invoked as regular aspects. Write them down on index cards and place them on the table during the game. It's well and dandy to add notes

to these aspects to flesh out their details if the statement of the aspect itself does not cover the issue completely, or simply to remind yourself what the issue is.

## THEMES IN A CAMPAIGN

When creating your campaign, you must decide who the important people, organizations, groups, and locations in your game are. You must also decide on the scale of your game. Will this be a sweeping journey across the globe or a mystery in a small village? Where the game takes place determines the scale of your campaign. The scale may change over time. The Players may start with a small scenario that reveals an epic conspiracy.

After you decide on the people, places, and scale of your campaign, you can decide on your themes. Will your game be about whether family determines your destiny, or what it means to be a hero, or what the meaning of loyalty, duty, or friendship is? Coming up with a theme can help to focus your campaign.

Don't be concerned if you can't come up with a theme right away. Your scenarios and arcs may create a theme for the campaign as you play. It might take a few sessions for the theme to reveal itself. When in doubt, look to the aspects of the Players, and see if there is a central theme that unites a few of them together. Connecting your Players to the theme will help motivate them to stay engaged.

## WORLD ADVANCEMENT

As the characters grow and change during a campaign, so does the world around them. Earlier, we discussed how characters may advance through a campaign. In this section, we will discuss how the world in which the game takes place will change as a response to your characters' actions.

Characters may defeat antagonists, preserve the Empire, enact sweeping social changes, or save the world. The very presence of the Agents in the world can change the political, social, or economic climate.

Changes take place during milestones. As the characters advance, Game Masters should make changes to the world as well that reflect the characters' actions. This might mean resolving a story issue and creating a new one, advancing an antagonist, or making changes to a setting.

## World Milestones

Milestones are moments during the game when characters are changed or advanced. World milestones should take place at the same time as character milestones. These milestones can happen at the end of the session, scenario or story arc. Changes do not need to take place as often as the Players change. The world should only change when the Player characters have created or influenced a change.

Milestones should follow some important event in the story. Just as for characters, there are two types of milestones, major and minor. Each carries with it con-



siderations for changing the world in which the characters live. Whatever the changes to the world of the game, make sure that they occur as a result of the actions of the Player characters.

### MINOR MILESTONES

- Add a new location to the game.
- If the Players have resolved an issue in a location, change or get rid of that aspect

### MAJOR MILESTONES

Major milestones are the most important events in a story, and represent big changes in the game world. When a major milestone occurs, consider making these changes to the world of your game.

- Examine your game issues and make sure they are still relevant and compelling to the characters. If not, change them.
- Add new skills or stunts to NPCs to reflect their growth.
- If the Players resolved a story issue, change or get rid of that aspect and create another.
- If the Players created a permanent change in a location, get rid of, or change that location aspect to reflect that change.
- Did the Players create a permanent change in the game world? If so, give that aspect a new issue to reflect that change.
- Examine the NPCs and decide if some of them will advance to remain current with the Players advancement, or remain at their current skill level. This is the time to change NPCs and flesh them out as needed.
- Players may have focused on the current issue of a campaign while ignoring an impending issue, or the other way around. You can keep the issue unchanged, or change it to reflect that they live in a dynamic world. Perhaps the secret society has gained power while the Players were dealing with another issue.
- When Players resolve a story issue, another one must take its place. This does not need to happen right away, but a vacuum of power, the growth of influence, and changes within the world mean that new issues will always arise.

## EXAMPLE PROTAGONISTS

### Archivist Agent Wellington Thornhill Books

Agent Books comes from an English family of good breeding and generous means. He is the Chief in Charge of the Archives and, while not an active Field Agent, finds himself with Agent Eliza Braun out on investigation perhaps more often than intended. While Agent Books easily passed basic training, he possesses talents

and skills that he has chosen to remain hidden. He is an unusually skilled marksman as well as a dangerous man with a cane.

He prefers the filing of cases, notes, and evidence over the action of the field for reasons only he understands. An avid reader, he is also a shrewd researcher able to draw conclusions from the most obscure references across multiple case files.

Indeed, Agent Books has also admitted to a gentlemanly interest in engineering, or tinkering, as some might refer to it. He is responsible for the design, creation, and installation of the Analytical Engine in the Archives. When not lost in the depths of the Archives, he can be found messing about with code for the Analytical Engine or cogs, steam, and brass.

He always has a pot of tea nearby, though it may not be warm any longer.

Agent Books enjoys the fine arts, notably the opera, and prefers not to use weapons if at all possible. He places his trust in the intellect.

### Agent Eliza D. Braun

Born in New Zealand, Miss Eliza Braun was trained by her parents from an early age in the arts of hand-to-hand combat, sharpshooting, and the pouring of the perfect pint. Upon reaching her majority, she became an Agent of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences' New Zealand outpost. She worked her way up the ranks and through the various posts New Zealand had to offer, serving her nation and the British Empire.

Agent Braun was banished to the London Office by her nation's Prime Minister (although official records show this was a reassignment of indefinite nature), and through a series of rather explosive events in Antarctica, was assigned to the Archives. Under the dubious tutelage of Agent Books, she is developing a new set of skills that will only aid the Ministry and the British Empire.

Agent Braun maintains a rather elegant home in London, enjoying a high standard of living. She appreciates fine art, exquisite jewelry, and elegant clothing equally serviceable in appearance as well as functionality. Discarding traditional proprieties, Agent Braun has been known to choose trousers over skirts on occasion.

She is, in fact, quite fond of weaponry—most especially firearms—and carries many pistols in a variety of sizes and calibers. In particular, she always carries a specific pair of pistols with her: Barrels of gleaming brass with handles of ivory inlaid with pounamu, a deep green stone held sacred in New Zealand. The inlay design is a Hei-Hei, powerful symbol for good luck. Also, when given the choice between additional back up from the Ministry and more dynamite, she tends to opt for the ignitable option.



## Engineer Agent Doctor Josepha Raven Blackwell

*Yes, there were stories about  
Dr. Blackwell. Rumors of bloodthirsty  
flora and explosive contraptions.*

*—Women of the Empire*

Doctor Blackwell came to the Ministry straight from a fine ladies' finishing school in Switzerland—which had unexpectedly burnt to the ground under inconclusive circumstances. Coincidentally, an ætheraccelerator of Doctor Blackwell's design then came into production as part of the Ministry's regular arsenal.

As the Head Researcher in the Development Division, Doctor Blackwell has pioneered various biological and chemical concoctions to aid in missions. She is also known for her forward thinking work in massage devices for relieving female hysteria. Her devices have provided relief and calm to women across the British Empire.

In her spare time outside the Ministry, she has a continuing interest in exotic fauna. It has been whispered among some social circles that Doctor Blackwell has been known to feed nosy landladies to her *venus maximus nomininess*. She is also quite the devoted croquet player.

Blackwell is a petite woman with long dark hair and a large bosom that she keeps wrapped up in matronly fashions that are often associated with mourning. Her skin is very pale from all the hours spent indoors devising her experiments, and she never travels outdoors without her parasol. When reading, she wears circular spectacles.

## Engineer Agent Professor Hephaestus Axelrod

Having developed an interest in science and engineering at an exceedingly early age, Doctor Axelrod began his research in the field of matter transference with a series of independent experiments. These resulted in the unfortunate disappearance of a rather un-missed portion of Charing Cross. Having successfully proven the ability to remove matter, and do so repeatedly, he was taken under the tutelage of one Lord Hamish 'Mad' McTighe.

Doctor Axelrod continues his research for the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences and contributes to the Ministry's arsenal. There is, however, a constant need for beta testers and consequently always an opportunity in the laboratory for tall lads with nerves of steel, or at least anatomy of brass.

In his time outside the laboratory, Doctor Axelrod enjoys big game fishing. He also has a keen eye for fashion and indulges in tailoring his own garments. Agent Axelrod is a barrel-chested man whose exquisite clothing is often stained by his impressive experiments. His brown hair is disheveled and his full beard is perfectly kept.

## EXAMPLE ADVERSARIES

### Sophia del Morte

As deadly as she is beautiful, this Italian mercenary is multi-talented and possessed of an excellent seamstress. Signora del Morte is an accomplished assassin, cat burglar, and seductress. While the last skill set may aid in the accomplishment of many of her missions, it is a born talent and she exudes sensuality as naturally as breathing. She is a master of hand-to-hand combat, sharp-edged weapons, and small firearms. She is also well-versed in the use of various poisons.

In addition to her known dealings with the Phoenix Society and her completed contracts for the House of Usher, she has been suspected of involvement with The Maestro.

Little material evidence exists, but the Ministry has reliable intelligence implicating her in the murder of Agent Harrison Thorne, the abduction of Agent Wellington Thornhill Books, and the assassination of several members of the nobility.

Sophia del Morte enjoys fine cuisine and has been known to return to particular establishments employing chefs able to prepare dishes appealing to her discerning palate.

### Doctor Ravyn McCallister

Hailing from the Americas, Doctor McCallister was the first woman to receive a doctorate in the sciences from the state of Kentucky. Brilliant yet unhampered by a sense of right versus wrong, she is regarded as one of the leading minds in chemical engineering and biology. However, due to questionable ethics and a preference for the finer things, she offers her knowledge and skills to the highest bidder.

Known employers include the House of Usher, the Illuminati, and Methuselah's Order.

Her specialty lies with toxins, particularly those capable of shutting down neural functions and muscular response. She uses unique instruments to deliver her toxins to her victims and has gained notoriety in both the Baltimore, Maryland, and Richmond, Virginia, underworld for a particular poison delivery system, referred to in the archives as "The Masque of the Red Death." The toxin delivered by this instrument leaves the victim's lips and cheeks a vibrant scarlet color just prior to an untimely demise.

### Baron Dragomir Corb Corax Emilian Negrubine

Baron Dragomir Negrubine is a disgraced Baron of the Romanian countryside, kicked out by his own people after committing grave atrocities against them. Deposed, the Baron took up a life of crime, assuming new identities to conduct outrageous cons to steal money, resources, and make a grab at power. He is known for using cut-



ting-edge technology and impressive disguises to assume supernatural identities, preying on local superstitions to enact his nefarious schemes. The Baron has faked his death on at least three distinct occasions, each time escaping after he was presumed dead.

Currently believed to have commandeered an airship, the Baron has taken to the skies as a pirate, where he robs commercial airships. He is known for his flamboyance, ruthlessness, and incredible disguises. It is rumored that he has a familial connection to an Agent within the Ministry, though records on that are sealed. The Baron is tall and slim with long, dark hair, a rakish smile, hollow cheeks, and azure blue eyes. When he isn't in a disguise, he is often wearing a crimson Inverness cape. He wears an eye patch, but what eye is covered is inconsistent in accounts of his sightings and is to be treated as an affection, rather than a malady.

## NPCS

### AGENTS OF THE MINISTRY

#### Agent Kitty O'Toole

A living legacy, Kitty O'Toole is the daughter of the first female Agent of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences, Agent Melinda O'Toole. Her sweet disposition may have been inherited from her mother, but appearances often lull the unwary into a false sense of ease. Agent Kitty O'Toole is a shrewd and ruthless negotiator in addition to her mastery over the kendo, aikido, and shaolin disciplines. Specializing in y rei investigations and nensha cryptology, Agent O'Toole is remote and serves as the Ministry's liaison in Japan.

She makes good use of her spare time as a milliner and a sword-smith.

#### Agent Brandon Hill

Originally stationed in the field at the Ministry outpost in the dominion of Canada, Agent Hill came to the London headquarters as a Senior Field Agent. He is equally known for superb knife-fighting skills and the ability to survive harrowing encounters with wild animals. Survival skills aside, Agent Hill is also held in high regard and considered to have infallible control, reason, and judgment. He has the absolute trust of the Director of the Ministry.

Agent Hill also collects tropical spiders in his spare time, and enjoys holidaying in wilds of Africa for just this purpose.

#### Agent Maulik Smith

Specializing in the occult, Agent Maulik Smith has completed extensive studies in his area of expertise. His research has included time spent under the tutelage of the mystics of the east, shaman of the American plains, and even the thaumaturges of the Alps.

Having sustained terrible injuries in a fire, Agent Smith is reliant on the McTighe breathing apparatus to sustain his respiratory capabilities. Despite this need for technology to sustain his mortal existence, he remains a valuable member of the Ministry.

#### Agent Moira Templeton

Stationed in Shanghai, China, Field Agent Moira Templeton is also referred to in the case files of the Archives as the "Chinese Lantern." Her specialties lie in plant toxins, with a broader expertise in chemistry.

This Agent has partnered with Agent Braun on several occasions, emerging not only intact but also having earned several decorations for her work in the field. She is quite familiar with diplomacy, having been raised the child of British emissaries and also has a deep knowledge of the Chinese Buddhist religion. Ever adaptable to every social function, she can move with ease from Asian religious ceremonies to high society dinner parties keeping an ear open for intelligence. Her fluency with seven different languages lends to her ability to gather intelligence in places where diplomats gather.

#### Agent (Lady) Caroline of Sidman Hall

Rumors swirl around this particular Agent, and though she is the second daughter to Lord Victor of Sidman Hall, her standing in high society is dubious. Her family is considered to be of new money and perhaps even involved directly in industry. Casting off the usual expectations of marriage to a suitable young lord, Agent Caroline of Sidman Hall harbors a passion for ancient civilizations and is based in the Egyptian office of the Ministry.

Her upbringing amongst high society serves her well as a spy and where connections and skills might not be enough, her striking appearance and grace open many doors otherwise closed to her.

### MINISTRY SEVEN PLUS SERENA

*"Sometimes, Welly, when an Agent is in the field—particularly when the field is the Great City herself—you need to break convention. The Ministry Seven are very good at what they do."*

*~ Agent Eliza D. Braun*

On occasion, an Agent may take it upon themselves to maneuver beyond the protocols and regulations of the Ministry. Agent Eliza Braun is well known for such *creativity*. While the Ministry does not officially condone such action, a few of Agent Braun's unusual allies are worth mention, in particular, the Ministry Seven. (All eight of them.)

This group of street urchins runs errands for Agent Braun, and by association, Agent Books. They are skilled pickpockets, con artists in the making, and snoops. In short, they have the makings of excellent Agents if they continue to be instilled with a strong moral compass



and set of ethics. It would be preferable if they did not develop the same fondness for explosives as their mentor.

Christopher is the oldest of the Ministry Seven and de facto leader. He is about fifteen, perhaps, or sixteen at the most. A clever boy, he is not only quick to follow a line of investigation but makes a calculated bid for profit when the opportunity arises.

Liam is talented boy of ten years in age, capable of either reading lips or knocking your teeth in.

Colin is marked by brilliant blond hair. This eleven-year-old is one of the more talkative in the group.

In contrast, Callum has dark hair and bright blue eyes. This rather striking twelve-year-old does fairly well with his sums despite living on the streets.

Young Eric is a red-headed boy of ten years in age.

And then there are the Twins. Jonathan and Jeremy, bloody quiet and good at slipping in and out of places undetected. They also will interchange with one another when working a con (hence giving the impression to marks of being in two places at the same time, a trick that worked brilliantly on Harrison Thorne and Eliza Braun).

Finally, there is Serena. This little girl is a sweet blonde cherub, when not in desperate need of a bath.

## ALLIES AROUND THE WORLD

### Matilda Blanche Vanderfield

Heiress to the Vanderfield fortune of Maryland and living in the bustling metropolis of Chicago, Illinois of the United States, Matilda B. Vanderfield is quite possibly the most sought-after aviatrix in the world. She is known for assuring her cargo safe and secure passage to their destinations, be it important people or expensive properties.

Perhaps the reputation “*If it’s got wings and a prop engine, Matilda can fly it. And if she loses an engine, Matilda can land it!*” sounds like a wild boast at first, but it is indeed a business ethic for Vanderfield.

For Agents traveling far afield in the former colonies, Vanderfield is a well-respected ally.

.....  
*“Quite an exhilarating experience. Does wonders to steel one’s self before a suicide mission.”*

.....  
*—Agent Eliza D. Braun*  
.....

### Phailin

A case file exists in the Archives dating back to 1860, originally assembled by Agent John M. Alvey. One of the more peculiar cases, to be sure; a ring is included amongst the item inventory. Notations in the case file indicate that should an Agent of the Ministry be in need of aid when traveling in Siam, the ring would be a sign of allies to a mythological race called the kinaree.

Originally from the forests and mountains of the Himapan, the kinaree are a race of bird people able to pass as human when they shed their tail and wings. They are purported to have some paranormal powers and are thought to be long-lived.

If the veracity of case files can be believed, Phailin may indeed still be in Siam guarding the King in secret. A lithe woman of golden bronze skin and dark hair, Phailin has the wings and tail of a swan. She is a graceful dancer and fierce fighter with the ability to momentarily confuse her enemies upon making eye contact. According to Agent Alvey, she is able to fly and even carry a man a short distance through the air. Her feathers are able to purify water.

Tests conducted on the ring support these claims.

In Chapter Fifteen, you will see example character sheets for Player characters, antagonists, and NPCs. These are available for your use in your campaign or to draw on for inspiration in constructing your own.





ELIZA D. BRAUN  
Junior Archivist



LONDON OFFICE  
United Kingdom  
Archives

Well, that's the end of your training then. I certainly hope you have learned all you will need to keep yourself alive out there in the wide world of beauty and madness that is the domain of the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences.

I can promise you, that you will see some strange sights and meet some intriguing people, none of which you can ever tell to your nearest and dearest. Come to think of it, they wouldn't believe you even if you did!

It's a bumpy ride out there, living a life in the shadows, fighting the good fight, but when all is said and done, you're one of the elite in Her Majesty's government, and that is something most people can't say.

Just remember to keep your weapon loaded, your dynamite dry, and your chin up (Unless you are in a fist fight, where you should definitely protect it better than that). Send your reports back to the archives on time, since they are rather sticky about protocol. I'll read them and sigh, and Wellington will make sure they are filed correctly. Good luck and good hunting!

Cheers

*Eliza*

WELLINGTON T. BOOKS, ESQ.  
Chief Archivist



LONDON OFFICE  
United Kingdom  
Archives

As my junior has already said, welcome to the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences.

Do remember that, before setting off on a case, logistics are frightfully important.

Do make certain to come and spend some time with us here. Agent Braun and I will endeavor to prepare you for what lies ahead.

And perhaps even give you the best place to stop for an afternoon tea, or where in Budapest to find a proper pie for lunch.

Oh, one more thing—always remember to carry with you a bag of butterscotch lollies. You would be surprised how handy they are in the field.

With greatest respect,

*Wellington Thornhill Books, Esq.*

Wellington Thornhill Books, Esquire  
Chief Archivist



## Chapter Fifteen

# CHARACTER SHEETS

## ALL TYPE AND MANNER OF CHARACTER SHEETS PROVIDED FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE

A Character Sheet Template for Custom Characters as Well as Beloved Characters



Pre-Generated for Your Convenience, Including Non-Player Characters,



Villains, and Allies Alike, for Inclusion in Any Game.





## WELLINGTON THORNHILL BOOKS, SENIOR AGENT

HOME OFFICE: *London*

DEPARTMENT: *Archives*

AGE: *31*

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *The Best Secret Agent You've Never Heard Of*

TROUBLE: *There Is No Such Thing as a Petty Difference*

RECRUITMENT: *Archivist with an Eye on Engineering*

FIRST ASSIGNMENT: *Researcher of the Obscure*

ADVENTURE: *There Is Always a Strategy, Miss Braun*

### GADGET

HIGH CONCEPT: *Analytical Engine*

TROUBLE: *Large and Temperamental*

### SKILLS

GREAT (+4): *Mythology*

GOOD (+3): *Firearms, Fight*

FAIR (+2): *Deduction, Invention, Fencing*

AVERAGE (+1): *Stealth, Notice, Class, Will*

### STUNTS

LIVING LIBRARY: You are incredibly well educated, and this means that you've read about a wide variety of topics. You may spend a Fate Point to use Mythology in place of Deduction, Invention, Fight, or Medicine.

BARTITSU: You have studied Bartitsu, a mixed martial art designed for the modern gentleman. This form incorporates a walking stick into this martial art. If you happen to have your cane on your person, you gain +2 to your Fight in Attacks where you use your cane.

QUEENSBURY RULES: You were formally trained in boxing under certain rules and regulations. If your opponent is operating under these same rules, gain +2 to your Fight.

WALKING ARCHIVE: You are a walking archive of the Ministry. If it's filed in the Archives, there is a high possibility that you know about it. +2 to any rolls involving a fact or person that may be in Ministry records.

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐ ☐

Mental Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

### FIELD NOTES

Refresh: 2



## AGENT ELIZA D. BRAUN, FIELD AGENT

HOME OFFICE: *London*

DEPARTMENT: *Field Agent*

AGE: *28*

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Secret Agent in an Armored Corset*

TROUBLE: *Tempted to Make Things Go Boom*

RECRUITMENT: *My Heart Remains in New Zealand*

FIRST ASSIGNMENT: *Angel of Destruction*

ADVENTURE: *Ignition is Always an Option, Welly*

### GADGET

HIGH CONCEPT: *Hei-Hei Dual Pistols*

TROUBLE: *Specialized Ammunition in Limited Quantities*

### SKILLS

GREAT (+4): *Fight*

GOOD (+3): *Contacts, Firearms*

FAIR (+2): *Invention, Pilot, Stealth*

AVERAGE (+1): *Deduction, Notice, Physique, Wealth*

### STUNTS

MAU RAKAU: You have studied the way of the warrior in the martial art of the Maori of New Zealand, which focuses on using weapons in combat. In situations where you are armed with a cane or bladed weapon, you may roll Fight rather than Fencing.

MY RIGHT ARM: Your specially modified gun is dear to you, an extension of your right arm itself. It is noticeably different from other weapons, and nearly impossible to conceal. However, when you use this weapon, you gain +2 to your Firearms roll. This disappears if your weapon is damaged, modified, or taken from you.

HARMLESS: Your form of Stealth is all about appearing to be totally harmless. In situations where guards are on the lookout not simply for anyone, but for specific individuals, you escape notice not because they don't see you, but because they judge you to be totally innocuous.

MINISTRY SEVEN: You know a collection of street children who seem have their eyes and ears open to the movements of the underworld. Though they may occasionally ask you for food and a wash, they know when something big is going down, and can tip you off about it. +2 to any rolls having to do with the movement of the criminal underworld in London.

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐ ☐

Mental Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

### FIELD NOTES

Refresh: 2



## DOCTOR JOSEPHA RAVEN BLACKWELL, SENIOR AGENT

HOME OFFICE: *London*

DEPARTMENT: *Research and Design*

AGE: *24*

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Mad Scientist with a Heart of Gold*

TROUBLE: *Innocent in the Ways of the World*

RECRUITMENT: *Explosive Finishing School Experience*

FIRST ASSIGNMENT: *A Baroness in Exile Is Still a Baroness*

ADVENTURE: *Anything Can Become a Poison*

### GADGET

HIGH CONCEPT: *The Salvation of the Empire*

TROUBLE: *Inappropriate for Mixed Company*

### SKILLS

GREAT (+4): Invention

GOOD (+3): Class, Mythology

FAIR (+2): Deduction, Medicine, Will

AVERAGE (+1): Fight, Firearms, Stealth, Wealth

### STUNTS

LAB MASTER: When you have access to the full facilities of the Ministry lab, or another laboratory of equivalent facilities, you may add +2 to your Invention roll.

CHEMIST: You are an expert at the mixing of chemicals. When your invention centers around chemical concoctions (poisons, gases) you receive +2 bonus to their creation.

JEKYLL: Although you possess the skills of a healer, you have a special knack for devising poisonous concoctions. +2 to creating liquid or gaseous poisons that would cause harm when ingested or inhaled.

OCCULTIST: If it has to do with the supernatural, you know about it. +2 to any rolls having to do with the supernatural.

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐☐☐

Mental Stress: ☐☐☐

### FIELD NOTES

Refresh: 2



## PROFESSOR HEPHAESTUS AXELROD, SENIOR AGENT

HOME OFFICE: *London*

DEPARTMENT: *Research and Design*

AGE: *29*

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Inventor of the New Age*

TROUBLE: *The End is More Important Than the Means*

RECRUITMENT: *Student of the Great 'Mad' McTighe*

FIRST ASSIGNMENT: *Professor Rocketman*

ADVENTURE: *Just the Right Tool for the Job*

### GADGET

HIGH CONCEPT: *Rocket Powered Jetpack Spy Turtle*

TROUBLE: *Regular Care and Feeding*

### SKILLS

GREAT (+4): *Invention*

GOOD (+3): *Firearms, Mythology*

FAIR (+2): *Notice, Pilot, Will*

AVERAGE (+1): *Deduction, Fight, Physique, Stealth*

### STUNTS

ANYTHING IS A WEAPON, IN THE RIGHT HANDS: If you have time to alter, tinker and invent, you can turn any piece of technology into a weapon, regardless of the tools on hand. This may mean turning a listening device into a bomb, or turning the stays in a corset into a slingshot. Use this stunt to use Invention rather than Firearms for as long as your newly retooled weapon exists.

LAB MASTER: When you have access to the full facilities of the Ministry lab, or another laboratory of equivalent facilities, you may add +2 to your roll.

ACADEMIC COMMUNITY: You may use Mythology in place of Contacts if the contact you are searching for is in the academic community.

BOWLER HAT COMBAT: You can use your bowler hat as a ranged weapon. With its sharpened edge that is cleverly disguised under the rim, you have a unique and well-disguised weapon that is unlikely to attract attention. However, though your skill with this weapon gives it an excellent accuracy and range, it is, unfortunately, only a one-time use weapon until it can be retrieved. In close range, where a Fight skill would normally be called for, you may use your Firearms skill for this hat.

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

Mental Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

### FIELD NOTES

Refresh: 2



## SOPHIA DEL MORTE, ADVERSARY

AGE: 30

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Multi-Talented Mercenary*

TROUBLE: *In Debt to the Maestro*

ADD'L ASPECTS: *I Have A Tool For That; As Deadly as She Is Beautiful; A Friend in Every City*

### SKILLS

GREAT (+4): Theft

GOOD (+3): Fight, Stealth

FAIR (+2): Deceive, Fencing, Firearms, Sport

AVERAGE (+1): Contacts, Physique, Pilot, Provoke, Will

### STUNTS

CONTRAPTION: You may use Theft rather than Invention if you are engaged in repairing or creating a gadget that can be used to secure an item or group of items from theft, such as developing a secure safe.

FRIEND OF THE SHADOWS: Under the cover of darkness you are especially effective at disappearing. +2 to all Stealth rolls performed under cover of darkness.

KNOW YOUR OWN: You know the tracks of a thief, and you can tell where they've been. You may use Theft rather than Deduction to determine if an object is missing from a scene if it should be there.

YOU'VE GOT TO PICK A POCKET: When it comes to lifting something small out of someone's pocket, you are a master.

A POCKET: +2 to any challenges involving pickpocketing.

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

Mental Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

### FIELD NOTES

Highly Dangerous! Approach with Caution

Refresh: 2



## DOCTOR RAVYN McCALLISTER, ADVERSARY

AGE: 31

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Doctor of Toxins*

TROUBLE: *Unhampered by Right and Wrong*

ADD'L ASPECTS: *Inventor of Red Death; Notoriety in the Underworld; Leading Mind in Chemistry*

### SKILLS

GREAT (+4): Medicine

GOOD (+3): Contacts, Investigation

FAIR (+2): Mythology, Notice, Wealth

AVERAGE (+1): Deceive, Provoke, Rapport, Will

### STUNTS

CHEMIST: You are an expert at the mixing of chemicals. When your invention centers around chemical concoctions (poisons, gases) you receive +2 bonus to their creation.

JEKYLL: Although you possess the skills of a healer, you have a special knack for devising poisonous concoctions. +2 to creating liquid or gaseous poisons that would cause harm when ingested or inhaled.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: You have contacts among the ladies and gentlemen in pursuit of scientific truth. Whenever you are searching for someone who knows something about a particular scientific discovery or field, you gain +2 to your Contacts rolls.

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

Mental Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

### FIELD NOTES

Willing to work for the highest bidder.

Refresh: 2



## **"BARON" DRAGOMIR CORB CORAX EMILIAN NEGRUBINE, ADVERSARY**

AGE: 27

### **ASPECTS**

HIGH CONCEPT: *Master of Death and Disguise*

TROUBLE: *The Baron Comes First*

PAST ASPECT: *Born to Power, Live to Lead*

ADD'L ASPECTS: *Charismatic Conniving Cad; There Is Always an Exit*

### **GADGET**

HIGH CONCEPT: *Electro-Rapier*

TROUBLE: *Fire Hazard*

### **SKILLS**

GREAT (+4): Deceive

GOOD (+3): Provoke, Stealth

FAIR (+2): Fencing, Firearms, Notice

AVERAGE (+1): Class, Fight, Physique, Theft

### **STUNTS**

CARRAIGE: You appear to be a person of class, due to the way you speak and carry yourself. Perhaps it was very important to your mother than you speak "correctly", or perhaps the lord of the manor took you under his wing. Whatever the background, you can pass for social classes above your own and may use Deceive in place of, and in addition to, any Class rolls that are called for.

PREPARED FOR THE  
EVENTUALITY: You are incredibly forward-thinking and anticipated that events might take the direction that they have. Once per game, you can generate **OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS** with a single free invocation for the circumstances that have arisen.

SOFT SPOT: You instinctually figure out people's soft spots without ever having exchanged a conversation with them. Just a quick once over will give you the ammo you need. You do not need to know your target in order to attack them mentally.

### **STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES**

Physical Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

Mental Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

### **FIELD NOTES**

Always armed, not who you think he is, charismatically dangerous.

Refresh: 3



# NPC EXAMPLES: AGENTS OF THE MINISTRY

## KITTY O'TOOLE, JUNIOR AGENT

DEPARTMENT: *Field Agent*      AGE: *22*

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *A Living Legacy of the Ministry*  
TROUBLE: *Too Sweet to Be Taken Seriously*  
RECRUITMENT: *Broke New Ground*  
ADD'L ASPECTS: *Sweet Appearances Are Deceiving*  
*Martial Arts Master*

### SKILLS

GREAT (+4): Deceive  
GOOD (+3): Deduction, Fight  
FAIR (+2): Empathy, Firearms, Rapport  
AVERAGE (+1): Contacts, Fencing, Ride, Will

### STUNTS

MARTIAL ARTS (FIGHT)  
QUEENSBURY RULES (FIGHT)  
URBAN SNIPER (FIREARMS)

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐☐☐  
Mental Stress: ☐☐

### FIELD NOTES

Refresh: 2

## BRANDON HILL, SENIOR AGENT

DEPARTMENT: *Field Agent*      AGE: *33*

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Agent from the Wild*  
TROUBLE: *Partners Are Liabilities*  
RECRUITMENT: *The City Is Just a Brick Jungle*  
ADD'L ASPECTS: *Wisdom of the Wilderness*  
*Trustable Face*

### SKILLS

GREAT (+4): Will  
GOOD (+3): Deduction, Notice  
FAIR (+2): Fight, Firearms, Stealth  
AVERAGE (+1): Contacts, Empathy, Mythology,  
Rapport

### STUNTS

HEART OF STEEL (WILL)  
MIND OVER BODY (WILL)  
WEAK SPOT (DEDUCTION)

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐☐☐  
Mental Stress: ☐☐

### FIELD NOTES

Refresh: 2



## MAULIK SMITH, SENIOR AGENT

DEPARTMENT: *Field Agent* AGE: *35*

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Secret Agent Mystic*

TROUBLE: *Without McTighe, I Die*

RECRUITMENT: *No Mountain Higher Than the Ministry*

ADD'L ASPECTS: *Truth Is Stranger Than Magic*  
*Thaumaturgic*

### SKILLS

GREAT (+4): Mythology

GOOD (+3): Deduction, Notice

FAIR (+2): Contacts, Empathy, Will

AVERAGE (+1): Arts, Deceive, Fight, Invention,  
Firearms

### STUNTS

OCCULTIST (MYTHOLOGY)

UNINTERRUPTED OBSERVATION (DEDUCTION)

WALKING ARCHIVE (DEDUCTION)

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐ ☐

Mental Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

### FIELD NOTES

Refresh: 3

## MORIA TEMPLETON, SENIOR AGENT

DEPARTMENT: *Field Agent* AGE: *28*

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *Decorated Agent of the Military*

TROUBLE: *Recognizable Face*

RECRUITMENT: *There Is Always a Diplomatic Solution*

ADD'L ASPECTS: *At Home at Any Party*  
*Agent Braun and I Have History*

### SKILLS

GREAT (+4): Mythology

GOOD (+3): Medicine, Rapport

FAIR (+2): Deduction, Fight, Invention, Will

AVERAGE (+1): Contacts, Deceive, Firearms,  
Stealth

### STUNTS

CHEMIST (INVENTION)

JEKYLL (MEDICINE)

LIVING LIBRARY (MYTHOLOGY)

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

Mental Stress: ☐ ☐

### FIELD NOTES

Refresh: 3

## LADY CAROLINE SIDMAN, SENIOR AGENT

DEPARTMENT: *Field Agent* AGE: *29*

### ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: *High Society Secret Agent*

TROUBLE: *Something to Prove*

RECRUITMENT: *Not Daddy's Little Girl Anymore*

ADD'L ASPECTS: *Never Forgets a Face*  
*Expert of Ancient Civilizations*

### SKILLS

GREAT (+4): Rapport

GOOD (+3): Class, Wealth

FAIR (+2): Deduction, Empathy, Mythology,  
Notice

AVERAGE (+1): Contacts, Fight, Firearms, Stealth

### STUNTS

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION (RAPPORT)

LIFE OF THE PARTY (RAPPORT)

NEW MONEY (WEALTH)

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐ ☐

Mental Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐

### FIELD NOTES

Refresh: 3



# NPC CONTACTS

## MINISTRY SEVEN

### CHRISTOPHER

ASPECT: *The Leader of the Pack*

#### SKILLS

GOOD (+3): Rapport

FAIR (+2): Fight

AVERAGE (+1): Provoke

#### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐

Mental Stress: ☐

### LIAM

ASPECT: *Teeth-Knocking Tough Kid*

#### SKILLS

GOOD (+3): Fight

FAIR (+2): Physique

AVERAGE (+1): Provoke

#### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐

Mental Stress: ☐

### COLIN

ASPECT: *Swift-Tongued Street Kid*

#### SKILLS

GOOD (+3): Deceive

FAIR (+2): Rapport

AVERAGE (+1): Notice

#### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐

Mental Stress: ☐

### CALLUM

ASPECT: *Clever Boy*

#### SKILLS

GOOD (+3): Notice

FAIR (+2): Deduction

AVERAGE (+1): Contacts

#### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐

Mental Stress: ☐

### YOUNG ERIC

ASPECT: *Risk-Taking Street Inventor*

#### SKILLS

GOOD (+3): Deduction

FAIR (+2): Provoke

AVERAGE (+1): Invention

#### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐

Mental Stress: ☐

### JONATHAN

ASPECT: *Slippery as an Eel*

#### SKILLS

GOOD (+3): Stealth

FAIR (+2): Invention

AVERAGE (+1): Physique

#### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐

Mental Stress: ☐



## JEREMY

ASPECT: *Quiet as the Grave*

### SKILLS

GOOD (+3): Stealth

FAIR (+2): Physique

AVERAGE (+1): Invention

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐

Mental Stress: ☐

## SERENA

ASPECT: *Cherub of the Sheets*

### SKILLS

GOOD (+3): Deceive

FAIR (+2): Stealth

AVERAGE (+1): Arts

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐

Mental Stress: ☐

## MATILDA BLANCE VANDERFIELD

ASPECT: *Dashing Aviatrix*

### SKILLS

GOOD (+3): Pilot

FAIR (+2): Wealth

AVERAGE (+1): Sport

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐

Mental Stress: ☐

## PHAILIN

ASPECT: *A Swan of Siam*

### SKILLS

GOOD (+3): Stealth

FAIR (+2): Deceive

AVERAGE (+1): Rapport

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐

Mental Stress: ☐

## EXAMPLE NPC SHEET

ASPECT:

### SKILLS

GOOD (+3):

FAIR (+2):

AVERAGE (+1):

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐

Mental Stress: ☐



## AGENT:

HOME OFFICE:

DEPARTMENT:

AGE:

## ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT:

TROUBLE:

RECRUITMENT:

FIRST ASSIGNMENT:

ADVENTURE:

## GADGET

HIGH CONCEPT:

TROUBLE:

## SKILLS

GREAT (+4):

GOOD (+3):

FAIR (+2):

AVERAGE (+1):

## STUNTS

## STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Physical Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Mental Stress: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

## FIELD NOTES

Refresh: \_\_\_\_\_



# QUICK REFERENCE

## CHARACTER CREATION AND RULES REFERENCE

 A Brief Summary of the Character Creation Process, Skills List, Fate Ladder, Four Actions and Outcomes, and the Types of Aspects in The Ministry Initiative. 

### CHARACTER CREATION CHECKLIST

- Choose a name for your character.
- Choose a High Concept.
- Choose a Trouble.
- Choose a Gadget aspect (one negative/one positive).
- Choose Recruitment aspect.
- Choose First Mission aspect.
- Choose Adventure aspect.

### YOUR FILE

- Choose a name.
- Choose a department.
- Choose your home office.
- Choose seniority: Junior or Senior Agent.

### SKILLS

- 1 skill at Great (+4)
- 2 skills at Good (+3)
- 3 skills at Fair (+2)
- 4 skills at Average (+1)

All Agents are required to take these four skills, though they may choose at what level to rank them: Deduction, Fight, Firearms, Stealth.

### STUNTS AND REFRESH

Choose three to five stunts. For each stunt above three, reduce refresh by one point to a minimum of one.

### STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Calculate stress and consequences. Agents begin with two stress and one mild, one moderate, and one severe consequence. Adjust this with Agent seniority and Physique and Will skills.

After following these directions, your Agent should have a complete file with this information: A name, department, home office, Junior or Senior designation, six aspects (High Concept, Trouble, Gadget, and three others), skills (one great, two good, three fair, and four average) between three and five stunts, a mental and physical stress track (two to four each), and a refresh (one to three Fate Points).

### FOR THE IMPULSIVE: QUICK CHARACTER CREATION

Once upon a time, people took care and time with their character creation, but I suppose, modern times being what they are, we must oblige the impulsive and impatient among you who simply cannot wait another instant before diving headfirst into our gear-laden, steamy world.

If you desire to create a character flying by the seat of your petticoats, adding bit by bit between the first few sessions, we have a method for your considerable madness. At absolutely minimum, you simply must choose:

**1. A name:** You just aren't going to get by without one, so chin up and chest out, old chap. If you decide later that it was a nickname, or code name, or cover name, that's



simply fine with us. We promise not to send you any disagreeable letters about it.

**2. Your High Concept:** This is at the very center of your character, so give it a go, will you? Come now, you must have this in you. You can change it later if necessary.

**3. Your best skill:** What in heavens are you going to roll without choosing your best skill? We have a list, man, just pick one, write it down and get going. Close your eyes, point to one of the skill pages and think of the Empire.

With this rather slapdash method, you'll start with three refresh, so you'll begin with three Fate Points. After you've finished the first session, should you ever want to come back to this poor, unfleshed skeleton of an Agent again, you must take the time to fill in the rest of the aspects, skills and stunts, as well as choosing your department, home office and if you are a Junior or Senior Agent. We've rather streamlined the process, so I do think you have it in you. Chin up. Think of the Empire.

## SKILLS LIST

Skill List: Arts, Contacts, Class, Deceive, Deduction\*, Empathy, Fight\*, Firearms\*, Invention, Medicine, Mythology, Notice, Pilot, Physique, Provoke, Rapport, Ride, Sport, Stealth\*, Theft, Will, Wealth

\*Required Skills

## RULES REFERENCE

### THE LADDER

| Descriptor | Value |
|------------|-------|
| Legendary  | +6    |
| Epic       | +5    |
| Superb     | +4    |
| Great      | +3    |
| Good       | +2    |
| Fair       | +1    |
| Average    | 0     |
| Mediocre   | -1    |
| Poor       | -2    |
| Terrible   | -3    |
| Abysmal    | -4    |

## FOUR ACTIONS

**Overcome:** This describes taking action against a challenge related to your skills. This may be a difficult task or an obstacle. When you succeed, you Overcome this challenge and achieve your goal.

**Create an Advantage:** This action is all about creating an aspect the character, or their fellow Agents, might use to their advantage. It's snow in the eyes of an enemy or it's knowing about a secret affair. Creating an Advantage gives Players the opportunity to create aspects and gain free invocations.

**Attack:** When characters use a skill to Attack, they are attempting to harm another character. This harm need not be physical, it can affect social standing or psychological well-being.

**Defend:** When characters use skill to Defend, they are attempting to keep someone from harming them during an Attack, getting past them, or Creating an Advantage against them or another Player.

## FOUR OUTCOMES

- Fail
- Tie (0 shifts)
- Succeed (1-2 shifts)
- Succeed with style (+3 shifts)

## ASPECTS

**Types:** Character aspects, Gadget aspects, Game aspects, Situation aspects, consequences, and boosts.

**Invoking:** Costs a Fate Point or free.

**Compelling:** Accept a complication for a Fate Point.





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**EEBLE GRANNY?**

**OT ONE PENNY  
O YOUR NAME?**

**OU POOR WRETCH!**

**THE ASHFIELD CLINIC**  
IS THE  
PERFECT  
PLACE FOR YOU  
AND YOUR LOVED ONES

he illustrious DOCTOR SMITH practices only  
e cutting edge of medical advances & offers his  
ill free of any and all charges for those who, like  
are most destitute & downtrodden & deserving

Our patients leave so fit they  
ften seek employment abroad!

YOU A CONCERNED CITIZEN WHO FEELS AS IF THE  
**EMPIRE**  
AS FALLEN DOWN AND GONE TO SEED?

CITIZEN, DO YOU FEEL AS IF NOTHING HAS  
**IMPROVED**  
NCE THE LOSS OF THE AMERICAN COLONIES?

VE FEEL THE SAME!  
OU NEED THE PHEONIX SOCIETY!

nd your particulars to DR. DEVERAUX HAVELOCK  
Skyfall Estate, 1 Lionsgate Way.

are an exclusive, noteworthy & completely discreet  
iety with nothing less than a priority dedication to  
concerns, destiny & well-being of the classic British  
tleman.

upon review, we find your lineage acceptable & your  
iculars are in order, we will contact you.

EM: Visit newly-opened RAVEN'S MASQUERADE  
your next costumed ball or other entirely legitimate  
ason to obscure your appearance! A selection of the  
ighest quality mustaches, body-shape garments &  
dded shoes of the wrong size that, when leaving any  
ression in the earth, will not give away your true size!

No request too bizarre! Ask for: THE BARON!

you need evidence for divorce, bigamy, county court,  
ther cases? Do you feel you cannot turn to the local &  
ventional authorities? Have you lost something that  
more than precious and do not know to whom to turn?

**CALL ON SINGH**

ective AISHWARYA SINGH and her staff of highly  
rained & inordinately perceptive lady investigators  
re at your service! No stone will be left unturned, no  
ness unquestioned, no guilty party unapprehended!  
hat's the SINGH DETECTIVE AGENCY promise!

ITEM: In hot water with the constabulary? Need to get  
out of town fast? Travel the Skies with THE BARON!  
Inquire with the old witch woman sitting at the bar at the  
Dusty Raven pub by the docks (do not mention her eye)

ITEM: John & Jane Doe found in Thames. No clothing.  
Palms were stitched together in "prayer" position &  
"HE IS HERE" was branded on each back. Inquiries for  
identification should be made at the CITY MORGUE

ITEM: 豪斯昨晚被攻擊的老婦人。這個女人是重要督察滿。  
任何有關這次攻擊的信息，應當報倫敦警方盡快 不要害怕

ITEM: Any and all information concerning "BARON"  
DRAGOMIR is hereby WANTED. He is a Pirate,  
Larcenist, Kidnapper, Insurrectionist & Assassin. Last  
seen on the Island of Skye plummeting to his apparent  
doom. There is reason to believe the reports of his death  
is greatly exaggerated, as are the fabrications that he is a  
wizard, vampire or a werewolf. Authorities believe this  
"BARON" is currently at large & diabolically dangerous

**DAPPER MAN  
POMADE**  
DAPPER MEN USE DAPPER MAN

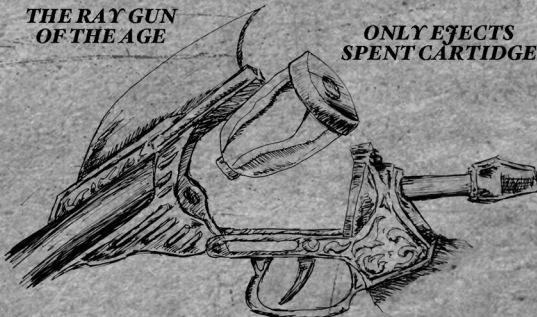
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UNPREPARED FOR ASSAILANTS?**

"It is to meet eventualities of the kind, where a person is  
confronted suddenly in an unexpected way, that I have  
introduced a new style of self-defence, which can be very  
terrible in the hands of a quick and confident exponent."

--E.W. Barton-Wright, creator of Bartitsu  
and founder of the Bartitsu Club

**BARTITSU**

has been devised with a view to impart to peacefully disposed  
men the science of defending themselves against ruffians or  
bullies, and comprises not only boxing but also the use of the  
stick, feet, & a very tricky & clever style of Japanese wrestling,  
in which weight and strength play only a very minor part.



**SHOULD APPEAL TO  
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(see that you have none other)

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per Pound  
included

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NO LONGER UNKNOWN

This is the  
Choicest &  
most Carefully  
Selected Coffee,  
'Roasted on the Russian  
Principle' & mixed with the  
Finest Minsk Chicory

LATVINSKY & COMPANY,  
274 Regent Circus, Oxford St

ITEM: Need to Leave Town? Desire an Employer Who  
Doesn't Ask Questions? Booted from the armed forces?  
Trouble with the law? Need coin quick? Then you, Sir  
Madam, should make haste & Travel the Skies with THE  
BARON! THE BARON can help even those with the  
most salted background with Gainful Employment on  
sky vessel the likes of which you have never before seen.  
Inquires should be delivered to the Dusty Raven pub  
No dress code.

ITEM: Test subjects needed for next breakthrough  
scientific discovery. Must have no fear of heights &  
of original teeth. Inquire at the Ministry of Peculiar  
Occurrences. Ask for Axelrod.

**TOTAL BALDNESS**

Everyone in America has  
heard about the extraordinary  
case of Christopher Doulas,  
of Philadelphia who  
became totally bald  
through a violent  
attack of fever, &  
whose hair was  
completely restored  
in less than six months  
by Van Knickerbocker's  
HIRSUTINE, the great  
American Hair Producer.  
We guarantee that there  
is no preparation in the  
world that so rapidly &  
surely produces profusions  
of Hair, Whiskers,  
Moustachios, Eyelashes, &  
Eyebrows as  
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