FATE
C+DEX

**VOLUME 1
ANTHOLOGY**

FATE CODEX

VOLUME 1 ANTHOLOGY

MAGPIE GAMES

CONTENTS

GAME CREATION TIPS: MANAGING THE CONVERSATION

by LEONARD BALSERA

FATE CORE describes a process of collaborative game creation, where everyone participating in the game sits down and, from the vast reaches of empty nothingness, produces an awesome world with dramatic tension to play in.

The hard truth is, doing this isn't always easy. The game creation chapter is a set of tools for you to use, but it's not a magic spell. The hard part—the work of joining creative minds in a collaborative atmosphere—still falls to you and your group.

Here's some advice on how to manage it.

Bringing Your Best You

For as much as we claim to value the experience, it's kind of amazing how little we (myself included) pay attention to what state we're in when we show up to game. We're all busy, burdened by the thousand tiny (and not so tiny) stresses of work and life. We all throw ourselves into various forms of recreation, and we all need to recharge.

Yes, gaming is fun and a great way to blow off steam. Game *creation* is a little different, though—it requires an effort similar to team sports and it expends energy, albeit mental rather than physical. Active, spontaneous imagining is taxing, and it pays dividends to make sure that, if you're going to do it, you're in the best shape you can be.

Obviously, you can't control when stressors are going to show up and then magically plan your game around them. But you *can* control some things. Have you rested before the game? Have you eaten? Where's your energy level? What kind of mood are you in?

It sounds silly, but checking in with yourself before you get to the game can make a huge difference for game creation. The other players are relying on your input as much as you're relying on theirs. If you feel like the session is something you have to endure or "tough out," all your energy will go to maintaining instead of participating, or worse, your resentment will bleed into what you create.

Don't be afraid to be *really* honest with yourself about how much you're able to engage with the group, and do what you need to do to get into a good headspace. Take a nap. Get some grub. Blow off steam before you start with a rant session and a couple of beers. Play a board game or watch a movie. Be kind to yourself. It'll pay off.

And if you're really, really not feeling it, don't be afraid to reschedule.

> If there's one dirty secret to Fate game creation, it's this: *to do it, you have to want to do it.*

The Collaborative Frame of Mind

If there's one dirty secret to Fate game creation, it's this: *to do it, you have to want to do it.*

Every time I've talked to people in depth about game creation gone wrong, as well as every time it's gone belly up on me, there's always someone in the group I can point to who didn't *really* want to collaborate. I don't mean that there was an obvious troll out to undermine other players or do anything malicious, but there was someone who, push come to shove, wasn't open to the ideas of others. They were set in what they wanted to see or not see.

If you come to the table like that, your session will stall. The tools in Fate Core will help you if you use them in good faith, but they can't stand as a substitute for that good faith. This doesn't mean that not wanting to collaborate is *bad*, per se. It just is what it is. If you're having this problem and you're open and upfront about it, you can reach a middle ground, which I'll get into later.

Here are some of my favorite ways to stay on the collaborative track.

CONFIRM AND BUILD (OR "YES, AND...")

This is an old chestnut from improv theater.

Don't deny, undermine, or reject anyone's suggestions about anything, regardless of your initial, visceral reaction. (There are exceptions! If you're really going to ruin someone's fun, like with triggering or controversial content, or the group vetoes it as a whole, don't go there.)

Instead, look at the things your friends say as *opportunities*, and *help them out* by offering more detail or greater justification for what they suggest.

So, if you're making a fantasy setting, and someone is like, "…and there should be robots," you might be tempted to say no.

Instead, take a breath. Think about how you might make that cool. Maybe they're magical constructs. Say that. Someone asks if they're common. Say they're not common. Someone adds that there's an elite cabal of wizard-craftsmen who make these things. Someone else says that it's an ultra rare thing to have even one in your army. Then say, "So what if there was one feared military power that had *five* of them?"

Now you're going in a direction that's way cooler than if you stopped and said, "How do you have robots in medieval fantasy? Forget that."

BE SIMPLE; BE OBVIOUS

Here's another one from improv training. It's almost axiomatic that the harder you try to be anything on the fly—whether it's dramatic, or funny, or thrilling—the worse you're going to do. You're already a fertile ground of imaginative and interesting ideas, but you don't think of them as imaginative and interesting because they're *yours*. Maybe your ideas are rough around the edges, but you have excellent pattern-matching machines to help you refine them, aka the minds of your fellow players.

Though it may seem paradoxical, don't work too hard to come up with an idea that's going to be impressive or interesting. Don't try to be fascinating. Say the first thing that comes to mind. Let the other people at the table be the judge, and give them the freedom to build on what you've got. You never know what they'll consider brilliant.

Hearts of Steel, from the FATE CORE book, is a good example of this. The initial pitch grew from a phrase I read on Rob Donoghue's blog: "Two Guys With Swords." So I brought that to the table, in all its fantasy cliché goodness. The response I got back immediately was: "Why two?" and someone said, "Maybe it's an odd man out thing…two guys with swords, and one weirdo." Then, "Guy *without* sword!" And we had a laugh, and thus Zird the Arcane was born.

ABANDON YOUR PRECONCEPTIONS

The game you make in Fate Core will not be the game(s) you have in your mind when you show up. It will not resemble that game at all, or anything you'd have thought of on your own.

Not only is that okay, it's kind of the point. You have to leave your preconceptions at the door.

Holding onto an idea too tight will impair your ability to collaborate. Of course, you should advocate for what interests you. Whatever you're fired up about should be the first stuff out of your mouth. But what you suggest to the group is just that—a suggestion, and no more. The other

players will add to and develop those suggestions, and you should let them, because they're showing you what fires *them* up, what'll make them eager to game with you.

If we'd held onto preconceptions, we would never had developed "a supers setting" into "super kung fu" into "a super kung fu monkey" into "a super cyber-enhanced kung fu monkey" into "a whole sect of super cyber-enhanced kung fu monkeys" into "a whole sect of super cyber-enhanced kung fu monkeys who have meditative chats over wine," which is perhaps the best illustration in the FATE CORE book. You are welcome.

LEAVE BLANKS ON PURPOSE

It's easy to fall into the trap of wanting make your world perfectly consistent and rival the worlds your favorite authors have made.

You don't need to do that. Many of the coolest twists and developments in the settings you love (especially in television) happened because the author left blanks on purpose and then figured out what they meant later, drawing on the strength of creative pattern-matching to make it seem like they'd planned everything in advance.

> If you're at a roadblock on some element of your game's premise, simply leave it blank.

You can do this too. If you're at a roadblock on some element of your game's premise, simply leave it blank—decide that whatever question you're trying to answer is one of the things you're going to deal with in play. Allow it to take on the power of mystery.

In FATE CORE's *Extras* chapter, we tease a setting called *Ancestral Affairs*, where the PCs draw power from ancestral spirits and use them to (what else?) fight crime. If you're building that setting and you ask, "What is the precise nature of the guardian spirits?," you might wander through hours of tangent as people explore different answers to that question.

If you leave it blank on purpose, then "uncovering the nature of the guardian spirits" could become what the campaign's about, or something you use to reflect character diversity by having different people believe different things about them.

Formal Techniques

The biggest obstacle to making a Fate Core game is decision paralysis. Even with the constraints we give in the book (drama, competence, proactivity), there's an infinity of games you could make. You want to narrow that down.

"WANT" AND "DO NOT WANT" LISTS

You remember where I said above that if you have an idea and you don't want to collaborate on it, you should just be honest about it upfront?

Here's why: your "must haves" and "must avoids" make an excellent starting point for talking about what game you're going to make.

Before you start out, grab an index card and make two columns on it (or use two index cards, as long as you can see the results side by side). One column is for things you really want to see, and the other for things you really *do not* want to see.

Everyone should write down one of each. It can be just about any trope you recognize from media—a genre, a character type, a setting element, or a plot device—as long as you can state it concisely and clearly (if you can't, converse about it instead until you can).

WANT

- Fantasy elements
- Ancient, forgotten kingdoms
- Dragons
- Medieval gadgetry

DO NOT WANT

- Omnipresent magic
- Overt adult themes
- Monocultural fantasy races
- Sexism
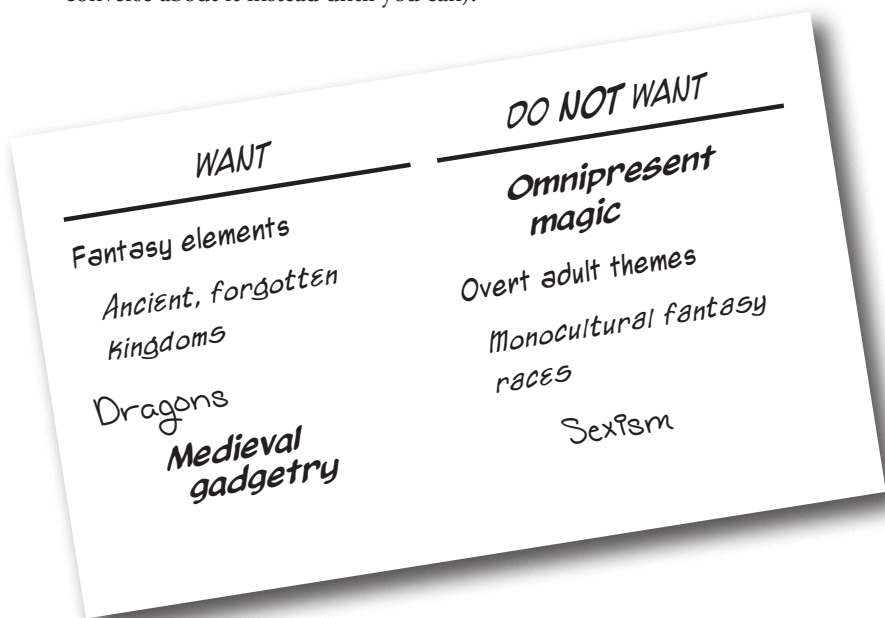
Once you have that list, look at it as a whole, and think about what game ideas could incorporate as many of those wants as possible. Some ideas are probably going to jump into your head immediately when you see the "want" list elements together. Voice them! Start the conversation! And don't worry if you don't get them all right off the bat—you can always use them as goalposts for later in the campaign.

If one person has a "want" that's similar to or exactly what someone else has as a "do not want," put an asterisk or other mark by it before passing

on the card. That's a signal to invite the other person to talk about their objection and see if there's a way to modify your "want" into something they'll be okay with.

You might discover that you run into a strong "want" or a fun-spoiling "do not want" in the middle of conversation, also. That's okay! Add them to the list and use that to refine your constraints.

BREAK DOWN COMMON MEDIA

You and your friends probably have at least some shared experiences watching the same television shows or movies, or reading the same books.

If you can settle on a broad genre, try picking a few examples you all have in common, then break down their elements and tropes. Do this like the "want" and "do not want" lists above, but pick things specific to those media properties. If you only use one property, then that list should be enough; if you do two or three, you'll want to narrow it down further into a single list that grabs "do" and "do not" elements from all of them.

Then, see if those elements give you any ideas, as above. Don't try to make a copycat of the properties you just analyzed, but think about how *else* those same ideas might apply.

(A more detailed treatment of this process is part of Jason Pitre's Spark RPG, and I'll admit that I'm a little jealous he found a way to implement it before I did.)

Another way to do this is to name a cliché or trope that everyone understands and is familiar with from other fiction, and then give it *one* unusual twist, whatever comes to mind. You'd be surprised at how just that one bit of added complexity can stir interest and ideas. (If you need proof of this, you need not look any further than the BBC's Sherlock, which milks "Sherlock Holmes but in the modern day" for everything it's worth.)

STAR WARS

WANT	DO NOT WANT
A sense of grandeur	Cute for cuteness' sake
Crazy spaceship battles	"The bad guy is my father" plot twist
Quasi-mystical abilities	Clumsy racial analogs
Sticking it to the man	Over-explaining mysteries

THE TV GUIDE SUMMARY

The techniques above are all about putting constraints on the front end of the process, but it's also helpful to put constraints on the back end of the process, giving you a goal to reach.

One such goal could be like the summaries you see in TV listings such as TV GUIDE. They look like this:

"In (name of game), a group of (main character tie) do (main show action), in a (genre) world where (major setting detail(s)). Rated (rating)."

Being able to articulate what your game's about in these terms is a good way of making sure that everyone's on the same page and on board with the idea, so you can get to creating issues and drilling down from there. The main character tie is whatever important commonality binds the characters together, and the main show action is whatever general thing the characters are doing week to week on a reliable basis. In STAR TREK, it's Starfleet officers exploring the planet of the week, and in FRINGE, it's scientists solving what seems to be a supernatural crime. Of course, you'll deviate from the main action, but it should work as a rough overview of your game.

For the example game in FATE CORE, *Hearts of Steel*, it might look something like this:

"In *Hearts of Steel*, a trio of troubleshooters (more like troublemakers) for hire do odd jobs for various fief lords and other moneyed interests, in a fantasy world where petty kings squabble over the remnants of a once-unified empire. Rated M."

Solo Fun, Together

As I said, if you're having trouble getting into the collaborative mindset and you're more used to the GM presenting a strong idea that the rest of the group goes along with, you can meet the FATE CORE rules in the middle. They're flexible; you won't break them.

> You're doing it right if everyone's having fun.

GMs, if you have a game idea you really want to run, and no one minds, come to the table with your current and impending setting issues already written down. Then, invite the players to develop that foundation further, by discussing the idea, naming organizations or locations, and coming up with issues for those together.

If you have one or two players really interested in a setting element, go ahead and delegate them as the "boss" of that particular element, leading the conversation about it. If no one else has input, just let them make up whatever they want. Everyone doesn't always have to participate in every part of the collaborative process, as long as there's an overall sense of people checking in with and listening to each other.

Character creation is also a foundation for worldbuilding, and it's okay to flit back and forth between them. If you need to have a piece of the game you "own," start character creation earlier on, and if you end up naming any setting bits you're tied to, go back into chatting as a group until you've fleshed that out, and then return to making your character.

Don't Worry About Getting It Wrong

Fate Core uses collaboration as a tool to get you invested in each other's ideas and inject some surprises along the way. It's simple, but again, it's not necessarily *easy*. You're doing it right if everyone's having fun. Hopefully, these tools and suggestions will help you get the ball rolling and keep your sessions lively, as they have for me.

Happy creating! ✚

LOCK AND LOAD: USING AMMO IN FATE

by BRIAN ENGARD

Fate isn't a game that cares how many bullets you have left. In Fate, a gun is flavor; it's a narrative device that allows you to use your Shoot skill. It's not inherently more dangerous than a fist or a knife or a tire iron, and the only mechanical differences between these various implements of grievous injury are the skill you use and the range at which you can use them.

But what if you want to separate guns out a bit, make them different? What if you want to know how much ammunition you have left for your P90, or—if we use the term "guns" broadly—how many arrows you have left for your compound bow?

> If your gun can run out of ammo, then *the world feels more real*, more believable.

There are a few reasons you might want to include ammo in your game. First and foremost in many people's minds is verisimilitude: if your gun can run out of ammo, then the world feels more real, more believable. It's a simulation of a particular aspect of reality that Fate glosses over in favor of narrative importance or cinematic action, and adding some measure of limitation to guns can make them feel more dangerous or important.

You might also like the tactical decisions that ammo limitations can enforce. If you only have six shots in your revolver then you're going to use them that much more carefully.

Finally, sometimes additional mechanical complexity can be good. I'm a gearhead to some extent; I like rules, I like the way they interact with each other, and I like seeing what happens when they meet in play. Fate already has plenty of meat, but some people want a little more.

In this article you'll find three options for tracking ammo:

- **Counting Bullets** gives you rules for tracking your individual shots.
- **The Ammo Track** gives you boxes you can check off when you need to spend a little more ammo.
- **Ammo Aspects** gives you a way to handle ammo as a spendable aspect.

Counting Bullets

If you want a high fidelity rule that more closely represents reality (or at least fictional reality), you can count individual bullets. This rule has the advantage of being simple to implement, but it has the disadvantage of imposing a lot of bookkeeping on the game, as well as imposing a limitation on guns and other ammo-driven weapons that Fate doesn't normally account for.

Assume that when you shoot your gun, you're using up a bullet; count it off. For each gun on your character sheet, track its ammo using the actual number of bullets it holds (if you know it), or make something up that feels right (if you don't). Figure out how many spare magazines or clips you have so you can reload when you need to. Reloading is an action, but you can spend a fate point to make it a free action.

Some guns might allow you to fire a burst or open up with full autofire. Both of these options use the Weapon rules (see page 277 of Fate Core). Use the following guidelines for tracking bullets:

- *Burst Fire:* If you're using a weapon that supports short burst fire, you can use it any time you'd use the attack action. Mark off 3 bullets and increase the gun's Weapon rating by 1 for that attack.

- *Autofire:* If you're just holding down the trigger and spraying, mark off about a quarter of your gun's total ammo. Increase the gun's Weapon rating by 1 for the attack, and attack everyone in the zone you're targeting—even allies.

When you run out of ammo, you're out of ammo; you can't shoot your gun anymore. This rule isn't compatible with an **Out of Ammo** aspect—applying such an aspect to someone who's run out of ammo is redundant and unnecessary.

The Ammo Track

This ammo rule has the advantage of requiring less bookkeeping than counting individual bullets, and it also grants the players a few extra tactical options and choices. It does lean more toward cinema than realism though.

Give each gun you have an ammo track; each gun has at least 2 stress boxes and as many as 4 stress boxes. Shooting a gun doesn't usually use up any of your ammo; you can just fire away as much as you want, as long as you're just using one of the standard four actions with your Shoot skill. There are two circumstances under which you check off ammo boxes:

- If you attack and fail, you can check off an ammo box to reroll your dice. This doesn't count as an aspect invocation, and you can do it as many times as you want to per attack action. Each time you use this rule, check off another box.

- If you spray an area, check off two boxes and make your attack action against everyone in the zone you're targeting. You can use this rule in combination with the rule above, but you can only target one zone per attack action. Being able to do this is a function of the gun you're using; you can't spray an area with a six-shooter, for example, but you can spray an area with an MP5.

There's no limit to the number of ammo stress boxes you can check off in a single action other than the number of stress boxes your gun has. Once you check off the last stress box on a gun's ammo track, that gun's out of ammo. When a gun's out of ammo, you can't use it until you get more ammo. Getting more ammo is an overcome action with Resources with an opposition set by the GM. Tying gets you half your ammo back, succeeding gets it all back, and succeeding with style gets you an *Extra Ammo* aspect.

You can create the *Extra Ammo* aspect with a create advantage action if you like, but you can only have one *Extra Ammo* aspect at a time. You can invoke it like any other aspect, but invoking it destroys the aspect and never costs a fate point. You can also invoke your *Extra Ammo* aspect to clear out the ammo track on one gun.

Ammo Aspects

If you want even more abstraction and less bookkeeping, treat ammo as a special aspect on each gun.

If you have a gun, that gun has a special *Ammo* aspect on it by default. As long as your gun has *Ammo*, you can shoot it. If you invoke your gun's *Ammo*, it destroys the aspect and doesn't cost a fate point, but otherwise has the same effect as invoking any other aspect (that is, a +2 or a reroll). In addition, if your gun is capable of spraying an area, you can invoke your gun's *Ammo* to attack everyone in a zone. This uses up your gun's *Ammo* aspect just like invoking it normally, but doesn't get you the +2 or reroll.

When your gun runs dry, you can try to reload it. When you reload your gun, you're creating a special advantage on it, trying to put the *Ammo* aspect back on the gun. Passive opposition for reloading is usually Mediocre (+0), but might be higher depending on the situation. If you fail, something prevented you from reloading. If you tie, you reload your gun but you've left yourself exposed or vulnerable; someone else gets a boost they can use against you. If you succeed, you've reloaded. You now have *Ammo*. If you succeed with style, you reload *and* get a boost.

Locked and Loaded

When it comes to Fate, ammo can be a contentious topic. The designers deliberately omitted a system of tracking ammo in Fate Core in favor of a more cinematic, faster-paced method of handling guns. Some people like complexity or tactical options or verisimilitude though; if you're one of those people, then these optional rules are for you. Go forth and shoot things. ✚

LIFE LOCKED
by BRIE SHELDON

The back of the van was quiet while Crunch was jacked into the 'net outside the massive black office building. Her work was fluid but frantic, like the rush of water through a broken levee. The passive security measures sensed her intrusion and activated. Ice, cold and prickling, crept around the edge of her vision in the VR. She dove deeper, her eyes moving rapidly behind her eyelids while the rest of her body twitched in response to the virtual stimulus.

The files were inside, behind that glowing green door. Those damn files! Paperwork with backgrounds on her, Brink, and Jaaz and all of their families. Ever since PeriCor got their hands on the data, the three women had been haunted by that damned Corporation. They were locked out of everything: bank accounts, stores, even the hospitals. Crunch punched through the code of the door, shattering it. The ice surrounded her in spikes as she carefully wove through a narrow opening.

"Yo, Crunch, how long is this about to take?" A voice echoed through Crunch's earpiece.

Crunch's response blipped up on Jaaz's heads-up display.

OMG SRSLY I'M ON IT. ICE LIKE ANTARCTICA UP IN HERE.

Jaaz sighed loudly, and closed her eyes so she didn't see Crunch's storm of swears. She was trying to be patient, seriously, but it was like, way too long. She could see the security inside, and the last thing she wanted was to draw their attention. She was lucky that PeriCor was full of egotistical

jerkoffs who didn't worry so much about their security, though, because the guys inside were chumps. They had the uniforms, but they weren't professionals. Jaaz might look a little out of place with her dreadlocks, but at least she could take someone down. These guys looked like they *might* be able to take down a twelve-year-old. *Maybe.*

It couldn't be too much longer. Jaaz was there to keep Crunch on track, since Crunch sometimes got a little distracted in the 'net. Jaaz held her breath as Crunch's OK OK came up on-screen, and then breathed in relief when the door clicked.

Jaaz walked through the shiny metal door like she owned the place. There was a set of turnstiles ahead of her, but she needed an ID badge to get through. She bumped into a chick in a suit as she walked past and snagged her badge. Now she was *in*, and it should be easy-peasy.

The badge worked on every door and elevator except for one—the door to the server room. *Damn.*

"Crunch, can you get this?"

BRINK IS ON HER WAY. SHE'S GOT THIS ONE.

Jaaz cringed. *I hope she doesn't hurt anyone before I get to her.* She loved Brink, but Brink dealt with locked doors only one way.

The inside of the ventilation was cramped and tight, but Brink's body was small and flexible, so it wasn't much trouble. The smell of re-recycled air was overpowering. She inched, stretched, and pulled her way through the metal corridors.

"Crunch, is it left or right here?"

LEFT, TWO RIGHTS.

Brink smiled and shimmied forward. Crunch was an ace hacker, but this was the biggest job they'd ever done, so she couldn't even imagine how hard Crunch's work was. On the other hand, Brink was a B.A. infiltrator, so this job? Chill.

The ventilation corridor opened up onto an elevator shaft. She crouched down and then propelled herself to hook onto the elevator line. She caught it easily and let herself spin. She let go, and dropped fast, air swooshing around her ears and blowing her hair into her face. *Whee!*

STOP HAVING SO MUCH FUN, BRINK

"Hey, it's my life on the line here. Get it, on the line?"

Her hydraulic rig slowed her to a stop, bringing her next to the ventilation system. She swung over and climbed in, snaking through until she was over the server room. She looked down through the vent. The metal vent

had wide slots that were easy to look through, and it wouldn't take much to open it. Light peeked through the slots, almost blinding after being in the dark corridors of the ventilation. When her vision refocused, she saw a figure bent over a computer.

One woman inside. She could handle this. She had to. Her family depended on it. So much depended on it.

Brink quietly opened the vent, and dropped down without a sound. She crept up behind the woman sitting at the computer and quickly snaked her arm around the woman's neck. The woman didn't respond at first, which is when Brink realized that the woman was jacked in. Brink eased the pressure for a moment and the woman's hands reflexively grabbed onto Brink's arm. They struggled, the woman pulling on Brink's arm and Brink's arm tightening until the woman stopped resisting and slumped over the computer. Brink took her ID badge and went to open the door.

Brink swiped the badge, practically bouncing on the balls of her feet. The door opened with a quiet *hiss*. Jaaz rolled her eyes and pushed through.

"Where's the…" Jaaz caught sight of the woman's body and immediately turned around on Brink. "I thought we said no casualties."

"Nothin' casual about it. She's just sleeping anyway."

SRSLY GUYS DID YOU KILL SOMEONE?

Jaaz checked the woman's pulse. The woman was still alive.

"She's not dead."

Jaaz carefully pushed the woman's body to the side. She opened the compartment on her new metal arm and pulled out a wireless key. The new arm was handy—a replacement for the one lost in a serious car accident a few months earlier. This new one was stronger, more useful than her meat arm. She plugged the key into the computer and wiped her fingerprints before she turned to leave.

"All yours!"

WHAT UP, PERICOR, I AM IN YOU

Crunch could see the code behind every lock and key PeriCor had. More than anything, she could see the data she was looking for—a shining beacon her search function had located. Unfortunately, it rested behind two big gates and two very, very angry dogs, lit up with the programming. Numbers ran over their hides like rain.

It was time for a show.

Crunch tried, first, to sneak past. She squatted down onto the ground and then belly crawled halfway to the first gate. It was easy. When she got to the gate, she reached out and touched the lock with her fingertip. It burst

like a supernova, light emanating from its center and spreading outward into sparkling symbols.

```
ONE DOWN
<The floor is lava.>
NO SRSLY, THE FLOOR IS LAVA!
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Crunch twitched in the real world, her body shuddering in response to the pain she felt when she dropped into the virtual lava. In VR, she transformed. Her skin hardened and scales grew over her arms and legs, and she swam through the lava, a salamander with webbed fingers and toes. It took a while, but she managed to reach the other side, slogging through pain that threatened to break through her protection.

The next gate was harder. She poked at it, prodding the pieces of code, turning them in the air and slipping them back into place. After a minute, she had it figured out, and she punched the lock. Like the last one, it burst.

Suddenly, it was cold. She must have touched something wrong, because there it was: the ice. The dogs in front of her grew up in size, blinking one, two, three times as they turned into giant monster dogs. Spikes of ice grew into her vision, and real-her gasped in pain, cringing.

It was time to bring out the big guns.

She transformed again. This time, bigger. Badder. Better. Her scales led the way down her back to a long tail, and she spun around, a huge, massive-toothed dragon.

The dogs growled and ran at her. She twisted and swept her tail at them, nailing one in the side. The other grabbed her and tore at her code, ripping out her wings. Real-her shouted in pain, but virtual-her shook off the dog. She drew in a massive breath, pulling together all of her strength. Her real nose began to bleed.

She let out the virtual breath in a massive, shining burst of numbers and symbols, flames licking the ice and melting it from her vision and shattering the dogs into wasted piles. She stumbled forward over them and opened her giant mouth to swallow her prize: the file directory.

Crunch shook herself outside, slowly pulling herself out of the 'net. It always left her fuzzy but hyped. Now that she had the files, she could read them literally instead of having to fight down any more monsters. She skimmed them, and inside the file directory, she found something else. PeriCor had more hidden records. Bastards.

The files on her, Brink, and Jaaz were good ones, detailed, but they didn't compare in the slightest to the files mixed in with them: death records. From what Crunch could tell, PeriCor had released chemicals into the local river… and killed thousands. What had been billed as an outbreak of a vaccine-resistant flu was instead the result of Corp negligence. *Fragging hell?*

If PeriCor was this soulless, they were way worse than just hunting down runners, and worse than just working with the Tricks to find Brink's family. If they were this bad, what else would they do?

Jaaz was running, Brink alongside her. Behind them, the sound of footsteps slammed. Two security guards followed—slowly but surely. Their heads-up showed the message from Crunch.

FOUND SECRET FILES. PERICOR EVIL. GTFO NOW!

They rounded a corner and Jaaz yanked Brink to the side, narrowly avoiding the pair of suits walking straight towards them. The first suit pulled a gun and Jaaz whipped her leg around, kicking the gun out of his hand. She barreled at him, slamming him into the wall. Her strength was greater than she expected, and she heard a loud crunch. The guy's rib-cage sunk in and he choked out a gurgling breath. She jumped back and dropped him, her eyes wide.

Brink was too busy to notice. She had no trouble disarming the other guy, but now she was surrounded by two security guards and this suit, spinning around in circles, dodging and striking out. Three against one is lousy odds. She was just about to get socked, but dodged at the last second. Excited, she spun around, kicking out and clocking each of them. It knocked one guy out, but the other two were still game. She shouted at Jaaz.

"Oh em gee, Jaaz, get it together!"

Jaaz shook herself out of it, turned and immediately attacked the other suit, leaving the last security guard to Brink. She held back her strength, concentrating and taking care to *just hit hard enough*, and succeeded—two hits and the guy was down and out, but not dead.

"I warmed him up for ya!" Brink shouted as she jumped and kicked the security guard in the face, knocking him flat.

They paused for a second, observing the damage, but then sense caught up with them and they ran.

"We need an exit!"

Crunch hammered into the keyboard, opening doors along their path and shutting down security. All the while, her other screen showed files with lists of names, people dead because of PeriCor. It made her feel sick, but all the more determined.

She reached a roadblock in the code, and dropped the keyboard. She dove into VR, her eyes rolling back and her body going limp. Standing in front of her was an avatar of a knight, one of those old-timey guys in metal armor. He had a sword and was waving it around like it meant something. Words appeared above him.

LITTLE GIRL, I WILL GET YOU

Lightning fast, he moved towards her and struck her, again and again. Her avatar cracked, and real-her convulsed. The smart thing to do would be to pull out now. She could feel the pain welling in her brain, but she could also feel the tell-tale ping-ping of the GPS locators in Jaaz and Brink. If she went down, so did they. Worse, no one would ever know about all of those people.

FRAG THAT
‹fragment drive›

She ducked low, avoiding the knight's swing, and shoved upwards, catching him in the midsection. There was a low *buzz* and *brrrt*, and the knight began to fragment, piece by piece. His code spilled out of his torso like guts. His text displayed.

NO ONE DEFEATS KnIGhT!

She took a deep breath, and blew him away as he screamed **FUXXOR UZOR** and fell into a million pieces. Blood trickled out of her real ear. Where the knight had been, there was a wall of code with the last door. *Finally*.

She opened the last door for Jaaz and Brink and the two stormed out of the building and piled into the van. Jaaz started the engine and they tore off down the street.

They could see the black SUV behind them. It was only a matter of time until it caught up. Brink dug into the dash and pulled out three pistols. Jaaz glared at her and shook her head.

"No way!"

Brink nodded.

"Yes way."

Jaaz snatched one of the guns out of Brink's hand and shoved it into her pants.

"I'm taking it, but I'm not using it."

"Fine!"

WILL YOU GUYS SHUT UP?

"Dude, we're right here!"

Crunch groaned and slumped forward between the seats.

"Yeah, I know, it's just easier."

She held a tablet in her hands and showed it to Brink, who read off some of the text to Jaaz. The van whipped around a turn into a narrow alley

and skidded on two wheels. The SUV behind them drove past, unable to turn quickly enough to catch them.

"That shit's horrible, Crunch." Jaaz was shaking, her knuckles white as she held onto the wheel and navigated more twisting streets.

Crunch nodded, her face set with grim determination. This changed everything. They saved themselves, but there were so many more people at risk, so many who had been hurt by PeriCor. She shared a glance with Brink and then with Jaaz, and knew they felt the same way.

"We've got work to do." ✚

Crunch

Crunch is a skinny brunette with an eye for trouble. In spite of only being in her late teens, she is the number one hacker in the city. Impressive, considering hackers run by the dozen. She's from a once-affluent family who seem oblivious to her illicit activities. Her expertise lies in virtual reality (VR) hacking, where she easily transforms and navigates through any security measure laid in front of her. Her greatest achievement yet is hacking into the city's secure automated trial system—a crime for which she has yet to be caught.

ASPECTS

<div align="center">

HIGH CONCEPT: CURIOUS ACE HACKER

TROUBLE: THE 'NET IS MY WONDERLAND

I FIGHT IN MANY FORMS • SUCKER FOR A CAUSE
WHAT'S RIGHT IS RIGHT

</div>

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Hack
GOOD (+3)	Deceive, Will
FAIR (+2)	Investigate, Resources, Stealth
AVERAGE (+1)	Burglary, Contacts, Empathy, Lore

STUNTS

Hard Limits. While in Virtual Reality, you can convert mental stress to physical stress. Consequences you take as a result of this stunt cannot be invoked or compelled by virtual opposition during the current conflict.

Break the Ice. +2 to Hack when attempting to circumvent or break locks in Virtual Reality.

Codetalker. Once per session, you can establish a virtual link with a number of characters equal to your Hack. Regardless of distance or virtual and physical barriers, you can communicate with these characters via electronic code. The effects of this stunt last for one scene.

STRESS

Physical ☐☐   **Mental** ☐☐☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Crunch's skill list includes Hack, a new skill designed for use with the Silicon City Quick Start Adventure. Head over to page 35 to read more about how the Hack skill can be used in play.

Brink

Brink is an ex-Olympic gymnast on the run from the mob, the Tricks. When Brink was up for the Olympics, the Tricks tried to bribe her to throw the competition. She instead turned them in to the cops, and ever since then, she and her family have been hiding out, trying to keep away. Brink is an expert at sneaking in and out of everywhere, from clubs to mansions to military complexes. Petite and flexible, she has no trouble fitting into ventilation shafts and windows. She never hesitates to do what is necessary to protect her family.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: BAD ASS GYMNAST

TROUBLE: FAMILY IS EVERYTHING

EXPERT AT THE OLD IN-'N-OUT • NO ONE KEEPS SECRETS FROM ME
ALWAYS HELP A CHUM IN NEED

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Burglary
GOOD (+3)	Athletics, Stealth
FAIR (+2)	Investigate, Notice, Physique
AVERAGE (+1)	Deceive, Fight, Provoke, Shoot

STUNTS

Grapple. You can use Athletics instead of Fight to Attack when you engage in close-quarters grappling with an opponent.

Just Dropping In. You always go first in conflicts, provided you find a way to enter the scene without drawing attention to yourself.

Hard to Hit. +2 to Defend with Athletics when you're outnumbered.

STRESS

Physical ☐☐☐   **Mental** ☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Jaaz

Jaaz is the moral center of every group she's been a part of. From her family, some of whom threw out their respect for law a long time ago, to her crew, who do bad things to make things right, she's always keeping someone in check. She's big and muscular with dreadlocks and a metal right arm, which she still has to pay off. She tries to get her money honestly. So far, nothing has made her cross the line to kill—but Jaaz knows that sometimes, you gotta do what you gotta do.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: CYBERNETIC BOUNCER

TROUBLE: PART-TIME PACIFIST

I DON'T TRUST AUTHORITY • WEAKNESS FOR THE WEAK
STILL ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Fight
GOOD (+3)	Athletics, Physique
FAIR (+2)	Investigate, Notice, Shoot
AVERAGE (+1)	Burglary, Drive, Stealth, Will

STUNTS

Don't Know My Own Strength. Once per session, you can use your Physique rating as a free invoke when you attack with Fight. If your attack inflicts a consequence, take a point of Mental Stress.

Big Woman, Big Heart. Use Physique instead of Rapport on any create advantage rolls that involve roughhousing, kid juggling, or other physical acts of affection.

Robotic Arm. Once per session, you can pull a piece of advanced electronic equipment you need from your robotic arm.

STRESS

Physical ☐☐☐☐   **Mental** ☐☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3

QUICK START ADVENTURE: SILICON CITY

Archons, man. Just when you think the powers-that-be are fixed in duracrete, they come along to *arruinar todo*. Freakin' Archons.

Buy low on Hydra today, folks. Big bust comin' down the pike that's going to tighten up supply. My sources say Drazick himself is on the chopping block. Syndicates sold him out. If that's the case, we're all in for a wild ride.

– Alicia de la Torres, wave2162.12.01:52:11, hijacked line

It didn't used to be called Silicon City. Long ago, before the national government collapsed, before they built the wall that cut the City off from the desert, before the War, it had a different name. That's all lost to memory. Now it's just Silicon City—gleaming and perfect—rising from the shoreline like a monument to humanity's reach for the stars. It's the Shifting City, Code City, a flash of zeroes and ones that never sits still, not for a moment. It's our destiny.

QUICK START ADVENTURES

Silicon City is a Quick Start Adventure that contains a unique setting, pregenerated characters, plot hooks, and an opening scene. It's not a full adventure, but it will get your group started on a brand new Fate campaign!

THE COUNCIL

Silicon City still has a functioning government, but power in the City is centralized in the Council, the "elected" representatives of the seventeen districts that make up Silicon City. Councilmembers are powers unto themselves, oligarchs and virtual warlords who rule over the City in luxury, meeting only to decide the fate of the citizens. They are absolute, and the elections that put them in power are usually puppet shows designed to placate the masses.

THE ARCHONS

To keep the City safe from the rapidly multiplying technological and political threats, the Council appoints Archons to keep the peace. Archons are the best and brightest that the City has to offer, law enforcement prodigies who have sworn to give their lives to keep the City intact and the Council in power. They are soldiers and detectives, clever and deadly all at once.

The Council has granted the Archons a broad set of extrajudicial powers: Archons can go anywhere, look at anything, ask any question, and destroy any target… provided they're willing to answer to the Council after the job is done. This is not an idle threat. Archons have found themselves stripped of their status and relegated to the salt wastes south of the City for acting beyond the Council's authority.

Archons generally act with cautious impunity. They have the authority to override and commandeer any resources they need to protect the City, but they realize that it's dangerous to think you've got it all figured out. Situations evolve rapidly, and smart Archons avoid jumping into danger until the odds are in their favor. That said, they're proactive, competent enforcers of law and order, and many of them have sacrificed their lives to keep terrorists and criminals from destroying Silicon City.

SYNDICATES, CORPORATIONS, AND CARTELS

Despite its best efforts, the Council's power in Silicon City is not absolute. Syndicates, corporations, and cartels—legal and illegal—hold sway over much of the City's populace. The crime syndicates are the most vicious, but they tend to stay out of the actual politics of the City. Corporations muck

around in the public eye, all but immune to legal proceedings, but they remain wary of the power of Archons who have an eye for actual justice. Cartels are the lowest organizations, but the hardest to stamp out or run out of business. Archons know that they wear a target on their backs if they look too closely at an organization without pulling the trigger.

THE UNDERCITY

Deep below the glitz and glamour of Silicon City, the poor and the restless find shelter. There's not enough room in the upper floors of the sweeping skyscrapers for everyone, of course, and those that haven't been able to work their way to a better life find themselves condemned to the Undercity, a dense and labyrinthine network of tunnels and old buildings that plays host to a shadow city just beyond the Archon's reach. Rumor has it there's a revolution brewing down there…

Setting Creation

As a Quick Start Adventure, *Silicon City* has everything you need to jump right into your first session. Before you start, you'll want to discuss the broader setting with your group. Silicon City faces one immediate issue—a spike in the abuse of Hydra, a designer drug—and two additional issues bubbling under the surface, ready to erupt at any moment.

ARE ARCHONS THE BAD GUYS?

A few Archons abuse their power, muscling in on various criminal enterprises and working for syndicates, but most Archons want to see the City succeed. Archons aren't saints, but neither are they only looking out for themselves. There are easier ways to get ahead in Silicon City! Archons are a system, a way of keeping order in the chaotic and semi-lawless City—the people called to do that work believe in that system.

At the start of play, explain the **current issue** to your players and ask them to fill in one or two additional faces associated with the *Hydra Epidemic*. These additional characters will provide new plot hooks and twists that will tie your players to the thorny problem afoot.

Then ask your players to choose from one of the two available **impending issues**: *Robot Civil Rights* or *Silicon City Elections*. Have them fill in one or two additional faces for their chosen impending issue as well, rounding out the larger cast of characters with their suggestions.

CURRENT ISSUE: HYDRA EPIDEMIC

Of course, no shining city on a hill is without its problems. Archons all over Silicon City are reporting a serious uptick in Hydra usage, the designer drug of choice among the wealthy and elite. The *Hydra Epidemic* is a serious concern for the Council, so it's on the radar of every Archon in the City.

Fearing an outbreak of violence and chaos, the Council has ordered the Archons to do everything they can to bring the epidemic to a close.

Hydra is an especially dangerous drug because citizens who enjoy great privileges in Silicon City are the primary users. Initial doses of the drug speed up cognition and human processing, making it a perfect fit for financial wizards and high-priced code junkies. But as the drug takes hold in the nervous system, some users display psychopathic outbreaks of violence. It's not unusual for a long-term user—a Hydradrone—to murder a business partner on a whim or abduct a stranger without warning. The only ominous hint of an imminent crime is the thin black veins that spread across the eyes of Hydradrones, the telltale marks that give the drug its name.

Faces:

- Drazick, major supplier of Hydra in Silicon City District 3
- Frances Nguyen, scientist working on a cure for Hydradrone psychopathy

HYDRA EPIDEMIC

FRANCES NGUYEN

scientist working on a cure for Hydradrone psychopathy

DRAZICK

major supplier of Hydra in Silicon City District 3

IMPENDING ISSUES

In addition to the **Hydra Epidemic** plaguing the City, there are a number of other impending issues that the Council is concerned might erupt into larger conflicts, including:

Robot Civil Rights

Artificial intelligence in Silicon City has been advancing at a nearly exponential rate. Despite their impressive intellectual and social gains, robots within the City are treated as property. There are no laws against destroying a robot you own, for example, and any violence against robots is considered to be property damage instead of assault or murder.

A number of robot activists and allies within Silicon City hope to change the public's perception of robot civil rights. As robots have gained additional cognitive capacity, many within the City are starting to believe that robots may effectively be people, with all the rights and responsibilities thus included. At the same time, paramilitary groups like the Humanists hold a fundamentally opposed position, arguing that no robot can possibly be equal to a human being.

Faces:

- Alexandria 7, android leader in the Robot Civil Rights movement

- Carol Xibua, Humanist spokesperson and anti-robot activist

Silicon City Elections

Corporations in Silicon City exert control over most facets of the daily lives of citizens, but the City is still ostensibly a democracy. Archons are allowed to pursue fugitives regardless of jurisdiction, use lethal force, and commandeer resources precisely because the Council is selected by the will of the people. For Silicon City's political elite, elections are a necessary evil that enables the continued functioning of the City's many services.

This election season, a new candidate—Millan Tratar—appears to be mobilizing many of the City's poorer citizens in District 3. The incumbent in that district has held the seat for some time, but a number of fiscal scandals have left him vulnerable to the upstart. Disturbingly, Tratar is promising to dismantle the Archon system itself, claiming that the extrajudicial powers granted to Archons are "a tool of the oppressors." She enjoys widespread support.

Faces:

- Marshall St. John, pro-Archon incumbent councilor for District 3

- Aliyah Carter, political director for Millan Tratar

ROBOT CIVIL RIGHTS

ALEXANDRIA 7

android leader in the
Robot Civil Rights
movement

CAROL XIBUA

Humanist spokesperson
and anti-robot
activist

SILICON CITY ELECTIONS

MARSHALL ST. JOHN

pro-Archon incumbent
councilor for
District 3

ALIYAH CARTER

political director for
Millan Tratar

Character Creation

Silicon City works well with either Fate Core or Fate Accelerated characters. *Silicon City* characters complete only two phases in the phase trio, selecting a **tech aspect** instead of the third phase aspect. In addition, players building Fate Core characters can make use of Hack, the new skill presented with this adventure.

Usually players take on the role of Archons, extrajudicial forces of the Silicon City Council, and the adventure assumes this is the case. It's not an absolute requirement, of course, and the setting works with civilian or support characters.

PREGENERATED CHARACTERS

If your players wish to play pregenerated Archons, you can use the three sample characters provided on page 40 of this adventure. Stats are provided for both Fate Core and Fate Accelerated versions of each character.

New Skill: Hack

Hack is the skill you use to penetrate, disarm, and rejigger computer code found on networked devices. In settings with networked electronics, Hack represents your ability to alter the code that runs the world.

Overcome: Hack allows you to bypass all sorts of electronic obstacles including digital locks, encrypted files, or difficult robots. You can even use Hack to disarm or shut down physical electronics that are hooked up to digital networks.

Create an Advantage: You can use Hack to create any number of digital advantages, including *Forged Identification Credentials* or *False Sensor Readings*. In short, you can make things go wrong, often without leaving any trace. You can also use Hack to set up preemptive defenses against hackers (like placing *Encrypted File Locks* on sensitive files).

Attack: Hack is used to make mental attacks against electronic systems that have preprogrammed defenses or codelocks. It can also be used to attack other characters if you find yourself facing off against a rival hacker in a virtual environment.

Defend: You can't defend with Hack. You need Will to fight off attacks in a virtual environment from rival hackers or activated security systems.

HACK STUNTS

Extended Access. When you succeed with style on a create advantage roll using Hack, you may immediately create a second aspect with a free invoke as your programming subroutines locate additional information.

It's All in the Code. Use Hack instead of Empathy when you tear apart a piece of code to discover aspects about the code's programmer.

OVERCOME VS. ATTACK WITH HACK

As a rule of thumb, you can only attack things that have stress tracks. If an electronic obstacle doesn't have a way of absorbing stress, you only need an overcome action to get past it using Hack.

TECH ASPECTS

Tech aspects give **Silicon City** characters an opportunity to make use of advanced technology such as cybernetic implants, prosthetic limbs, or more traditional guns and armor. The right tech can mean the difference between life or death when you're facing down Hydra runners or anti-robot terrorists.

Example Tech Aspects: **Cybernetic Head Jack**, **Spider Claw Gloves**, **DNA Scrambler**, **Optical Enhancers**

Opening Scene: Raid on Asombra Arcology

Recent activity in the drug markets have tipped the Council off to the whereabouts of Drazick, one of the major suppliers of Hydra in Silicon City. According to undercover sources, Drazick has been hiding out in the abandoned Asombra Arcology, a planned community on a small island west of the City itself. Asombra was declared a "nonlivable zone" by the Council after it was discovered that the developers used unstable duracrete in the construction of the 120-story facility.

As the scene opens, the player characters are in a helojet headed to Asombra. They have a number of additional Council forces, but they're the only Archons assigned to bring Drazick in to face the Council. They need to land on the shores of the island, fight their way to the doors of the Arcology, and find their way to wherever Drazick is hiding before he has a chance to escape.

THE OPPOSITION AT ASOMBRA

Drazick's crew has a few goons, one more serious enforcer, and Drazick himself. If you've got a big group of player characters, consider adding more goons inside the Arcology and perhaps even statting up another bodyguard for Drazick. This conflict should take most of your first session.

The scene should start with an action order as the conflict gets underway. Provide your players with a set of zones for the beach and Asombra Arcology and a set of opening aspects with one free invoke each.

Opening Aspects: **Pounding Rain**, **Unstable Duracrete**, **Asombra Squatters**

In the unlikely event that Drazick has the option of bailing on his crew to get away, he'll take it. They were all hired to be expendable anyway.

SKILL MODES?

Silicon City uses skill modes for NPCs instead of individual skills. When NPCs take action in accordance with that general activity, they get the skill rating of the mode. If no skill mode is appropriate, the NPC rolls on a +0. These NPCs can also gang up and assist each other—four of Drazick's goons will get a +6 (+3 for skill mode and +3 for ganging up) when shooting at Archons.

Drazick's Goons (8)

Drazick's not some low-level thug. His men are highly trained and equipped with military-grade equipment. Worse yet, someone has tipped Drazick off to the Archon raid that's coming at him. His goons are prepared to return fire on Council forces and stand their ground to give Drazick time to prepare his defenses.

ASPECTS

Armed Cartel Enforcers • Smarter Than They Look
Ready for Archons

SKILLS

Good (+3)	Shooting at Council Forces, Standing Ground
Average (+1)	Dodging Fire, Intimidating Civilians
Poor (–1)	Running Away, Sneaking Around

STRESS

☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐

Grafton White

As Drazick climbed his way up the cartel ladder, Grafton White was happy to provide the muscle needed to knock down his opponents. A hulking man with tattoos and piercings, Grafton is the perfect enforcer to intimidate, frighten, and crush Drazick's opposition.

ASPECTS

Trusted Right-Hand Man • Tattooed Muscleman
Deadly with a Knife

SKILLS

Superb (+5)	Knife Fighting
Good (+3)	Sneaking Around, Intimidation
Average (+1)	Avoiding Gunfire, Detecting Intruders
Poor (–1)	Avoiding a Fight

STUNTS

Poisoned Blade. When you succeed with style on an attack with a knife, spend a fate point to inflict the mild consequence ***Poisoned*** on your target.

STRESS

☐☐☐☐

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) • Moderate (4)

Drazick

Drazick isn't just a drug lord—he's the inventor of Hydra itself. The Council has information that leads them to believe that he might know how to counteract the side effects of the drug, making it the perfect tool for them to distribute to Archons and Council staff. Drazick, however, isn't exactly eager to turn over his secrets, and he'll do everything in his power to keep from being captured.

ASPECTS

HYDRA DRUG LORD • MASTER CHEMIST • NASTY LIMP

SKILLS

SUPERB (+5)   Making Hydra

GOOD (+3)   Shooting at Archons, Resisting Questioning

AVERAGE (+1)   Setting Traps, Planning Ambushes

POOR (−1)   Running Away

STUNTS

Slippery. In the event that someone tries to create an advantage that would keep you from leaving a zone or scene, spend a fate point to turn that situation aspect into a boost.

STRESS

☐☐☐

CONSEQUENCES

MILD (2) • MODERATE (4) • MAJOR (6)

Plot Hooks and Adventure Seeds

The opening scene of **Silicon City** isn't the end of the adventure. The players may have captured Drazick, but he's certainly not the only Hydra supplier in town. And don't forget the impending issues! Here are a few plot hooks and adventure seeds to keep the story going, varying the tone and pace of scenes after the conflict at Asombra:

DRAZIK TRADES UP

Drazick isn't a martyr or a fool. If the players captured him, he'll try to strike a deal to keep himself safe at the expense of the people who funded his initial Hydra research. (Even if the Archons didn't capture Drazick, he might come forward with a deal now that his organization is in trouble!) He claims that he can get the Archons access to La Araña (The Spider), the woman who funded a number of designer drugs, including Hydra. Since the Council knows little about the internal dealings of the cartels, they aren't even really sure that La Araña exists. Does Drazick really know who La Araña is or is he setting the Archons up for a trap?

HUMANIST ATTACK AT ROBOT PROTEST

If your players chose **Robot Civil Rights** as their impending issue, give the Archons an alert that surveillance drones have picked up Humanist traffic regarding a terrorist attack on pro-robot protestors near Silicon City Plaza #24. Alexandria 7 is scheduled to give a speech outlining her vision for robot civil liberties—she's a high-profile target that could potentially attract Humanist assassins—but the crowd of human and robot supporters is just as likely to be targeted by the anti-robot forces. Can the Archons find the terrorists and stop the strike or will they be left dealing with the chaos caused by the Humanists?

CARTER ASKS FOR HELP

If your players chose **Silicon City Elections** as their impending issue, Aliyah Carter comes to Silicon City HQ to talk to the Archons directly. Millan Tratar—the challenger in the District 3 elections who claims the Archons are "tools of the oppressor"—is missing. The candidate is fond of walking the neighborhoods in the south of District 3 alone, but Tratar didn't return from her excursion the previous night. Carter isn't sure who else to turn to for help. Did someone associated with Councilman St. John kidnap Tratar to ensure that the upstart campaign would fail or is Tratar not as squeaky clean as she appears? ✚

Sample Characters

FATE CORE

Adam Brennan

Less than a year ago, Adam Brennan was an average cop working in District 15, pursuing everyday thugs and criminals in a tough part of the City. That all changed when a Humanist bomb at a robot justice center left him nearly dead. Now he's been rebuilt with state-of-the-art Council technology as a cyborg, a new breed of Archon built to protect the City from all of its enemies. Nearly 65% of his body is mechanical now, leading many to question if he's even human anymore. Brennan dismisses such questions, but is starting to wonder which side of "the Robot Question" he's really on.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: EXPERIMENTAL CYBORG PROTOTYPE

TROUBLE: COUNCILMAN ST. JOHN'S NEPHEW

TECH ASPECT: INDUSTRUCTIBLE DURASKIN

RISING IN THE RANKS • PROTÉGÉ OF HARVEY GATTEN

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Physique
GOOD (+3)	Fight, Hack
FAIR (+2)	Investigate, Shoot, Will
AVERAGE (+1)	Athletics, Contacts, Notice, Rapport

STUNTS

Extended Access. When you succeed with style on a create advantage roll using Hack, you may immediately create a second aspect with a free invoke as your programming subroutines locate additional information.

Part Man, Part Machine, All Cop. +2 to overcome actions with Athletics if you are pursuing a subject to make an arrest.

Hardwired Sensors. You may use Fight instead of Notice to detect surprise attacks or ambushes.

STRESS

Physical ☐☐☐☐   **Mental** ☐☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Harvey Gatten

If there was a time before Archons, Harvey Gatten would remember it. He's the oldest Archon working for the council, an old man whose wits and experience carry him through situations that would kill a lesser man. He's short for an Archon, but faster than you might think. His long white hair stands in sharp contrast to his darker skin, framing a face that's weathered and wrinkled, but somehow just as lively as ever. He should have retired by now, but everyone knows retirement never ends well for Archons—they have too many enemies to go quietly into the night.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: GRIZZLED VETERAN

TROUBLE: EX-FAMILY MAN

TECH ASPECT: SINGLE ACTION PEACEMAKER

ONE FOOT OUT THE DOOR • BY THE BOOK

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Investigate
GOOD (+3)	Contacts, Shoot
FAIR (+2)	Provoke, Stealth, Will
AVERAGE (+1)	Burglary, Deceive, Notice, Rapport

STUNTS

Investigator's Eye. You can use Investigate instead of Empathy to learn the aspects of a target through careful observation and questioning. You need at least five minutes of sustained interaction.

Freeze! +2 to Provoke when you are trying to intimidate nameless NPCs into surrendering. You may also spend a fate point to target a group of nameless NPCs simultaneously with a Provoke attack.

Oldtimer. Once per session, you can spend a fate point to establish that a named NPC has the aspect *Old Friend*. You get an additional free invoke on any advantages you create on that NPC until the end of the session.

STRESS

Physical ☐☐   **Mental** ☐☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Brooke Towers

Brooke Towers is a ghost, an enigma, a dark-haired, intense woman who ends up where she's needed as if by magic. The truth is that she learned her skills from a syndicate—she's exactly the kind of criminal that Archons normally hunt. When her syndicate left her for dead in the Undercity, she found her way to the Council, offering her services to the powers-that-be. But Towers is terrified that the things she did in the Undercity, and the *bruja* curse she's convinced she picked up, will end her life before she can turn it around.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: EX-SYNDICATE OPERATIVE

TROUBLE: CURSED BY AN UNDERCITY BRUJA

TECH ASPECT: CYBERNETIC LEG

TEAM PLAYER • DOES THE DIRTY WORK

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Athletics
GOOD (+3)	Provoke, Will
FAIR (+2)	Deceive, Physique, Stealth
AVERAGE (+1)	Drive, Empathy, Fight, Shoot

STUNTS

Get the Drop. Spend a fate point to move to any zone in a scene instead of taking an action during a conflict.

Called Shot. During a Shoot attack, spend a fate point and declare a specific condition you want to inflict on a target, like ***Shot in the Hand***. If you succeed, you place that as a situation aspect on the target in addition to inflicting stress.

Ice Cold. +2 to defending with Will against attacks designed to intimidate or scare you.

True Friend. Once per session, you can add your Will to an ally's defense against a mental attack by standing with the ally against a common opponent.

STRESS

Physical: ☐☐☐   **Mental:** ☐☐☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 2

FATE ACCELERATED

Adam Brennan

Less than a year ago, Adam Brennan was an average cop working in District 15, pursuing everyday thugs and criminals in a tough part of the City. That all changed when a Humanist bomb at a robot justice center left him nearly dead. Now he's been rebuilt with state-of-the-art Council technology as a cyborg, a new breed of Archon built to protect the City from all of its enemies. Nearly 65% of his body is mechanical now, leading many to question if he's even human anymore. Brennan dismisses such questions, but is starting to wonder which side of "the Robot Question" he's really on.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: EXPERIMENTAL CYBORG PROTOTYPE

TROUBLE: COUNCILMAN ST. JOHN'S NEPHEW

TECH ASPECT: INDUSTRUCTIBLE DURASKIN

APPROACHES

GOOD (+3)	Forceful
FAIR (+2)	Careful, Flashy
AVERAGE (+1)	Clever, Quick
MEDIOCRE (+0)	Sneaky

STUNTS

Extended Access. Once per session, I can use my extended access subroutines to create an additional advantage when hacking a network.

Part Man, Part Machine, All Cop. Because I am part man, part machine, and all cop, I get a +2 to Forcefully overcome when I am pursuing a subject to make an arrest.

Hardwired Sensors. Because of my hardwired sensors, I get a +2 to Quickly defend against attacks that catch me by surprise.

STRESS

☐☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Harvey Gatten

If there was a time before Archons, Harvey Gatten would remember it. He's the oldest Archon working for the council, an old man whose wits and experience carry him through situations that would kill a lesser man. He's short for an Archon, but faster than you might think. His long white hair stands in sharp contrast to his darker skin, framing a face that's weathered and wrinkled, but somehow just as lively as ever. He should have retired by now, but everyone knows retirement never ends well for Archons—they have too many enemies to go quietly into the night.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: GRIZZLED VETERAN

TROUBLE: EX-FAMILY MAN

TECH ASPECT: SINGLE ACTION PEACEMAKER

APPROACHES

GOOD (+3)	Careful
FAIR (+2)	Clever, Forceful
AVERAGE (+1)	Quick, Sneaky
MEDIOCRE (+0)	Flashy

STUNTS

Investigator's Eye. Because I have an investigator's eye, I get a +2 to Carefully create an advantage while studying someone for clues.

Freeze! When I yell at nameless NPCs to freeze, I get a +2 to Flashily overcome their defenses.

Oldtimer. Once per session, I can spend a fate point to establish that a named NPCs has the aspect *Old Friend*. I get an additional free invoke on any advantages I create on that NPC until the end of the session.

STRESS

☐☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Brooke Towers

Brooke Towers is a ghost, an enigma, a dark-haired, intense woman who ends up where she's needed as if by magic. The truth is that she learned her skills from a syndicate—she's exactly the kind of criminal that Archons normally hunt. When her syndicate left her for dead in the Undercity, she found her way to the Council, offering her services to the powers-that-be. But Towers is terrified that the things she did in the Undercity, and the *bruja* curse she's convinced she picked up, will end her life before she can turn it around.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: Ex-Syndicate Operative

TROUBLE: Cursed by an Undercity Bruja

TECH ASPECT: Cybernetic Leg

APPROACHES

GOOD (+3)	Forceful
FAIR (+2)	Clever, Sneaky
AVERAGE (+1)	Careful, Flashy
MEDIOCRE (+0)	Quick

STUNTS

Get the Drop. Because I get the drop on criminals, I can spend a fate point to move to any zone in a scene instead of taking an action during a conflict.

Called Shot. When I take the time to aim Carefully, I get a +2 to attacks using a firearm.

Ice Cold. Because I'm ice cold, I get a +2 to Forcefully defend against mental attacks.

STRESS

☐☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3
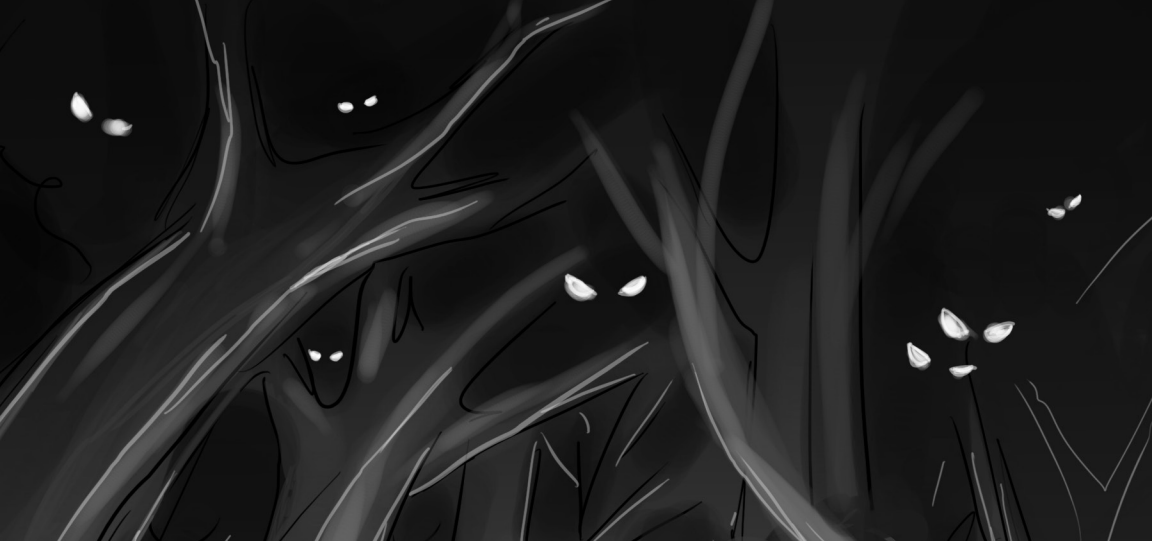
CHANGING SKILLS:
A MATTER OF SURVIVAL

by RYAN MACKLIN

By only having 18 skills, the default skill list in Fate Core has some odd quirks and blind spots. Much of that is by design—different settings should have different skill lists. To quote FATE CORE SYSTEM, page 96:

> *When you're creating your own setting for use with Fate, you should also create your own skill list. The default list we provide is a good starting point, but creating skills specific to your world can help make it seem richer by reinforcing the story with mechanics.*

Of course, we don't tell you in the book how to go about doing that, partly because there's no one true way and partly because that's not the job of the core book. In this article, I present a new skill while walking you through the design process. It sheds some light on how to make design decisions while building a skill list, and concludes with a new set of mechanics that were created as a result of rethinking two skills. Because there's no one true way, the process in the article is shown by example—one you can use in your own builds, and tweak to serve your needs.

Creating the Survival Skill

There's a character archetype that isn't well supported in the default list: the survivalist. That includes the way Aragorn uses his knowledge of the wilds in THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING, the classic trope of the street urchin who knows how to survive in the urban jungle, characters like Robinson Crusoe or Oliver Queen (especially how he's portrayed in ARROW), and so on.

The ratio of 18 skills/10 skill slots (which I call "the 55% Rule"—more about that in a moment) is key to Fate's skill economy, because it means that any given character only gets reasonable spotlight time with just over half of the skills. To keep the ratio with minimum fuss, I'm going to swap out another skill—the natural choice for that is Notice, for reasons we'll get into shortly.

PLAYING WITH THE 55% RULE

There are a couple of exceptions to the 55% Rule that you should take into account when making new skills:

- Skills reserved for a privileged few don't count toward the number of skill slots determined by the 55% ratio.
- Skills that are split functions count together.

Talents that are rare in a setting, like psionics or magic, are typically handled as an extra (chapter 11 of FATE CORE SYSTEM). Some extras

work best as unique skills rather than getting tacked onto an existing skill. Because those skills aren't available to everyone, they don't count in the ratio. Furthermore, people taking such a talent are intentionally making a choice to be competent in something interesting, so part of the cost is not being competent in another (often related) set of actions. For instance, someone might take Psionics as a skill and forgo Shoot (because he has a stunt called Mind Bullets) or Physique (because he doesn't need to work out to use Telekinesis). So the ratio is skewed slightly, but the competence element enforced by the number of skill slots remains.

Likewise, if you split a skill into different areas—such as having Lore become Academics (for broad scholarship), Sciences (for technical knowledge), and Lore (for occult, spiritual, and religious matters), then there's no need to add a skill slot. In settings where such splits matter (such as the upcoming Fate edition of ACHTUNG! CTHULHU splitting Lore as above), players who take one of these split skills generally have a particular branch in mind, not unlike having a specific take or vibe in mind when taking Lore from the Core skill set. So if a player wants their character to have two or more such skills, that's a fine choice because, while it decreases the number of slots the character uses for conflict-oriented skills, it privileges them with discovery and knowledge—which is something of interest to quite a number of Fate players.

So, the 55% Rule isn't about strictly adhering to a number. Keep it in mind when building your setting's skill list, but understanding where each skill fits into the skill economy is just as important to making a Fate build work.

Cannibalizing Notice

Notice is probably the second-oddest skill in the bunch. (The oddest goes to Resources, which is its own article. Or series of articles.) It covers situational awareness, passive discovery, and reflexes in physical conflicts (in that it covers turn order). So before we construct the Survival skill, let's parcel out Notice's spheres of influence.

First of all, passive discovery—where the GM might call for a Notice roll to see if the characters process something they've just seen or heard in an actionable fashion—should be split into all the other skills. Investigate is the default, but every skill can be used to discover something: Lore to process that some arcane writings are actually a passcode to magically open a door, Shoot to get a sense of what weapon was just shot from a distance ("That's a very distinctive sound" from LEVERAGE's Eliot), Empathy to reflexively tell if someone's lying, etc. This means that anything where the character isn't intently focusing on something, just the brain automatically processing stimuli in a useful way, is covered by how well versed the

character is in a field. (This will naturally include ways where Survival conveys such information, such as spotting a useful item in the muck or seeing a hidden danger.)

We're going to play more with this idea toward the end of the article.

Constructing Survival

The other two elements—situational awareness and establishing turn order—work with the skill we'll naturally call "Survival." But that's not enough, because it doesn't cover those characters in fiction mentioned above; it doesn't cover the expertise needed to survive in those worlds. For that, we're going to borrow some of Lore's functionality, where knowledge is useful for overcome actions and creating advantages.

At this point, you might be thinking, "Wait, but Lore covers those situations already." That's true, but it doesn't inherently model the characters above. The street kid has street smarts, not the breadth of knowledge conveyed by Lore. Oliver Queen is sharp, but in a way that means a high Survival rather than a high Lore. Now, we're not going to completely steal that from Lore—the person with Great Lore will be a virtual encyclopedia, pointing out different plants and animals in a forest, but not necessarily be useful in action. Likewise, the person with Great Survival will be able to tell you what's in a book on life in the desert, but the rest of the library isn't in her wheelhouse.

Fate already has a precedent for skill function double-up, where Athletics and Fight can be used for melee defense, and Physique and Athletics can both be used to get out of tight situations, so this isn't new. It simply builds on the high-competence nature of Fate characters.

That's enough to construct a Survival skill, using language from Notice and Lore. But let's play with one more thing…

Spinning Survival as a Defense Skill

Another odd hole is Shoot defenses. Typically Athletics is used to dodge a bullet in more cinematic circumstances, but if Survival is based in part on being able to stay alive, then we can extend that to being a defense against ranged attacks by hunkering down or taking cover. (Depending on the nature of the narrative, it might even make more sense than Athletics.) So we're going to add this as a base function of Survival.

> Survival isn't an attack skill.

A noteworthy design bit: this could just as easily be moved into a Survival stunt, if as a designer you think that's one piece of functionality too many. The reason I don't mind it is because Survival isn't an attack skill, and it doesn't defend against combat that's right in your face.

Survival

The Survival skill is all about the ability to endure and physically thrive in the wilds, whether in jungle, desert, or even the streets and sewers of a city. It covers situational awareness—your overall perception and the ability to pick out at a glance useful things or dangers hidden in the surrounding environment.

Overcome: You use Survival to overcome obstacles relating to your environment, such as finding your way through rugged terrain, gathering edible food and potable water, and so on. Survival is also used to overcome obstacles relating to reaction: noticing a danger, hearing a faint sound of someone following you, spotting the concealed gun in that guy's waistband, etc. Additionally, Survival can be used to treat a physical consequence akin to being a field medic, provided you have the proper supplies and time.

Create an Advantage: You use Survival to create aspects based on direct observation of your surroundings—finding an escape route in a debris-filled building, noticing someone sticking out in a crowd, tracking an animal or person, etc. When observing people, Survival can tell you what's going on with them externally; for internal changes, see Empathy. You might also use Survival to declare that your character spots something you can use to your advantage in a situation, such as a convenient *Escape Route* when you're trying to get out of a building, or a *Subtle Weakness* in the enemy's line of defense. For example, if you're in a barroom brawl you could make a Survival roll to say that you spot a puddle on the floor right next to your opponent's feet that could cause him to slip.

Survival also allows you to create aspects based on using or manipulating your environment, such as making a trap or a foxhole, scrounging for supplies, building a shelter or tools, and otherwise altering the environment to suit your needs.

Attack: Survival isn't really used for attacks.

Defend: You can use Survival to defend against any uses of Stealth to get the drop on you or ambush you, or to discover that you're being observed. Survival is also used to defend against gunfire and other such attacks, but only when you are huddled down in a defensible position, such as a foxhole or bunker. (This is the opposite of using Athletics, which involves avoiding these situations via movement.)

SPREADING THE TURN ORDER LOVE

Since the skill to survive in the wilds is now how turn order is determined in a conflict, and not every great fighter is also a master of the outdoors, you could use the skill replacement method of stunt creation to cover other character concepts.

Special: Survival is used to establish turn order in a physical conflict, replacing Notice.

Survival Stunts

The Danger Sense and Body Language Reader stunts from FATE CORE work for Survival. Depending on how you feel about it, the Reactive Shot might as well. Here are a couple more stunts tailored specifically for Survival.

- **Animal Ken.** Creatures of the wild are second nature to you. Use Survival for Empathy and Rapport situations with animals.

- **Master of the Wild.** Pick some sort of terrain or broad environment. Once per scene, when you create an advantage that involves spending a little time scavenging or manipulating the local area, you can give that aspect an additional free invoke.

- **Natural Healer.** Your time in the wilds has taught you how to patch yourself up when hurt and to recognize what's good to use around you for cleaning wounds or as medicine. You can use Survival to address consequences that are physical in nature. (Design note: I'm on the fence about whether this is a natural part of the skill or a stunt, and sometimes I think that maybe just recovering from a mild physical consequence is inherent to Survival.)

- **Master of the Ring.** Given even a brief sense that the situation could get physical, you can use Fight in place of Survival for the purposes of establishing turn order and for spotting hidden dangers that could come into play during a fight.

- **At Home in Academia.** Whether browsing in the library stacks or wandering through the campus garden, no one gets a jump on you on your home turf. Use Lore instead of Survival or Empathy when establishing turn order.

MAKING PASSIVE DISCOVERY COOL

Now that we have Survival detailed, we're done with hacking the skill set, right? Well, yes, but we don't have to stop there. I mentioned above that we're splitting the passive discover of Notice into all skills, so let's extend that concept into a new mechanic: **automatic discovery**.

This concept centers around rewarding characters with high competence in any field (which is every character in a Fate game) by ensuring they never miss key information. In automatic discovery, all of your skills rated at Good and higher have an additional benefit: they always succeed at overcome actions or creating advantages that involve passive discovery—i.e., any time when the GM would normally call for a skill roll to spot or hear something that is reflexive and takes no time or effort. No roll is required; the characters are just that good. Now instead of the person with a high Notice being the person who discovers all things, the person with the high Athletics notices the martial arts an opponent is using (thus suggesting where they trained), the high Burglary sees the telltale scratches around a lock or window pane that suggests it's been compromised, and so on.

The characters can still make actions involving active discovery, just as normal. Nothing's changing in that regard for creating advantages or other actions that involve focused effort. After all, Notice isn't really useful in that regard; that's where Investigate (or other skills, depending on the situation) comes into play.

Furthermore, we'll add a little bit more to skills that are Great or higher—assume they succeed with style at passive discovery. That means extra free invocations or other benefits from being one of the setting's top experts or masters of that field or discipline.

In settings where gaining knowledge is potentially harmful, such as those where fighting to retain one's sanity is a big deal, automatically succeeding at passive discovery is one of the most dangerous things to have. And that makes it even more interesting. But even without that, this dynamic highlights every character's mind and ability to discover and unconsciously process things under fire.

I hope you've enjoyed this walkthrough on making a skill and extending the rest of the skill list. Happy gaming! ✚

INFILTRATION: CRACKING THE HOUSE
by PHIL LEWIS

CrimeWorld by John Rogers in FATE WORLDS VOLUME TWO: WORLDS IN SHADOW provides an excellent rundown on how to run criminal exploits using Fate. This article presents an alternative for breaking into a low technology facility, focusing on a set of extensions to the challenge rules (page 147 in FATE CORE). These mechanics simulate the sort of exploits made popular by video games like THIEF and ASSASSIN'S CREED.

The House

The first step in creating a scenario is to come up with details for the **House**. The House is the target of the illicit activities. It could be the king's secret vaults or the tower of a reclusive wizard. The GM should think up a few interesting details about the House, including what physical security and access restrictions are present. Avoid creating a map, as that will be done collaboratively (see *"The Heist"*).

SECURITY LEVEL

The House has one skill, **Security**, reflecting how difficult it is to break into the target. This value uses the same scale as Fate skills. A target with Good Security (+3) might be the manor of a rural duke, while Epic Security (+7) is appropriate for the king's prized emerald. If the Security level is higher than the characters' peak skill, it's going to be difficult for them to succeed.

GUARDS

After creating the House, it's time to make some guards to watch over the place. A mage might use imps or zombies to guard his books of magical lore, while a king or mayor might employ more mundane defenses.

Guards are similar to mobs (page 216 in FATE CORE), with a skill cap equal to the Security of the House. The best skills for guards are Fight and Athletics to defend themselves with as well as Notice and Empathy to detect intruders. If you want to push the action toward stealth and fast talking, give the guards higher Fight and Athletics skills; the player characters will want to avoid overt aggression because it will be much riskier.

Guards have one minor consequence instead of a stress track. In isolation, guards are fairly weak and pretty easy to ambush. However, there's an infinite supply of guards, so taking one out is essentially just an effective, although risky, way to buy time. Finally, give the guards a couple aspects, such as ***Enthusiastic About Inflicting Pain*** or ***"Is It Lunchtime Yet?"***.

The Plan

During play, the players don their black hats and **case the House**. This involves uncovering some of the details already in place. What is the ruby locked up in? Who has access to the king's chambers? These questions can be answered using simple skill rolls.

As befits Fate, this can be a collaborative effort. If a player has a good idea when asking a question about the mission, it's fine to run with it, even—maybe especially—if it's a somewhat surprising development!

SUPPLIES

In order to play through the mission, some note cards and tokens to represent characters and guards are necessary.

WRITING THE PLAN

After the players have gathered details about the House, they have to create **the plan** for the heist. This is a series of specific **tasks** that must be overcome in order to succeed. If all the tasks are completed, and the characters can get out without being detected, they are successful! Create one task for each player in the game.

Tasks can be contingent on each other, or some can be performed simultaneously. Be careful, though, that no part of the plan is optional for success. Here are some possible tasks:

- Climb over the back wall
- Distract Baron von Schlefwitz
- Steal the key to the map room
- Crack the central vault

Above the description of the task, write a location where this task will take place, similar to labeling zones in a conflict ("Main Office: Distract Baron von Schlefwitz"). Each of these tasks gets an opposition value that's revealed when a character enters the zone on which it's placed (see *"Character Actions: Movement"*).

The Heist

Gather together the task note cards, and add note cards equal to the number of players, resulting in twice as many note cards as players. These are your zones.

First, place the note card containing the final task on the table. The GM and players alternate placing the remaining note cards adjacent to one or more of the existing note cards, thus creating a map of zones. Label the blank zone cards with evocative names reflecting places within the House such as **Main Hall** or **Barracks**.

A number of zones equal to half the number of players rounded down have **alarms**. Add labels to those cards such as "Alarm Bell" or "Summoning Circle." Put the alarms on zones that don't already have a task. Finally, add a zone for "Outside the House" and place it adjacent to one or more zones that make sense.

Place all the characters in the "Outside the House" zone. Place guards equal to half the number of players (round down) on zones of the GM's choice. Place each guard near one of the edges of the notecard.
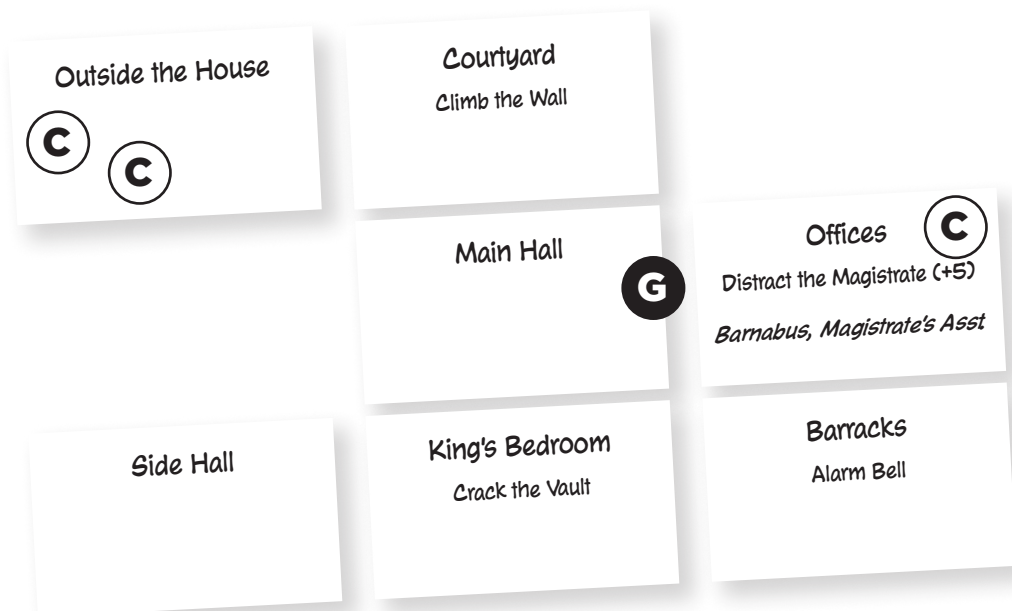
Infiltration with Three Characters

EXCHANGE

1. Each character may take one action, in any order desired by the players.
2. All guards take one action, in any order desired by the GM.
3. The House takes an action.

CHARACTER ACTIONS

Characters have the usual actions, with others listed below. If a PC fails *any action* while guards are in the same zone as the character, the guards in the zone are **alerted**—they get the ***Alerted!*** aspect which, unlike most aspects, has two free invokes.

Movement

Movement works the same as it does in Conflicts (page 169 in Fate Core). When a character moves into a zone that contains a task, determine the opposition value by rolling Security for the House. Write this result next to the task.

Overcome Task

As an overcome action, use a thematically appropriate skill to complete a task in the same zone.

If the roll is failed, the character takes stress equal to the roll's difference. Whether this is physical or mental stress depends on the task attempted; consequences taken should be appropriate to the task.

Furthermore, a failed or tied roll to overcome a task results in the nearest guard becoming suspicious. Give the guard the ***Suspicious*** aspect with one free invoke. If guards are in the same zone, they become alerted instead.

Remove Suspicion and Alerts

Characters may attempt to remove the ***Suspicious*** and ***Alerted!*** aspects using an overcome action opposed by the guards. Failing to remove suspicion causes the guard to become alerted.

Attack Guards

Guards who are physically attacked become alerted, if they weren't already. Guards who are killed need to be disposed of in some fashion, as guards who stumble upon a body are immediately alerted.

GUARD ACTIONS

Movement

Guards patrol each turn by moving one—and only one—zone, heading in one direction, moving through adjacent zones, until they must turn around and head back in the other direction. Use the edges of the note cards to remember which direction the guards are moving.

Guards that are suspicious or alerted stop patrolling and use the same movement rules that other characters do. Alerted guards that move onto a zone with an alarm may sound the alarm, allowing more guards to arrive. Alerted guards outside the House may also sound the alarm.

Overcome

A guard may use an appropriate skill, such as Notice (if a character is using Stealth to hide) or Wits (if a character is trying to Deceive the guard), to target a character in the same zone. If the guard is successful, they become alerted.

Attack

Only alerted guards may attack.

HOUSE ACTIONS

Each turn, if there are fewer guards in the House than the number of players, the Security of the House may be used to gain more guards. Roll Security against an opposition of five. On a success or tie, one guard may be placed on the edge of a note card anywhere within the House. Since you start the heist with half as many guards as players, the GM can summon guards on most turns at the beginning.

If the alarm has been sounded, don't roll. Instead, place one guard, ignoring the limit for the number of players.

Applicable Skills and Stunts

Characters may use Burglary to disable an alarm, thus making it more difficult to sound the alarm. If successful, remove the alarm label. The opposition is equal to the Security of the House.

Leading up to the heist, characters may create an advantage (maybe using Rapport to get a job within the House) that gives them authority to be in one or two of the zones. Guards can't actively target the character in such zones.

Deceive or some other reasonable skill can be used to hide a guard's body so it isn't found.

Concede

So, you're not going to overcome all the tasks and get out again? It's fine to offer up concessions as in a Conflict (page 167 FATE CORE). A particularly good one is to let someone get captured in exchange for other characters escaping. Time to infiltrate the jail! ✚
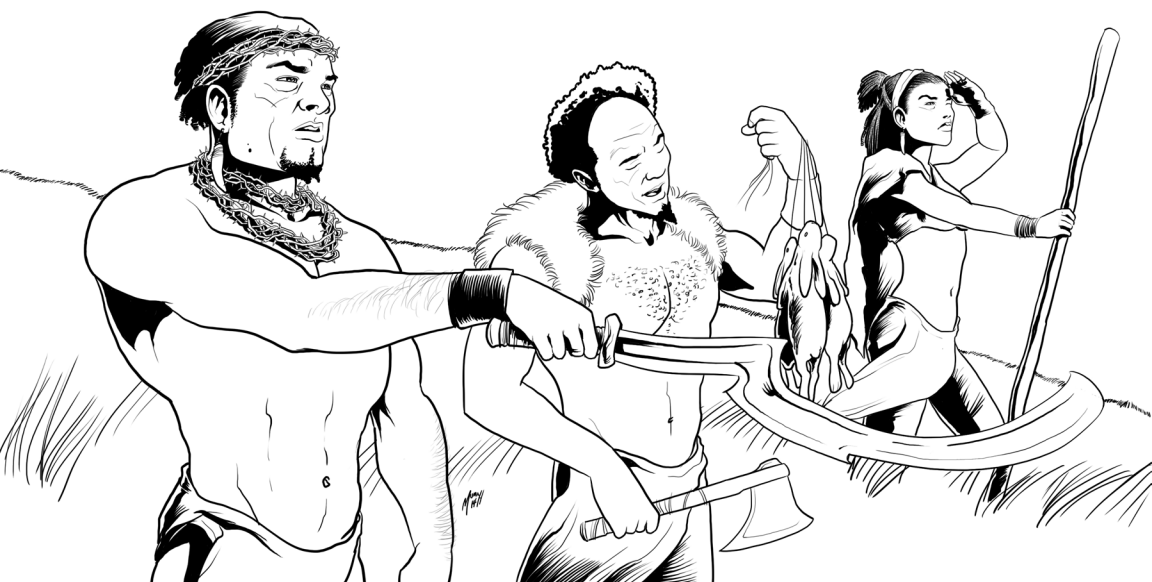
CULTURE FROM THE OUTSIDE IN
by QUINN MURPHY

A common challenge in running games is delivering believable cultures to players. When building cultures that stray from typical fantasy norms, there aren't familiar tropes to rely on, making the task more difficult. How do you supply enough context to make a culture seem real without taking up half the session in explanation? What's the best way to turn your research and imagination into a culture that feels real and different to your table? How do you build these cultures with minimum effort and maximum playability?

Answer these questions by starting culture design from the outside and working inward. Rather than build a culture from its history and resultant customs and belief systems, start with customs, followed by its beliefs and then its history.

Start with customs first because they are the most "gameable" element of culture. Rather than trying to introduce characters to a new culture by explaining about that culture's history, show them what members of that culture are like by describing what type of things it is that they do. If the characters start to interact more with people from that culture, they can see new customs and actions. If they don't, the other benefit is a lack of wasted effort. The GM has not designed a lot of history and setting information that the characters failed to interact with.

Five Customs

To start, provide the culture with a name, then give it five customs. A custom should be written in first person, and it should not state what the people value or believe. Customs are boundaries on actions, listing what a

culture does or doesn't do, rather than just listing that a culture believes in X or doesn't believe in Y. The more actively you can describe the custom, the easier it is for the player to understand how the culture operates, without getting bogged down in history or philosophy. "We always do this" or "We never do that" are perfectly fine.

The Kitani

- We never use any tool more complicated than an abacus.
- We always take the simplest method of achieving our short term goals if given an option.
- We solve our problems through physical might.
- We go through obstacles, never around.
- We observe the natural order closely and live in tune with it.

Here is a quick sketch of a culture, so what should be done with it? NPCs can be introduced as following any of these customs. NPCs could also be shown in conflict with their culture's customs. Maybe the characters stumble into an argument where one NPC is trying to find a more subtle way around a problem while her companion insists they approach it directly, like a "proper" Kitani always does.

Once you've laid out your customs, realize that these represent ideals of the culture, not absolutes. Any individual from that culture will observe all, some, or none of these customs. There are many ways you can introduce customs and settings to your players from this initial seed. Characters could be asked to take sides in an intra-cultural dispute of new ways versus old ways, or they might find themselves observing a culture fighting to keep its traditions in the face of sweeping changes such as plague and war.

Paragons

With customs introduced, it is now time to create three to five cultural paragons of the culture. These are roles of reverence and representative of the culture's ideals. They don't represent common positions or roles but roles that must be attained.

For the Kitani we'll use *Scholar of the Wild*, *Berserker King*, and *Master Woodsman* as our paragons. Each reflects ideals of Kitani culture as expressed through the customs we've outlined previously.

These paragons can usually be slotted into one of an NPC's aspects for the fractally minded amongst you. Use as-is or with variations that fit the character.

Adding More Detail

Having looked at the outsides of our culture, we can start to dig a little deeper. An advantage to the outside-in approach is that if the play group is satisfied with the quick peek at a culture, focus remains solely on what characters see and interact with. If the characters keep interacting with the culture, you can add further details.

CULTURAL VALUES

Our next step then is to learn what our culture thinks of itself. Starting with "*A member of the culture is…*" you can create a list of ten adjectives or nouns that describe what people from this culture value. We'll continue with our Kitani culture:

A Kitani is...

- Brave
- Defiant
- Brash
- Forthright
- Quiet

- Charismatic
- Clean
- Honorable
- Tough
- Relentless

These can be used to assign aspects to NPCs as in previous sections. It also provides a deeper sense of who these people are and what they value. Roleplay and interactions should inform at least part of the list of values.

One way to involve players and increase their investment is to let them build part of the list. Ask each player to provide 1 or 2 elements. "*How do you think the Kitani see themselves?*" can be a provocative and entertaining exercise for the group. Realize though that this list is how the culture sees itself. It's important to remember that the values on this list should be things that the culture considers positive, not what an outsider would deem positive.

When using values as aspects, they can be lifted from the list as-is, but also consider using them in conjunction with other aspects. Values can augment other aspects to create high amounts of variation that still represent the themes of a culture.

Making a Kitani NPC, a GM can use *Tough* or *Relentless*, as Aspects, but can mix them with the paragons listed previously to get **Relentless Berserker King**, **Defiant Scholar of the Wild**, or **Charismatic Master Woodsman**. Combining values with other Aspects "flavors" and tailors them to the built culture.

CULTURAL HISTORY

The next stage of developing your culture is determining how it came to be as it is today. The process has so far stayed completely away from history, starting at the present and moving backwards towards the past. The previous steps allow a lot of knowledge through inference about the people in this culture, so the only gap left to fill is the historical context which they inhabit. The process didn't ignore history because it's unimportant but rather because it's too difficult a place to start. However, now that so much is known about how people in the culture live and what they value, it should be much easier to hone in on events of historical significance to members of the culture. These events contribute to everything known about these people.

First, define a triumphant event. This event is a "golden age" epoch or moment for members of the culture. This event should evoke pride and positive feelings.

For the Kitani, this event is **Destroying the Empire's Shipyard**. This is where the Kitani won their independence from the Empire, and set out for themselves on their own ships.

Next, define a failure event. The failure event is our culture at its lowest point. This is an event many from the culture won't even want to discuss, as it is too painful a piece of history to deal with.

For the Kitani, this event is **King Lowdin Surrendering**. This lost battle is what placed the Kitani under the Empire's rule in the first place. Having seen what happens when they do surrender, it is no surprise that they are now more likely to simply charge forward and take their chances.

Lastly, come up with up to three other significant events. These events are known to all members of the culture, though opinion may remain divided. The events can be lore or fable, or it can be an event that actually occurred. Critically important is that the events be shared.

For the Kitani, the significant events are ***Discovery of a New World*** and ***Chopping Down the Fallwood Forest***. The former encapsulates the Kitani's journey to a new world after escaping the Empire and the latter is a common legend told of some Kitani Woodsman who made a bet to see who could chop down the most trees and in doing so ended up cutting down most of the forest. The story is a teaching tool used to instill humility and attention to nature's needs in young Kitani children.

Players earn access to these events as "rewards" for engaging actively with a culture. If the characters are around a culture long enough, they will learn about these events and stories. When characters reach this point, simply supply the events on an index card. Mark the positive events with a + and the negative events with a -. These events can be invoked and compelled as aspects, but negative events might make NPCs particularly sour if rolls go poorly.

Cultural Detail

After blocking out the major high level aspects of a culture, it is time to provide more detail. Keeping the building fractal, the next step is to provide cultural skills and cultural stunts. These skills and stunts can be used to flesh out NPCs of a particular culture but can also be used at a high level if cultures come into conflict.

CULTURAL SKILLS

Every culture has skills that it values higher than others. A full skill pyramid isn't required, however: It's assumed that a culture values a few skills but has all others within its population to some degree. Determine the culture's peak skill, which will be at Great (+4). Next, pick two Good (+3) skills. That's it!

The Kitani's skill pyramid has Physique at its peak, with Fight and Athletics below it. The Kitani pride themselves on their physical access to the world, and these skills provide it.

NPCs from this culture will tend to have these skills at higher than normal ranks for their type. Cultures that come into conflict will use these skills as characters would, but in the context of cultural shifts (explained on the next page).

CULTURAL STUNTS

Attached to the cultural skills are stunts. For each skill, design a rebel stunt and a paragon stunt. A rebel stunt represents a stunt of someone who rejects some cultural norm, while a paragon stunt represents the capabilities of a person who embraces this element of the culture. Building a rebel stunt means developing a sense for how someone brought up in this culture now rejects the accepted way something is done. How would a pacifist from a warrior culture use Fight? How does fighter from a peaceful culture use Empathy? Answering this sort of question leads to finding a proper rebel stunt.

Building a paragon stunt means thinking about the culture's relation with a skill. A warrior culture needs Fight, but what does that mean exactly? What is it about fighting that draws these people to it? Here is where the previous work of establishing values and history will really help.

KITANI CULTURAL STUNTS

Physique

- **(Rebel) Trickster's Jape.** You use your physical talents to anger others and instigate fights. Let others rush headlong into problems; you'd rather get your opponents off-balance and rushing at you! You may spend a fate point to use your Physique instead of Provoke.
- **(Paragon) Overwhelming Presence.** Some lead with words. You lead with actions and presence. Once per session you may use Physique in place of any one Rapport or Empathy roll.

Athletics

- **(Rebel) Master of the Street.** +2 to overcome actions with Athletics when in a city.
- **(Paragon) Master of the Wood.** +2 to overcome actions with Athletics when you are in a forest.

Fight

- **(Rebel) Clever Fighting.** +2 to your first Fight attack roll if you used Lore, Provoke, or Deceive in a previous action this scene.
- **(Paragon) Fighting Spirit.** Spend a fate point to use your Fight skill against a Deceive or Provoke roll.

Cultures in Conflict

Cultures easily come into conflict. While conflict can take place on battle-fields, cultures also conflict when their ideas and concepts meet each other. When a culture comes into conflict with another, treat each culture like a character. Each culture has a cultural stress track of three boxes. Individual characters cannot take actions against a culture except by mobilizing other cultural forces against it.

When a culture is taken out, it immediately regains the stress boxes and undergoes a cultural shift. In a cultural shift, one of the following happens:

- A custom is changed by a few details.
- One value is changed.
- An event is added to culture's history.

Track the number of cultural shifts a culture goes through. Every three cultural shifts causes a major cultural shift. In a major cultural shift, one of the following happens:

- A custom is completely rewritten, to as many details as the winning culture wishes.
- Up to three values are changed.
- A cultural skill is raised or lowered.

All changes should go through the GM, but major cultural shifts should be dramatic and reflective of the smaller shifts that lead up to it.

Making Culture Work in Your Games

Culture is a big subject. It's definitely much bigger than this article, and maybe too big for any one game. Especially when making fantasy cultures whose basis lies in real world cultures there is a fear of "getting it wrong." One reason the outside-in method was developed was to help build these cultures with less of that fear. By trying to build cultures from respect-ful noting of observable behaviors and then drilling down into beliefs and values, the hope is to avoid making judgments and presumptions on a par-ticular culture. Nothing is perfect, however. There is always the risk of get-ting it wrong, but that doesn't mean that we can't take steps to bring culture more meaningfully into our games. These "outside-in" techniques are one way to do it; hopefully you and your group enjoy it! ✚
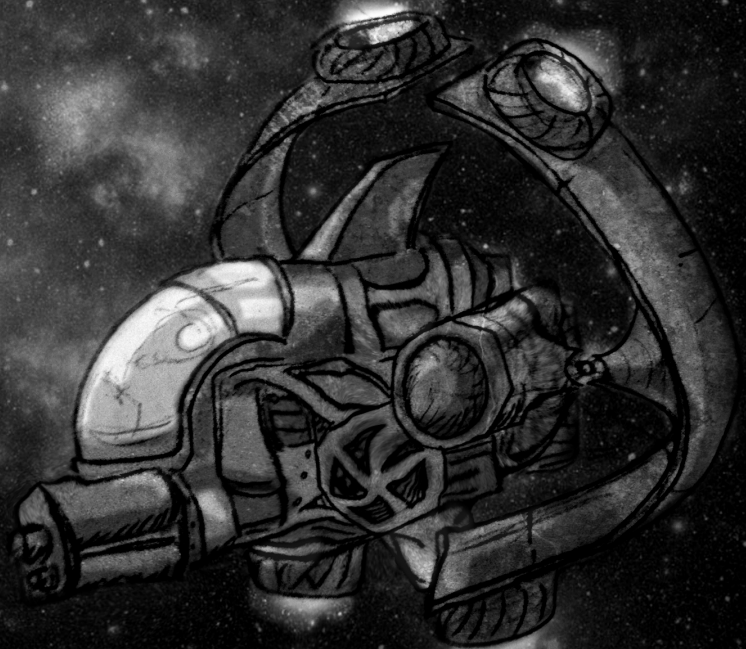
DARK STAR
by MARK DIAZ TRUMAN

Do you know why they put us out here, Coyote? Because we're not useful in the most important war the Empire has ever fought. We're not helpful to the cause back in the Core or even in the Delta system. We're better off sitting out here watching a big ball of nothingness pulse and gyrate like an overgrown toadball from Cesius Prime. We're freakin' useless.

There ain't nothing left for us but this, man. Drink your beer. It'll be a cold day in hell before any of us see any action again. Cold day in hell. And in the meantime, we're going to keep flying milk runs against a ball of nothingness the size of a planet.

- Lt. Commander Wista Kriner, Blue 5

The Dark Star

Sitting at the edge of the galaxy, beyond which there is nothing—not even the vacuum of space—lies the Dark Star. It's large, nearly the size of a planet, but it has no mass. It emits no light, absorbing whatever strikes it without growing in size or density. No sensor can penetrate it. All probes that are sent into it cease to function immediately upon entering the sphere.

Technically, the mysterious sphere is called Object 7232B. Everyone who works at Outpost 7232B-a and the garrison of Imperial soldiers that's been assigned to protect that Outpost call it the Dark Star, even on official reports to the Imperial Academy of Sciences on the Core planets.

THE GALACTIC EMPIRE

For the last 673 years, humanity has been united under the Galactic Empire, a fusion of cultures and peoples that brought a *Pax Imperia* to bear on the problems of the galaxy. While individual personalities and cultures have risen and fallen, the Empire has remained in control, spreading throughout the galaxy to ensure that humanity is the dominant form of life. There have been other, nonhuman species found, but it is broadly considered to be indigenous life and confined to local planetary systems—the stars belong to Terra.

THE VICTORIOUS

The primary power of the Empire is found in its capital ships, massive hulks of military force capable of jumping across the galaxy at faster-than-light speeds. The Empire has nearly a hundred of these vessels, each capable of projecting force across an entire system and launching fighters to defend itself from serious threats. They are filled with thousands of soldiers, dozens of pilots, and enough weaponry to bombard planetary forces into dust.

To protect its interests in the Dark Star, the Empire has assigned an older, nearly decommissioned capital ship named *The Victorious* to ensure that security is maintained in the vicinity of Outpost 7232B-a. There are no other planets in the system, but the Dark Star itself creates enough gravity to act as a kind of phantom planet, surrounded by an asteroid field and a few small moons. This is *The Victorious'* final mission, babysitting a scientific phenomenon at the edge of an empire.

ACE PILOTS ON THE EDGE

Along with *The Victorious*, the Empire has stationed nearly three dozen ace fighter pilots to run scientific and defensive missions along the perimeter of the Dark Star, collected in three distinct squadrons (Red, Green, and Blue). After an early mission with ordinary pilots turned into a disaster—the pilots

were unable to cope with the Dark Star's rotating gravity well and crashed into a fighter transport—the Empire was forced to send more qualified pilots out to Outpost 7232B-a, hotshots who can roll with the shifting conditions and get the scientists the data they need.

Of course, the Empire needs good pilots in the Core. Anyone sent out to the Dark Star likely has some damage or problems associated with their service—a criminal conviction hanging over their head maybe or a failure to obey protocols at appropriate levels. Simply put, these are good pilots and terrible soldiers, troublemakers who don't fit in anywhere else in the galaxy. Any pilot assigned to the Dark Star has problems, reasons that they aren't welcome back in the Core.

The Victorious

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: DARK STAR MISSION ESCORT

TROUBLE: SCHEDULED FOR DECOMMISSION

CAPITAL CLASS ARMAMENTS
"THEY DON'T MAKE 'EM LIKE THEY USED TO!"
CAPTAINED BY RLYNN REZNIK

SKILLS

ENGINES:	Good (+3)
HULL:	Fantastic (+6)
SENSORS:	Great (+4)
SYSTEMS:	Great (+4)
WEAPONS:	Superb (+5)

STUNTS

Reinforced Hull. +2 to Hull when defending against energy weapons and missiles in open space.

Coordinated Jump Drives. When jumping from system to system, spend a fate point to include all allied fighters in the jump.

STRESS

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

CONSEQUENCES

MILD (2) • MODERATE (4) • MAJOR (6)

NOTES

The Victorious uses the Ship Skills found on page 75 of ***Dark Star***.

QUICK START ADVENTURES

Dark Star is a Quick Start Adventure that contains a unique setting, pregenerated characters, plot hooks, and an opening scene. It's not a full adventure, but it will get your group started on a brand new Fate campaign!

THE WHITE HAWK REBELLION

The last five years have put a real strain on the flow of pilots out to the Dark Star. An outbreak of insurrection called the White Hawk Rebellion—launched by a zealous religious faction on Vralae II—has led to a full-on Galactic Civil War across multiple systems, including the Core worlds. Many of the Empire's capital ships have been captured (or have defected) and the fighting between the White Hawk rebels and the Empire is intensifying as the rebels bring the weight of their forces to bear. It's not clear who will win. Each day that ace pilots are stationed at the Dark Star instead of back in the Core is a day that a lesser pilot faces the guns of the White Hawk fleet in defense of the Empire.

Setting Creation

As a Quick Start Adventure, *Dark Star* has everything you need to jump right into your first session. Before you start, you'll want to discuss the broader setting with your group, perhaps even reading aloud the descriptions of the Dark Star, the Galactic Empire, *The Victorious* and her fighter pilots, and the Rebellion so everyone is on the same page.

At the start of play, explain the **current issue** to your players and ask them to fill in one or two additional faces associated with *The Dark Star*. These additional characters will provide new plot hooks and twists that will tie your players more deeply to the strange phenomena they face at the edge of the galaxy.

Then ask your players to choose from one of the two available **impending issues**: *White Hawks Approach* or *Growing Scientist Discontent*. Have them fill in one or two additional faces for their chosen impending issue as well, rounding out the larger cast of characters with their suggestions.

CURRENT ISSUE: THE DARK STAR

Pilots who fly Dark Star sorties have to contend with a few major problems: the science missions that require them to get close to the object's weird gravitational field and the occasional Void Craver ship that jumps into the system. In the case of the former, most pilots know their limits around the Dark Star and refuse to fly missions that are too dangerous, but the Void Cravers, an apocalyptic cult that seeks oneness with the Dark Star, don't care about safety. They rush at the strange object, engines pushed to full to be at one with their gods, daring Imperial pilots to try to intervene. The

Empire has given orders to "shoot to kill" on any unidentified craft that move toward the Dark Star, but no pilot likes lighting up civilian transports, no matter where the transport is headed.

Most pilots run their science missions with a constant eye on ship contacts, hoping that they aren't going to pull any Void Cravers on this run…

Faces:

- Rustin Jeranti, Matriarch of the apocalyptic cult seeking oneness with the Dark Star
- Captain Rylnn Reznik, commander of *The Victorious*

THE DARK STAR

RUSTIN JERANTI

Matriarch of the apocalyptic cult seeking oneness with the Dark Star

CAPTAIN RYLNN REZNIK

commander of
The Victorious

IMPENDING ISSUES

In addition to **The Dark Star** and the threat it poses, there are a number of other impending issues that threaten *The Victorious*, including:

White Hawks Approach

The fight against the White Hawk insurgency has mostly taken place near Core planets, key strategic systems that the rebels have tried to separate from the rest of the Empire. Recently, pilots have caught wind of a second front in the War, a White Hawk fleet that's rumored to be near the Dark Star. No one knows if the rebels think the Dark Star has strategic value, but rebel ace Kir Heartstar is rumored to be piloting a fighter in the fleet closest

to *The Victorious*. Kir's presence indicates that the insurgency is plotting something, as they wouldn't waste one of their best pilots on a mission that wasn't vital to their cause.

Faces:

- Kir Heartstar, ace White Hawk pilot in approaching rebel fleet
- Master Chief Granderson, hanger chief assigned to Blue Squadron

Growing Scientist Discontent

Over the past six weeks, the head astrophysicist, Dr. Tanya Lee, assigned to research the Dark Star, has claimed that micro-G movements inside Object 7232B are indicative of "a future Dark Star event." The other scientists associated with the project—and scientists back in the Core—have been unable to replicate Dr. Lee's results, leading to a reprimand from *The Victorious'* political officer, Lt. Elias Karisa. Undaunted by the political pressure, Dr. Lee has taken to publishing scientific memos demanding more funding and support for "Dark Star oriented research."

Faces:

- Dr. Tanya Lee, head astrophysicist assigned to study Object 7232B
- Lt. Elias Karisa, political officer stationed on Outpost 7232B-a

WHITE HAWKS APPROACH

MASTER CH
GRANDERS

KIT HEARTSTAR

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approac

GROWING SCIENTIST DISCONTENT

hanger chief
to Blue So

DR. TANYA LEE

head astrophysicist
assigned to study
t 7232B

LT. ELIAS KARISA

political officer
stationed on
Outpost 7232B-a
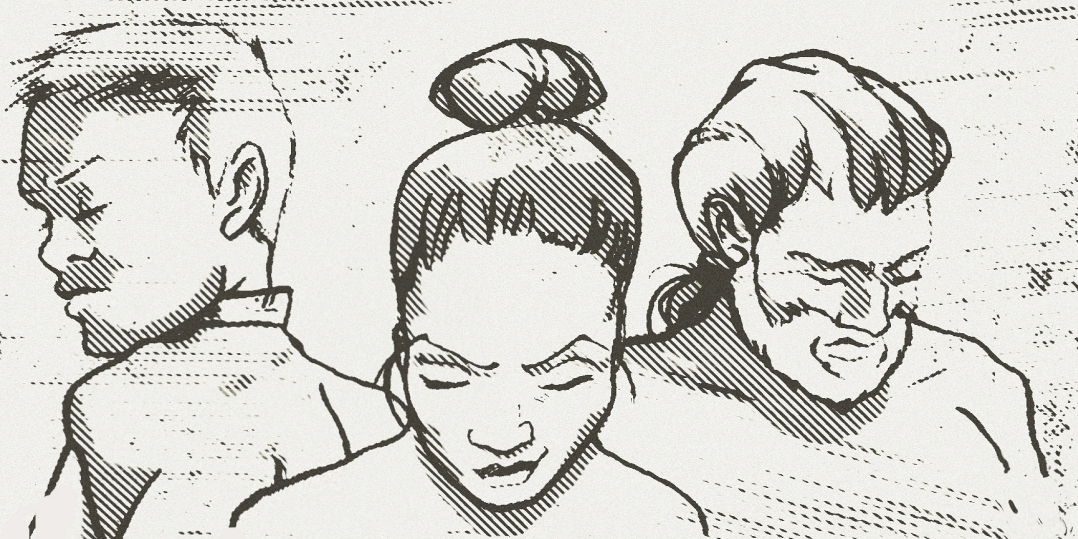
Character Creation

Dark Star works best with Fate Core characters. You can choose to use Fate Accelerated approaches instead of the more traditional skills, but the unique **ship skills** for the fighters won't seem as interesting or special if the players already think about their actions abstractly.

In *Dark Star*, players take on the roles of ace Imperial fighter pilots, assigned to the farthest reaches of the galaxy as the result of bad luck and poor choices. It's possible for players to take on the roles of scientists or other military officers on board *The Victorious*, but such characters probably won't have as direct a role in the story if they don't have a fighter in the dogfights.

Players should select their aspects as normal, choosing a high concept, a trouble, and completing the phase trio to determine their final three aspects. Players should also select a **callsign** for their pilot, such as Coyote, Hotdog, Viper, or Apollo. These callsigns aren't aspects, but they are a great way to reflect how the NPCs in the setting view the characters. Most of the players will portray characters associated with Blue Squadron, one of the oldest serving units aboard *The Victorious*, and they may even choose to serve in the same three-fighter unit, a flight of ships like Blue 10, Blue 11, and Blue 12.

PREGENERATED CHARACTERS

If your players wish to play pregenerated Dark Star pilots, you can use the three sample characters provided on page 82 of this adventure. Stats are provided only for Fate Core versions of each character, including their individual stunts, callsigns, and fighter ship extras.

SKILL LIST

Dark Star uses a modified skill list from traditional Fate Core. These skills aren't new, but they've been renamed and contextualized to ensure that they make sense for the new setting. The other skills (Athletics, Contacts, Deceive,

Empathy, Fight, Investigate, Physique, Provoke, Rapport, Resources, Shoot, Stealth, and Will) remain unchanged.

Doctrine (Lore)

Imperial officers receive training in both the history of the Empire and the standard operating procedures of the Imperial military. For some, this knowledge allows them to bypass paperwork and locate resources within Imperial ships and structures. Other pilots haven't thought about Imperial doctrine since flight school and struggle to access records properly, know what's expected in proper protocol, or remember the layout of a particular kind of ship.

Larceny (Burglary)

Pilots don't often case banks or break into people's houses, but that doesn't mean they're unfamiliar with the art of getting what they want through illicit means. Pickpocketing, stealing, and breaking into places all fall under the art of Larceny, but it more frequently involves fudging paperwork and altering computer records without getting caught.

Operate (Drive)

Most Imperial soldiers don't have much occasion to drive a vehicle, but they regularly operate a variety of Imperial equipment, including computers on board various ships. Sometimes this includes driving a vehicle on the planet's surface. Operate does not include piloting a fighter or commanding a capital ship (see page 75 for more on ships in **Dark Star**).

Repair (Craft)

More often than not, Imperial crews are asked to fix up equipment on the fly, repairing old tech to keep it running. Pilots often repair broken equipment on their own ships, although some prefer to leave that work to a Master Chief on deck. Characters with Repair are able to fix broken tech, jury rig new equipment, and generally keep things running on Imperial ships. Note that this does not include on-the-fly adjustments to fighters during dogfights (see page 76 for using Systems in **Dark Star**).

Survival (Notice)

Dark Star makes use of the Survival skill found on page 50. In addition to overcoming environmental dangers and making use of information characters notice in their environments, Survival can also help pilots navigate zero-G and find resources in emergency situations.

AUTOMATIC DISCOVERY

Since Notice has been removed from the skill list, **Dark Star** makes use of the **Automatic Discovery** system developed by Ryan Macklin for use with Survival (page 51). Skills rated at Good (+3) or higher automatically succeed at rolls to overcome or create advantages using passive discovery; skills rated at Great (+4) or higher automatically succeed with style on such rolls.

CONDITIONS

Rather than use stress tracks, **Dark Star** uses modified **conditions** from the Fate System Toolkit (page 18) in addition to the more traditional consequences. Pilots have a single stress box for two sticky conditions called **Angry** and **Exhausted** and two stress boxes for a lasting condition called **Injured**.

CONDITIONS

STICKY

1☐ 1☐ **Angry**

1☐ 1☐ **Exhausted**

Condition lasts until you accept a compel based on the condition.

LASTING

1☐ 1☐ 1☐ **Injured**

Condition lasts until you make a recovery roll after at least a whole session has passed.

Using Conditions in Play

During play, you can mark off conditions to avoid being taken out during a conflict or to pay a minor or major cost as the result of a failed roll, provided it's in keeping with the fiction of the story. It's pretty tough to say you're **Injured** as the result of a failed roll against your superior officer… unless that superior officer decides to attack you for your insolence.

When the condition is checked, it acts as an aspect on the character—it can be invoked and compelled as normal by the GM and other players until it's recovered. In the case of conditions with more than one stress box, the condition doesn't act as an aspect until all the stress boxes associated with that condition are checked. Checking just one box of **Injured**, for example, doesn't do anything. It's the second (or third) checked box that puts the aspect on the character.

Sticky Conditions: Angry and Exhausted

Sticky conditions in **Dark Star** act as aspects when you check them off to pay a minor cost or avoid being taken out in a scene. These conditions last

until you have accepted a compel (or self-compelled) in accordance with the condition. If you blow a social encounter, for example, because you're too *Angry* to listen to another pilot, then you can recover the condition as you get your head screwed on straight.

Lasting Conditions: Injured

Lasting conditions are more difficult to get rid of during play. Instead of accepting a compel, you must wait a whole session and then make a recovery roll against the injury with a Great (+4) passive difficulty. For example, a character might have to visit the Medical Bay and make use of the Operate skill to apply medical attention to the wound in question. If no characters have the needed skills, it might be possible to steal medical supplies (Larceny), convince a ship doctor to see you (Rapport), or even try to heal the injury without passing out (Will).

Additional Stress Boxes for Conditions

Characters with a Physique at Fair (+2) or better can add one stress box to *Exhausted*, and characters with a Will of Fair (+2) or better can add one stress box to *Angry*. Characters with either Physique or Will at Great (+4) can add a third box to *Injured*. These additional boxes do not slow or delay recovery. If a player accepts a compel or makes an overcome roll, the entire track clears.

NEW EXTRA: SHIPS

In addition to their normal skills and aspects, pilots in *Dark Star* get their ship as an extra. Most pilots who serve on a capital ship like *The Victorious* customize and modify their fighters, swapping out parts and systems to configure the best possible version of their own craft they can find.

Ship Skills

In *Dark Star*, ships have five skills (Engines, Hull, Sensors, Systems, and Weapons) that represent how each ship is customized and prepped for missions. Since all the pilots in the setting are assumed to be amazingly skilled individuals, it's the build of the ship that determines what a pilot can do in the cockpit. Instead of rolling Operate or Survival, all rolls pilots make while in space are made using the following ship skills:

Engines: A ship's engine can be used to overcome distances and obstacles, as well as create advantages for keeping up with fleeing prey or setting up a strafing run. It cannot be used to attack, but it can be used to dodge enemy fire with a defense roll.

Hull: Typically used to defend against enemy attacks, the hull of a ship can also be used as a battering ram to make attacks. At the same time, it can also be counted on to overcome obstacles or create advantages when appropriate, such as flying through hanger doors to escape a ship.

Sensors: Want to see outside your ship? This skill can be used to overcome and create advantages to learn more about your environment. It can also be used for electromagnetic attacks, but most ships are shielded enough for that to be a rare attack.

Systems: Everything internal to the ship, including attempts to fix problems and keep things running, rely on internal systems. Keeping things up and running by overcoming obstacles and creating advantages is the primary use of this skill.

Weapons: One of the most versatile skills, the weapons on a ship can overcome obstacles, create advantages through suppressive fire, and attack other ships. It cannot be used to defend.

These five skills cover nearly everything pilots want to do in space, including dogfights and runs on capital ships. For new ships, pilots assign the following skill ratings to the skills above: +3, +2, +1, +1, +0. Capital ships and transports are built the same way: a peak skill, one skill at one less than the peak skill, two skills at two less than the peak skill, and one skill at three less than the peak skill. The largest Imperial capital ship—a Sunwrecker-class battleship—has ship skills at +9, +8, +7, +7, and +6.

Stress and Consequences

Fighters don't have stress boxes, but they can take two consequences: a mild (2) and a moderate (4). Larger ships may have stress boxes and larger consequences to represent how much more fire they can take before folding. Typically, capital ships have the more traditional mild (2), moderate (4), and major (6) consequences along with at least 2-3 stress boxes.

When pilots take stress while piloting their fighter, they can opt to take the stress themselves or allow their ship to take consequences (*Flying Blind*, *Busted Engines*, *Clipped Wings*). Pilots need to make (or find someone to make) Repair rolls with a Great (+4) difficulty to get their ship back to full capacity, removing the consequence and getting back into the air at full strength.

Opening Scene: Trouble at 10 Forward

After a few days on flight detail, Blue Squadron finally has some time off from running missions on behalf of the outpost scientists. Most of the time, this results in drinking and carousing, accompanied by the occasional fight with one of the other squadrons (Green Squadron or Red Squadron). The scene opens with the player characters at 10 Forward, the officer's club aboard *The Victorious*, enjoying a round of drinks to celebrate their hard-won time off from flying.

As they get the night underway, however, Lt. Dakchi—the best pilot in Green Squadron—decides to start trouble with one of the characters, preferably one of Dakchi's rival pilots. Dakchi's drunk, and he insists that they owe him money for a bet they made on who could get closer to the Dark Star on their last run. How will they deal with a drunk and belligerent pilot without getting thrown in the brig themselves? And will they let Dakchi claim to be the better pilot in front of the rest of the crew?

POSSIBLE COSTS FOR FAILURE

Minor Costs: 1 stress, drawing attention to the argument, banned from 10 Forward

Major Costs: 2 stress, *Angry*, arrested by Imperial military police

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Lt. Drek Dakchi

ASPECTS

Drunken Hotshot Pilot • Core World Exile • Lousy Gambler

SKILL MODES

Good (+3)	Fighting
Average (+1)	Arguing with Officers, Drinking
Poor (–1)	Dodging Attacks

STUNTS

Slippery. In the event that someone tries to create an advantage that would keep you from leaving a zone or scene, spend a fate point to turn that situation aspect into a boost.

STRESS

☐

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) • Moderate (4)

Dakchi's Squad

ASPECTS

Dakchi's Goons • Looking for a Fight

SKILL MODES

Average (+1)   Arguing, Fighting

STRESS

☐☐☐

Opening Aspects and Opposition

Opening Aspects: **Dirty Officer's Club**, **The Crowd Is Watching**, **Blue Squadron Is Off-Duty**

SKILL MODES?

Dark Star uses Skill modes for NPCs instead of individual skills. When NPCs take action in accordance with that general activity, they get the skill rating of the mode. If no skill mode is appropriate, the NPC rolls on a +0. These NPCs can also gang up and assist each other—if Dakchi's three or four friends decide to help him in a bar fight, they would each add +1 to his roll.

Middle Scene: Attack on *The Victorious*

However the characters decide to deal with Dakchi, their time in 10 Forward is cut short by a sudden and dramatic tilt in the floor. Something has knocked *The Victorious* off-balance, and the screech of the ship's hull indicates that the anti-grav systems are having trouble coping with the shifts in the gravity well. As the crew gets to its feet, a call goes out over the ship's internal communications for Blue Squadron to scramble fighters.

The characters have to go from 10 Forward all the way to the rear of the ship to access the Blue Squadron hanger bay. The trip usually takes just a few minutes, but the ship is listing at a 40-50 degree angle! If the characters make any attempts to access the nav systems, they discover that the Dark Star let out a massive burst of gravitational energy that threw *The Victorious* into a spin. They need to get to their ships to do a sweep of the Dark Star!

POSSIBLE COSTS FOR FAILURE

Minor Costs: *Angry*, *Exhausted*, lost in the ship

Major Costs: *Injured*, minor consequence, blocked passages

Opening Aspects and Skill Challenges

Opening Aspects: ***Listing Ship***, ***Damaged Hull***, ***Confused Soldiers and Crew***

As the characters make their way to the Blue squadron hanger, they may encounter a number of obstacles and opportunities. In general, selecting roughly two challenges per character gives everyone time to shine. Here are a few skill tests characters may need to make to get to their ships and get the hanger doors open:

Athletics: *The Victorious* is listing and drifting, conditions that might call for pilots to have to climb "up" hallways to get to their destination. Difficulty: Fair (+2) to Great (+4)

Doctrine: Listing ships tend to be confusing, and the characters may get lost (minor cost) as the result of a failure on another roll. Remembering the floor plan of a particular section of *The Victorious* will get them back on track. Difficulty: Fair (+2)

Operate: The sudden stress on the ship's hull from the gravitational wave has collapsed sections of *The Victorious*. Some doors that should be open have been locked by the automatic systems and need to be opened manually. Difficulty: Great (+4)

Provoke: Lost and confused soldiers may get in the way of the pilots' attempts to get to their ships. A simple order to get back to work will remove such an obstacle. Difficulty: Good (+3)

Repair: In addition to the damaged doors, many other systems have malfunctioned, leading to a lack of oxygen in some parts of the ship. Activating backup life support systems requires rerouting emergency power. Difficulty: Good (+3)

Final Scene: Protecting *The Victorious*

Once the characters get their ships out into space, they finally get a sense of the situation (especially if they use their Sensor ship skill to create an advantage). *The Victorious* is under attack by an alien transport ship, one with enough firepower to potentially crack the hull of the Imperial capital ship. Worse yet, *The Victorious* was disabled by the gravitational wave and doesn't have any defense against the smaller alien craft. Can they neutralize the alien craft before it destroys *The Victorious*, leaving them stranded on the edge of the galaxy?

POSSIBLE COSTS FOR FAILURE

Minor Costs: 1 stress, exposed to fire from alien ship, confused sensor readings

Major Costs: 2 stress, ship skill disabled, separated from Blue Squadron

Opening Aspects and Opposition

Opening Aspects: *The Victorious is Disabled!*, *Dark Star Gravitational Wave*, *Alone in Space*

The Alien Ship

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: DARK STAR ADVANCE SHIP

TROUBLE: RADIATION SIGNATURE

SATELLITE DEFENSE GRID • NONHUMAN WEAPONS
ALIEN HULL CONSTRUCTION

SKILLS

ENGINES:	Average (+1)
HULL:	Good (+3)
SENSORS:	Fair (+2)
SYSTEMS:	Fair (+2)
WEAPONS:	Great (+4)

STUNTS

Missile Battery. +2 to creating an advantage using Weapons when opening fire on other capital ships.

Self-repairing Satellites. If you succeed with style on a defense roll against a fighter, gain a free invoke on your *Satellite Defense Grid*.

STRESS

☐ ☐

CONSEQUENCES

MILD (2) • MODERATE (4)

Plot Hooks and Adventure Seeds

The opening scene of **Dark Star** isn't the end of the adventure. The players may have disabled or destroyed the alien ship, but the mystery of the Dark Star is still unsolved. And don't forget the impending issues! Here are a few plot hooks and adventure seeds to keep the story going, varying the tone and pace of scenes after the initial attack on *The Victorious*:

ENTERING THE DARK STAR

Right before the alien ship was disabled, it launched a probe back into the Dark Star. Sensor readings indicate that a neutrino shield unlike anything currently developed by Imperial scientists protected the probe from whatever Dark Star energies usually destroy such launches. If similar technology could be replicated—either using materials recovered during the battle or through a boarding mission to the alien ship—the pilots of *The Victorious* could lead a mission into the Dark Star itself to finally answer Dr. Lee's questions and gather the data they need to determine if more alien ships are going to emerge. Will the pilots risk their lives to head into the Dark Star? What will they find if they make the journey?

WHITE HAWK CONTACT

After dealing with the alien ship, the pilots get a contact report from *The Victorious* indicating that a small White Hawk fleet has jumped into the system. Armed with orders to investigate, the pilots find that the rebel ships are badly damaged and offering to surrender. Worse yet, the damage done to the White Hawk fleet seems to be from weapons with radiation signatures similar to the alien ship that emerged from the Dark Star. What attacked the rebels and where did it come from? And can the rebels be trusted to surrender or is this all a trap?

DR. LEE SEEKS ALLIES

Now that the Dark Star has proven capable of connecting to an alien dimension, Dr. Lee is looking for support in her demands to expand the program. Specifically, she wants the pilots who fought the ship to help her convince Imperial Command to send more resources…and she's willing to offer her own support in a transfer back to the Core if the pilots go along with the plan. In the next few days, an Imperial Admiral is scheduled to visit *The Victorious* for an inspection. Captain Reznik won't be thrilled with the pilots speaking up; will anyone dare to support Lee in an attempt to gain the freedom to return to the civilized part of the galaxy?

Lt. Vin "Candy" Candiotti – Blue 10

Lt. Candiotti isn't fit for duty. He's a mess. His ship is a mess. Everything about him says that he should be pulled off duty and sent to flight school, just so that he can learn some manners and dress himself without spilling food everywhere. But he's one of the best damn pilots in the galaxy, and his Squadron and Flight Leaders put up with him because he's an excellent pilot with a nose for solutions to tough problems. Underestimate him—and his food stained clothing—at your own peril.

ASPECTS

High Concept: Sloppy Hotshot

Trouble: Never Met a Vice I Didn't Like

Other: Nose for Loopholes

Sober Enough to Dogfight • Just Can't Be Trained

SKILLS

Great (+4)	Provoke
Good (+3)	Contacts, Larceny
Fair (+2)	Fight, Rapport, Shoot
Average (+1)	Deceive, Operate, Physique, Resources

SHIP SKILLS

Engines:	Average (+1)
Hull:	Average (+1)
Sensors:	Good (+3)
Systems:	Mediocre (+0)
Weapons:	Fair (+2)

STUNTS

I Got Confusing Orders. When lying to a superior officer about the orders you've received, you can roll Provoke instead of Deceive.

Linked Navs. When creating an advantage using your sensors for the first time in a scene, add an extra free invoke to the aspect you create for each additional pilot flying in your squadron.

I Know a Guy. +2 to Contacts rolls made to find people on board your primary capital ship.

CONDITIONS

☐ **Angry**   ☐☐ **Injured**

☐ **Exhausted**

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) • **Moderate (4)** • **Major (6)**

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Captain Payton "Coyote" Sazla – Blue II

Unlike most of the other pilots on *The Victorious*, Sazla didn't break any rules or get herself into trouble with the Empire. Instead, she's been sent to the edge of the galaxy because she's too mentally unstable to be trusted with a squadron in the War. Ever since the Battle of Molantuni, Sazla's taken bigger and bigger risks with her ship and her squad, and the Empire's decided she needs some time running missions for Outpost 7232B-a to cool off before returning to active duty.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: LEADER AMONG THE LAWLESS

TROUBLE: IT'S A GOOD DAY TO DIE

OTHER: FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION
LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE • SMALL TOWN MORALS

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Will
GOOD (+3)	Empathy, Provoke
FAIR (+2)	Doctrine, Shoot, Survival
AVERAGE (+1)	Deceive, Investigate, Larceny, Resources

SHIP SKILLS

ENGINES:	Fair (+2)
HULL:	Good (+3)
SENSORS:	Mediocre (+0)
SYSTEMS:	Average (+1)
WEAPONS:	Average (+1)

STUNTS

Alpha Dog. +2 to Provoke when giving orders to soldiers and crew of lower rank than you.

Death Wish. You can roll Will instead of Athletics when you come straight at an enemy with more firepower than you (i.e., you only have a knife and your opponent has a gun or you are dramatically outnumbered).

Kamikaze. When attempting to ram another fighter or transport, spend a fate point to force your opponent to reroll. The second roll cannot be rerolled, even if the opponent spends a fate point to invoke an aspect.

CONDITIONS

☐☐ **Angry**　　　　　☐☐☐ **Injured**

☐　**Exhausted**

CONSEQUENCES

MILD (2) • MODERATE (4) • MAJOR (6)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Lt. Krans "Hound" Petro – Blue 12

Convicted of repeated murders on the Core worlds, Petro was sentenced to death. Lucky for him, the Empire tests all criminals for useful aptitudes—his skills as a pilot saved his life as the Empire commuted his sentence. Now he wears a cybernetic collar that records his every action, forcing him into service and earning him the callsign "Hound." He loves flying. And egging on Candy to do all the things his collar keeps him from doing. He also longs for Dr. Tanya Lee, but she rarely gives him a second look or responds to his attempts to impress her with his flying.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: REPURPOSED MURDERER

TROUBLE: NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR DR. LEE

OTHER: COLOR WITHIN THE LINES
UNWILLING POSTER CHILD • CANDY'S ENABLER

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Fight
GOOD (+3)	Larceny, Rapport
FAIR (+2)	Doctrine, Physique, Survival
AVERAGE (+1)	Repair, Shoot, Stealth, Will

SHIP SKILLS

ENGINES:	Good (+3)
HULL:	Mediocre (+0)
SENSORS:	Average (+1)
SYSTEMS:	Average (+1)
WEAPONS:	Fair (+2)

STUNTS

Got the Scent. +2 on all Survival rolls made to track someone you've fought with in the past.

Do It for Me. When attempting to place an aspect on a target by convincing them to take risks in your place, treat any success as a success with style and any failure as a tie.

Barrel Roll. When taking evasive action under fire, spend a fate point to roll Engines instead of Hull to defend against the attack.

CONDITIONS

☐☐ **Angry**   ☐☐ **Injured**

☐☐ **Exhausted**

CONSEQUENCES

MILD (2) • MODERATE (4) • MAJOR (6)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

MAKING FATE POINTS MATTER

by JOHN ADAMUS

The five of us sit around my dining room table. It's hour two of our game, and as usual Mike is tapping his poker chips on the table. He has three. Craig has two. Dale and Mollie each have three. They'll probably get one more each before the food arrives in the next twenty minutes. And those chips will get stacked, fiddled with, forgotten, used as tiddlywinks, or spun as tops before we get into the big huge fight an hour from now. Even if I prod them with a very fiction-jarring, "Don't forget you have points to spend," they're still going to hold onto those chips.

Why does this happen? They're not bad players. They're actually quite good at coming up with aspects and interconnecting character stories; during fights, they manage to play off one another's moves with an ease that sometimes feels rehearsed, like they coordinate their combat maneuvers when I'm out of the room. No, it isn't their fault that they end up with a stack of chips during the non-fighting times in a game. It's mine. As GM, I have a responsibility to make those points matter to each player beyond something that can be stacked, arranged, or fiddled with.

It's human nature in gaming to want to collect material during play. Pass a certain square on the board and you'll receive colored bits of paper. Correctly guess the number the little metal ball lands on and get a pile of clay chips. Even if the collection doesn't have a physical component—kill the monster and get experience points—we still like collecting things.

You may notice a lot of talk about the fate point economy, but fate points aren't money in the strictest economic sense; they can't get used to pay for dinner. They aren't proof that someone is a good guesser or even that someone defeated imaginary creatures with imaginary weapons. What they are—and what the players don't realize when they stack the chips up in front of them—is half of a commitment. They're the promise of something awesome. So while hoarding them is the natural tendency, the focus should be on spending them.

Because spending them is the other half of the commitment. By giving my player a point, I'm promising them that they're going to get a moment to have the spotlight and, very likely, praise from other players if what they do is particularly awesome. They just have to meet me halfway and take charge of the moment and be awesome.

The fate point is a reminder of that. Or at least it should be. The fate point is well named: it speaks to the fate of the spender and makes a point about what they are capable of doing. The players sitting at my table WANT to be awesome. I want everyone to have a good time. Fate points make this easy, assuming the players recognize that potential. So let's talk about three different ways everyone can recognize and realize that potential—as GM to player, as player to GM, and as player to player.

GM to Player

The hunk, his girlfriend, the nerdy girl, their stoner buddy, and his dog—yes, we're pretty much playing Scooby-Doo—are sneaking around the creepy old mansion, trying to figure out if the ghost of Mr. Webster is real or not. They haven't split up yet, which means I haven't had the pleasure of springing a terrible trap on them. I know the hunk's girlfriend, Doris, has an aspect of ***Trouble Finds Me More Than I Find It***, so I casually pick up a chip and spin it between my fingers.

"You know, Doris, this room has loads of bookshelves. High, tall, heavy-looking bookshelves."

Doris knows what's coming.

"And trouble finds you more than you find it, doesn't it?" I say.

Doris takes a look at the one chip she already has and compares it to the stacks other players have. She reaches across the table and takes the chip out of my hand. "Yeah, it does, which is why I'm going to grab that book marked 'Building Your Own Secret Passages for Fun and Profit'."

By far this is the easiest of the three to bring up, because this discussion comes up more often in play than any other. The GM has a list of player aspects handy (or at least should. Seriously. Even if it's just scrawled on a notecard) and when one of those aspects can change the course of play—for good or ill—out comes the compel.

The GM has tremendous ability to incentivize action here. In the above example, I didn't know which book would be a trigger, and I didn't even know what it would be a trigger for, but I know my players, and I know how canny and perceptive they can be. When you add up old house, big library, and Scooby-Doo vibe, of course there's going to be a secret passage. As GM, I don't need to script everything to the last detail, because I trust my players to be able to create the experience they want. I'm just there to keep their creations within the boundaries of the setting and mechanics.

Little by little, in letting the players act, rather than just always react to me, I'm encouraging them to go deeper into the world. And if they feel encouraged to add details, even as small as a book title, they'll stay hooked into the fiction we're creating.

Of course, that still doesn't address spending points. My giving them out only means there are more poker chips sitting idle next to the corn chips. As GM, I need to make them seductive, and that requires a little manipulation on my part.

I can hold up the chip and describe one of the possible actions a player can take.

"What did you find while searching the kitchen?"

This tethers the possible action to the chip, and should show that the actions are possible in trade. Then it only becomes a matter of one player going first, and showing the others that there's value in using rather than holding onto the points, and the table as a whole benefits once the floodgates of actions-feeding-into-more-actions open and the story accelerates.

Accelerating the story means that, ideally, chips are being trafficked more. Aspects are coming into play to help inform actions and give nuance and depth to the story. It's no longer my story alone; the story belongs to the whole table, and when I hand out chips, it's a stock paying dividends.

BRIBING PLAYERS

Okay, yes, flashing fate points while suggesting a course of action is sort of like forcing action through bribery. The player might not have naturally come up with wanting to search the kitchen; they might have just gone on to another room or done something else. And it's not what they find in the room that really matters—the point here isn't to push them to discover something I already decided is in the kitchen. What matters is that we're equalizing the story-telling field: we're each providing details, which spares me the extra on-the-fly fabrication and helps invest the players in what's going on.

Player to GM

Here's the reverse of my dispensing chips: players choosing to pay me. And it's trickier to manage than when I'm handling the economy because I'm not in control and because I'm trusting the players understand the rules and mechanics well enough to take over and be awesome, even if just for an action.

> Carrying a shovel she found in the shed, the nerdy girl, Margot, moves down the dark corridor. After some hesitant steps, she turns a corner to find the Big Scary Creature.
>
> The accompanying dice roll isn't that awful, but she's short of really smacking the Creature and buying herself some time to make good her escape. Margot's player hands over a chip.
>
> "I'd like to add +2 to my roll," she says. "Adrenaline surges kick in at just the right moment so the shovel comes down square in the Creature's midsection."

Theatrics aside, the best way to get players to hand over chips is by giving them a good understanding of how the mechanics work. In-game reminders, however gentle or meta, can be incredibly jarring for some people, no matter how tempting they might be as quick prods. Skip them, and focus more on good rules explanation up front, whether it's at the beginning of every game, or just the first of the series.

A player handing over a chip isn't just doing their part in the mechanics of the game; it's an admission that they've bought into the story, and they want something to happen. This anticipation, this want for cool stuff, isn't instantly generated. It doesn't just appear because you've passed out note cards and the fate dice. It needs to be cultivated by the story you're telling. Having already solicited information from them at the start of play, and knowing your players like you do, you as a GM should have a wealth of material to draw on. It's all bait, luring players to buy into the story, made easier by the fact that they've contributed to the foundational elements of this story, and all you're doing now is perpetuating their involvement in it by accepting their chips.

ROLL WITH IT

When the player contributes, go with it. Yes, they're going to likely bring up something you didn't plan for. Yes, they're likely going to give you something they think is great that you might think is terrible or that it derails all your carefully laid plans. Go with it. Say "Yes" to it and weave their idea into yours as though it has always belonged. The bulk of creation is still yours, if you're looking for credit or praise; they're just adding color and depth. Let them. Flexibility helps tell the story and makes players want to play. Their enthusiasm, which helps them want to reinforce the story, and the vibe and the shared experience can and should totally be infectious, to you AND to the other players.

And you can encourage them to keep offering details, by giving details in return. They want to tell you the details of the room they're in? Give them details about the next room when they enter. Paint the most evocative picture of how the badguy-of-the-week jumps, kicks, and punches, and players will respond in kind.

In this two-stroke cycle of GM-to-player and player-to-GM, a game flows nicely. The give and take isn't even, and isn't necessarily regular, but there's enough movement of fate points to tell an interesting story and pass a few hours around the gaming table while consuming food that will likely give you indigestion later.

But there's a third leg, making this economy a sort of isosceles triangle, and that's when a player instigates action from another player's aspects.

Player to Player

This is the hardest type of economy to pull off, but it guarantees that players won't hold onto chips: they'll be too busy using them to strategize and further their story.

> Old Man Webster is dead; his body was stuffed in the walk-in freezer. Mrs. Webster, though, is alive and well and currently chasing our intrepid teens all through the house, with sharp knives and a murderous gleam in her eye.
>
> The group, newly reunited after they all took the shortcut through the conservatory, hides now behind a credenza. They take stock of their supplies.
>
> "No guns, no knives. What do we have?" asks the hunk.
>
> "I've got a shovel," says Margot.
>
> "And I've got a bag of marbles," says the stoner friend.
>
> The players all share a look, and then look at me.
>
> "John, is there a chandelier in the room?"
>
> "You tell me."
>
> Someone plunks a chip down. "Yes, there's a chandelier, of course there is, it's right overhead. We just need someone to climb up and get ready to pounce."
>
> The hunk turns to Doris, tapping her chips. "Oh look, ***Being a Gymnast Makes Me Popular For Some Reason***."
>
> After a bit of arguing that climbing up furniture like a cat is a lot harder than it looks, Doris relents, and a chip makes its way over to me.

It shows a certain level of involvement when one player can use the material another player provides to help everyone get more out of the story. In that scene with the chandelier, the players were invested in having a certain type of situation happen, and rather than relying on GM direction where they only had to fill in the blanks, they took the initiative to tell me far more than I was telling them.

Yes, this means players need to know the aspects of both their character and those of other players. Yes, that may mean they have to ask a fiction-breaking question mid-play about who has what aspect. Let them. Seriously, let them. Have enough confidence in yourself that you can hook them back in, and trust them enough that they won't spend the entire gaming session strategizing while the story sits "paused." Then bring them back to the fiction. There's nothing wrong with a meta pit stop, just don't let it become a protracted sidebar away from play.

<div align="center">■✚■✚</div>

I often worry that a lot of traditional players come to a more "indie" or story game with preconceived notions of competition or one-upmanship, that they as an individual have to do better than everyone else in order to "win." In my own experiences with my group, it did take a lot of exposure to different games and mechanics to break the connection between playing a game and always having a superior winning position.

When a player uses the mechanics to the story's advantage, rather than their own interests, it's a signal to other players that the mechanics are in place not to limit fun but encourage it. In the previous example, the hunk got Doris to shimmy up the furniture and onto the chandelier, taking Margot's shovel with her, so that when Mrs. Webster ran into the room, she'd get a faceful of shovel. That's not a GM plan. I figured they'd use the marbles on the ground to make her trip, or that they'd find the rope in the shed and tie her up. Instead, we all got pleasantly surprised when a few good rolls led to my villain eating shovel before the police arrived.

Do I think understanding these three ideas of point exchange are going to forever stop players from hoarding chips? No. It's going to take a combination of investment and incentive and flexible GMing on a situation-by-situation basis to keep the chips flowing in and out of play as story development tools.

Because that's what gaming with your friends is: the story of you and your friends telling shared stories that everyone has a part in, and that everyone enjoys. ✚

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR MUTANT FIRE DOG:
Monster Training in Fate Accelerated

by **JUNE SHORES**

Luminescent fungus carpets the cave floor. It covers the tunnel with an eerie, multi-colored glow. Kairi can hear water flowing just beyond the tunnel walls. The walls press in on the space around her, pricking up goosebumps on her skin.

Zipp, her mutant fire dog, lets out a whine. He sticks close to her knees.

A rock falls ahead and Zipp jumps.

Eight gleaming eyes stare out from the darkness of the tunnel. A dreadful hiss echoes off the walls. The spider, as large as an elephant, rears up out of the dark with acid dripping off its joints.

"Zipp." The dog hears Kairi's command and stands ready. "Burn it up."

Monster training is a popular genre. From Pokémon and Medabots to Digimon and Shaman King, monster trainers get around. In this article I'll show you a way to drop player-directed monsters into your ongoing campaigns, how to give them life, and how to improve their abilities over time.

Monsters as Extras

Monsters are powerful, probably far more powerful than your player characters. That's okay because monsters are here to lend power to their trainers. To make this power more real we're going to create the monster as an **extra** (Fate Core, page 207) to attach to your PCs. While you won't find extras discussed in Fate Accelerated Edition, anything from Fate Core can easily be tweaked to suit your FAE game. We'll take basic Fate Accelerated building blocks of aspects, stress, stunts, etc. and make something new with them.

Monsters are simple for players and GMs to create. Wild monsters and monsters commanded by NPC trainers can be written up as mooks or characters in their own right. Once they're in the hands of PCs, though, they're written out like this:

NAME

Name your monster anything you like. A nickname, a code name, or whatever happens to come out of the monster's mouth.

STAGE

Monsters are divided into stages that outline how powerful they are. There are 3 stages in all. To ascend through the stages you need to gain XP (we'll get back to this a little later).

ASPECT

Each monster gets their own aspect detailing three things: a core personality trait, an element that they embody, and a real-world animal or object that they resemble.

STRESS

A monster has three stress boxes, just like their trainer.

CONSEQUENCES

A monster's consequences depend on their stage. Stage one monsters have one mild consequence slot, stage two monsters add on a moderate consequence slot, and stage three monsters get a severe consequence slot.

STUNTS

A monster gets one stunt at stage one, and one more each time it ascends to a higher stage.

XP TRACK

Each monster has an XP track with a number of boxes to fill. Stage one monsters have five boxes, stage two monsters have six boxes, and stage three monsters have seven boxes.

APPROACHES

Monsters don't have their own approaches. They're only as good as their trainer and therefore depend on their trainer's approaches.

Zipp

Stage One.

ASPECT

MONSTER CONCEPT: LOYAL FIRE DOG

STUNTS

Heart of Fire. Because I have fire in my heart, I get a free invoke on the first consequence that my trainer or I take in a conflict.

STRESS

☐☐☐

CONSEQUENCES

MILD (2)

XP

☐☐☐☐☐

Monsters in Play

Monsters can do things that their trainers can't. Throwing fire around like it's a play thing is an example of this, but so is tracking by scent.

> Zipp is a dog made of fire. By his nature, he can do all that implies, such as throw fireballs with his mouth, listen closely with his ears, or bite with his teeth.

PC monsters act on behalf of their trainer. Whenever a PC could take an action, they can use their monster instead, as long as it makes sense in the situation. Monsters don't get separate turns—when they act, they take up their trainer's turn. You're basically substituting your monster for yourself. Perhaps you join in the fray and act together with your monster, but this is primarily narrative—either way, you get one action per turn between you and your monster.

> The giant spider is closing in fast. Kairi orders Zipp to protect them with a spray of fire to force the bigger monster back. Kairi's player rolls her Forceful approach and succeeds on her defense. The spider's attack is stopped in its tracks.

If you fail a defense action then you can choose which of you takes the stress or consequences.

> Let's say that Kairi and Zipp failed that last defense action. The spider inflicts 2 stress on Kairi and Zipp. However, instead of letting Zipp take stress, Kairi's player decides to soak up the stress with a mild consequence, **Shaken**. The spider is driven back by the fire, but Kairi is affected by the close call.

When a monster attempts to **overcome an obstacle** or **create an advantage** and the GM needs to set a target number, keep in mind the kind of monster it is and the aspects that could be working against it. Think about adjusting the difficulty for the action, perhaps by adding a +1 for every aspect working against it and +2 for aspects with elemental details that trump the monster's element.

> Kairi and Zipp are trying to escape a collapsing tunnel. As they flee, water is trickling down from the roof and is about to crash into the tunnel along with some very big rocks.
>
> The players at the table decided earlier that fire elementals don't do fantastically against rock, so the GM decides that the difficulty would usually be Good (+3) for the collapsing tunnel. However, that **Impending Flood** is awfully intimidating to Zipp, which adds a +2 to the difficulty just for having the watery aspect present in the scene and making trouble for Zipp. So Zipp needs to get at least a Superb (+5) to make good on this escape.
>
> If an NPC invoked such an aspect in a conflict, they'd award fate points to Zipp, but this sort of passive difficulty adjustment does not.

Monsters are also empathic toward their trainers. Any consequences that the trainer has will worry a monster. Consequences and other aspects on a trainer can be the basis for a compel on the monster's behavior. Any compels on the monster's behavior award fate points to their trainer.

> Kairi has the moderate consequence **Trying Too Hard** from an earlier conflict with one of her rivals. In the next scene, she and Zipp face a dangerous obstacle, a sheer cliff.
>
> The GM decides that this is a perfect time to compel the consequence and suggests that, in an effort to totally show up the rival's monster, Zipp takes a shortcut. He's going to try to climb down the cliff face to get a head start to the camping grounds. Kairi stays behind, trying to coax Zipp out of it, but she takes the fate point anyway. The two are now separated.

XP

And now, as promised, we'll discuss XP. You might be scratching your head. "But June," you say, "there are no experience points in FAE!"

Well, now there are, although they don't work the way XP usually does. In **How to Train Your Mutant Fire Dog**, a monster moves on to the next stage in a time of crisis or uncertainty. To model this I've added another resource to the game: XP. Once you fill up the required amount of XP, your monster develops new abilities and maybe even changes shape.

To gain XP:

- Your character must be involved in a conflict.
- Your monster must participate in that conflict.
- Your character or your monster must take a consequence in the conflict.
- In the end, you must concede the conflict.

Conflicts where you win don't count. When you concede a conflict, you gain an XP and fill in a box on your monster's XP track. Once all the boxes are filled, your monster ascends to the next stage.

When your monster moves up a level, you do the following:

- Add a stunt to your monster.
- Redefine your monster's stunts (optional).
- Add the next level consequence slot to your monster.
- Redefine or add a part to your monster's aspect (optional).

This little sub-system rounds out the monster training experience, but….

There Are Still Spaces to Explore with This

Maybe you can catch and tame new monsters in your game. Perhaps the GM plays the monsters, or the players each play another PC's monster. Or maybe you just want to drop the monster mechanics into a game about a magical school to give extra flair to familiars. There are a thousand different ways to train your mutant fire dog. ✚

MAKING MAGIC WITH STRESS

by CHRISTOPHER RUTHENBECK

Fate Core and Fate Accelerated Edition (FAE) are phenomenal games, but chances are they don't always meet your needs. There are two existing stress tracks for Core and one for FAE that are designed to fill a specific need— and they do it extremely well. However, there are times when your needs and their design don't mesh; when that happens, you get to make your own stress track. Fate Core System does a decent job of laying the ground-work for modifying your game, but while *Extras* (page 269) is all about fine tuning skills and stunts to do what you want, there's not much about tuning the stress tracks. In this article, I introduce a new mana stress track for magic users while walking through the design process.

A Brief Introduction to Stress

Stress is a much-used component of Fate, but it tends to get less attention than skills, stunts, and aspects. Skills and stunts are very easy for gamers to latch onto: 4 actions, 4 outcomes, and plenty of design space to fiddle with it all. Aspects, too, are easily enough understood: they're important facts about the character, scene, game world, and so on. Stress, on the other hand, is this nebulous concept that resembles hit points from other RPGs, and is commonly dismissed as such. It's constantly used in conflicts to save your skin and out of conflicts to succeed at a cost. It's always there, in the background, making your character shine. But it can do so much more.

Both Core and FAE use the same basic mechanics for their stress tracks: each box has a value from 2 to 4 (set right in the middle at 3 for FAE), and when you check a box you use its value to reduce shifts of an attack. Another way to look at it is this: *check a stress box to add its value to your roll*. If you fail a defense roll by 2 and you check your second stress box, you

take no consequences and aren't taken out, right? Effectively, it's a bonus to your roll.

Stress is a cost, sure, but it's one you choose to pay. When you fail a roll, one option is to "get what you want at a serious cost" (FATE CORE SYSTEM, page 132). For failed defense rolls, stress is that cost. If you don't pay, you don't get what you want, and the aggressor gets what *they* want—which is usually to take you out!

Extra Stress

For many Core games, the two existing stress tracks are sufficient. Mental stress can be used to fuel Willpower-type abilities, and physical stress can be used to represent pushing your body beyond its normal capabilities. Since physical conflicts rarely attack the mental track and vice versa, using one track to power abilities for the other's conflicts can be a potent combination.

Because FAE only has one stress track, it's often better to make a new track instead of drawing on the existing one. Fueling your abilities by "double dipping" on the same track that prevents you from getting taken out is a sure-fire way to get taken out very quickly!

MANA, A STRESS EXAMPLE

A common fantasy trope is the wizard or sorcerer who uses magic to do the impossible: Harry Dresden and Anita Blake from their self-titled book series; Eragon the dragon rider from the INHERITANCE series; Merlin from Arthurian myth; Luke Skywalker from STAR WARS. We've heard of or read about many of them or others like them: literary figures who can do the impossible with mystic powers.

For some games, you want more than just the default stress tracks that can be spent in the default manner. Sometimes you have extras (FATE CORE SYSTEM, page 269) that need a little bit more *oomph* to them than just skills and stunts. Stress tracks can fill the gap when neither skills nor stunts are exactly what you want.

While skills are used to tackle problems head-on—hence the four actions—and stunts make you better at your skills,

stress tracks work more as a modifier to your skills and stunts. It's a subtle change in the focus of the skill or stunt, not always coming into play, but always there to do its thing when needed. For example, your character is in a foot chase and needs to make an overcome roll to jump over a low wall. If you tie on the roll, you succeed with a minor cost. You and the GM decide that cost to be a point of stress. You're still in the chase, but you're that much closer to being taken out.

STRESS BACKGROUNDS

The first step is creating a bit of background for the stress track. No more than 3 or so sentences is needed, just something to get the idea of what the track is used for and a place to draw inspiration later on if you get stuck. For this step, keep in mind the Golden Rule of Fate: "Decide what you're trying to accomplish first, then consult the rules to help you do it" (FATE CORE SYSTEM, page 185). Since Fate is a narrative-focused game, you want to start with the narrative first, then move on to the mechanics.

> Mana is an ephemeral source of energy that mages learn to tap into for power. It is easy to harness, but slow to recharge. With it, mages can harness unimaginable power of destruction—and creation.

TRACK LENGTH

There are many ways to determine the length of a stress track, and both Core and FAE have one such way as their default. Fate Core uses the skill-based stress track: you start with 2 boxes, and gain bonus boxes for having a high skill. FAE utilizes the fixed-length track: it has a set length of 3 boxes.

The skill-based track in Core is good for general-purpose stress tracks: the better you are at something (i.e., higher skill), the more stress you have to go along with that skill. Fixed-length tracks are good when adding new stress tracks to FAE, since that matches up with the existing stress track, but they can also be used for Core games where the resource represented by the stress track is limited.

There are two other options for stress track length: aspect-based and stunt-based. Aspect-based tracks are good for those you want to limit in size: your character aspects are limited, so dedicating them to your stress track says worlds about your character. The stunt-based track favors specialized characters: the more stunts you have for your stress track, the longer the stress track is.

The aspect-based stress track originated in the FATE SYSTEM TOOLKIT under the wealth stress track (page 69). It starts at 2 boxes, just like the skill-based, but gains one bonus box for each aspect that references why it

should be longer. So both **Filthy Rich** and **Hoarded Savings** can increase your wealth stress track.

The stunt-based stress track also starts at 2 boxes, and you gain 1 additional box per two stunts that are related to the stress track—and note that these stunts don't actually have to draw on the stress track, just be related to it.

If you're creating a new stress track for FAE, it's best to avoid having your new stress track based off an approach since each approach encapsulates so many different facets of your character. Therefore, FAE stress tracks are best left to either fixed length, aspect-based, or stunt-based. The example mana stress track is using the stunt-based length, so it can be used for either Core or FAE.

The skill-based stress track has its own built-in length limit: you can only have a skill rated so high, and the skill pyramid prevents you from skyrocketing the skill too high, too fast. The aspect-based stress track maxes out at 7 boxes since your character only gets 5 aspects. The fixed-length track also has a built-in limit: it's one length, period. For stunt-based tracks, however, you need to think about the maximum length it can be. Even a starting character can use all 3 stunts and 2 refresh to have 5 total stunts dedicated to the stress track. That would give your stress track a length of 4—and the next milestone could see it rise to 5! Generally, 4-6 is a good maximum, unless you want the characters to be extremely powerful; in that case, a maximum of 8, or even no maximum at all might be called for.

> Since more powerful mages are able to harness more mana, the mana stress track is going to be stunt-based. It starts at 2 boxes, and is increased by 1 for every two magic stunts the mage has. Powerful mages are able to do wondrous things, but they must devote their lives to the craft. For now, I will set a maximum length of 5 boxes.

Spending Stress

Now that we know what our stress track is about and how long it's going to be, the next step is figuring out what we can spend stress on. The default stress tracks are used to succeed at a cost, but that's not the only option. You could also use stress for a bonus to your roll, or in lieu of fate points. A good example of "stress as fate points" is Brian Engard's **Ammo Track** from FATE CODEX—VOL. I ISSUE I: spend an ammo stress to reroll a Shoot roll with a gun.

There is a small but important difference between using stress to succeed at a cost and using it for a bonus to your roll. They seem very similar

on the surface, but the end results can be very different. Say you fail a roll by 1. If your stress track is a success at a cost, checking any stress box means you're ok, you paid the cost. But if the stress track is a bonus, you could mark off your 1-stress to turn that failure into a tie—or check off the 4-stress box to succeed with style!

Which one you use depends on the feel you're going for. To get a more powerful, *active* use of something, use the roll bonus. If the stress track is more defensive or *reactive* in nature—such as stress tracks that show resilience, stamina, etc.—it should be used to succeed at a cost. Making a new stress track is very much an art, not a science, and this is one example of why. It's tempting to forego the succeed at a cost method because adding bonuses to your rolls may seem more advantageous, but keep in mind the purpose of the stress track. There's no right way or wrong way to do it, though; just go with what feels right. When in doubt, go back to the background write up for the stress track and mine it for ideas.

> For the mana track, the stress boxes will be a fate point analogue. Spending mana stress is akin to spending fate points—meaning that each box is the equivalent of one "magical" fate point. Also, since each stress box is only worth one fate point equivalent, they will all have a value of 1, no matter how many boxes you have.
>
> To use these stress boxes, mages must take stunts that can access them. Fate Core System talks about fate point powered stunts on page 92, so that's a good place to start. A good rule of thumb is that in place of the usual "once per session" or "in a limited circumstance" limit placed on a stunt, you're required to spend a mana stress instead. For example, a mage can throw a fire blast spell at a single target all day long without spending any mana stress (it's a normal ranged attack), but affecting an entire zone with the attack requires the **Fireball** stunt: Take one mana stress to attack every target in a zone of your choice.

Fate Accelerated Edition has a similar once per session stunt template on page 32 that can easily be modified to cost stress instead of being once per session. Of course, since Core and FAE are extremely compatible, you can easily use the stunt options from Core in your FAE game!

Recovering Stress

After stress is spent, you need to recover it. The standard method is that after a conflict, when you've had time to catch your breath, all your stress goes away. It's easy and doesn't require any bookkeeping. However, in some cases you may want to change how stress is recovered. The ammo track mentioned earlier requires a resources roll, representing buying more ammo, while the wealth track from the FATE SYSTEM TOOLKIT has its own special way of recovery. In brief, you need to find "money parcels" as treasure or payment, and the rank of the parcel is the amount of stress recovered.

The method you use to recover stress should be based on what is already known about the stress track: what it represents and why it's there. If you're trying to create a stress track for super heroes, you want it to refresh more often so the heroes can be heroic more often! On the flip side, for a gritty, power-comes-at-a-cost stress track where even the most basic of spells are potent, there should be a commensurate cost to recovering the stress.

> Since mana is easy to spend but slow to recover (as stated in the background section), we're going to go with a third option: stepping down. Instead of clearing a stress box automatically at the end of a scene, erase it and check the box to its left. If you're removing the first box, it's just removed. With this method, you're guaranteed one free stress box each scene. Since mana is only spent to fuel the really powerful spells, your mage is still able to use their lesser spells freely.

Here's the mana stress track in all its glory.

MANA

Mana is an ephemeral source of energy that mages learn to tap into for power. It is easy to harness, but slow to recharge. With it, mages can harness unimaginable power of destruction—and creation.

Gaining Mana

In order to have a mana stress track, you must have a high concept dealing with your training or status as a mage. It starts at 2 boxes, and you gain +1 box for every two magical stunts you take, to a maximum of 5 boxes. Each mana stress has a value of 1.

Spending Mana

Mana stress can only be accessed via stunts that allow for its use. Any stunt

you create that would normally require a fate point can instead be written to use one mana stress instead. For a stunt to count as a magical stunt, it has to modify or enhance your spellcasting ability, even if it doesn't cost a mana stress.

Recovering Mana

At the end of each scene, step back each point of mana stress. Erase each spent stress box and check the box to its left. If it's the first stress box, just erase it—that stress is now gone.

Sample Stunts

Crushing Gravity Cages. When you succeed with style when creating a *Gravity Snare* or similar aspect, instead of the normal benefits of succeeding with style you may cause a 2-stress hit.

Fireball. Take one mana stress to attack every target in a zone of your choice (FATE CORE SYSTEM, page 207).

Focused Blast. Choose one of your magical attacks. Take one mana stress to gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls using said attack spell.

Green Thumb. When you cast a spell to control the local plant life, you gain a +2 to your create an advantage roll.

Magic Missile. When attacking multiple targets and splitting your shifts (FATE CORE SYSTEM, page 206) you get a +2 to your attack roll.

Versatile Magic. Once per scene, you may take one mana stress to invoke your high concept as if you spent a fate point. ✚

ARCANE HIGH
by MARK DIAZ TRUMAN

> *Right at this moment, the Blue Dragons are in their locker room, talking about how they're going to spend their Globi Cup winnings. They're not even thinking about us, not even worried that we might win this thing. They think they've got us figured out.*
>
> *That's our advantage. That's how we win. We surprise them. We play twice as hard for three times as long. And we win this thing.*
>
> *We're a team. And together we're going to take that trophy home. Are you with me?*
> - Gabriella Lyons, Team Captain of the Razorskin Warthogs

It may not look like much, but Arcane High holds tremendous secrets. Each day, the young students who attend this magnet school in the Chicago suburbs enter a mysterious world of magic and supernatural power, studying wizardry and witchcraft and learning to channel their abilities into

time-tested magical rituals. Nearly a thousand students each year wrestle with advanced magic under the careful supervision of archmages who have trained their whole lives to master a particular subject ranging from illusions to hexes.

GLOBI: THE GAME OF SPHERES

Yet the real draw for most students to attend Arcane High isn't really magical training—it's the sports! Students still play traditional sports like baseball and soccer for fun, but the coolest thing about going to a magic high school is playing **globi**, a version of capture the flag played in enormous **globi arenas** filled with magical obstacles and dangerous creatures. In globi, teams of four players have to make use not only of their physical abilities, but also their magical training in summoning, divination, elemental magic, and illusions.

The goal of globi is to capture one or more of the rival team's globi—metal spheres about a foot in diameter that each team hides before the start of the match—but the spheres fight back once someone picks them up! Some globi grow incredibly heavy while others sprout vines and roots to try to entangle players while they escape. Getting to the globi is only half the battle—getting it back to your team's goal is also a tremendous task.

Globi Avatars

Magical traps, difficult globi, and rival players aren't the only dangers teams face in the globi arena. Each team also has a special defender called an **avatar**, a fierce magical construct or creature that protects the thin strip of the course—the defensive zone—where the players hide their team's globi. Avatars stick with a team year after year, even as players graduate, and most teams derive their name and logo from whatever creature or construct their team employs. Avatars are difficult obstacles, and most teams go to great lengths to avoid having to face one directly.

THE GLOBAL ACADEMY TOURNAMENT

There are only a few magic schools in each country, but globi is a truly international sport watched by wizards everywhere. Each year, the globi season culminates in a **Global Academy Tournament** that pits the best high school globi teams against each other in a single-elimination event featuring dangerous arenas and unique surprises. It's considered an honor for the International Globi Committee to ask an archmage to help design the arena for the Globi Cup, and any players who make it all the way to the tournament take their places in globi history!

Globi Around the World

What is globi like in other countries? Or in a professional league? That's up to you! The characters in *Arcane High* are the best players at their high school, but that doesn't mean that a bigger world of globi stardom is easy to attain. Of course, the vast majority of kids who play globi at the high school level will never take their skills to the professional leagues. But all of them harbor that dream, as professional globi players are praised, lauded, and adored throughout the magical community.

QUICK START ADVENTURES

Arcane High is a Quick Start Adventure that contains a unique setting, pregenerated characters, plot hooks, and an opening scene. It's not a full adventure, but it will get your group started on a brand new Fate campaign!

Setting Creation

As a Quick Start Adventure, *Arcane High* has everything you need to jump right into your first session. Before you start, discuss the broader setting with your group, perhaps even reading aloud the descriptions of *Arcane High* and *Globi* so everyone is on the same page.

At the start of play, explain the **current issue** to your players and ask them to fill in one or two additional faces associated with *Two Games Down*, listed below. These additional characters provide new plot hooks and twists that tie your players more deeply to the drama and strangeness of life at a magic academy.

Then ask your players to choose from one of the two available **impending issues**: *Summoning Midterms* or *Talia in Trouble*. Have the players fill in one or two additional faces for their chosen impending issue as well, rounding out the larger cast of characters with their suggestions.

CURRENT ISSUE: TWO GAMES DOWN

Arcane High hasn't won a Global Academy Tournament. Ever. Year after year, Arcane's globi coaches have seen their team come up short, falling to richer and more competent rivals. The team that most often thwarts Arcane High's hopes and dreams is the Iron Owls, an East Coast globi team with a history of going all the way to the Globi Cup. Some years are worse than others, and the worst years are when the Iron Owls knock Arcane's team out in the National Round.

This year, Arcane High's new coach, Adrianne Radford, hopes to break the losing streak. Arcane's team is only down two games from the Iron Owls, running a close second behind their bitter rivals and hoping to make a play for the Globi Cup. They've got a strong coach, a new avatar, and a bunch of young, excited globi players. There are only five games left in the season before the Global Academy Tournament starts, and the team can taste victory. Their next game is against the Iron Owls, and a win there will put them in striking distance of a National Championship!

Faces:

- Dr. Vikram Singh, Iron Owls coach and Professor of Elemental Magic.
- Octavia Reyes, senior and star striker for the Iron Owls.

TWO GAMES DOWN

DR. VIKRAM SINGH

Iron Owls coach and Professor of Elemental Magic

OCTAVIA REYES

Senior and star striker for the Iron Owls

IMPENDING ISSUES

In addition to being *Two Games Down* to their greatest rivals, there are a number of other impending issues that might occupy the PCs, including:

Summoning Midterms

Arcane High runs on a complicated system of classes that start and stop at different times. The advantage of this system is that the teachers and

administrators work hard to make sure that students aren't overwhelmed by too many tests or projects at once. The downside is that there is pretty much always a test. The worst one on the horizon is the Summoning midterm—each student will be expected to call an elemental from a distant plane and control it for at least ten minutes! Students are preparing round the clock for the upcoming exam, even summoning smaller elementals that might just get out of control at the wrong moment….

Faces:

- Dr. Jamal Freeman, head of the Summoning School at Arcane High
- Reese Kwan, teaching assistant (and frequent tutor) for Advanced Summoning

Talia in Trouble

Most globi players get a ton of opportunities to practice what they learn in class in the arena. Yet Talia, one of the backup defenders for Arcane High, has always struggled in Divination—mostly because she's not fast enough at fortunetelling to use it on the field. Last week, she was suspended for cheating on her Divination midterm, using unauthorized magic to get the answers to the test. Other players can step up to fill the gap, but people are whispering that Talia is having trouble at home too, and that she might not be returning to Arcane High when her suspension is completed.

Faces:

- Talia Kieval, recently suspended standout defender for Arcane High
- Mariella Rastle, Arcane High Divination instructor who turned Talia in for cheating

SUMMONING MIDTERMS

DR. JAMAL FREEMAN

Head of the
Summoning School
at Arcane High

REESE KWAN

Teaching Assistant
(and frequent tutor)
for Advanced Summoning

TALIA IN TROUBLE

MARIELLA RASTLE

Arcane High Divination
instructor who turned
Talia in for cheating

TALIA KIEVAL

Recently suspended
standout defender for
Arcane High

Character Creation

Arcane High is written for Fate Accelerated. You can choose to use Fate Core—and you might want to develop a more complicated magic system if you do—but the real fun of *Arcane High* rests in the unique **arena mechanics** and the lightweight zest of Fate Accelerated approaches.

In *Arcane High*, players take on the roles of jock high school students in a magical and exciting world. Everyone at Arcane High does magic all the time, but the characters are thrust into a particularly dangerous and interesting situation: the globi arena. *Arcane High* jumps between fast and furious globi matches and the complex world of high school politics.

Before they create their characters, players must first create their team's avatar. Remember that selecting an avatar both determines the team's defenses and the team's name. Most teams find an avatar from a supernatural plane, like a griffin or a water elemental. Once players have selected their avatar, each player should add a unique aspect to the character, like **Sharp Claws** for a griffin or **Illusions of the Deep** for a water elemental.

The Gamemaster (GM) will then assign a few skill modes to the avatar, listing one skill mode at Great (+4), two skill modes at Fair (+2), and one skill mode at Poor (-1). The griffin, for example, might be Great at "attacking with beak and claw," Fair at "evading enemy attacks" and "piercing illusions," and Poor at "resisting entrapping magic." These strengths and weaknesses are known to the players on the team, but they often try to keep them a closely guarded secret from their rivals.

After creating their avatar and naming their team, players each select a **position aspect** and a **drama aspect** for their characters. The position aspect is like a character's high concept, a short phrase that describes the character's role on the team, such as **Snake in the Grass** or **Memorized the Playbook**. A drama aspect, on the other hand, is a short phrase that describes what kind of problems the character faces off the field, like **Academic Probation** or **Bad Reputation**.

Finally, players should each select a **teammate aspect** with one or more of the other characters on their team to describe their relationships. One character might have **Taken the Fall** in a previous cheating scandal or might be **Hopelessly in Love** with another member of their team. Characters should have at least one teammate aspect to start, but they can add them later in play too.

After selecting aspects, players should select approaches as normal. Players may also want to add a stunt or two, but like teammate aspects, stunts

can be added during play as well. As with other FAE characters, they receive only three boxes for stress, both physical and mental.

APPROACHES AND MAGIC

Arcane High uses the traditional list of approaches found in Fate Accelerated (FATE ACCELERATED EDITION, Page 10): Careful, Clever, Flashy, Forceful, Quick, and Sneaky. Most of the time, players should use the approaches as described in FAE, but each of those approaches can also be used when casting magic. Here's what each approach means when the players let loose with spells, hexes, and summoning rituals:

> ## MAGICAL EFFECTS
>
> Remember that many of the negative outcomes associated with a particular approach can still show up on a success. For example, a wizard who throws a fireball at a rival team may knock out a rival player but find themselves trapped in a section of the arena that's suddenly *On Fire!*

Careful

Careful magic is slow and methodical. It involves the wizard slowing down and casting the spell with some consideration for tradition and precision, common to Summoning or Incantations. It runs the risk of moving too slowly or exposing the wizard to other dangers.

Clever

Clever magic is tricky and unexpected. It catches opponents off-guard with surprising force or springs a trap that no one saw coming. It runs the risk of overcomplicating the situation or tying the wizard up in unnecessary strings.

Flashy

Flashy magic is distracting and ephemeral. Illusions are almost always flashy, attempting to grab and hold the attention of a target. It runs the risk of creating unexpected chaos or drawing unwanted attention to the wizard.

Forceful

Forceful magic is powerful and direct. It relies on brute force and straight lines, knocking down obstacles, tying them up, or pushing them forward. It runs the risk of collateral damage or overextending the wizard's capabilities.

Quick

Quick magic is light and fast. It knocks rival players off their feet without harming them or snakes away a resource faster than the other team can respond. It runs the risk of not being forceful enough or getting entangled in existing spells and magic.

Sneaky

Sneaky magic is quiet and invisible. It evades detection, curling around its targets before they have a chance to react, or invisibly pushing against the opposition from afar. It runs the risk of falling short of the goal or revealing itself at the wrong moment.

New Extra: The Arena

To play globi, you use a new Fate extra: the globi arena. Matches are played out like conflicts, with each player getting a turn to take a single action that shapes the outcome of the game. The arena divides up the field of play into discrete zones, each one filled with different challenges or obstacles designed to impede the characters' progress. The arena is large enough that the rival team is obscured at the start of play, moving secretly through the arena toward the three globi that lie on the other side, three precious spheres hidden in the player team's defensive zone.

DESIGNING THE ARENA

Archmages use powerful magic to design globi arenas, often putting 400 square meters of jungle next to a small lake or desert. Each one of these zones may contain either an **obstacle**—some sort of active yet stationary aspect that opposes the characters moving through the zone—or a **challenge**—an animated creature or construct that might even pursue a character from zone to zone.

Challenges are supercharged mooks (FAE, page 38) with two aspects, a strong skill mode ranging from +2 to +6, and a few stress boxes; obstacles are static threats that oppose movement through a zone with at least one aspect and a skill rating affixed to the aspect that's used to impede the young athletes. Players can try to outrun or attack challenges—if a mook can't absorb an attack with stress boxes, it falls—but they have to deal with an obstacle each time they want to move through that zone.

When you lay out the arena, take six index cards and write challenges on the first three and obstacles on the remaining three. Add three blank cards to the stack, and put all nine cards facedown on the table in front of the players to form a 3x3 arena, placing the obstacles and challenges in locations that you think will make the arena interesting. (Label the cards on the back with letters, so everyone is clear about which zone is which zone.) As players enter each zone, flip the cards face up to reveal the obstacle or challenge that awaits them in that zone, describing the fantastic or magical environments that the archmages have constructed for the arena. The players have to deal with the opposition before they can keep moving forward.

A	**B**	Sentient Trees
Black Knight	**E**	**F**
G	**H**	**I**
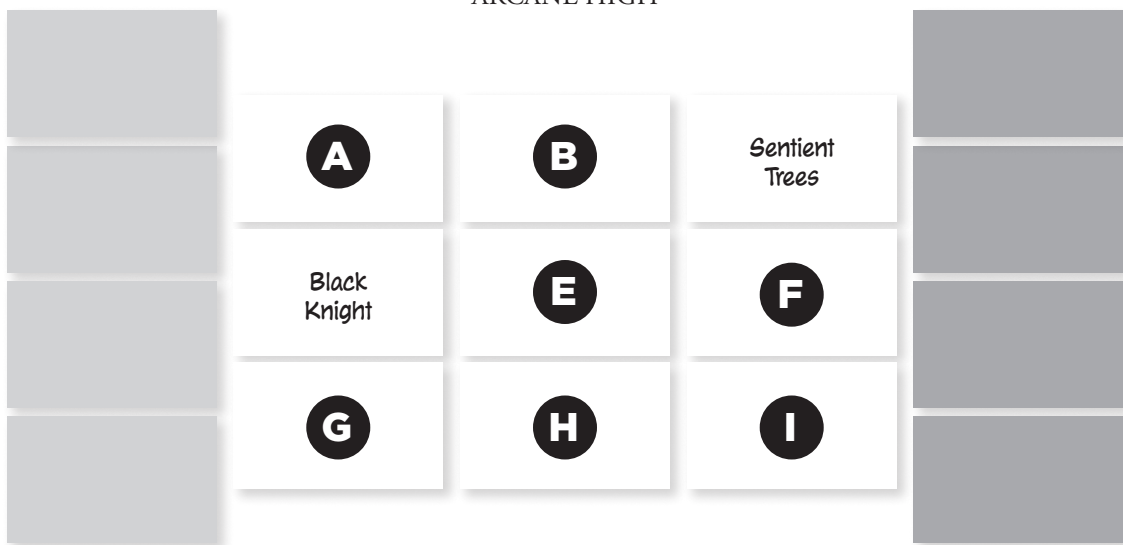
Placing Globi

In addition to the 3x3 grid, each team should also place four cards at their respective end of the field. These four cards are the defensive zone, the home turf for each team. Each team should describe what that home turf looks like—it's home, after all, to their avatar—and secretly note the starting location of their three globi and avatar in those zones. Globi must always be placed in different zones to start and cannot be moved or repositioned by the team that placed them until they are removed from the defensive zone. Assuming all the players are on one team, the GM can leave the room to let them discuss where they want to place their resources.

Each team has three globi: a **heavy globi** that grows heavier when lifted, a **plant globi** that sprouts vines and roots to ensnare players, and a **monkey globi** that actively tries to squirm away and run back home when removed.

Movement in Zones

Characters start in any of their team's defensive zones. At the start of their turn in the action order, they can move freely into any adjoining zone they want, provided they don't start in a zone with an obstacle or challenge. If they are in a zone with an obstacle or challenge, they must overcome those difficulties before moving into the next zone. Characters must move to contiguous zones; teleporting between zones isn't allowed in the globi arena.

When a character moves into a new zone, they should flip it face up if it hasn't been revealed already. If they uncover a zone that's empty with their movement action, they can use their regular action to move into the next zone. Characters can look into the next zone to try to determine what

obstacles and challenges may reside there, but it takes a magical spell—like Divination—to truly reveal what lies ahead. Characters can also add new obstacles or challenges to zones, including defensive zones, by creating magical advantages. These are less powerful than the obstacles and challenges placed by the GM, but formidable nonetheless.

At the same time that the players decide their starting position, the GM should secretly note the starting position of the rival players. If characters stumble upon a rival player, they may end up in a scuffle or conflict. Remember that NPCs—including avatars—have a spot in the action order too! Once an NPC has been discovered, however, their movement is public until they move into an unrevealed zone (see "Rival Players Off-Screen" for more).

GLOBI AS OPPOSITION

Each globi has a unique way of fighting to keep itself from going into the other team's defensive zone:

- **Heavy:** Each turn after being picked up, this globi acts as an obstacle that tries to keep whoever is lifting it from moving forward. In fact, it gets heavier each turn, adding +1 to its starting difficulty of Average (+1). Players must beat the current difficulty to move into the next zone.

- **Plant:** Each turn after being picked up, this globi attempts to place *Ensnared* on whoever is holding it using a "Magical" skill mode of Good (+3). Any players who are *Ensnared* must overcome the aspect before they can begin moving again.

- **Monkey:** Each turn after being picked up, this globi attempts to escape and run back to the other team's defensive zone using a "Physical" skill mode of Good (+3). If it manages to escape, it moves one zone per turn regardless of challenges or obstacles present.

Players may try to come up with interesting ways of battling these effects, but they cannot dispel the globi's enchantments with magic. The globi are protected with powerful anti-magic wards that vastly eclipse the powers of high school students.

RIVAL PLAYERS OFF-SCREEN

As the Arcane High team moves down the field, dealing with the rival team off-screen can be a bit tricky. You'll probably want to minimize the spotlight time that NPC players get, but you also don't want players to feel cheated

when the NPCs blow past obstacles off-screen without cost. Here are a few ways to balance the costs of the field against the PC spotlight:

- **Remove the Fog of War:** It's fun to wonder where the NPCs are, but real sports don't obscure the positions of rival players. One way of dealing with the other team is to show their position on the board and make rolls for them as normal. This method will feel fair to your players, but loses some of the magic of the globi arena.

- **Let Fate Decide:** Roll 4df and assign each die to one of the four rival players when they are off-screen. A ⊞ result means that the player moved forward into the next zone, bypassing an obstacle; a ⊟ result means that there was some cost or penalty—like stress or a consequence—that kept the player from advancing; and a blank means that the player can't advance but doesn't suffer an immediate consequence. This method is quick and direct, subjecting NPCs to the same roll of the dice as the players, but doesn't differentiate between strong and weak obstacles or players.

- **Give Them Limited Passes:** If you want to really minimize time spent dealing with the opposition team, give each opposing player three passes that let them bypass an obstacle while they are off-screen. Once those passes are used up, they've got to take two actions to get past an obstacle. This method preserves some of the mystery, but might feel a little silly to your players when they're grappling with a big obstacle they can't get past early in the game.

Regardless of how you deal with off-screen NPCs, remember that they must roll when they're on-screen—give the PCs a chance to interfere and interrupt their progress!

FORMATIONS AND ROSTERS

Not all games of globi are played with four players. Some matches restrict rosters to only three players, while others expand it to five or allow substitutions. Feel free to add or subtract athletes based on the number of players in your gaming group, but make sure to raise or lower the difficulty of the obstacles and challenges accordingly!

WINNING THE GAME

Characters can create advantages, attack each other, and overcome obstacles while playing in the arena. Medical staff is standing by to magically heal wounds, so most players don't worry too much about getting hurt. Aggressive violence is frowned upon, but it's not entirely against the rules.

If at any point, any of the team's globi are stolen and returned to the rival team's avatar, the game is over. The avatar consumes the globi and the archmages declare the match to be over. In more high-stakes games like the Globi Cup or the professional leagues, teams might be required to steal two or even three globi to win the game!

FIGHTING AVATARS?

You can't destroy a team's avatar, but you can keep it tied up and busy on the other side of the field if you think that your team might be able to get a globi back to your avatar first!

First Session: Globi Match vs. The Iron Owls

Your first session of *Arcane High* focuses on the players' team competing in a regular season globi match against their rivals, the Iron Owls. Matches are the heart of *Arcane High*, so devote as much of the first session as you need to see an entire match play out. You can follow up on the high school hijinks later!

This match is particularly meaningful because it's the best chance the Arcane High team has at making it into the Global Academy Tournament. Only the top team from each nation is selected to go on to the global round, and the Iron Owls have a two-game lead on Arcane High's scrappy team. Can they win this match and close the gap?

POSSIBLE COSTS FOR FAILURE

Minor Costs: 1 stress, expose your position, drop a globi
Major Costs: 2 stress, lose control of a spell, get trapped in a zone

Opening Aspects

Each zone of the arena has a different environment, but the whole course has a few aspects that apply more universally. You might want to place a free invoke on each of these to encourage players to make use of them during the match.

Opening Aspects: *Mists and Fog*, *Windy Trails*, *A Chance for Glory*

Oppostion: Challenges and Obstacles

This globi match has gotten a lot of attention, given that it's likely to determine which American team is going to move forward in the tournament. The archmages who designed the course have constructed a set of dynamic and exciting challenges and obstacles.

Challenges

The Black Knight

ASPECTS

THE GREAT SWORD OF NIGHT • DARKNESS ELEMENTAL

SKILL MODES

+4 ATTACKING WITH A SWORD, ABSORBING DIRECT ATTACKS

-2 PIERCING ILLUSIONS, PURSUING ATHLETES

STRESS

☐☐☐

Mighty Mimic Toad

ASPECTS

POISONOUS SKIN • HYPNOEYES

SKILL MODES

+3 CASTING ILLUSION SPELLS, CAPTURING ATHLETES

-2 AVOIDING RANGED ATTACKS, MOVING QUICKLY

STRESS

☐☐

Water Sprite

ASPECTS

SIREN SONG SINGER • BOUND BY THE LAKE

SKILL MODES

+2 CALLING TO ATHLETES, WHISPERING SECRETS

-2 DIRECTLY CONFRONTING DANGER

STRESS

☐

Obstacles

- Fantastic (+6) *Sentient Trees*
- Great (+4) *Magical Quicksand*
- Good (+3) *Steep Cliffs*

Opposition: The Iron Owls

The Iron Owls are a formidable team, easily capable of walking away with a win against Arcane High. They have one star player, Octavia Reyes, but the other three players on the Owls are fairly strong contenders themselves. Not to mention their avatar, an iron construct that stands over eight feet tall and weighs more than two tons!

Iron Owls Players

ASPECTS

Position: Nearly Professional Players

Drama: Too Used to Winning

APPROACHES

Good (+3)	Forceful
Fair (+2)	Flashy, Quick
Average (+1)	Careful, Clever
Mediocre (+0)	Sneaky

NOTES

Oliva may have slightly higher approaches or a stunt or two that might make her a better player, depending on how much you want to challenge your players.

The Iron Owl

ASPECTS

Iron Claws • Wings of Steel • "Who Goes There?"

SKILL MODES

+4	**Catching Sneaky Players**
+2	**Attacking With Claws, Flying Towards Targets**
-1	**Avoiding Detection**

APPROACHES

Arcane High uses approaches for NPCs, as if they were PCs themselves. These NPCs can also gang up and assist each other—if three or four Iron Owl players decide to tackle a PC, they would each add +1 to the roll to pin the PC to the ground, provided they have an approach they can use rated at a +1 or better. Avatars, challenges, and obstacles, on the other hand, use skill modes instead of approaches, and roll a +0 if no skill mode applies.

Plot Hooks and Adventure Seeds

The opening globi match of ***Arcane High*** isn't the end of the adventure. The players may have won or lost the game at hand, but there's still a Globi Cup at stake. And don't forget the impending issues! Here are a few plot hooks and adventure seeds to keep the story going, varying the tone and pace of scenes after the initial match against the Iron Owls:

REIGN OF TERROR

After a late night senior prank at Arcane High leaves several floors of the school underwater, Principal Montoya issues orders to crack down on troublemakers, pranksters, and slackers at Arcane High. All the usual trouble that the team causes at school is suddenly going to land them in the principal's office…and maybe even off the team! It sounds simple to stick to the rules, but it's hard to resist doing magic without permission, exploring the secret passageways throughout the school, and scuffling with rival cliques. Can the PCs behave themselves until the next match? What kind of tricks and trouble are they willing to risk pulling under Montoya's nose anyway?

IRON OWL TRANSFER

Immediately following the game against the Iron Owls, Coach Radford tells the team that a new player will be joining them for the next match: Octavia Reyes. Her family is moving from Boston back to Chicago, which means that Octavia will be attending Arcane for the rest of the semester. Everyone knows that Octavia would rather still play for the Owls, but the Globi Council hasn't approved such a transfer in decades. Can Octavia be trusted to play hard for Arcane High? Or is this all an elaborate trick by Dr. Singh to ensure that the Iron Owls rise above the competition at a crucial moment?

PRO GLOBI SCOUTS

Everyone knows that only a few globi players a year make it up to the professional globi league—pro globi is a totally different game, filled with dangerous monsters, cross-dimensional globi balls, and ruthless celebrity politics. But when three pro globi scouts show up at the next Arcane High practice, students and staff start buzzing that there might be more than one potential superstar on the team. Who is most likely to get called up to the major league after graduating? Is it worth skipping college to play globi on a team that might not care about the players as much as they care about the money? And who did these scouts come to see in the first place?

OPEN SLOTS

All of the sample characters have an open stunt slot. You can fill that in during the first match or save it for your first scenes at Arcane High! After all, not everything happens in the globi arena....

Auggie Radford

Auggie is Coach Radford's kid, and that means that she expects him to be the star player. Fortunately, Auggie has his mom's intellect, and he's been studying and drilling since he started playing at the age of five. Dealing with his mom as the new coach isn't easy, but he's got things under control. If only Lysander would respect him for what he brings to the team!

ASPECTS

POSITION: WALKING PLAYBOOK

DRAMA: MY MOM'S THE COACH

TEAMMATE: JEALOUS OF LYSANDER

APPROACHES

GOOD (+3)   Careful

FAIR (+2)   Clever, Sneaky

AVERAGE (+1)   Flashy, Forceful

MEDIOCRE (+0)   Quick

STUNTS

All the Spells. Because I know All the Spells, I get a +2 when I Cleverly defend with counterspells.

Done the Drills. Because I've Done the Drills, I get a +2 to Carefully overcome obstacles in the arena.

_____ . Because _____ ,
I _____ .

STRESS

☐ ☐ ☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Jacobo Martinez

Jacobo doesn't like to play the fool. He's got things figured out, from the midfield of the globi arena to the answers for tomorrow's Summoning midterm. Of course, that big brain of his gets him into trouble as often as it wins him the game and he's glad to have his friends and teammates around when things go sour. He's even willing to try to repay Auggie's many acts of kindness by teaching him how to rig the game off the field.

ASPECTS

POSITION: MIDFIELD MANIPULATOR

DRAMA: PROFESSIONAL CHEATER

TEAMMATE: TEACHING AUGGIE TO FISH

APPROACHES

GOOD (+3)	Careful
FAIR (+2)	Quick, Sneaky
AVERAGE (+1)	Careful, Flashy
MEDIOCRE (+0)	Forceful

STUNTS

Seeing Is Believing. Because I'm a master of illusions I get a +2 when I Cleverly defend against opposing illusions.

Fast Breaker. Because I'm a Fast Breaker, I can spend a fate point to outrun a challenge into the next zone.

_____ . Because _____ ,
I _____ .

STRESS

☐☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Jill Fortescue

Jill's got a reputation as a bad girl and an even worse student. She's taller than everyone else, even the oldest boys at Arcane High, and she knows how to use her size to knock around smaller teams before they even know what hit them. Sadly, she's got a crush on Jacobo that's dragging her into some real trouble—she recently took the fall for him when he got caught cheating on an Elemental Magic practicum.

ASPECTS

POSITION: BONE CRUSHER

DRAMA: BAD REPUTATION

TEAMMATE: TOOK THE FALL FOR JACOBO

APPROACHES

GOOD (+3)	Forceful
FAIR (+2)	Clever, Flashy
AVERAGE (+1)	Quick, Sneaky
MEDIOCRE (+0)	Careful

STUNTS

Linebacker. Because I'm a Linebacker, I can Forcefully attack two characters at the same time once per session.

Charge! Because I know how to Charge the opposition, I add +2 when I Forcefully attack immediately after moving into a zone.

_____ . Because _____ ,
I _____ .

STRESS

☐☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Lysander Jones

Lysander is the rising star at Arcane High, the new kid who is getting all the accolades and applause for swiping rival globi and returning them to the defensive zone. She's good at playing defense too, leading plenty of people to talk about her as a potential pro player despite her consistent academic problems. Thankfully, she can turn to Jill to talk about her difficulty handling all this fame in the middle of so many important classes.

ASPECTS

POSITION: SNAKE IN THE GRASS

DRAMA: ACADEMIC PROBATION

TEAMMATE: JILL IS MY CONFIDANTE

APPROACHES

GOOD (+3)	Sneaky
FAIR (+2)	Clever, Quick
AVERAGE (+1)	Careful, Forceful
MEDIOCRE (+0)	Flashy

STUNTS

Home Turf Defender. Because I am a Home Turf Defender, I get a +2 when I Carefully create advantages in the defensive zone.

Fast Tracker. Because I am a Fast Tracker, I can move an extra zone while pursuing someone who has the ball.
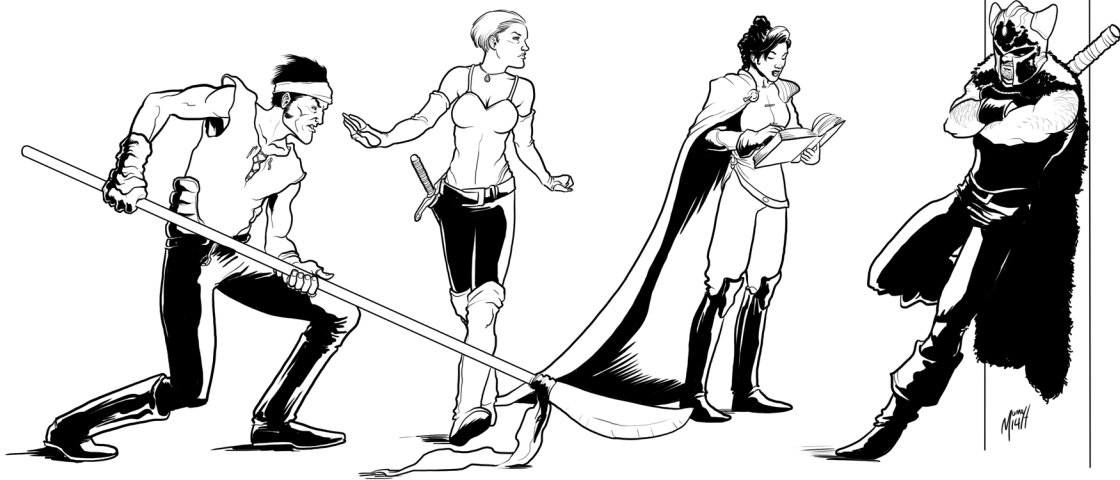
_____ . Because _____ ,
I _____ .

STRESS

☐☐☐

NOTES

Refresh: 3

WHY ARE WE ALWAYS FIGHTING?

by NICK BATE

If you're anything like me, fight sequences are a pretty ubiquitous feature of your roleplaying sessions. That's hardly surprising; there's a long history of combat in gaming and its pop culture influences. Besides, fight sequences can be hugely useful. They provide clear forward motion—the opposition is obvious (it's the guys shooting at you!), and the stakes are high (they're trying to kill you!). A dramatic, well-staged fight is fun.

However, those strengths can quickly turn into weaknesses. Fight scenes can easily distract from depth. Another helicopter crashes into a building, another gunfight breaks out on an overpass; there's action, the heroes are in danger, but none of it particularly matters. Character options are constrained, too. If every session features combat, every character will devote resources to ensuring they've got something to contribute in a brawl.

So why not try a completely violence-free game? Explicitly removing violence gives you a chance to double down on your game's core premise and on its characters. The fight sequence crutch is gone, which encourages you to focus on what your characters want and how to stage interesting conflicts.

FATE CORE is the perfect system for this sort of thing, since it places all conflicts on roughly equal mechanical footing, regardless of type. Taking out the fighting allows you to really focus your attention—prep and play time, characters, even rules hacks—on other things.

In the coming pages, I'll talk about explicitly removing violence from your game. Doing so requires buy-in from everyone in the group, and is likely to have profound consequences on setting design. We'll discuss the sorts of things you need to consider when you sit down to plan a new

campaign, and the ways in which you can use the Fate Core rules to reinforce a non-violent premise.

Building a Non-Violent Game

There are two big questions that you have to tackle once you've decided to play a non-violent game:

1. What are our new core conflicts? (Or, what will we do instead of fighting?)
2. Why is there no violence? (Or, what's stopping me from hitting that guy?)

Your answers to these are likely to be interrelated, so be prepared to move back and forth between them. You can tackle them in any way that suits your group, but the questions work well as part of collaborative campaign design. Grab a few note cards and a few friends, and we'll talk these questions through one by one.

CORE CONFLICTS: EXPECTATIONS AND STAKES

Fighting is such a common way to introduce tension into a roleplaying session that removing it could rob your game of drama and momentum. To solve this issue, you should discuss as a group what sorts of conflicts you'd like your game to feature in place of all those action-packed gunfights.

Hand everybody at the table a note card, and have them write down a type of action scene or conflict they'd like the game to feature: heists, chases, races, sport, interpersonal drama, politics, puzzles, investigations, or something else. Encourage everyone to add an interesting spin to the basic conflict. For example:

Conflict: Politics of dockside development

Conflict: Stealing magical artifacts

Conflict: Football using robot avatars

Next, add an opposition to each card. You can work on the card you wrote, or redistribute the cards randomly. Who or what is stopping you from achieving your goals in each of the conflict scenes you've described?

Conflict: Stealing magical artifacts

Opposition: The best magical security in the world

Conflict: Politics of dockside development

Opposition: Councilman Evans and the Foreshore Lobby

Conflict: Football using robot avatars

Opposition: The vast RoboTeam corporation

Now you need to establish what happens if you fail. What do the characters have at risk? Whatever it is, it should affect them personally and immediately. Most people aren't good at processing nebulous, far-off consequences, and that can rob conflicts of crucial tension.

Conflict: Stealing magical artifacts

Opposition: The best magical security in the world

Stakes: I'll be stripped of my magical powers!

Conflict: Politics of dockside development

Opposition: Councilman Evans and the Foreshore Lobby

Stakes: Our parents' homes will be demolished

Conflict: Football using robot avatars

Opposition: The vast RoboTeam corporation

Stakes: I won't get a college scholarship

Once you've been through this process, bring the note cards together and either decide which options you're going to use, or (even better) consider how you can integrate them.

Depending on the size of your group, you might need to chat about which suggestions you're going to keep and which you're going to put aside, since you don't want to clutter your game. You may decide to make one of the suggested conflict types your primary mode, with the others as secondary. Don't throw unused cards away, though. You can use them to add variety down the line, or maybe incorporate them as background elements to add depth to your setting.

Using our example above, we might decide that the most common form of conflict in our game will be heists to steal magical artifacts. These can be used to improve the performance of our robot avatars (The Big Game might make for a good climax to a session or an arc). Councilman Evans won't be the main focus of our game, but we do note that he's the owner of RoboTeam. That little background detail makes the sporting season extra personal for the characters, and could become more significant as the game progresses.

The goal here is to discuss in some detail what you're going to be doing instead of violence, and why you're going to be doing it. That way, when the familiar fight scene is no longer an option to provide forward motion, the alternatives are clear.

A BAN ON FIGHTING

There's still one question you need to answer: why can't the characters just fight? This is crucially important, because it will come up. When guards corner the characters in the middle of a heist, or the characters discover a rival mechanic trying to sabotage their car, they'll be tempted to start swinging.

There are two ways to ban violence in your game: hard limits and soft limits.

Hard Limits

A hard limit makes the ban on violence explicit. It's not a moral code or law enforcement, it's something way more absolute. A law of nature, decreed when the God of War was cast out from the pantheon. A genetic modification made to all newborns, the First Law of Robotics, or maybe a psychic dampening field.

This is perhaps the easiest route to take, since it externalizes the restriction on violence. Characters don't choose to avoid throwing punches, they physically (or mentally) can't. The exact nature of the hard limit will have a profound effect on your game world. Who decides what constitutes

violence? How do characters feel about the ban, its originators, and its enforcement? How (if ever) are the rules broken?

Soft Limits

If you'd rather not have non-violence play such a central role in your setting design, consider instead a soft limit. In this case there's no explicit restriction on violence, but circumstances conspire to make it unlikely.

Kids might get into the occasional scuffle, but everybody knows bullies are bad. People in positions of authority—politicians, celebrities, teachers—are unlikely to risk their jobs or reputations by getting into a fistfight. Master thieves avoid violent confrontations that draw unwanted attention.

Enforcing soft limits requires more finesse than hard limits, since the GM shouldn't just say no. Your first tool is buy-in from the players; you've agreed to play a game that is free from violence. Beyond that, you can use in-game repercussions. You don't need to inflict these straight away—if a player suggests a violent action, it's okay to remind them that it will have consequences for the character.

If you're looking to add some mechanical teeth to reflect the repercussions of breaking soft limits, every time a character engages in some form of violence, throw a Fate die into a bowl. As soon as you've got four dice, roll them to create advantages against the characters that reflect their willingness to engage in unacceptable behavior.

You can control how immediate the consequences of violent acts are by varying the rate at which dice are thrown into the bowl, and when the bowl clears. Consider also the difference between using this roll to target the perpetrator of the violence, or the entire group; both are viable options, but make sure everyone understands the risks before the dice hit the table.

Physically placing a die in the bowl has the added benefit of calling out the inappropriate behavior. The presence of that growing pool of dice is a reminder that the players are repeatedly transgressing.

The Skill List

Once you've developed a premise, it's a good idea to take a look at tweaking the skill list to support it. There are two overtly violent skills in the default Fate Core list: Fight and Shoot. One option is simply to remove them from the list. That's a viable choice, and probably essential if you've opted for a premise with a hard limit on fighting.

Alternatively, you might tie these skills directly with some sort of formal training (ideally rare and unusual), or require characters that use them to be registered. That way an act of violence uniquely identifies the perpetrator, which makes it a risky proposition. This is a form of soft limit, and it makes a nice hook on which to hang plot developments.

If you choose to remove Fight and Shoot from the skill list, you're left with only one method for making attacks: Provoke. Depending on your premise, that may be sufficient. The danger is that the character with the highest Provoke will dominate every conflict, or every conflict scene will feel very similar. If you choose to stick with just one attack skill, you should focus your attention on setting up the circumstances that allow the attack to be delivered; that way, characters with a variety of skills can contribute.

Look back over the default modes of conflict that you have discussed with your group. Can you introduce new skills that deal with these conflicts in a more granular way? This may involve splitting existing skills into narrower fields of influence, or adding the Attack action to new skills for use under specific circumstances.

Taking two of our example conflicts from earlier, we might modify the skill list in the following ways:

Magical heists

- remove Burglary
- add skills dealing with specific security types, e.g., Astral, Magitech, Mundane
- add the attack action to Rapport, targeting guards
- add the attack action to Deceive, again targeting guards

Robot avatar football

- add the attack action to Physique, for grinding out territory during the game
- add the attack action to Athletics, for using speed and agility to gain ground
- rename the Craft skill as Mechanic, for on-field repairs
- add a Signals skill, for jamming attempts between pilot and robot avatar

Fate System Toolkit discusses modifying skill lists (page 23) and adding complexity to non-standard conflicts (page 54). This is all related to the Bronze Rule (page 9): virtually anything can be represented as a character. Imagine the sorts of obstacles you expect the characters to face. What do their stress tracks look like? What modes of (non-violent) attack do you expect will come into play when dealing with them?

Stress and Consequences

Stress, consequences, and concessions are used to determine who is victorious in a conflict. Just as skills tell players what their characters can do, stress tracks point to the paths they can use to overcome opposition.

Physical stress is problematic in a non-violent game, since it implies that inflicting physical harm is a viable route to victory. There are a few ways you can deal with this issue.

EXTERNAL PRESSURES

If your game features some sort of conflict that is hard on the body (football!), or a soft limit on violence, then you may wish to leave the physical stress track as it is. In this case, you can use external pressures to discourage characters from inflicting stress through violence.

We've already discussed a few options, but another powerful possibility is to rename the physical stress track as "pain" or "trauma." Names can modify behavior—there's nothing noble about inflicting pain! Bear this in mind when you're describing the results of violence, too. Consequences like **Shattered Femur** or **Blood Everywhere** feel very different than **Broken Leg** or **Unconscious**.

REMOVING PHYSICAL STRESS

You can simply remove the physical stress track. In a game with a hard limit on violence, that should work just fine. If your limitation on violence is soft, however, then every punch or gunshot will go straight to consequences.

That can be positive, since it dramatically raises the stakes in a fight. The risk is that it actually makes violence a more appealing option, particularly as a quick method for dispatching nameless NPCs, with whom the players have very little investment. If this becomes an issue you'll need to fall back on the external pressures we discussed earlier.

REPLACING PHYSICAL STRESS

Probably the best option is to replace physical stress with alternative stress tracks that reflect the core conflict(s) in your game. Consider options like wealth, reputation, followers, relationships, or something stranger like the environment, how close the authorities are to tracking you down, or your connection to mystical power. Doing so directs play away from violence, by making victory contingent upon targeting something that can't be harmed with a bullet.

Climactic Final Scenes

Climactic finales can present a particular challenge in a non-violent game. Since the players probably aren't facing injury or death, you need to ensure that they've got something personal at risk in the climax. Think about something important that they'll lose if they don't carry the day, like a job, a friendship, property, an opportunity, or even a skill or power.

Better yet, physically embody the stakes in the scene. If the players are striving for a football scholarship, make sure they've met the college scouts, and stick them in the stands. If the characters are fighting to save their homes, hold the climax in front of the bulldozers with their families watching on. An audience, particularly of people the characters care about, is extremely useful for heightening drama.

A dramatic backdrop works just as well for a non-violent climax as it does a fight sequence. Set your showdown on the floor of the Galactic Senate, or the disintegrating bridge of a starship. Time limits work great, too—if the players have to steal the magic MacGuffin before the building is demolished underneath them, that's bound to add tension.

If your game features more than one core conflict type, then pile all of them up in the climactic scene (the Return of the Jedi gambit). Stealing the crucial magical tool you need to defeat the opposing team during the game, even as the bulldozers bear down on your family home, is considerably more dramatic than dealing with each of those problems in turn.

The climax could also be the perfect moment to challenge the restriction on violence. Present the players with the opportunity to remove a hard limit, or with incentive to break a soft one. Or have their opponents initiate the violence, and see how the players respond. Tread carefully, though, and make sure that this twist is appropriately foreshadowed—it's easy for a sudden burst of unexpected violence to feel trite or desperate.

Conclusion

Next time you're watching an action movie, think about which action sequences carry the most weight and emotional impact. You might be surprised. Sure, sometimes it's the ones filled with beautiful violence, and sometimes it's the brutal ones (hello, Eastern Promises). But just as often, I think you'll find that the fighting is incidental.

The best conflict is about character. The airplane scene in The Incredibles, where Elastigirl realizes that her kids are involved, whether she likes it or not. Even the tank scene in The A-Team reboot, which is as much about the reality-defying power of Hannibal and his crew as it is about drone attacks. Nobody dies in Ghostbusters.

Hopefully this article has provided you with a few ideas for running non-violent games. Even if you're not keen on removing violence altogether, thinking about alternative modes of conflict will only make your games richer. It encourages you to engage with the hopes and fears of characters on a deeper level than just their sense of self-preservation. Who knows, you might find your characters reaching for the gun second, if at all! ✚

CAMPAIGN SEASON
by ANDRÉ LA ROCHE

So. You want to change the world. War for a vacant throne? Pass legislation to protect us from the metahuman menace known as "superheroes"? Run for president of the galactic colonies? Or maybe you pretend to be an "aw shucks" good ol' boy in Congress who only craves power. If you want nations to listen to your voice, or just those in smoke-filled back rooms, it sounds like you're ready to begin the **Campaign Season**.

Defining a Campaign

A *Campaign* uses the **Fate fractal**—the idea that anything in Fate can be treated as a character with skills, aspects, stress track, and stunts—to chart the success of players whose characters are elite political operatives; it measures how successful players are in changing public opinion.

A Campaign represents an overarching social mission that the players struggle to achieve in response to the game's **Big Issues** (page 22 of FATE CORE SYSTEM), and the group decides what kind of coordinated efforts it represents. Is it passing legislation? Is it a treaty negotiation at a political summit? Is it running an election, while rigging an ambassadorial appointment? Tracking the tide of a war of succession? Coordinating a bake sale?

Players can be embroiled in multiple Campaigns at once. New Campaigns emerge through play when the group agrees that story advancements render it appropriate. In fact, it's ideal to have different Campaigns that the players shuttle between, weaving different agendas in and out of focus.

Game Creation Guidelines

During game creation, the GM and players should discuss the initial Campaigns that the PCs will engage in. Do the PCs collaborate on the same Campaign, or are they elite operatives working on behalf of competing Campaigns at cross-purposes? For more in-depth advice on the game creation session, see Leonard Balsera's **Game Creation Tips: Managing the Conversation** in THE FATE CODEX, Volume 1, Issue 1.

ARE THE CAMPAIGN RULES EVEN WARRANTED?

The first question to answer is whether the players want their approach to solving the game's Big Issues to even require building a Campaign. Theoretically, every game could use these rules to model player progress in confronting the game's Big Issues. That would be wasteful, though. The Campaign rules really shine when the players want their characters to be close to the ebb and flow of public opinion, to really see the effects of their victories and failures play out across society. While a heroic group of adventurers will certainly affect the world over the course of their career, reminders of their larger influence will be sporadic. They aren't steeped in the daily society-wide measures of their actions the way that a lobbyist, small-town mayor, or ambitious prince is.

SCOPE OF POLITICS

How political do you want the game to be? First and foremost, a Fate game is supposed to be fun for everyone at the table. Inherently political games run the risk of pushing people into uncomfortable emotional terrain, but then again, maybe that's precisely what everyone at the table wants. The game creation session is a vital time for everyone to speak up and say what issues they consider off the table, or at least want to be treated with respect, not lampooned. We're all friends here at the table, so make sure it's a fulfilling experience for everyone.

In games focusing on politics of medieval succession, the overarching political issues are likely so abstract from present issues that there's little risk of pushing other players' emotional buttons. However, even something as fantastic as "metahuman registration" can devolve into thinly-veiled mimicry of real-world politics. Be aware of each other's lines, and be forgiving if someone crosses your lines—it likely wasn't intentional. A little respect and forgiveness goes a long way. Feel free to revisit this conversation as things progress.

In modern political games, it's tempting to use knowledge of policy and legislation to add detail to the process. A little amount of detail is nice, e.g., "This bill will help national parks at the expense of teachers!" but the more detailed you get, the more you're likely to lose the attention of players who

aren't politics junkies. It's best to develop just a few ideas of who a bill helps or hurts and how.

FRACTAL PLAY

So how do you make the Campaign rules complement, rather than over-shadow, individual characters? One way to do this is to have players roleplay their individual missions and objectives as the key to unlocking certain Campaign rolls.

Your Campaign can't attack using its Publicize skill until the player characters have found a new communications director to replace the sus-piciously missing one. Likewise, your players will need to be successful in using their Provoke and Rapport skills to rally protestors within the com-munity before your Campaign can attack using its Mobilize skill. Or per-haps that **Grand Banquet** you hope to throw using Funding requires you to perform a few personal favors for major donors.

Think of it this way: player missions represent the core events that set the Campaign's public actions into motion.

Initial Campaign Creation

The initial Campaign is created during game creation by the GM and play-ers. As in-game events result in the creation of new Campaigns, the GM can either create the write-up of those Campaigns, or delegate it to the players to do between sessions and approve it at the start of the next game session—whatever works best for your group.

Campaigns are written up much like characters.

NAME THE CAMPAIGN

The Campaign name, though not an aspect, is a way of tracking what a Campaign is focused on achieving. Examples include "Colonial Presi-dency," "Stack the Deck," and "Nimby." See page 140 for full write-ups of these examples.

CREATE CAMPAIGN ASPECTS

Framing Aspect: Much like the high concept for characters, the framing aspect is the overarching direction of the Campaign—the rallying cry of the faithful. Examples include **Colonies United!**, **Everyone's a Stepping Stone**, or **We Don't Want It!**

Counterframe Aspect: Much like the trouble aspect for characters, the counterframe aspect represents the inherent and obvious weaknesses of a Campaign. Examples include, **Time Is Ripe for Independence**, **Circular Firing Squad**, or **Just a Wee Bit Overreactionary**.

Other Aspects: Like character creation, each player takes turns creating an aspect for the Campaign and explaining its significance. The group determines how many additional aspects are needed, based on how large and far-reaching the Campaign is.

INFLUENCE STRESS

Each Campaign has a stress track which measures ***influence stress***. The influence stress track represents how your Campaign is weathering the slings and arrows of the opposition in the eyes of the public. Influence stress can be affected by the actions of other Campaigns or of individuals. Each Campaign starts out with one stress box, plus one stress box per Campaign aspect. Influence stress works just like a character's physical and mental stress track with one giant caveat: it can never heal unless the Campaign possesses the Damage Control stunt. The news cycle and public opinion are unforgiving.

CAMPAIGN CONSEQUENCES

Like character consequences, each Campaign has a -2, -4, and -6 slot. Just like consequences suffered by characters, these can soak up stress. As with influence stress, Campaign consequences don't heal.

CAMPAIGN SKILLS

Campaigns all share the same four skills (page 136), and players decide together how to rank each skill along the following levels of the skill ladder with one skill per ladder rung: Average (+1), Fair (+2), Good (+3), Great (+4).

SKILL TIMING

Discuss whether a Campaign can use its skills once per scene, or once per milestone (minimum of once per session, or more frequently if multiple milestones occur in a session). Campaigns designed to be brief and span days or weeks (bake sale, treaty summit) should allow rolls once per scene. Campaigns designed to be extended and last months or years (presidential election, wars) should allow rolls once per milestone.

FATE POINTS

Campaigns have no fate points. Characters who work on Campaigns can use their own fate points to affect Campaigns.

CAMPAIGN STUNTS

Each campaign has three stunts, chosen from the list on page 138.

SINGLE CAMPAIGN GAME

The default assumption is that eventually multiple Campaigns will be in play at any given time, fighting and competing against one another. If you want to streamline this, it's easy to track only the Campaign that the players support. Using this option, the players' Campaign can be harmed directly by NPCs. Instead of having opposing Campaigns attack, have attack and defense rolls be made by key NPCs using the skill that makes the most sense.

A middle ground is to use the Nimby Campaign provided on page 142. The Nimby Campaign is designed to provide general opposition to just about anything. Just rename it to "Space Invasion," "Concerned PTA," "Majority Political Party," or whatever represents the opposed interests.

Campaign Skills

All Campaigns have the same four skills: Funding, Mobilize, Publicize, and Subterfuge. A Campaign can use its skills to affect the social mood and people's conventional wisdom surrounding the Big Issues.

Advantages created by Campaigns are powerful and, depending upon skill timing, last until the next scene or milestone. A Campaign can make one attack per scene or milestone, in accordance with its skill timing.

Funding

This skill represents the Campaign's material resources. It could be a king's horde, galactic credits, shells, drachma—whatever the currency, this skill represents how much your Campaign wields.

Overcome: Like the Resources skill, Funding allows Campaigns to purchase solutions to problems.

Create an Advantage: You use Funding to create advantages that reflect pouring money into local economies (***A Turkey in Every Oven***) or use conspicuous displays of wealth to impress supporters and the public (***Grand Banquet***). You can also use Funding to declare that your Campaign has something on hand, or to acquire it quickly.

Attack: Funding isn't used for attacks.

Defend: Funding isn't used to defend.

Mobilize

This skill represents the raw physical power of a Campaign's believers and operatives. It could represent highly-paid attorneys, skilled operatives, grassroots volunteers, or trained armies.

Overcome: Your Campaign can overcome obstacles related to mobilizing its operatives such as canvassing a neighborhood, protesting an event, or organizing a bake sale. Opposed Campaigns use their own Mobilize skill to resist this roll.

Create an Advantage: Use this skill to create advantages related to your ability to mobilize your followers such as *Power to the People*, *Angry Mob*, or *Disciplined Army*.

Attack: Mobilize can be rolled to represent the combined might of your followers attacking another Campaign by canvassing, coordinating staffer efforts, lawsuits, or good ol' fashioned fisticuffs.

Defend: You can use Mobilize to defend against attacks made by other Campaigns using the Mobilize skill.

Publicize

This skill represents a Campaign's ability to spread its message effectively. It could utilize media, runners, and town criers, or an informal web of gossip and rumors.

Overcome: You can spread messages that are harmful to your enemies or helpful to your Campaign. You can inspire or terrify the public with your message. Enemy Campaigns oppose with Subterfuge.

Create an Advantage: You can create advantages that reflect public opinion such as *Shocked*, *Inspired*, or *Rebellious*.

Attack: Publicize can be used to attack a rival campaign's influence stress.

Defend: Using the media is just as crucial for defending as it is for attacking. This skill can be used to defend against attacks made by another Campaign's Publicize skill.

Subterfuge

This skill represents the Campaign's ability to manipulate behind-the-scenes events. These are the unsavory actions that Campaigns take that they typically don't want known.

Overcome: Use Subterfuge so that your Campaign can bypass situations in sneaky or underhanded ways, such as snooping through the opposition's private documents, hacking computer systems, embedding spies, or engaging in blackmail.

Create an Advantage: Subterfuge can be used to create advantages that reflect some sort of hidden benefit such as *Shapeshifter Agents*, *Trojan Horse Virus*, or *Bribed Official*.

Attack: Subterfuge itself isn't used to attack, but to position your people to make the most effective attacks.

Defend: Subterfuge can be used defensively against Publicize attacks, as you bury unfavorable stories beneath blustery arguments and distractions.

Campaign Stunts

Campaigns choose three of the following stunts. Characters can take these stunts too, granting their ability to any Campaigns they work on. This represents the characters' status as highly-valued and coveted Campaign operatives.

Beacon of Hope: The Campaign radiates inspiration for a more prosperous future. The Campaign gains an extra free invoke when using Publicize or Funding to create advantages premised on a better future such as *Plan for Prosperity*, *I Will End This War*, or *A Golden Age Is Near*.

Damage Control: The Campaign is exceptionally resilient. Once per scene or milestone (based on the Campaign's skill timing), one of its operatives can spend a fate point to clear one box of influence stress.

Scandal!: The Campaign is ruthless about exploiting damaging information—love affairs, buried secrets, or hidden hypocrisies. When attacking by highlighting an opposing Campaign's scandalous or hidden information, you deal an extra shift of influence stress.

Work the News: The Campaign is exceptionally connected to the media, and knows how to broadcast its message. This stunt grants +2 to Publicize when spreading the Campaign's message. This bonus can be used on Subterfuge rolls by Campaigns with the Friends in Low Places stunt.

Friends in Low Places: This Campaign has connections it would rather not publicize. Perhaps those connections are with criminal organizations, or incredibly unpopular figures. Either way, those connections grant the Campaign the ability to work in unconventional ways. You can use Subterfuge to attack as though it were Publicize.

Pig-Headed: This Campaign won't go down without a fight. It gains two extra influence stress boxes. Individual characters who take this stunt grant only one Campaign they're working on at a time the two additional stress boxes.

Battling Campaigns

Campaigns attack each other using relevant skill rolls. However, Campaign combat works slightly differently than character combat.

EFFECT OF BEING TAKEN OUT

As with characters, if an attack reduces all of the Campaign's stress and the Campaign has no more consequences, it's taken out. Being taken out always ends the Campaign. Being taken out can either result in the complete loss of the Campaign, a compromised success (such as a bill containing poison pill provisions, an army claiming the throne with tenuous power to maintain it, etc.), or a victorious campaign with an overwhelmingly disapproving society (space invaders establishing an empire that's challenged by rebel forces.)

Unlike characters, Campaigns are designed to be finite creations. It's easier for a Campaign to be taken out—and taken out for good—than for a character. That's why Campaigns don't heal stress or consequences. They may be able to last a little longer with the Damage Control stunt, but ultimately every Campaign will end. This means that, logically speaking, even a victorious Campaign ceases to exist once its opponent has been defeated. Every election has a voting day, every treaty gets passed or talks stall out, every war ends, and every small-town rumor campaign explodes into a public spectacle.

That's why it's important to create new Campaigns throughout the course of play. The easiest way to do this is to create new Campaigns when the Big Issues of the game change. Sure, the Metahuman Registration Act has passed, but now we must Appoint the Director of Metahuman Affairs. While Aleck may have succeeded in acquiring the throne, he must now Restore Law to the Land even as he is opposed by a Wave of Bandit Raiders.

Every new story comes from some other story's end.

CONCEDING

A Campaign can concede, but like being taken out, that ends the Campaign. A concession can result in incredibly favorable compromises such as being chosen as the opponent's running mate, proposed spin-off legislation, or restoring peace to the kingdom at the cost of your throne. ✚

Sample Campaign Writeups

Colonial Presidency

It's that time of the orbital cycle again: the political war for the most important position in the galaxy! All sides are vying for the position, and Galactic Gambling Mogul Kami Shaddad has thrown her hat into the ring, hyperdriving across the colonies, working her charm, flashing smiles, and promising the Interplanetary Trade Commission all of the support it wants.

ASPECTS

FRAMING: COLONIES UNITED!

COUNTERFRAME: TIME IS RIPE FOR INDEPENDENCE

OTHER ASPECTS: GALACTIC CASINOS FOR THE MASSES
WHO DO YOU THINK CONTROLS THE CREDS?
TARGETED BY XENOCIDAL EXTREMISTS

CAMPAIGN SKILLS

FUNDING	GREAT (+4)
MOBILIZE	AVERAGE (+1)
PUBLICIZE	GOOD (+3)
SUBTERFUGE	FAIR (+2)

SKILL TIMING

Milestone

STUNTS

Beacon of Hope. The Campaign gains an extra free invoke when using Publicize or Funding to create advantages premised on a better future.

Pig-Headed. Gain two extra influence stress boxes.

Scandal! When attacking by highlighting an opposing Campaign's scandalous or hidden information, you deal an extra shift of influence stress.

INFLUENCE STRESS

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Stack the Deck

Politics is a deadly game. Sometimes doing everything you can to get your party's voting bloc into the majority, and your own star on the rise, requires bloodying noses and burying bodies—literally. Today's casualties pave the way for tomorrow's leaders.

ASPECTS

FRAMING: EVERYONE'S A STEPPING STONE

COUNTERFRAME: CIRCULAR FIRING SQUAD

OTHER ASPECTS: WHEEL AND DEAL
POWER: THE ULTIMATE APHRODISIAC
AUTHENTICITY IN SURPRISING PLACES
STRANGE BEDFELLOWS
NO ONE LIKES USELESS PAIN

CAMPAIGN SKILLS

FUNDING	AVERAGE (+1)
MOBILIZE	FAIR (+2)
PUBLICIZE	GOOD (+3)
SUBTERFUGE	GREAT (+4)

SKILL TIMING

Milestone

STUNTS

Damage Control. Once per scene or milestone (based on the Campaign's skill timing), one of its operatives can spend a fate point to clear one box of influence stress.

Scandal! When attacking by highlighting an opposing Campaign's scandalous or hidden information, you deal an extra shift of influence stress.

Work the News. Gain +2 to Publicize when spreading the Campaign's messages.

INFLUENCE STRESS

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Nimby

The Nimby are a fearsome people. They will stop at nothing to halt your Campaign, no matter how righteous and just. The Nimby never listen to reason, nor can they see the future clearly or respect a treasured past. It should be obvious to the Nimby that your cause will only help their long-term goals, but they'll hear nothing of it. The Nimby are in every society, and every reality, and are cunning enough to infiltrate your own causes. They could be anyone, anywhere: villagers with pitchforks, righteous pro-testors, landed gentry, a faceless goon squad, or a PTA comprised of heli-copter parents.

ASPECTS

FRAMING: WE DON'T WANT IT!

COUNTERFRAME: JUST A WEE BIT OVERREACTIONARY

OTHER ASPECTS: MOB MENTALITY • THAT'S NOT WHAT I HEARD!

CAMPAIGN SKILLS

FUNDING	**AVERAGE (+1)**
MOBILIZE	**GREAT (+4)**
PUBLICIZE	**FAIR (+2)**
SUBTERFUGE	**GOOD (+3)**

SKILL TIMING
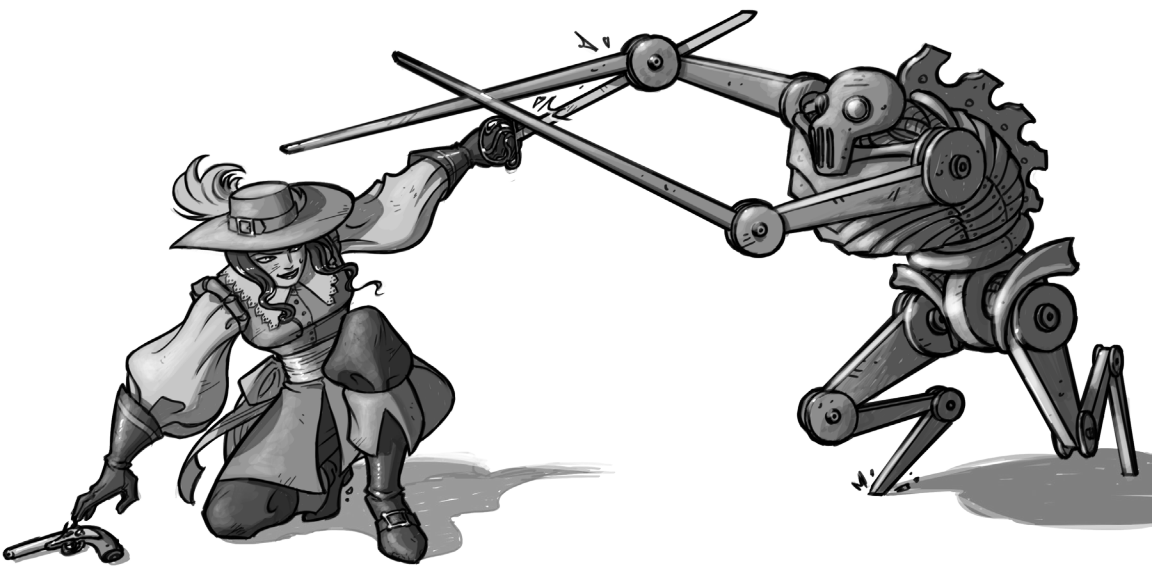
Scene

STUNTS

Friends in Low Places. You can use Subterfuge to attack as though it were Publicize.

Pig-Headed. Gain two extra influence stress boxes.

Scandal! When attacking by highlighting an opposing Campaign's scan-dalous or hidden information, you deal an extra shift of influence stress.

INFLUENCE STRESS

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

MOMENTUM DICE
by PHIL VECCHIONE AND CHRIS SNIEZAK

In cinema, cartoons, and video games, the protagonist often turns things around when a fight is going badly. Whether something small like cracking an opponent's pristine armor or grand like summoning a blazing sword, these moments portray momentum swings in the favor of the protagonist as victory becomes possible. The Momentum mechanic is designed to simulate these tide-turning events in a Fate game.

THE MOMENTUM MECHANIC

The Momentum mechanic is centered on one of the four Actions from the Fate Core rules: Overcome, Create Advantage, Attack, and Defend. Each character gains Momentum through the use of one of these actions. During character creation, the player and GM agree upon one of the Actions that will generate Momentum for that character. This will be the character's Momentum Action.

In a rough and tumble fantasy world, a Sword Master decides to take Momentum in the Attack action. Conversely, a double shield fighter decides to take Momentum in the Defend Action.

Players need two sets of Fate Dice, in two different colors, to use the Momentum mechanic. One set of dice represents the base dice, and the second set of dice, the Momentum dice (hereafter called m-dice), represent the Momentum pool. When a player rolls for a Momentum Action, they assemble a roll of 4dF using a combination of base dice and m-dice. The number of **m-dice** a character can roll on a given Momentum Action is based on the skill being used. The base is one m-die, with an additional

m-die added if the skill is ranked Fair (+2), and another m-die gained at Great (+4). The remaining dice in the 4dF are base dice.

The Sword Master has a Fighting of Great (+4). When he makes an Attack action with Fighting, he uses three m-dice and one base die.

The player rolls 4dF and resolves the roll as per the Fate Core rules. Regardless of the outcome of the roll, the player checks the facing of the Momentum dice. If any of the m-dice are a ⊞, the player receives one Momentum. A handy way to track this is to take that m-die and place it off to the side, banking the die. This creates a Momentum bank.

> The player has Fate Dice (the Core Dice set) and uses the blue dice for her normal set, and one of the green dice for her Momentum die. When rolling for a Momentum Action, a ⊞ on the green die earns a point of Momentum.

A character's Momentum bank may never hold more than 4 Momentum. For each Momentum die in the Momentum bank, the number of available m-dice for Momentum Action rolls decreases by one. It is possible to be able to roll more m-dice than you have available in your Momentum pool. In this case, roll as many dice as are available in the Momentum pool. A character that does not spend Momentum (see below) eventually depletes the Momentum pool and has all four Momentum dice banked.

> The Sword Master with a Fighting of Great (+4) rolls three m-dice on a Momentum Action. On his first Attack, he rolls three m-dice and one base die, and is able to bank an m-die, reducing his Momentum pool from four to three. On his second attack, he rolls three m-dice and one base die, and again banks an m-die, reducing his Momentum pool from three to two. On the third turn, he attacks again but only has two m-dice remaining, giving him two m-dice and two base dice to roll.

A second method for generating Momentum is by forgoing a Boost created through the use of the Character's Momentum Action. The player forgoes the Boost and banks another m-die. This allows both Ties and Success with Style to generate Momentum.

Momentum is lost when there is a break in the action (e.g., after combat). When a character would have a chance to clear stress, she also clears Momentum.

SPENDING MOMENTUM

Momentum is spent to create different types of results. There are three general categories on which Momentum can be spent:

- Effects (One Momentum)
- Boost Conversion (Two Momentum)
- Game Changer (Four Momentum)

Players can spend Momentum to gain an Effect or Boost Conversion on their turn as appropriate within the fiction. Game Changers have more sweeping effects and may be activated outside of the players' turn, depending on how they are designed.

Effects

Effects reflect small mechanical changes in a challenge that can help turn the tide. Below are some sample Effects, but GMs are free to expand this list.

- **Move an Enemy.** You can move an enemy one zone if you're using zones, or narrative distance if you're not.
- **Move.** You can move an extra zone or narrative distance, still following the rules for overcoming obstacles.
- **Get a Clue.** Acquire a piece of information to point you in the right direction. You still have to do something to acquire the clue within the fiction.
- **Reduce Armor/Weapon Rating.** When making an exchange with an opponent, you can reduce the Armor or Weapon rating of the opponent's gear as long as the fiction can support the action.
- **Inspire Allies.** You can inspire all allies in your zone or within a distance that adheres to the narrative, granting them +1 to their next check.
- **Cause Despair.** You can intimidate all enemies in your zone or within a distance that adheres to the narrative, inducing -1 to their next check.
- **Cause Damage When Defending.** When using the Defend action, you can inflict a 1-stress hit against your attacker.

> The Sword Master faces off against an opponent in a tavern and makes an Attack action with Fighting. She scores a success, dealing three stress, and also chooses to spend one Momentum to move the opponent to an adjacent zone, explaining that after the sword strike she kicked her opponent into the nearby bar.

Boost Conversion

For two Momentum, the player can convert a Boost which was generated by the character's Momentum Action into an aspect with a single Invocation. This represents the hero capitalizing on an opening (Boost) and making it count.

> The Sword Master makes an Attack action with Fighting against an opponent and ties, gaining a Boost. The character inflicts **Rang His Bell** and describes a pommel strike to the side of the head. The player then spends two Momentum to increase that effect to an aspect with a single invocation, denoting the severity of the strike to the head.

Game Changer

With this mechanic, every character gets a four-point Momentum ability known as the *Game Changer*. The Game Changer's effect is potent and should have a huge impact on the conflict. When a character uses their Game Changer, they exhaust their Momentum bank and are unable to generate or spend any more Momentum for the remainder of the conflict and scene.

Game Changers should feel like very potent stunts, in the flavor of creating rules exceptions. When building them, use these guidelines:

- Tie Game Changers into a character's High Concept or an Aspect of the character.
- Game Changers can have a wide variety of potent effects which bypass or circumvent some rule of the game.
- Game Changers should not end a challenge, contest, or conflict, but they can set them up to be ended.
- Determine how and when Game Changers are activated (e.g., on successful Momentum action, any time, etc.).
- The effect of a Game Changer should be transient, lasting for no longer than a single exchange.

Following are some examples of Game Changers to illustrate the mechanics:

Example 1

The game is in a World War II pulp action setting, and the character's High Concept is **Former Nazi Occult Scientist**. The character's Game Changer is:

I Know the Answer. When dealing with occult foes and forces, you

know the answer to the problem or the weakness of the foe. You can immediately create an aspect on the scene, or reveal an aspect of an occult threat, with two free invocations on it.

Example 2

The game is in a medieval fantasy setting, and the character's High Concept is ***Murderous Assassin***. The character's Game Changer is:

Killing Blow. Make an Attack. If successful, this damage cannot be absorbed by stress boxes; it can only be handled through one or more consequences. If the target does not have enough consequences to absorb the attack, they are Taken Out.

Example 3

The game is in a street-level superheroes setting, and the character's High Concept is ***I'm the Toughest Guy in Town***. The character's Game Changer is:

Can't Keep Me Down. At any time, you may clear all your Physical and Mental Stress, or remove one Consequence.

MOMENTUM AND ADVANCEMENT

For the sake of simplicity and mechanical balance, a character should have only one Momentum Action. If a character wishes to change their Momentum Action, it should be done as part of a Major Milestone.

MOMENTUM AND NPCS

This system is designed for player characters and not intended for NPCs. Momentum is a characteristic of the major characters within a story and not appropriate for **nameless or supporting NPCs**. If a GM did want to give Momentum to an NPC, the best NPCs would be the **main NPCs**: major characters within the story.

Turn the Tide

The Momentum mechanic adds an additional layer of narrative complexity and mechanical choices to a typical Fate Conflict. It represents both the small effects, as well as the heroic surges, that turn the tide of combat. If you are looking for some additional complexity in your combats, this optional rule may be a ... Game Changer.

Special thanks to the rest of Encoded Designs team, Shawn Merwin and Robert M. Everson, for their assistance on this article. ✚

THE PILOTS OF EDEN
By J. HUSTON TODD

Nuclear war and environmental waste made the Earth uninhabitable. Centuries of fighting brought us to the brink of destruction. There had to be a better way. So, we looked to the stars. It was our chance to try again, to leave behind the mistakes we kept making. Except things didn't go that way. Old rivalries resurfaced alongside new conflicts. The same shit followed us as we tried to forge ahead. And we were unprepared for the horrors that awaited us, unprepared for THEM....

We've been away for 500 years, but now we need to go back. It's time. We left something behind we didn't know we'd need until now. So we gathered the best and the brightest—soldiers, scientists, explorers—the gifted and the special. We built great machines, advanced suits of devastating power, to even the odds against whatever we found in the vast expanse of space. Our mission: return to Earth.

You are the pilots of Earth Defense Engagement Network, and you are coming home.

A Ruined Earth

Five hundred years ago, humanity was forced to leave the Earth behind. The majority of the population boarded their great Seed-ships and set off toward the closest habitable planet. The world they left behind was in ruins, wasted by nuclear fallout and environmental catastrophes. The majority of the planet was poisoned, making life untenable for the human race. A biological weapons race pushed the planet to the brink of destruction.

The greatest achievement of that worldwide struggle had been the Kaiju, bio-engineered living weapons of mass destruction. Each government and corporation had designed and bred their own version of these titanic monsters. The Kaiju were never actually released; mutually assured destruction wins again. The specimens were too large to transport and almost indestructible, so they were put to sleep and buried underground. Tectonic shifts and natural decay eventually released these weapons and they have now become the apex predators on Earth. The beasts are fiercely territorial, although Kaiju of similar genetic makeup often hunt in pairs, making them even deadlier. The titans reign over their kingdom; however, deep inside each is the genetically implanted imperative: KILL ALL HUMANS!

While the Kaiju are the most fearsome inhabitants of Earth, they are not the only ones. The Grist are an example of a species the members of Project EDEN are likely to encounter during their mission.

THE REMNANTS OF HUMANITY

Meanwhile, humanity has strived to make a home for itself among the stars. They have settled into a pattern: they travel to a star system ripe with raw materials where their ships mine and cultivate its resources. Once a system has been depleted, the migrant fleet moves on to the next. Most humans have never set foot off their Seed-ship. They prefer the comfort and familiarity of the spacecraft to any settlement or colonization. In this way, humanity has become comfortable and soft. During their journey they have found other species and civilizations, some friendly, some not. Rarely do the descendants of Earth turn their gaze homeward.

SPECIES STAT BLOCKS

Quinn Murphy's *Culture From the Outside In* from THE FATE CODEX, Volume 1, Issue 2 (page 19) was used to create the different species for *Pilots of EDEN*.

The Grist

An insect race whose starship crashed on Earth hundreds of years after it was abandoned. Their queen died during the crash and they have slowly evolved out of the need for a hive mind.

ASPECTS

High Concept: Insectoids Disconnected from the Hive Mind

Triumph: Reclaiming the New York Subway System

Failure: Rise of the False Queen

CUSTOMS

We always…

• Look out for our own

• Reach consensus quickly

• Punish the guilty

We never…

• Abandon the hive

• Take away another's choice

VALUES

hard-working • cooperative • pragmatic • logical

honorable • fluid • determined

CULTURAL SKILLS

Great (+4)   Athletics

Good (+3)   Rapport, Repair

PARAGONS

Owner of Earth

Master Dung-Collector

Egg-Keeper

PEOPLE OF THE STARS

The species which humanity has encountered have been nothing like they expected. Most greet the humans with equal parts suspicion and curiosity. They see humanity as an oddity, such bravery and foolishness from such a young species. They see in the people of Earth a potential both exciting and dangerous.

Cloaks

Of all the alien species humanity has encountered in the universe, the Cloaks are by far the oldest. The Cloaks themselves are actually sentient slugs who embed themselves into the brains of other creatures. Each slug is thousands of years old. Most host bodies are bio-engineered animals, and of late, Earth animals, mostly extinct on Earth itself, have become increasingly popular among them.

ASPECTS

High Concept: Long-Lived Symbiotic Space-Slugs

Triumph: Genetically Engineering the First Host

Failure: The Human First Contact War

CUSTOMS

We always…

- Seek a peaceful solution
- Remember the past
- Observe before making a decision

We never…

- Bond with a creature deemed Intelligent and self-aware
- Destroy anything we could learn from

VALUES

inquisitive • observant • knowledgeable • intelligent • careful

benevolent • wise • reasonable • rational • endless

CULTURAL SKILLS

Great (+4)   Science

Good (+3)   Notice, Will

PARAGONS

High Arbiter

Master Geneticist

Bonding Council

There are rumors of more species, tales told in passing; the galaxy is an immense place, easy to get lost in.

PROJECT EDEN

A new enemy has emerged which threatens to wipe out all of humanity: the Aether. The Earth Fleet's government has been able to keep the exact nature and severity of this threat under wraps. Most of the migrant fleet lives on,

ignorant of the situation. However, there are enough people who know the truth and refuse to simply wait around. So, the Earth Defense Engagement Network, a paramilitary group dedicated to returning to Earth and finding the key to stopping the Aether, was founded. Their main goal is the acquisition of "The Key," a strand of perfect human DNA which could be used to create a defense against this threat. The only known sample is back on Earth, lightyears away.

To face the threats posed by a return home, Project EDEN oversaw the design and production of the Mech Suits. These massive robots were built to protect humans and even the playing field against the now awakened Kaiju. With the whereabouts of "The Key" and a squad of Mechs, EDEN went about recruiting pilots to take on the mission of returning to Earth. While the primary field consisted of humans, Project EDEN reached out amongst the stars to look for the best and most able pilots available, which meant opening their roster to alien species as well.

With the construction of a prototype starship, *Seraphim*, designed with the first dark matter engine, Project EDEN was finally ready to make the trip back to Earth.

Setting Creation

As a Quick Start Adventure, **Pilots of EDEN** has everything you need to jump right into your first session. Before you start, you'll want to discuss the broader setting with your group, starting by reading the previous sections to get your players on the same page. At the start of play, explain the **current issue** to your players and ask them to fill in one or two faces associated with *A Wrecked and Ruined Home*. These additional faces will provide new plot hooks and twists that will tie your players more deeply to the horrifying threats they will face.

Then ask your players to choose from one of two available **impending issues**: *The Aether Arrives* or *We Weren't the First Team to Arrive*. Have them fill in one or two additional faces for their chosen impending issue as well, rounding out the larger cast of characters with their suggestions.

CURRENT ISSUE: A WRECKED AND RUINED HOME

Before the pilots can even think about recovering any lost tech or establishing a base of operations, they have to contend with the world around them. The Earth is a hostile environment, far more dangerous than any of the history books relate. But they've traveled here for a reason and they have their Mech Suits to help even the odds.

The giant Kaiju have settled in as lords of the Earth and they, alone and in pairs, have marked specific geographic areas as their territories. The only real threat a Kaiju has is from another Kaiju, and contests often erupt as one

monster seeks to expand its domain into another's. Crossing any length of area is perilous as the Kaiju are staunch defenders of their territories.

As if that weren't bad enough, there are countless other hazards: collapsing infrastructure, radioactive waste, sentient plants, mutated predators, acid storms. At every turn, the pilots of EDEN should face danger as they explore this new Earth.

Faces:

- General Marshall Talmage, decorated war hero and commander of Project EDEN who oversees the mission from the orbiting starship, *Seraphim*
- Ripjaw, Category VII Kaiju with radioactive teeth capable of tearing through even the strongest metal, currently makes its home inside a hydroelectric dam

A WRECKED AND RUINED HOME

GENERAL
MARSHALL TALMAGE
commander of
Project EDEN

RIPJAW
Category VII Kaiju
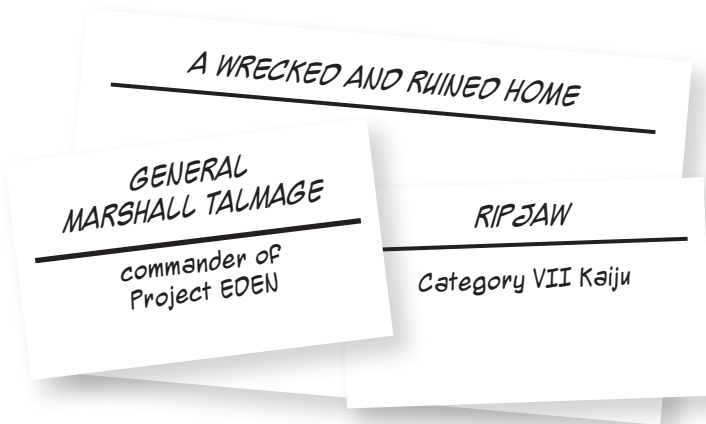
IMPENDING ISSUES

In addition to **A Wrecked and Ruined Home**, there are lots of other impending issues that the Pilots of EDEN will have to deal with before their missions is complete, including:

The Aether Arrives

The Aether are a mysterious alien legion with the ability to assimilate biological matter and rewrite its genetic code, turning it into more Aether. While not a hive mind, every member of the Aether is driven by the need to propagate the genetic code within it. The Aether presents an existential threat grave enough to spur Project EDEN into action. Humanity barely survived its first encounter with an Aether Scout Ship, and only because of the brilliant strategy by General Talmage. But now the Aether knows we

exist, and they are coming back. Project EDEN has returned to Earth to retrieve **the Key**.

However, the Aether has followed them here. Long-range sensors already register its entrance into our solar system, and the pilots may witness its landing on Earth. Their job just got a whole lot more difficult. They need to complete their mission before the Aether catches up with them.

Faces:

- The Emissary, the voice of the Aether, which sporadically communicates to the pilots updating them on the inevitability of their destruction

- Doctor Franz Boran, leading researcher into the exact nature of the Aether who may have become too obsessed with the threat

We Weren't the First Team to Arrive

Throughout their missions on new Earth, the pilots slowly uncover disturbing evidence that they are not the only team to arrive on Earth. A rival team is pursuing their objective as well. The HELIOS Syndicate has outfitted and dispatched their own team, hoping to find the Key and use it for their own purposes. A strand of perfect human DNA would be worth an exorbitant amount of money, which is saying something for the largest and wealthiest corporation in existence. To make sure they secure the objective, HELIOS has hired the deadliest mercenaries and toughest guns-for-hire in the known galaxy. It seems the designs for Mech Suits leaked; the HELIOS team is equipped with their own models. They are led by Orin Saber, ex-Commando for the human military and the coldest-blooded killer in the galaxy.

Faces:

- Orin Saber, renegade Military clone-soldier and current leader of the HELIOS team on new Earth

- Lt. Cris Miclander, intelligence officer for Project EDEN, who has an extensive dossier on the HELIOS team

THE AETHER ARRIVES

THE EMISSARY

The voice of
the Aether

DR. FRANZ BORAN

Lead researcher,
obsessed

WE WEREN'T THE FIRST TEAM TO ARRIVE

ORIN SABER

Leader of the
HELIOS team

LT. CRIS MICLANDER

Project EDEN,
Intelligence Officer

Character Creation

In *The Pilots of EDEN*, players work together as members of an elite team of soldiers, scientists, explorers, and other experts fighting to save humanity and take back their ancestral home. Besides being human, characters can also choose to play as any number of alien races who would have a stake in humanity's future. There's room for ace pilots, eccentric scientists, seasoned explorers, gifted psychics, advanced AIs in synthetic shells, or hardened clone soldiers. Regardless of what type of character a player chooses to be, it needs to be clear why they were chosen for this mission. Each player needs to think about what sets them apart from the rest of the universe and from the other members of the team.

All players begin each session with 3 fate points.

CHARACTER ASPECTS

The Pilots of EDEN characters complete only two phases of the phase trio, selecting a **mech aspect** instead of a third phase aspect. Each Mech Suit is individually designed and synced to a specific purpose and pilot. This aspect explains exactly what each suit was designed to do. Players should start by naming their Mech. It works well if all the players decide on a common theme for their Mechs. Animals, mythological names, or types of weapons make good starting points. Each name should be followed by a description of the suit's primary function. The more evocative the description, the easier time your players will have invoking and you will have compelling this aspect.

> Example Mech Aspects: ***Rapier Advanced Reconnaissance Unit***, ***Rhino Assault Carrier***, ***Athena-Class Support Platform***

An *Icarus* Mech is fast and mobile but fragile; a *Rhino* Mech is built for frontal assaults and charging, possessing poor maneuverability and threadbare systems.

SKILL LIST

The Pilots of EDEN uses a modified skill list from Fate Core: Athletics, Deceive, Empathy, Fight, Hack, History, Infiltration, Investigate, Operate, Physique, Provoke, Rapport, Repair, Science, Shoot, Stealth, Survival, and Will.

Some skills don't make sense in the setting and are completely cut (Contacts, Notice, Resources), and new skills (Hack, Science, and Survival) have been added to fill in the setting-specific gaps.

Hack

Although humanity abandoned the Earth long ago, there is still plenty of technology around. Some of it is in surprising good shape. Characters have access to the Hack skill presented in ***Silicon City*** in THE FATE CODEX, Volume 1, Issue 1 (page 35).

History (Lore)

You may not be able to find the right person to talk to, but you do have access to a wealth of information. History represents your ability to sift through the near limitless amount of encyclopedias, databases, and wikis available to you and find the right information for your specific situation.

Infiltration (Burglary)

Sometimes the hardest part of finding an ancient secret is figuring out how to open the door. Infiltration represents a character's ability to overcome any obstacle related to bypassing locks, avoiding traps, and generally not getting caught. This could involve scanning over the blueprints of an installation or coming up with a plan to get past those troublesome guards.

Operate (Drive)

Pilots of EDEN never know what situations they are going to find themselves in. There are plenty of situations where they will be tasked to leave their Mech Suits and explore the world. Knowing their way around the controls of a shuttle, tank, or other transport could mean the difference between survival and a horrible, excruciating death.

Repair (Craft)

Mech Suits are meant to be as self-sufficient as possible. They are lightyears away from reliable garages and are cut off from the repair bays in the orbiting starships. Characters with Repair know how to get their Suits up and running. When dealing with a world that is constantly trying to kill you, being able to keep your Suit going is a very handy skill.

Survival

The Pilots of EDEN makes use of the Survival skill found in ***Changing Skills: A Matter of Survival*** in THE FATE CODEX, Volume 1, Issue 2 (page 9). Survival represents all the ways a character can use their knowledge and wits to overcome their environment. Characters with ranks in Survival rely on their quick instincts and perception of a situation.

New Skill: Science

The Science skill demonstrates a character's knowledge of the natural laws of the universe. This can manifest in a number of fields and expertise, such as exobiology, astrophysics, and nuclear engineering. It's assumed that a character with ranks in Science has a broad understanding of all of these fields. As they say, knowledge is power, and power keeps you alive.

Overcome: You can use Science to overcome obstacles that deal with academic understanding, such as finding your way through a gravity storm or overcoming language barriers.

Create an Advantage: This is the primary use for Science. You can use your understanding of different scientific fields to benefit you. You can use your understanding of anatomy to find a Kaiju's weakness (***Exposed Underbelly***), your familiarity with language to communicate with an alien species (***Translation Algorithm***), or your expertise in xeno-biology to understand social hierarchies (***Take Me to Your Leader***).

Attack: You cannot use Science to directly attack.

Defend: In rare circumstances, you may be able to use your knowledge of Science to defend against scientific threats, but more than likely this can be handled by creating an advantage

STUNTS

First Contact Protocols. Use Science instead of Empathy when you attempt to communicate with an alien species.

The Wonders of Anatomy. Gain +2 to create an advantage using Science when attempting to discover an enemy's biological weakness.

PILOT STRESS BOXES AND CONSEQUENCES

Characters in ***The Pilots of EDEN*** aren't as hardy as normal Fate characters. To balance the extra consequences granted to by a Mech Suit, this setting uses Fate Accelerated's single stress track of 3 boxes. Characters receive the standard (Mild 2, Moderate 4, Severe 6) personal consequence boxes.

New Extra: Mech Suits

The characters' Mech Suits act as an extra. Each suit is designed with a specific pilot in mind and should reflect the strengths of a character. Mechs are an extension of the pilot, working to enhance a pilot's existing skills. As such, pilots use their normal skills when piloting their Mechs, e.g., making Athletics rolls when attempting to move their Mech quickly across a zone.

To demonstrate this, Mechs are represented by a series of stunts. Players have five free mecha-stunts to build their suit, using their mech aspect as a guideline for the types of abilities their robot should have. Mecha-stunts—based on the megastunts found in the ATOMIC ROBO RPG on page 76—are a collection of stunts combined together to represent the different systems of your suit. The sample characters (starting on page 163) present several examples of mecha-stunts in action. The weapon and armor ratings can be taken multiple times, but each instance uses up one stunt slot.

Players can pick from the following list to determine their mecha-stunts:

- Add a +2 bonus to a skill (gain +2 to [Action] using [Skill] when [limited situation])
- Add a new action to a skill (Stealth in place of Shoot to make sniping attacks)
- Grant a Weapon:2 rating (+2 shifts on a successful attack)
- Grant an Armor:1 rating (reduce shifts on a hit by 1)

Mech Consequences

A Mech Suit is designed to take a beating so its pilot doesn't have to. To represent this, each Mech Suit has a mild (2) and moderate (4) consequence. Pilots decide whether to assign stress to their personal consequences or to their Mech's. A Great (+4) Repair roll is needed to reduce a moderate Mech consequence to mild or to remove a mild consequence.

Opening Scene: A Fiery Crash

Project EDEN has already made the trip back to Earth. Running on experimental engines, the trip took one-tenth of the time it normally would have.

A shuttle launches the pilots into orbit and down toward Earth. Their Mechs are stowed in a transport container in the shuttle's hold. However, an explosion rocks the shuttle as the crew hurries to the escape pod. Players should feel disoriented, confused, with very little time to think.

SCENE ASPECTS AND OPPOSITION

Scene Aspects: *Crippled Shuttle*, *Severe Turbulence*

Crashing Shuttle

ASPECTS

BARELY HOLDING IT TOGETHER

DAMAGED HEAT SHIELD • INTERMITTENT POWER

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)   Fight

GOOD (+3)   Hack, Phsyique

STUNTS

Feeling Gravity's Pull. +2 bonus to difficulty when trying to invoke an aspect to overcome an obstacle.

Power Surge. +2 to defend when an opponent is trying to use the damaged shuttle's systems.

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As soon as the shuttle is taken out, the shuttle breaks the atmosphere and quickly crashes on the planet. The scene ends with the players strapping into their restraints and bracing for the impact.

Middle Scene: Earthfall

They land horribly off-course, stranded on a dangerous and alien world with their Mechs nowhere in sight. A calm but gruff voice demands the pilots report in. Commander Talmage explains that they aren't quite sure what happened to the shuttle, but a cargo pod containing their Mechs landed several klicks away. Their priority is to cross the stretch of wilderness and secure their suits ASAP.

That may not be as easy as it sounds. A ferocious storm rages on the ground. The players have landed in the middle of a dense jungle; thick giant trees stretch up, wrapping around the skeletons of old buildings. A sinister shriek echoes from the canopy above. Shadows swoop in and out of branches. The players have attracted a lot of attention; here on this new Earth, attention is a dangerous thing.

SCENE ASPECTS AND OPPOSITION

Scene Aspects: *Giant Undergrowth*, *Sinister Shadows*, *Urban Jungle*

Mutant Bat Alpha

ASPECTS

Winged Terror • Echolocation

SKILL MODES

+3   Attacking on the Fly

+1   Dodging Melee Attacks, Hunting in the Dark

-1   Frontal Assaults

STUNT

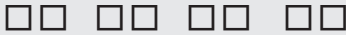**Death from Above.** +2 to attack when able to drop down on a target.

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Mutant Bats (4)

ASPECT

Pack Hunters

SKILL MODES

+1   Attacking from Above, Using the Jungle for Cover

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Final Scene: First Contact

Having escaped the bat-creatures, the characters should head as quickly as possible towards the coordinates Talmage gave them. Their path is lined with tall trees that turn out to be the skeletons of massive skyscrapers now covered with a millennia of planet growth. Sticking together, the team is able to make good time, though every now and then a strange noise explodes in the distance behind them. Play up how alien the Earth has become.

After a few hours of travel, they arrive at another, much larger pod. As they approach, the pod's computer recognizes their comm-signatures and bio-scans, and heavy locks spin as the walls detach, making a ramp up to the center to reveal their suits—massive, imposing, and a welcome sight.

The characters should have just enough time to suit up, power on their systems, and stow their gear when a giant rumble commands their attention. A massive rustling ripples through the urban jungle they just passed through and a menacing screech fills the air. Their suits begin to issue a proximity alert and register the size as Category V. The only thing that large on the planet, besides their suits, is a Kaiju. They have only a moment to collect themselves before two lithe, reptilian shapes begin to circle the crash site.

SCENE ASPECTS AND OPPOSITION

Scene Aspects: *Torrential Thunderstorm*, *Awash with Mud*

Howler (2)

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: CATEGORY V ELECTRICITY-INFUSED APE KAIJU

WEAKNESS: SPINAL CAVITY

ASPECTS: AMBUSHER • RAGE INCARNATE

SKILLS

FANTASTIC (+6)	Physique
SUPERB (+5)	Shoot
GREAT (+4)	Fight
GOOD (+3)	Stealth
FAIR (+2)	Notice
AVERAGE (+1)	Athletics

STUNTS

Electricity Glands. +2 to attack with Shoot when using electricity. Weapon:2.

Chameleon Stealth Cells. +2 to create an advantage with Stealth when using the natural environment to hide.

Armor Plated Skin. Defend against physical attacks using Physique when upright. Armor:1.

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Plot Hooks and Adventure Seeds

These three scenes are only the beginning of your players' adventures as pilots of EDEN. While they've survived their first encounter with Kaiju, there is still a whole, vast, alien world to explore. The players still need to find their mysterious target, and there are still those impending issues to worry about! Here are a few plot hooks and adventure seeds to keep the story going.

INVESTIGATING THE CRASH SITE

The exact circumstances surrounding the shuttle's crash are unknown. It would definitely be in the players' best interest to investigate the crash site to try to learn what happened. The shuttle would have attracted the attention of Earth's inhabitants, and the technology would make a fine prize for a Grist salvage crew. Who exactly is responsible for the shuttle's crash? The remnants of the first team sent back to Earth? Was someone from Project EDEN to blame? What will the pilots do with the information they learn at the crash site?

RETRIEVING ACCESS CODES

In order to retrieve their objective, the pilots must first extract a set of access codes from an old military base. The problem, of course, is that the military installation has become the center for a Grist colony. Project EDEN knows little about the strange insect species, and it will be up to the pilots to determine how best to deal with this problem. Will they attempt to negotiate with these alien creatures? Would a stealth approach be better? Or will they attack the colony head on, relying on their superior firepower to overcome them?

TURNING ON THE LIGHTS

Remarkably, much of the old Earth technology is still functioning, or at least close to functioning. A hydroelectric dam needs to be restarted in order to reach the lowest levels of the facility where the pilots' objective rests. To complicate matters, Ripjaw, a gargantuan Category VII Kaiju, has made its home in the shadow of the dam. How do the pilots plan on starting up the dam and dealing with the massive monster?

Alexander Ford

Alexander Ford began his military career as a mechanic; however, his technological genius soon became apparent and he quickly advanced to Special Projects Division where his imagination and inventiveness were allowed to flourish. That all changed with the First Contact with Aether. One of his devices, a phase-matter bomb, was used to stop the threat. Unfortunately, its use also resulted in the annihilation of most of the human forces. When the tragedy reached the Human Fleet, the civilians responded with a wave of outrage, and during the subsequent investigations, the full weight of the massacre was placed on Ford. This led him to a dishonorable discharge and the bottom of the closest available alcoholic substance. Ford resigned himself to drunken dishonor until he was approached by Commander Talmage with an invitation to help design Project EDEN's Mech Suits. To Ford, this mission is his only shot at redemption.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: INVENTOR AND OUT-THE-BOX ENGINEER

TROUBLE: OH MY GOD, WHAT HAVE I DONE?

MECH ASPECT: ARMADILLO-CLASS DEFENSE AND SUPPORT UNIT

OTHER: I'VE NEVER MET A MACHINE I COULDN'T FIX
I'M GETTING TOO OLD FOR THIS

APPROACHES

GREAT (+4)	Repair
GOOD (+3)	Hack, Operate
FAIR (+2)	Investigate, Notice, Survival
AVERAGE (+1)	Deceive, History, Science, Shoot

MECHA STUNTS

Heavily Shielded. You may use Operate instead of Athletics to defend when using your Mech. Armor:1.

Gravity Generator. +2 to create an advantage using Shoot when using your Gravity Generator. Weapon:2.

Tech-Head. +2 to overcome using Repair when working on a Mech you've patched up before.

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CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

Mech: Mild (2) | Moderate (4)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

"George" Un'cee

The current host for the Cloak consciousness called Un'cee began its life as a simple test subject. A lemur cultivated from the DNA stores among the Human catalog, George was used to test the effects of deep range starship engines. During one such test, George's craft was rocketed far outside of known space and was recovered by a Cloak vessel. Un'cee, a cloak scientist whose lineage stretches several thousand years, found the lemur and bonded with it. Thus George Un'cee was born. The lemur, now housing generations of experiences, returned to the test facility and took an active role in experiments involving interspecies contact, Un'cee's field of expertise. It wasn't long before this strange creature came to the attention of Commander Talamge who recruited the alien for Project EDEN.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: INSIGHTFUL ANTHOLOGIST LEMUR/CLOAK

TROUBLE: CAN'T LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE

MECH ASPECT: OWL-CLASS RESEARCH AND ANTHOLOGY XENO-SPECIES UNIT

OTHER: SURVIVOR OF THE HUMAN/CLOAK WARS SCIENCE ALWAYS BEATS VIOLENCE

APPROACHES

GREAT (+4)	Science
GOOD (+3)	Empathy, Notice
FAIR (+2)	Athletics, History, Investigate
AVERAGE (+1)	Infiltration, Rapport, Repair, Will

MECHA STUNTS

Expert Observer. +2 to overcome when using Science to try to understand a subject you have spent several minutes observing.

Enhanced Sensor Package. +2 to create an advantage using Notice when trying to analyze enemy weaknesses on the battlefield.

Electricity Staff. Weapon:4. Armor:1.

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CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

Mech: Mild (2) | Moderate (4)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Athena Saber

In order to ensure its survival as it traverses the perils of deep space, humanity created an army of enhanced clone soldiers, Saber Units. The result of decades of research and augmentation, the Saber Units have proven themselves capable defenders of humanity. Athena is the latest unit, an experiment in genetic memory. Athena carries with her the combined tactical experiences of over 20 generations of clones. This makes her an extremely effective soldier in almost any situation imaginable. The flipside to these gifts is that Athena has been given far more agency and personality than the average Saber Unit. The result is a hardened killing machine who is discovering what it means to have choice and a conscience. Despite the risks, Commander Talmage called in quite a few favors in order to bring Athena into Project EDEN.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: GENETICALLY-ENGINEERED CLONE SOLDIER

TROUBLE: KILLER WITH A CONSCIENCE

MECH ASPECT: RHINO-CLASS ASSAULT UNIT

OTHER: OVER 200 HUNDRED YEARS OF BATTLEFIELD EXPERIENCE
LEARNING TO QUESTION AUTHORITY

APPROACHES

GREAT (+4)	Fight
GOOD (+3)	Athletics, Notice
FAIR (+2)	Physique, Provoke, Survival
AVERAGE (+1)	Investigate, Rapport, Shoot, Will

MECHA STUNTS

Hardlight Energy Sword. +2 to attack using Fight when outnumbered. Weapon:4.

Suppressing Fire. +2 to create an advantage using Shoot when trying to pin the enemy down.

Neural Holosensors. Use Notice instead of Shoot when targeting enemies at least one zone away.

STRESS

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CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

Mech: Mild (2) | Moderate (4)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

FATE IS A SAFE PLACE:
FATE CORE AS A TOOL FOR INCLUSIVE GAMERS
by SHOSHANA KESSOCK

A group of people sit down for a session of Fate Core. They bring with them their Fate dice, their pens, their stack of blank note cards. They also bring their unique life experiences and perspectives to the table. Together, they'll craft a story in a space wholly their own. The question then becomes: *whose stories get to be told?*

Issues of representation, meaning the inclusion and treatment of people of different genders, sexualities, races, religions, cultures, the differently abled and more, can both explicitly and implicitly influence the way a game will go even before any Fate dice hit the table. The choices the players make at a game table when considering the issue of inclusivity will impact all aspects of play, from world-building and character creation to the adventures they'll have during their sessions. Today, more people are conscious of the fact that it is imperative to make game spaces open and welcoming to all kinds of players. Everything from game artwork in a book to the roles that individuals fulfill in the game are in question to see if the game provides a safe space for players of all identities to feel included and welcome. Thankfully, Fate as a system automatically makes it possible to create safe spaces for all players and creates a low-risk environment for players to have fun, inclusive play. And much as it can sometimes make us nervous as a topic of conversation, inclusivity is vital to making games approachable, welcoming, and fun.

Inclusivity and Why It Makes Us Nervous

The word inclusivity is often used as shorthand for the overall topic of discussion that's exploring how spaces can become more welcoming to diverse groups of people, with their unique experiences and stories. When we talk about inclusivity, or say that a space is inclusive, we are talking about making sure a place is open to people from all walks of life and all identities, without pressure, or prejudice, or aggression. Anyone is welcome and the things that make up an individual's identity, that is to say for example race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, cultural background, economic class, religion, appearance or health status, are not discriminated against, stereotyped, or used to alienate someone. To be inclusive is to let people be who they are in a welcoming environment.

On the surface, this sounds like a no-brainer. Folks get together to game to have a good time, and that's possible because people feel welcomed and accepted by peers. The issue becomes when those game spaces don't offer the opportunity for people of all kinds to tell stories about all kinds of people. When people come to the game table with their preconceived notions and prejudices, sometimes those ideas can get mixed into the game space and end up making someone feel unwelcome. When those potential preconceptions lead to a group in game, say women or queer characters for example, being portrayed in a negative or marginalized way, a player at the gaming table can find that portrayal uncomfortable, offensive, or even harmful. That same player then has the difficult task of deciding whether to allow their discomfort to go on in silence, or speak up and risk a confrontation with their fellow players. That kind of tension does not make for a fun, relaxed gaming environment and creates what can be called an unsafe space.

What makes a space unsafe? Let's run through some examples that can create unwelcoming, exclusive spaces:

- A group is made up of both men and women, yet in game all the women are assumed to play support characters, side-kicks, or love interests for male characters.
- A group represents people of color in their game based on media-perpetuated negative stereotypes rather than as people.
- A group develops a game setting that automatically treats LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender) characters as lesser than straight, cis-gendered characters.

Each of these is a way that discrimination gets used in a game setting and can make players feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. One perpetuates stereotypes that directly impact what a player can do in a game based on who they are or who their characters are, while the second is using stereotypes

that can be harmful in a game, and the third takes real world issues of discrimination and makes them part of the game world with which the players will have to interact. Unless you intend on including those topics in your game for the sake of addressing these issues, these behaviors can make a space feel unwelcoming, uncomfortable, and unsafe.

Today, more people are conscious of inclusivity in games than ever before. Conversations about this topic are being discussed at conventions, on blogs, and across social media, as well as at individual gaming tables. Along with the important question of *how do we make spaces more inclusive?* is another question: *why should we have to worry about this?* After all, games are spaces where people come together to create fictional worlds, enjoy adventures, and have a good time. Bringing up issues of politics, gender equality, or sexuality and religion can force players to tackle difficult subject matter directly and asks everyone involved to take a good look their own notions and beliefs. Some argue that their tables are already diverse enough for their own players, and they've never had to talk about inclusivity as a Big Serious Topic, so why start now?

The answer lies in the assumptions people bring to the table about inclusivity conversations.

First, let's dispel an idea right off the bat: *talking about inclusivity doesn't have to turn into a great political debate at your gaming table*. Making sure that a space feels welcoming to everyone can be as simple as stating that you won't have discrimination towards any kind of person, in or out of character. It can go one step further, by stating clearly what you mean ('there will be no misogynistic treatment of women characters in this game') and negotiating people's comfort levels about certain topics. But as long as the baseline of being welcoming to all identities and people is established, it doesn't need to turn into a real world debate. Remember, this is about making people feel comfortable at the table and the intent of conversations about inclusivity is to create a dialogue.

There is also a concern that these kinds of conversations can put players on the spot about their own beliefs out of character and lead to some uncomfortable finger-pointing. It takes trust in your fellow players to be able to be creative, and people who feel judged about who they are aren't going to feel welcome to co-create. Therefore it takes an atmosphere of honest communication to reach an understanding. It's important to keep in mind that most players, unless they've proven otherwise by their actions and behavior, don't set out to make their fellow players feel unwelcome. After all, everyone has come together to share in a game, and that's meant for fun and enjoyment. But when players come to the table, addressing differences in beliefs and how they affect play can sometimes be uncomfortable. Having

a space to address those conflicts will make for an overall better game and perpetuate more diverse stories being told.

Thankfully, in designing both Fate settings and individual Fate game sessions, the players are provided with tools to create from the ground up with their own needs in mind. Fate provides a blank slate, an open framework that does not prescribe any sort of norms of its own. It is a system that allows the players to decide the baseline for their stories and then empowers them to create adventures. In a Fate game, everyone at the table has a voice and everyone has a place, and that is the basis of the creation of a safe space.

Creating Worlds and Deciding 'The Rules'

Perhaps the best part about Fate as a tool for creating safe environments is the character and world creation rules that approach games as blank slates. When the players sit down to create the world, they might come to the table with a previously created setting in mind, or else they generate fresh game ideas collaboratively. No matter the source, the players always have the ability to pick and choose the rules of their universe. They might use the shorthand of worlds they know (example: "*I want this to be like Star Wars meets Leverage*") but since they are handed the final say regarding what goes in their universe, they can transform that space in any way they please. "*I want to play in a Buffy universe*" could be the starting point, but a player might suggest they want to see male vampire slayers so they can change up some of the gender dynamics in the game.

With everything in a Fate game negotiable, players can also explore the ideas of what is *normative* (or considered accepted as part of the world view of dominant society) and what is *transgressive* (what is considered outside the norm). Games with settings provided with their system already come with the design choices made about whether their games are going to include more normative or transgressive material. One example of that would be a game in which multiple fantasy races were included for play. Prejudices and stereotypes from our modern world can filter down into the design of and the treatment of these made-up racial groups. Later, the players must then interact with those preconceived ideas and have to build their characters and stories into those narrowed decision spaces. If games are less held back by encoded limitations in design, then the stories told have the ability to challenge what beliefs people brought to the table when they sat down. In a game like Fate, the wide open creation space strips away the encoded limitations and provides the opportunity for players to start fresh, without expectations or preconceived prejudices.

That invitation to make each play session unique and custom to the players is a design idea that speaks to the very heart of inclusivity. In the end, *the game is inherently about player decisions*. Even those Fate settings

already written can be seen as adjustable guidelines for the players' own campaigns, with plenty of room for reinterpretations based on the wants around the table. Fate games therefore create places where players can build great stories together around their particular needs and wants, especially in terms of inclusivity.

To understand what the players around the table need to create an inclusive safe space requires a little communication. A great tool to approach having those conversations about what is and is not okay around the table is actually built right into the Fate system. Leonard Balsera covers some more great tips in his article from Issue 1 of THE FATE CODEX, entitled **Game Creation Tips: Managing The Conversation**. But there are two helpful questions mentioned in that article that are very important in terms of starting conversations about inclusivity during game set up. They are:

- What do you want to see in the game?
- What would you rather not see in the game?

These questions can open up a dialogue between players and set the foundation for understanding just what each player might consider important in terms of representation. These conversations don't need to be long, but a player's baseline ideas can be understood by their answers. Going one step further, the GM can use those answers to draw the boundaries of what is okay and not okay at the game, and then ask further questions during world-building to brainstorm new ideas for being inclusive.

A GM can use this communication tool to also help expand elements of the game world to further diverse representation in terms of setting elements, factions within the game, or the way specific groups are treated in the fictional world. For example:

- While players are creating the setting, a GM can take a look at the way different races are represented in the game. The GM can make suggestions about being more diverse in their racial representation if it's lacking. They can also examine how racial groups may be stereotyped and provide suggestions about how those stereotypes can be handled differently.

- Players will create organizations and groups within their new game world. The GM can ask questions to find out more about the ideas, ethics, and politics these groups represent. If those ideas are very normative, a GM can suggest alternatives to change things up for these groups and make them more diverse.

- The same can be said when creating major NPCs in the game. When players begin creating leadership NPCs in the game, especially those in positions of power, the GM can suggest ways to make those leaders more diverse in terms of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity.

GMs should feel free to challenge stereotypical representations of characters or characters thrown in to represent groups without being fleshed out. Suggest ways in which characters that have become stereotypes can be fleshed out to become fully realized characters outside of their representation of a specific group.

Players may bring preconceptions about physical capabilities, standards of beauty, health, and illness to the game. A GM may present alternative ideas about how to treat characters with health conditions, redefine body image norms, or defy stereotypes of physical or mental illness.

Since one of the GM's jobs during creation is helping players expand on world-building, these conversations aren't outside of the normal scope of game setup. They do, however, allow GMs to challenge stereotypes and out-of-game societal norms to suggest ways characters and the world can be fleshed out in ways that expand the fictional space to allow for diversity.

By facilitating discussion, the GM can help create an inclusive space where everyone feels equally invested in what's going on at the table through collaborative creation.

Character Creation as an Exercise in Inclusivity

Once the fictional world has been created around the table, the players will once again explore these issues of inclusivity in character creation. The Fate character creation system, being so customizable, automatically creates space for players to build characters however they like. This creates the opportunity for players to make characters that push norms and let them play outside their comfort zones. It also provides a place to write rich, complex characters within a collaborative character creation space that lets players discuss potential issues of stereotyping and uncomfortable representation.

Stereotypes and familiar archetypes are used when creating characters because they provide instantly understood points of reference for everyone around the table. When those traits create a negative portrayal of a particular minority group through a player's portrayal, it can impact not only the in game events but the comfort of the other players out of character. During character creation, there's a few questions players can consider and even talk about with one another to help flesh out characters beyond common stereotypical tropes.

- A character's aspects can reflect beliefs and ideas about that character's identity. What do the character's aspects say about their relationship with their racial group, their ethnicity, sexuality, culture, and so on? What is their relationship with the way their society thinks about their identity? Also consider whether those aspects reflect stereotypes about the character's identity. While stereotypes are easy to fall back on, they can leave your character flat and give you fewer opportunities for interesting compels of those aspects. If a character is, for example, a **Loving Soccer Mom**, that's fun. But **Mad Scientist Soccer Mom** makes a more interesting high concept and gives the player and GM more nuance to work with.

- When creating your aspects, is the language you're using in terms of gender, sexuality, etc. particularly harsh, negative, or derogatory? Avoid using language in a character's aspects that puts another group in a lesser or negative light. Consider how those aspects, once compelled aloud, might make another player feel if they share an identity group with that character. For example, an aspect of **Always There to Protect the Ladies** indicates that, in that characters eyes, ladies are always in need of protection. Using more neutral language will help diffuse discomfort regarding how that aspect makes other players feel, unless that negative portrayal is purposeful and written in as an issue the character, and the players, want to tackle head on.

- When looking at the character's stunts, what do they say about the character's identity? Is the character only good at abilities that their identity group is stereotypically known for? Discuss with the GM what stunts the character might be "expected" to have if they were being stereotyped, and then find ways to defy those expectations.

- If the character being created has discriminatory behavior built into them, are the players prepared to deal with that subject matter at the table? Players might feel uncomfortable with bigotry, racism, homophobia, transphobia, religious intolerance, sexism, body shaming, or ableism being portrayed in a fellow player's character and could find it disruptive to play if it were to come up without warning. Discuss with fellow players what their limits are and offer up the option of players calling a halt if they feel the character has gone over the line. Remember: the alibi of "this is what my character would do" does not negate bad feelings or offense

created at the table. Better to discuss in advance to alleviate potential problems with portrayals while in play.

Using the collaborative style of creation built into Fate, matched with a little extra communication about inclusive play, will provide players the control over their game material and help make a gaming group into a safer space for all.

Trust Is at the Heart of Creation

Fate games are engines for creating amazing worlds, and creating them collaboratively around the table. That kind of freedom to create requires a level of trust that others will accept your ideas and comfort that a player's beliefs and identity will be respected and accepted around the table. That commitment, mirrored in the character and world creation phases of the game, will build the foundation of a trusting play group that can have great adventures together. With that in mind, here's some simple tips to keep in mind to make sure that the steps towards inclusivity taken during creation continue during gameplay.

- **Fate Is About Empowering Players While Having Fun**: If the world created during game set up is not enjoyable to the players due to an issue of representation, then adjust it during play. Make sure the players at a session have all bought into whatever gets created at the table and provide the chance for players to feel comfortable voicing play.

- **Take Nothing for Granted:** The paper is blank until the players make choices to create their world. Nothing is taken for granted, and nothing 'just is that way.' That goes also for during play, as actions unfold.

- **Encourage Self-Expression and Freedom in Creation:** Each person brings their own identity and experiences to the table. Encourage players to feel comfortable bringing their own unique take on characters into the game. Create the space for the players to feel comfortable not restricting themselves based on real-world power dynamics or societal norms.

- **Reward Supportive Play:** Consider rewarding collaboration by players to create inclusion in plot lines, world-building, and character ties during play. Rewarding those that promote positive atmospheres will do more to encourage safe space than being negative towards those that do not. Fate points are a great way to indicate positive choices made by

players and can be used to encourage players stepping into uncomfortable territory away from their course of action.

- **Encourage Open Dialogue Before, After, and During Game:** Since this is a collaborative storytelling experience, keeping up communication before, during, and after play is key to making sure everyone is feeling comfortable, safe, and included. Encourage players to speak up if they have an issue without requiring explanations or justifications.

By encouraging positive representation and inclusive ideas during play, you will create a safe environment at the table for all involved. Understanding the needs and wants of the players creates ongoing trust that allows players to not only relax and have fun, but also gives them the space to explore difficult topics—if that's what they want.

Regardless of the content however, these exercises in inclusivity through communication allow for game spaces to be more welcoming by establishing that everyone can tell their stories and express their identities equally. The safer and more respected the players at the table feel, the more comfortable they will feel creating amazing stories together. ✚

COOKING UP A FATE ONE-SHOT
by **MARISSA KELLY**

Many of us find ourselves with little free time to dedicate to gaming, and one-shots are the only thing keeping our story-world spinning. Whether at a convention, playing with friends from out of town, or introducing someone new to roleplaying games, we've all tried to fit an entire game into one session. In this article, I share my recipe for making Fate fit into one session that efficiently lets you tell an amazing story.

Be Prepared!

You're only gonna do this once, so you're gonna want to do it right!

What every Fate game needs to run:

- Three to five people; one will be the Game Master (GM) and the others will be players.
- Index cards or sticky notes.
- Tokens to use as fate points.

Special ingredients you need for a kick-ass Fate one-shot:

- The Deck of Fate, an alternative to using fate dice. This deck of cards mimics the probability of fate dice.
- The X-card, by John Stavropoulos. Available at http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg.

Optional:

- One character sheet per player. Downloadable at www.evil-hat.com. You don't need to worry about printing out character sheets for a one-shot—you can just go through each step of character creation together and make sure each player has an index card to write down their character info on.
- List of skills. I recommend using approaches, but if you want to use skills, have a prewritten list of skills that you can place in the middle of the table for players to look at when making their characters.
- Fate Core System, Fate Accelerated Edition, or Fate System Toolkit. If you're familiar with Fate, you don't need the rulebooks. In case you want a refresher, there are page references throughout this article.

Setting Creation

Brainstorming can be an adventure all its own, so stay on track.

As the GM, you can help keep the game focused by coming prepared with one or two setting ideas that you would like to run. Presenting options for your group to choose from makes the decision process move along faster. You don't need to prep a lot, just have a short pitch to give to the group. "Terminator underwater" or "high fantasy in space" are elaborate enough pitches. Familiar pop culture references express the tone of the game quickly and concisely.

After the group chooses a pitch, ask the players questions to create a **current issue** and an **impending issue** for the world. It may seem like you're delaying the adventure by coming up with current and impending issues, but it's important to set expectations. If everyone has a sense of the story's direction before play starts, they can help each other get there. Using your limited time to set up issues creates a high level of buy-in for you and your players. When everyone has a chance to contribute something, the story is more compelling for the players because everyone helped add depth and history to the setting.

Player-generated issues also take the weight of coming up with plot off the GM's shoulders. During setting creation, the players tell you what issues they want to engage in. Listen to them and be prepared to run with it once the game starts.

Asking the players to tell you what issues they are interested in means that you don't have to guess what kind of themes and challenges they want

to encounter, but it also means their answers may surprise you. When they come up with something that you weren't expecting, set a scene that explores what you find interesting about it. You only have a few hours to play, so it's important that you're excited about running each and every scenario.

THE QUESTIONS

To make sure everyone gets a chance to contribute to the setting, go around the table and ask one player at a time to answer a question about the setting. By asking the question to only one player at a time, decisions can be made quickly. Also, this ensures that all of the players have a chance to contribute to the setting and be heard. Remember, the more invested they are, the better time everyone will have.

What Is the Current Issue?

SEE ALSO

Fate Core System, page 22.

Limit your table to one current issue for your game. Although two current issues would increase how vibrant the world is, in one session there isn't enough time for the characters to interact with more than one.

Start by passing the spotlight to one of the players at your table and ask them directly, **"What longstanding problem do the people in the setting face?"**

What Is the Impending Issue?

SEE ALSO

Fate Core System, page 22.

Once you have your current issue, pass the spotlight to the next player at the table and ask them, **"What facet of the current issue threatens to ruin the setting if nothing is done soon?"**

If necessary, rephrase the impending issue so it's an immediate enough threat that the players can engage it when roleplay starts. You will constantly refer back to this part of the fiction and use it to construct what's at stake for the final conflict.

Who Are the Faces?

SEE ALSO

Fate Core System, page 26.

Continue to pass the spotlight around the table and define one face for the impending issue and two faces for the current issue. If you limit the number of faces to three, you can ensure that all of the NPCs can enter play if needed. Name each face and give them a (public or private) goal. Faces are tied to either the impending or current issue, but they should also have a clear motivation and/or drive to continue being part of the story. Each NPC is a useful tool for signaling to your players that something interesting and important is happening.

Make the face associated with the impending issue an important figure, like someone with power or influence over a faction or corporation. Guide your players by asking, **"What powerful person has a stake in how the impending issue is resolved?"** Use the presence of the face of the impending issue in a scene to signal to the players that they've impacted the world in some way. Make it explicit through the NPC's dialogue, even if it's just a message over a PA system during the epilogue of your session.

Make sure the two faces associated with the current issue are opposing forces. Ask your players, **"Who benefits from the current issue?"** and **"Who is trying to change the current issue?"** If you have a mega-corp that's taking over the world, two opposing faces might be a corporate bigwig and someone working to take down the mega-corp. Showing an active conflict guides the players' actions and makes them feel like they can jump right in to the action by taking sides. Instant drama!

If a player is having trouble creating a face, ask guiding questions like **"How do this face's goals oppose the other faces?"** or **"How does the face's goal drive the face to remain engaged in the world?"** Asking questions helps the player flesh out what they really want out of the story, rather than imposing your own solutions.

What Are the Places?

(Reference: Fate Core System, page 26.) Now it's your turn, as the GM, to put a name to some places that have come up during setting creation. Name two places that you want the players to be drawn to. Your adventure will take place in these two locations, so make them interesting and different from each other.

Naming the two locations gives your players a heads-up about where their adventure will take them. If your places are a warehouse and a fancy penthouse, starting the adventure in the penthouse means that every player knows that the warehouse is where it will all go down later. You can create faces for these locations if you need more ways to draw the players in.

Character Creation

Grab your pencils, the heroes have arrived.

Fate is an open-ended system that allows you to create any setting you want, but that open-endedness can also lead to time lost at the table during character creation. Asking your players a specific question for each aspect reduces the chances of choice-paralysis.

ASPECTS

Ask the following questions (one at a time) to the whole table. Give them time to think about and write down their answers.

High Concept: Easily illustrated as a motto, quirk, or personality trait.

Question: When danger strikes, why do people call on you?

Trouble: Easily illustrated by a weakness, enemy, or obligation the character has.

Question: Why do you have difficulty getting close to people?

Go around the table and have everyone introduce their characters!

Next, have the PCs each think of one more aspect: their relationship aspect. To define the relationship aspect, have the players answer the question below about a relationship they have with the PC to their left. This aspect establishes existing history between characters as well as fleshing out a third aspect they can use during play.

Relationship: Easily illustrated as an obligation, motto, or weakness.

Question: What did your character do for them or say to them in a time of need?

APPROACHES

Use approaches instead of skills to keep the ball rolling for a one-shot game. Approaches help players describe their characters quickly as well as signal to the entire party when they may be "breaking character type" to take a radical or heroic action.

STUNTS

Stunts let a character "break the rules" in a way that fits their character concept. Rather than spending time with each player to come up with cool situational powers that they *might* use during the game, wait for opportunities during play. When a player describes something badass that they want to do—and their character concept suggests that they should have little to no trouble accomplishing it—write a stunt for them on the spot.

When you create a stunt on the fly, ask yourself if this is something the PC should be doing a lot or if it's too powerful to be used more than once. If it's recurring, write a stunt that allows for a situational +2 to an approach or a skill. If it's a "Hail Mary" kind of stunt, make it something they can use once this session or at the cost of a fate point.

STRESS

Stress can sometimes seem like recordkeeping that takes you out of the fiction. To keep your one-shot spicy, use **conditions** rather than a stress track and consequences. This keeps the damage descriptive and creates a feeling of immediacy when your players take damage or stress. When a PC takes a hit, they can mark off one or more conditions. A **fleeting** condition absorbs up to 1 stress. A **sticky** condition absorbs up to 2 stress. A **lasting** condition absorbs up to 4 stress. Mark all the boxes for a condition when it's taken. The character now has that condition's aspect, and opponents have a free invoke they can use to take advantage of your condition's aspect. The aspect lasts until you clear the condition.

FROM FATE SYSTEM TOOLKIT, PAGE 18

"There are three kinds of conditions: fleeting, sticky, and lasting. A fleeting condition goes away when you get a chance to catch your breath and calm down. A sticky condition stays checked off until a specific event happens. If you're Hungry, you're Hungry until you get a good meal. Wounded and Broken are both lasting conditions. These stick around for at least one whole session, and require someone to overcome an obstacle with a passive opposition of at least Great (+4) before you can start to recover from them. Lasting conditions have two check boxes next to them, and you check them both off when you take the condition. When recovery begins, erase one check box. Erase the second one (and recover from it fully) after one more full session. You can take a lasting condition only if both of its check boxes are empty."

CONDITIONS		
FLEETING	**STICKY**	**LASTING**
1☐ Angry	2☐ Exhausted	4☐ 4☐ Broken
1☐ Frightened	2☐ Hungry	4☐ 4☐ Wounded

To keep things simple, ask every player to choose between two boxes of Broken or two boxes of Wounded. Asking your players to choose which conditions they want (mental or physical) allows players to further define their characters.

FATE POINTS

Great news about one-shots is that you don't worry about refresh! Everyone just starts with 3 fate points. Done and done.

Playing the Game

Time to jump into the thick of things. It's not over till it's over!

Time is always a pressure, and deciding where and how to spend it is key. This section contains in-game tools that aid in creating a satisfying one-shot game in Fate.

THE DECK OF FATE

Use the Deck of Fate to help you save even more time by eliminating excessive dice-shaking and math. When using the Deck of Fate, shuffle after every +4 or -4 is drawn. This ensures that no one is safe from those results going forward. Fate dice or other generators can be used in a pinch, but the deck is the fastest way to get results.

STRAPPED FOR RESOURCES?

The Deck of Fate can also double as fate points—just don't forget to shuffle them in with everything else when you hit a +4 or -4.

X-CARD

Available at http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg

"It's a card with an X on it that participants in a Simulation or Role-Playing Game can use to edit out anything that makes them uncomfortable with no explanations needed. It was originally developed to make gaming with strangers fun, inclusive, and safe."

The X-card allows everyone to be on the same page throughout the game. If someone isn't having fun, then you should be able to *quickly* correct it and move on with the story.

SEE ALSO

Fate Core System, page 146.

CHALLENGES, CONTESTS, AND CONFLICTS

Because you have one shot to squeeze an epic plot out of this game, only focus on two encounters. The first is a quest or mission that can be easily resolved and sets the stage for the second encounter. Make the second a world-changing event or showdown that demands action from the PCs.

Introduce threats to your group using challenges, contests, and conflicts, depending on how much time you want it to take. Challenges generally don't take a lot of time and are best used when setting up a bigger conflict.

Contests can happen at any point in the story and usually focus on conflict between PCs. Conflicts take a lot of time and energy, so only introduce one and save it for last.

Base the first encounter you present to the players around a challenge that uses the current issue and one of its faces. Make the first encounter a challenge—not a contest or a conflict—and set it at one of the defined places. There's no need to plot out how it should resolve (negatively or positively) because the major conflict hasn't played out yet. Whether your heroes go into the final act feeling prepared or just having taken a loss, they can still have a satisfying end scene.

Make transition scenes short and use NPC interactions, like threats or praise, as well as describing changes in the environment that PCs may have caused, like heightened security or a sympathetic underground movement that's ready to assist the PCs in their cause.

The second encounter is the final conflict. Use the remaining place you created at the beginning of the game and incorporate the impending issue and its face into a conflict for the PCs to overcome. Revisit what the impending issue is and what goal its face has, then make the conflict explicit by spelling out what the players are being asked (by an NPC faction) to do and how their involvement can impact the impending issue.

Because the impending issue was created as a looming threat to the setting, the PCs will feel like they have a chance to impact the world by eliminating, failing, or perpetuating the problem at stake. Be prepared to follow through on that promise, even if you run out of time—use the epilogue to show them that their actions had an impact.

EPILOGUE

If you sense yourself running out of time to finish your final encounter, look for a stopping point. A good stopping point is any time a PC has just accomplished or failed an action. If your party is split or executing multiple plans at once, look to wrap up an action with each of them individually. Once it's clear that all PCs' actions have resulted in a failure or success, it's time for the GM to begin epilogues.

With the goal of tying up some loose ends in the scene, describe what impact the PCs' actions had on their immediate surroundings. What do the "bad guys" do? Do they escape, see the error of their ways, get disposed of by restless citizens, or get betrayed by someone close to them? Also describe what kind of physical impact the PCs may have had on the landscape. Does the sun begin to rise, symbolizing a new beginning? Do the PCs have to wait for the dust to settle over the rubble to see if their friend made it out? Tell the PCs what they lost and what was saved because of their actions. Whatever you choose to describe, refrain from telling the PCs what their

characters do or do not do; they'll have a chance to explain what they got out of the encounter once you're done.

Even after the GM finishes up the final scene, the end of your encounter can feel like a cliffhanger, so go around the table and give each of the players the spotlight to share a short summary of what their character does in the world following the conflict. This can describe immediate actions, like chasing down an NPC in the pursuit of justice, or future actions, such as retiring from a life of violence and wandering the world till the end of days. If the scene they describe involves another PC, have them ask for that player's permission. The one-shot ends with a satisfying montage of character stories for your group as the PCs tie up loose ends that they found important.

ROSES AND THORNS

"Roses and thorns" is an out-of-character way to get feedback and make sure every person has a chance to voice concerns and praise. This generally happens naturally after a game, but the structure makes sure nothing and no one voice gets left out.

Go around the table and ask each person (including yourself) to share one thing they liked/thought worked well during the session (the rose) and one thing they didn't like (the thorn).

Fin!

GMs, designers, and players all have different schedules, but no matter how much time we have to dedicate to it, collaborative storytelling should be a fun and fulfilling experience. I hope this recipe helps you cook up even more Fate games with the limited time you have! ✚
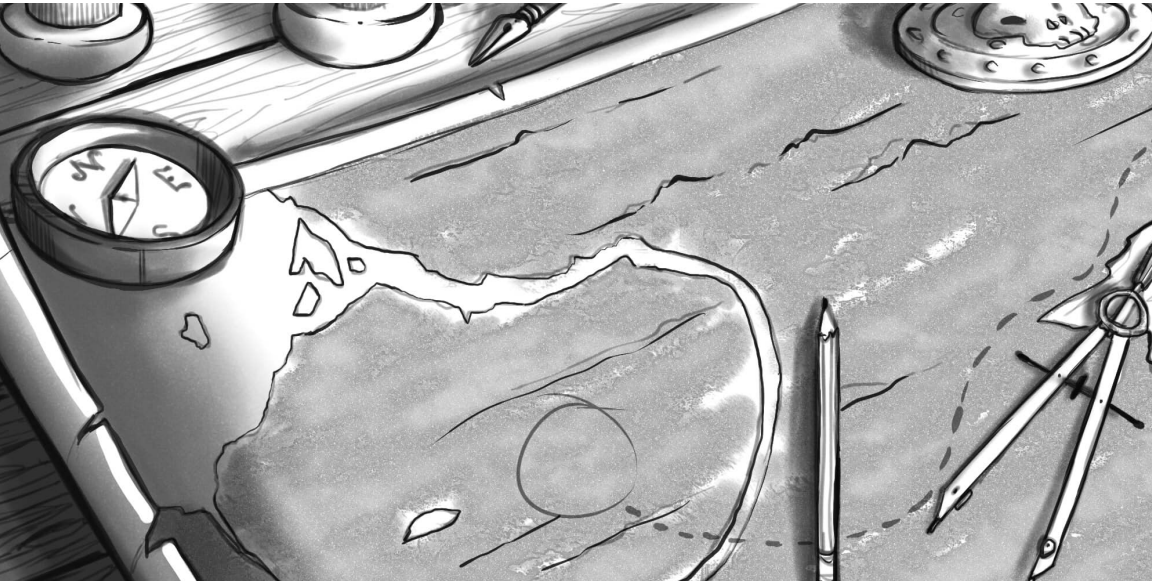
VOYAGES: A SKILL SET FOR GETTING THERE
by TARA ZUBER

*"It is good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey
that matters in the end."*

~ Ursula K. LeGuin

Everyone has their travel story. Strangers meet and separate along the road. Itineraries fall to pieces. Destinations change. Odysseus and Dorothy Gale just wanted to get home and Frodo just wanted to throw the One Ring away, but the path from A to B is rarely a straight line. Others surge across the land, over the seas, and through the air without a set destination. Tintin hunted for adventure, the Bride for revenge, Amalthea for unicorns, and Don Quixote for his impossible dream. Some, like Carmen Sandiego, cross continents and time for grand heists, while others, like Phileas Fogg, race around the world just to settle a bet.

This adaptation of the default Fate Core skill list focuses on how players get from place to place and all the stories they collect along the way.

THE SKILL LIST

New skills are bolded and italicized.

Athletics	Investigate	Rapport
Construction	*Mechanics*	Resources
Culture	*Medicine*	Shoot
Deceive	*Navigate*	Stealth
Empathy	Notice	*Wilderness*
Fight	*Pilot*	Will

WHAT'S CHANGED?

Those familiar with Fate Core may have noticed that Burglary, Contacts, Crafts, Drive, Lore, Physique, and Provoke are missing. Characters can still do these things—they'll just call on different skills to do so.

Crafts has been divided between Construction and Mechanics to allow for the varying expertise people with differing amounts and kinds of travel experience would have. Construction builds, while Mechanics make things go. Construction can build a boat or the body of a vehicle, but doesn't include the knowledge to make it work. Likewise, Mechanics can build an engine, but not the vehicle to house it. Characters may have skill in both, but with differing specialties based on their background and interests.

Drive has been expanded into Pilot, which addresses all manner of vehicles that move over land, on water, or through air.

Culture and Fight handle **Provoke** rolls. With Culture you draw on your cultural knowledge to push the right buttons to influence locals. With Fight you can incite violence.

Physique has been merged into Athletics. Use aspects, stunts, and role-playing to suggest specific characteristics, such as strength, speed, or grace.

Contacts are now part of Resources. Consider adding an aspect to claim additional people resources in areas familiar to the character. You might also consider a contacts-related stunt using Resources.

Burglary rolls can be done with Stealth or Deceive. For overcoming a locked door, consider using Mechanics to pick the lock or Construction to remove the hinges.

Finally, this skill list assumes that ranks in a skill imply knowledge. Therefore, **Lore** rolls should be handled by the most closely related skill. For analyzing a bullet, try Shoot. For questions of physics, try Mechanics. Discuss with your GM which skill is most applicable.

Stress

In Fate Core, skill in Physique can provide additional stress boxes. While you can opt to keep stress tied to a physical skill and use Athletics to determine the stress boxes, the added skills provide other options.

If you prefer to focus on physical stress as injuries, you may use Medicine to add stress boxes as the characters can automatically and immediately address their wounds.

Another possibility is combining the mental and physical stress tracks into one. In this case, rather than representing injuries, stress is the general disorientation and frustration associated with travel. In this case, you would use Culture to add additional stress boxes, since Culture is your ability to adapt to a new situation.

See page 118 of Fate Core System for how these added boxes work.

WHAT'S NEW?

Skills are used to overcome, create an advantage, attack, or defend. Only the relevant actions for each skill are listed below.

Construction

Construction is the skill of building objects with any material. Characters skilled in Construction are the builders, architects, and designers.

Overcome: Construction is a more limited version of the default Crafts skill and allows you to build, break, or fix objects, provided you have tools and time.

Create an Advantage: With Construction you can point out aspects of an object, both positive and negative. You can also use Construction to make or sabotage objects on the fly or to strengthen defenses.

CONSTRUCTION STUNTS

Bearing Gifts. Create a present for someone you're trying to influence. Use an aspect to describe how the person feels toward you afterward (e.g., *Thankful*).

Prison Break. Whenever you're being detained, spend a fate point and escape.

Culture

Culture is the adaptability that makes travel easy and interesting for you. With Culture, you not only know the right clothes and local secrets, you also know how to blend in and how best to insult, shock, scare, or compliment the locals. Culture isn't how you affect others, but rather how you fit into what people expect or how you demonstrate respect by a show of fitting in.

Overcome: Use Culture to adjust to a new place and society and to overcome culture shock and other hazards of travel. With Culture, you can blend in as a social chameleon, estimate the layout of a place, and provoke or influence locals.

Create an Advantage: Use Culture to give yourself temporary aspects that influence how others see and react to you (e.g., *Convincingly Authoritative*, *Using the Right Gestures*). You may also use your cultural knowledge to build a better Rapport with or to Deceive people.

CULTURE STUNTS

Polyglot. You've picked up bits and pieces of languages from all over. Add +2 to Culture rolls involving language.

You Honor Us. Gain +2 to a Culture roll after respecting a local custom. After using this skill, you must again demonstrate your respect to reuse it.

Mechanics

Mechanics is the knowledge of machines and making things go. Mechanics can build and repair engines, design traps or locks, and understand the interaction of different physical forces. It's the skill of engineers and physicists.

⚙ **Overcome:** Mechanics allows you to build, break, or fix machines and engines, provided you have tools and time. You can also pick locks.

⚙ **Create an Advantage:** Mechanics allows you to notice the strengths and weaknesses of a system. You can point out these aspects to your advantage. You can also fix or sabotage a machine under pressure.

MECHANICS STUNTS

Above and Beyond. Once per session, add an extra aspect with one free invoke to a machine you're repairing.

Trap Master. Your traps require three Good rolls against passive opposition. You can spend up to three fate points increasing each requirement from Good to Great.

Medicine

Medicine lets you dress wounds and diagnose problems.

⚙ **Overcome:** Medicine is used to overcome physical stress and consequences in yourself and others.

⚙ **Create an Advantage:** Medicine can also be used to set physical weaknesses on your opponents, creating aspects to exploit in a fight.

⚙ **Defend:** Medicine can defend against poisons.

MEDICINE STUNTS

Cornered. In close quarters, use Medicine—and supplies from your medical kit—instead of Fight to injure an opponent who attacked you on their previous turn.

Trust Me, I'm a Doctor. If the people you're interacting with are aware of your medical skills, add +2 to Rapport.

Navigate

Navigate handles map-reading, backtracking, following directions, finding North, and being able to translate distances into the time, fuel, and supplies needed to traverse them.

☏ **Overcome:** Use Navigate if your character is lost. They can retrace their steps, determine North, or navigate by stars or landmarks.

✥ **Create an Advantage:** With Navigate, you map your course and can learn about or set aspects along the way. You can also take time to map out a new settlement.

NAVIGATE STUNTS

Always Prepared. You studied the route and anticipated necessary supplies. Once per journey between two settlements, set an aspect with a free invoke that demonstrates this preparation.

Back and Safe. Once per session, spend a fate point to safely and without interruptions return to wherever you're staying or have recently slept.

Pilot

The Pilot skill gets you from point A to B in every way except walking. It is flying airplanes, spaceships, and zeppelins, driving cars and trains, sailing and rowing boats, and riding bicycles and horses. If it moves, you can operate it.

☏ **Overcome:** Pilot is used to maneuver through or over a space. The skill allows characters to get through poor conditions (e.g., storms, tight spaces, rough seas) and to show off. It can also be used for contests.

⟳ **Attack:** Pilot is not typically used for attacking. You can, however, use your vehicle as a weapon by crashing or ramming into another object to cause stress. You incur as much stress as you cause and must complete a second roll to determine whether your vehicle remains viable. Your second roll must be equal to or greater than the stress you caused to remain usable.

☽ **Defend:** You can defend against attacks from similar vehicles to whatever one you are piloting by dodging, weaving, and making other clever movements.

PILOT STUNTS

Experience Counts. Roll Pilot instead of Mechanics or Construction to fix a vehicle your character is familiar with.

This Is My Domain. Choose Air, Water, or Land and add +2 to all Pilot rolls that involve a vehicle operating in that space.

Wilderness

The Wilderness skill is the basic know-how for getting by. You can forage for food, distinguish between safe and poisonous foods, follow tracks, start a fire, and create basic tools like fishing lures and nets. Wilderness intersects with several other skills, but is entirely concerned with how you survive the great outdoors. While Wilderness doesn't include "street smarts," it is also useful within cities as many of its uses—such as finding or creating shelter, starting fires, and locating food—would also help for surviving city streets.

Overcome: Wilderness helps you overcome challenges posed by the environment. You can find food and water and notice dangers posed by poisonous plants or certain sounds.

Create an Advantage: You create advantages by declaring helpful aspects on the environment, such as an *Animal Path* leading to fresh water, and by adapting the world around you, such as by creating a *Shelter*. You can also develop tools, such as creating a *Net* for easier fishing.

WILDERNESS STUNTS

Water Baby. You know everything there is to know about living in and around the water. +2 to Wilderness when you're in the same zone as a body of water.

Animal Family. Growing up, you spent a lot of time around animals. Choose a species to declare your animal family. When you encounter a member of that species, you can communicate and request favors using Wilderness. ✚
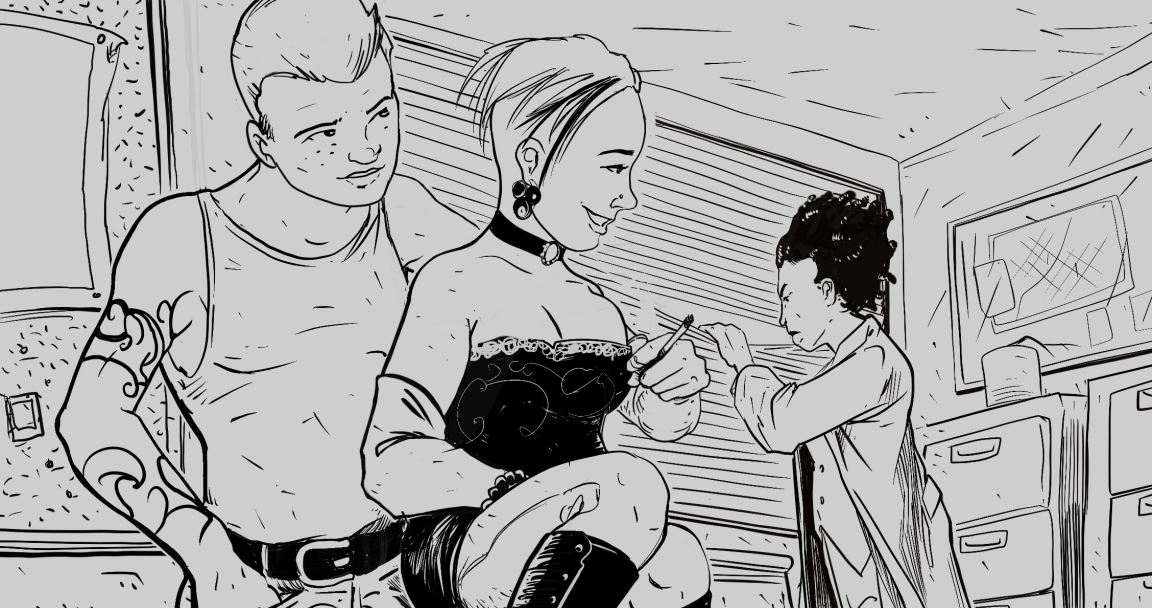
TWILIGHT DAMES
by KIRA MAGRANN

A Quick Start about queer women in an erotic Noir World

Twilight City

The persistent rain, monolithic architecture, neon lights, and buzz of traffic are the heart and soul of the impossibly large Twilight City. Where day turns into night too fast, and high-heeled women with tinted shades are quick to buy you a drink. These twilight dames come here to the big city to find out who they really are. To escape the conservative small towns they grew up in, places filled with old fashioned bigotry, places where they just couldn't be themselves. There's more people here in the city with open minds (and open…hearts) than you can imagine. The city's so big it's easy to experiment with who you are and what that means. That's not to say it's a walk in the park here though; there's plenty of experienced women who love to sink their claws into fresh meat, and systems even beyond them that we all struggle against. It's still a hell of a lot better than those small towns, that's for sure, and the seduction of the city slips its way into every-one's hearts.

QUEER NETWORKS

Things are different in the communities here than they are outside of the city. Some lesbians have very tight-knit groups, only letting a chosen few in. Other groups are super laid-back and welcoming. Some women move seamlessly from their "straight" day job to their "gay" nightlife. Here in the downtown you can be anybody you want to be. Some ladies take advantage

of their anonymity, trying on new personalities every month like a new pair of heels. There's opportunity to climb that business ladder if you want to and take a swing at that glass ceiling. You can work the docks, or join the police, or own your own bar with only a few odd looks. There's the hipsters and their endless parties and glamorous night clubs where you can dance all night and wake up in a new bedroom every weekend.

STRANGE LOVE

In this city, a girl can easily lose herself to whispers of passion traced in red lipstick and cigarette smoke. So many women do. Twilight City is a destination for women who have a desire for other women. It's more acceptable to be more yourself here, whether that's butch or femme, trans or cis, or somewhere along that Kinsey scale of desire. Loving who you want, out there in the wild open, is only one more step away. You just have to make the first move, sweetheart, what's stopping you? People won't judge, too much, but you can feel their eyes sometimes, that stare when you hold hands or kiss at the bar. Are they curious, or are they judging you?

DARK NIGHTS

There's a dark side to this city. Old lovers' quarrels that seem to have been around since the first stones were laid. Secret places that can fuel any vice. People who don't care about authenticity, who just want to use you. Thieves, blackmailers, and social backstabbers, yeah, they're all here too. Getting swept up in their drama and their schemes ain't as hard as it seems. Fall for the wrong gal and she'll walk all over you, tear your heart up, and hang you out to dry.

Setting Creation

Twilight Dames is a Quick Start adventure that has everything you need to jump into your first session. Before you start, you'll want to discuss the broader setting with your group, perhaps even reading aloud the descriptions of the Twilight City, the Queer Networks, Strange Love, Dark Nights, and The Body so everyone is on the same page.

At the start of play, explain the **current issue** to your players and ask them to fill in one or two additional faces associated with *The Body*. These additional characters will provide new plot hooks and twists that will tie your players more deeply to the issues facing their lesbian community.

Then ask your players to choose from one of the two available **impending issues**: *Political Takeovers* or *Police Corruption*. Have them fill in one or two additional faces for their chosen impending issue as well, rounding out the larger cast of characters with their suggestions.

CURRENT ISSUE: THE BODY

One of your own, a college girl new to the city named Emily McCutcheon, was recently found dead. The morning after a big party down at The 300, that artist hipster warehouse on the sketchy side of town, she was found out back in the high grass of the neighboring lot; seemed like an overdose. It's only been 24 hours, but rumors are spreading like wildfire through Twilight City's lesbian community.

Those closest to the case, however, are beginning to piece the puzzle together on their own. What really happened to Emily that night? Who in this city holds the secrets to her death, and what price will be paid to find out?

FACES:

- **Ian Welch:** Emily's ex-boyfriend, owner of The 300 art studio and celebrated drag queen
- **Jada Brooks:** Emily's girlfriend, a punk rock butch lesbian who's a headliner in the band Pussy Rage

THE BODY

IAN WELCH

Emily's ex-boyfriend, owner of The 300 art studio and celebrated drag queen

JADA BROOKS

Emily's girlfriend, a punk rock butch lesbian who's a headliner in the band Pussy Rage

IMPENDING ISSUES

In addition to **The Body** and the drama it poses to our members of the lesbian community, there are a number of other impending issues haunting Twilight City, including:

POLITICAL TAKEOVERS

POLICE CORRUPTION

CHRISTINA JOHNSON

Christian Republican representative in the closet

SUSAN CHANG

Volunteer at LGBTQ teen hostel, political activist, diesel dyke

ANGELA GOMEZ

Police Chief of Twilight City paid to not do her job

NIKITOS MANOV

Hot shot son of a mob boss, keen on gaining power

Political Takeovers

Christina Johnson—a conservative Christian Republican representative for Twilight City—is supporting Issue 24 on the ballot this election. It's a local bill to re-develop the area of town where the LGBTQ teen hostel Rainbows is, and the community is trying hard to fight it. These girls need a place to stay, and Mrs. Johnson doesn't seem to care about that at all, instead talking about a new entertainment district that will restore this city to its former glory. What most people don't know? Christina's a closet dyke. If she got outed it would ruin her career.

FACES:

- **Christina Johnson:** conservative Christian Republican representative, closeted lesbian
- **Susan Chung:** volunteer at the LGBTQ teen hostel, political activist and diesel dyke

Police Corruption

Everybody knows the cops here in Twilight City are dirty. The corruption goes deeper than anyone could imagine, though. Many even suspect Police Chief Angela Gomez of being deep in the pocket of several prominent figures in the city. If you want to get something looked into, and you don't have the cash to fund the investigation, it's probably going to be buried in bureaucracy. Things are coming to a head recently with the local mafia, as crime rates go up and the cops do nothing to stop it. Twilight City gets more dangerous by the minute.

- **Angela Gomez:** Police Chief of Twilight City, getting paid to not do her job and enforcing her strict regime
- **Nikitos Manov:** The mob boss's hot-shot son, who seems pretty keen on gaining power while his father's out of the country on business

Character Creation

Twilight Dames works best with Fate Core characters and is a tribute to pulp lesbian erotica. Players take on the roles of queer women in a pulp noir city. It's encouraged for players to address the idea of LGBTQ women however they like, creating characters that showcase a variety of identities that fall under that spectrum. These stories could focus on telling sexy noir stories featuring lesbian, bisexual, queer, or questioning women, both cis and trans.

This Quick Start isn't a 100% accurate reproduction of the genre—it's updated to remove a lot of the inherent sexism and negativity toward queer women that was featured in those historical pulps. It's also a mash-up of two genres: **Erotica** and **Noir**. Part of it is crime drama and intrigue, and the other part is the steamy scenes with other PCs or NPCs that arise amidst this drama.

Yes, this is definitely erotica! It should be sexy, steamy, pulpy, romantic, and extra queer. Decide how steamy you want it to be (PG-13? R?) and keep descriptions within those boundaries. Feel free to draw a curtain on a scene, ending the description before the "on camera" sex occurs, and then focus back in on the characters afterwards. Gain enthusiastic consent from players at all times, but especially when it seems they might be hesitant about something. Move on to a different scene if something comes up that's uncomfortable, or try a different way to tell that scene that works better for everyone. Most of all, have fun being a sexy noir lesbian!

Players should select their aspects as normal, choosing a high concept and a trouble, and completing the phase trio to determine their final three aspects. Begin by being connected to the current issue at first. Who are you and why do you know about, care about, investigate, or love Emily?

SKILL LIST

Twilight Dames uses a completely new skill and stunt list from traditional Fate Core. These skills and stunts are designed so that the actions players can take are very specific to the queer noir genre. If it's not on this list, it's not important to the narrative! Look for ways to showcase these skills and

stunts as you're roleplaying; they'll help bring out the essence of pulp erotica at your table. Choose one skill at Great, one at Good, two at Fair, and two at Average.

Body Language

People make subtle movements that relay their true intentions. While talking with someone, roll Body Language to read their motives or determine a lie. You can also use it to signal your own intentions.

Overcome: Body Language helps you determine whether someone is lying, nervous, or otherwise. Overcome their desire to keep their motives hidden.

Create an Advantage: Get an idea about what exactly they're hiding. Notice when their eyes go slightly to the left, or they reach inside their pocket, or they try to hide a text from you.

Attack: You've got some wicked moves, girl. Put 'em to good use, and let someone know without a doubt what you're thinking about them.

Defend: Use your moves to hide your true intentions and misdirect people from what you're really going for. Distract and deceive.

STUNTS

Hips Don't Lie. You've been lied to by the best of them and their tricks don't slide by you anymore. Gain a +2 to drag the truth out of someone.

I Know What You Want. You can read someone's true intentions. Gain a fate point if you give them what they want.

Rock Your Body. You know exactly how to move, where to touch, when to tease. Figure out an aspect from someone while using all your fancy moves.

Cash

An abstract representation of how much money you've got. Decide how obvious you want to make it, but it can be a huge influence over people's minds and hearts.

Overcome: Use cash to get yourself out of a sticky situation if you suddenly need to. Help others in need with donations to their cause.

Create an Advantage: Win someone's heart over by showing off your massive amounts of wealth. Buy them a drink or something they really need to get in their good graces.

Attack: Buy people to do your dirty work for you. People who could break into a place, threaten someone, be an "eyewitness", or spread nasty rumors.

Defend: Use cash to get yourself out of an awkward conversation or sticky situation.

STUNTS

Can't Buy Love. Gain a +2 to your Sensuality roll to buy someone a fancy fancy gift as part of your seduction.

Playboy/girl. You're ridiculously loaded, and you flaunt that shit. You can invoke for free any situational aspect that requires lots of money to be there.

This One's on Me. Dinner, drinks, movie, that date night—you're covering the bill, you insist. Roll Cash instead of Sensuality when you're using your money to prove you can take care of someone monetarily.

Guns

Not really for shooting, more for the threat of violence. Intimidating, basically.

Overcome: A gun encourages someone to back down and step away because now guns are in play.

Create an Advantage: They're a bit off their game if they're scared of you. This can give you a little leeway when asking for what you want, or settling an argument.

Attack: Even if you shoot that gun, physical stress isn't an option. Guns can frighten or demoralize your opponent, though.

Defend: Someone probably thinks you're not so much of a badass, but they will after you show you're packing. Now, to them, you're kind of scary.

STUNTS

Flash Your Piece. Show off that gun tucked in your pants and say something intimidating. Get a +2 to your Guns roll.

Command Authority. When using your gun as a reason to assert a command, roll Guns instead of Body Language.

Dangerous Sexy. Some people are attracted to danger, and a woman who can handle it. Get +2 to a Body Language roll when using your gun to prove how much of a badass you are.

Investigate

Sure, you might be on official detective business. Or maybe you're just trying to find out if your lover is cheating on you.

Overcome: This isn't just surface info you're looking for; you have to dig deep and look hard to find the right details and uncover the truth. Investigate lets you find that stuff that's buried deep.

Create an Advantage: Allows you to find specific details about the situation at hand, and the person involved.

Attack: Go after those nasty details, put together a file, and get ready to hit someone hard with it. You can use it for leverage or to outright threaten them.

Defend: Dig up dirt on that person who's trying to hurt you.

STUNTS

Private Eye. You're pretty good at sneaking without getting caught, and you always know the right place to find a diary. Spend a fate point to be in the right place at the right time to find what you're looking for.

Blackmail. Gain +2 when using Investigate to find a piece of information on someone you can blackmail them with.

Greasing Palms. Roll Investigate instead of Cash when you're bribing someone with money.

Lingo

This ain't your first rodeo. You understand the languages, etiquette, and secret code that gives you access to…all the right people. Use Lingo to understand or use words in a variety of communities outside of your own.

Overcome: Lots of cliques, clubs, and communities have their own way of talking and relating to each other. Want them to trust you, or to gain access to their secret parties? Use Lingo to overcome that language barrier.

Create an Advantage: Lingo gives you an idea of what that person might want to hear. It also gives you insight into the language of a place, and not just what to say, but what it all means in context.

Attack: You can sling slurs and insults in order to push someone's buttons.

Defend: You can stand up for yourself too! Don't let someone push you around with their verbal barrage, chica.

STUNTS

Lipstick Mafia. You're an important part of the lesbian community and you protect its members and traditions. Get an extra heart stress box reserved just for standing up for your lesbian community.

Down and Dirty. You're a dirty talker, and you know how to use it to push someone's buttons. Get a +2 when you say something raunchy to surprise someone or turn them on.

Comfort Zone. You know how to make someone feel unwelcome by using insider slang. Spend a fate point to make an NPC leave a scene because they feel like they don't belong.

Little Black Book

You've got some old friends and lovers to call on for help. Or information. Or whatever else you might need them for. Maybe an ex you need one last fling with? A cheating lover you need to revenge fuck? No judgment here.

Overcome: You've got a problem you can't figure out, but you know your ex would know this in a second. They can help you solve whatever it is you're trying to accomplish.

Create an Advantage: Need a winglady to help you out on this blind date? Know that a little bit more info might tip the scales in your favor? This person from your history can give you the backup you need.

Attack: Use your vast network of friends and allies (and friendly exes) to turn the tide on someone. They can spread nasty rumors or do favors for you to get back at someone.

Defend: Call your connections for aid, a friendly ear, a shoulder to lean on. When you're feeling vulnerable, your network can support and defend you against the most vicious social attacks.

STUNTS

Call in a Favor. Need a favor from someone? You've got it, without needing to spend a fate point.

Heal My Heart. Regain your heart stress when you share an intimate moment with an old connection.

Sleeping with the Enemy. When trying to reconnect with an old enemy, gain a +2 to your Little Black Book roll.

Muscle

How much strength, grace, and body mass you have. Enables you to do impressive physical stuff.

Overcome: Muscle pits you against large objects that ladies couldn't possibly move and allows you to lift it with sexy finesse. You're overcoming the general weight ridiculousness of that thing, whatever it is.

Create an Advantage: Maybe you're moving something out of the way of your path, rearranging furniture in an office, or lifting a girl off her feet so she doesn't have to walk in a puddle.

Attack: Attacking with muscle is akin to restraining someone. Use your strength to wrestle or hold someone.

Defend: Defends against someone trying to muscle you!

STUNTS

Lift You off Your Feet. Gain a +2 to Muscle whenever you're using it in a flirtatious show of strength by picking someone up.

Farm Girl. You're an expert at moving around heavy stuff, don't even break a sweat. Roll Muscle instead of Suave when trying to impress someone with your strength.

Out and Proud. You've gotten some shit ever since you came out, but you've improved your self-defense skills like mad because of it. Gain a fate point to use your mad skills in a tussle.

Sensuality

Sensuality is how in tune you are with your desires and how well you can read the desires of others. Roll this to determine if someone is really turned on by you or just using you. Also use it to work your natural flirtatiousness and mad sex skills on consenting partners.

Overcome: Sensuality lets you communicate your desire to a potential partner in a difficult situation. Eyes caught across the room, subtle double entendres in a mixed crowd, a quick accidental touch. Alternately, use it to overcome your shyness in approaching someone you're really attracted to and gaining the bravery to say something.

Create an Advantage: Your sensuality is a desirable trait; people want to be closer to you, share stuff with you they wouldn't with other people because they want to be in your glow.

Attack: Determine if your enemy is attracted to you, then hit 'em where it hurts, right in the heart region. Love 'em and leave 'em, or taunt them into letting them know they'll never really have you.

Defend: Defend against someone's relentless come-ons and one liners. Especially effective against negging. You know what people are after so you can shut them down extra fast.

STUNTS

Hopeless Flirt. You can't help flirting and everyone knows it. Gain a +2 to sexily extract information from someone.

Pillow Talk. After sleeping with someone, they have to reveal a secret— but so do you.

Good, Giving, Game. You're an excellent, attentive, playful lover, and you've got a reputation for it. Use Sensuality instead of Little Black Book to get in touch with someone you've slept with before.

Suave

Cool, hip, enticingly dangerous. Suave is what you use when you're trying to impress the shit out of someone. Or maybe just turn them on. When you succeed, they're not automatically "seduced." They're impressed, but ultimately they decide how to react to that.

Overcome: Suave makes someone more inclined to engage with you because of how amazingly cool you are. Overcome the emotional wall they've put up, be it shyness, stubbornness, anger, or snobbery.

Create an Advantage: Gain some insight about that person in conversation because your smooth moves can coax it out of them, or throw them off their game because you're a bit cooler than they are.

Attack: Kind of like a dance off, only with how cool you are. Prove you're cooler than someone else.

Defend: It's pretty hard to embarrass someone as cool as you; insults just roll right off of you.

STUNTS

Milk for Info. Use Suave instead of Cash if you're using your words and your looks as a bribe.

Sharply Dressed. Gain +2 to Suave rolls when you're dressed to the nines.

Genderfuck. Spend a fate point to seem ridiculously attractive to any gender, somehow knowing exactly what the target's preferences are.

Undercover

Your character's ability to fit in with different communities or identities, or appear as something other than what they are. Roll when you want to seem to be a different gender, orientation, race, or community member.

Overcome: You're going to overcome someone else's perception here, often a crowd of people. So, if you're trying to fit in at that fancy hotel downtown, or at the hipster bar, or on a college campus, or at the mobster restaurant, you're trying alter people's perceptions of you in those spaces.

Create an Advantage: You'll be able to interact more easily with the people in these communities, or relate to certain people who identify the way you're identifying.

Attack: Use someone's own community against them, act like an ally when really you're not.

Defend: Undercover can be used to defend against people who are trying to out you, either your sexuality or your ability to fit in with a community or identification.

STUNTS

Crossdressing. Gain a +2 bonus to Undercover when dressing, and attempting to pass, as a different gender.

Passing. Add +2 to Undercover when you flirt with a target while looking, sounding, or moving like a gender or orientation different than your own.

What Glass Ceiling? Put a *Stunned* aspect on your target when you impress them with knowledge about a non-traditional gender role.

HEART STRESS

Instead of the regular stress tracks you normally use in Fate Core, *Twilight Dames* has a specialized track for the only thing that can get hurt in this game: your character's heart. Get rid of physical and mental stress tracks. Replace them with a heart track. Filling the stress track still works the same way. Additionally, instead of dying, your heart gets broken, and you move to another city far away.

When taking actions, consider that you're acting to protect your character's heart! Same with NPCs. You can't really take physical damage (or

really hurt anyone physically) so everything you do is pointed toward emotional consequences.

Opening Scene: The Wake

All of the PCs knew Emily. Her passing is tragic, horrible, and shakes the community. They all had connections to her, so this isn't just professional, it's personal.

There's a wake being held for Emily today. It's at her family's house, the McCutcheons, who are refusing to acknowledge that Jada was her girlfriend. Emily's homophobic brother, Steve, is drunk and angry and ready to blame "those lesbians' influences" for his sister's death. It shouldn't be too hard to find, but there's some heroin stashed away in the bathroom.

How do the women deal with the mourning family and their homophobia? Is there someone there who they can relate to, or take their frustration out on? How are they expressing their sadness or anger at this loss? In what ways are they coming together with Emily being the thread that binds them?

Opening Aspects: ***Mourning Family***, ***Drug Stash***, ***Photos of Emily with Jada in the Trash***

Steve McCutcheon

DESCRIPTION

Emily's homophobic older brother

ASPECTS

Kind of a Bro • Homophobic • Out for Revenge

SKILL MODES

+5	**Reacting Before Thinking**
+3	**Mob Connections, Protecting His Family**
+1	**Out of His Element**
-1	**Making Good Logical Decisions**

STRESS

☐ ☐ ☐

Middle Scene: The 300

Later that evening, it's business as usual at The 300, the last place Emily was seen. Small art studios mixed with large warehouse spaces make for a moody evening. The largest space is holding a glam retro 40s style Drag Show tonight, headed by Ian Welch, Emily's ex. A small shrine has been built for Emily in the corner for people to pay respects. While many wild-flowers have been piled up there, most guests don't linger and are quick to return to their PBRs and strange dance moves. Jada, Emily's girlfriend, starts a dangerous bonfire out in the back of The 300 and tries to rile up the other hipsters and lesbians to find out who did this to her Emily.

Jada Brooks

DESCRIPTION

Emily's girlfriend, a punk rock butch lesbian who's a headliner in the band Pussy Rage

ASPECTS

Riot Grrl • Bit of a Temper • Broken Hearted

SKILL MODES

+5	Intimidating Punk Rock Activist
+3	Being Emo, Getting Violent
+1	Sharing Vulnerabilities, Helping Queers
-1	Keeping Her Cool

STRESS

☐ ☐ ☐

Ian Welch

DESCRIPTION

Emily's ex-boyfriend, owner of The 300 art studio and celebrated drag queen

ASPECTS

Drama Queen • Spies Everywhere • Duplicitous

SKILL MODES

+5	Making You Feel Way Less Cool
+3	Talking Trash, Finding Dirt on People
+1	Being Kinda Shady, Getting Around
-1	Not Being Intimidated

STRESS

☐ ☐ ☐

Do the characters try to calm the bonfire crowd? Join in the party? Get debaucherous and try to drown their sorrows? Try to question people about what's going on, or help Jada figure out what happened to Emily? Who do they make out with at the party? Who do they go home with? Do they comfort each other? Which NPCs have they begun to suspect? Who are you starting to suspect?

Opening Aspects: ***Dark Drag***, ***Plentiful Alcohol***, ***Raging Bonfire***

Final Scene: Bangers

The next day can comprise of individual scenes for each PC, wrapping up whatever fallout there was from the night before. Later, there's a confrontation at that old lesbian bar on the bay, Bangers. The owner, Betty, is a tough no-nonsense kind of woman.

Jada gets them to the bar, convinced that the guilty party is there. A worried text, a note, or a message can get her and the PCs there.

This is where they do in fact find the killer, or the enabler, or the truth. PCs have the opportunity to confront or react to this however they feel is dramatically appropriate.

Afterwards…is always the saddest. Have a scene where the PCs sit at the bar and discuss the fallout of this knowledge.

Who do they find at the bar? Do any of them know this person? Do they react with sadness, compassion, horror? Do they do something legal, and call the cops to have them carted away? Who do they tell about it afterwards? Whose arms do they crawl back to tonight?

Opening Aspects: ***Heavy Rain***, ***Old Jukebox***, ***Shotgun Behind the Bar***

How to Play NPCs, Solve the Mystery, and Have Queer Drama

The plot of ***Twilight Dames*** is set up to encourage interaction, relationships, and drama amongst the PCs and NPCs. It's a backdrop, a setting, a red herring in order to see how the characters interact with each other and how relationships form or break apart. It's there to highlight their queerness, the sadness of losing someone from a small community, and really allow them to interact with each other and the NPCs in meaningful, revealing ways.

Here are some guidelines for helping you run this kind of game:

- **Remind them of their skills:** All of their skills ultimately come back to encouraging sexy, dramatic, noir interactions with other characters and the setting. If someone is being smooth and is dressed to the nines, ask them "It sounds like you're being Suave. Is that what you're doing? Want to roll?"

- **Play provocative NPCs:** Imagine that the NPCs that are included here, and the ones that you might make up on the fly, are there to push the PCs buttons. Got a PC who's really great with cars? Have an NPC's car break down at a dramatic moment. Have NPCs and villains that are trying to out them, make them feel like outsiders, or who just want to "experiment" with lesbianism instead of being in a real relationship.

- **Highlight the queer erotica:** Is the story a little too…dry? Have an NPC make the moves on one of our PCs. Ask the player about their character's current crush, or romantic interest. Describe the wayward glances that woman smoking with the glass of red wine at the bar is giving them. Picture every femme fatale and every cheesy erotica scene you can and recreate it within this story. Go with the trope, and then if you can, add a twist! The femme fatale is a ladykiller?! The innocent girl in trouble is totally a top?! The corrupt cop is actually a prude who's just lonely?!

- **Drive toward maximum drama:** Noir and Erotica are both over the top genres. When in doubt, don't worry about the details, or the mechanics. Go for the most dramatic thing.

Characters

Detective Jordan Smith

Jordan's in her sixth year as a detective in this city, and she's one of the best at what she does. An eye for detail and an understanding of people's motives can solve most crimes. Although Jordan's well respected by her fellow police officers, she's not ignorant to their laziness, or the cash they take for turning a blind eye to the crime that overwhelms Twilight City. While many guess at her evening romances with women, Jordan's never said a word about it. There are just some things that are personal, and some things that are professional.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: BROODING POLICE DETECTIVE

TROUBLE: WEAKNESS FOR THE LADIES

OTHER: BEEN AROUND THE BLOCK
MISTRUST OF THE SYSTEM • GOOD LISTENER

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Investigate
GOOD (+3)	Undercover
FAIR (+2)	Body Language, Guns
AVERAGE (+1)	Cash, Lingo

STUNTS

Private Eye. You're pretty good at sneaking without getting caught, and you always know the right place to find a diary. Spend a fate point to be in the right place at the right time to find what you're looking for.

Hips Don't Lie. You've been lied to by the best of them and their tricks don't slide by you anymore. Gain a +2 to drag the truth out of someone.

I Know What You Want. You can read someone's true intentions. Gain a fate point if you give them what they want.

HEART STRESS

☐☐☐

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Carmella Alessandri

All glitter, glam, and feather fans, Carmella is the star of the local burlesque troupe. By day she's an accountant's assistant, working at the same firm her husband does. She doesn't quite fit in with her normal day job, and while the evenings are what she truly loves, many in the queer community don't accept her bi-sexuality because she's married. She's nonetheless quite the paramour, her seduction on stage an attraction for women of all orientations. Carmella and her husband have an open marriage, and tales of their exploits make the rounds in the local gossip.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: BURLESQUE PRINCESS

TROUBLE: MARRIED TO A MAN

OTHER: CENTER OF ATTENTION
NOTORIOUS • PASSIONATE MOOD SWINGS

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Suave
GOOD (+3)	Body Language
FAIR (+2)	Little Black Book, Sensuality
AVERAGE (+1)	Cash, Lingo

STUNTS

Hopeless Flirt. You can't help flirting and everyone knows it. Gain a +2 to sexily extract information from someone.

Sharply Dressed. Gain +2 to Suave rolls when you're dressed to the nines.

Rock Your Body. You know exactly how to move, where to touch, when to tease. Figure out an aspect from someone while using all your fancy moves.

HEART STRESS

☐ ☐ ☐

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Heather Benson

Heather grew up fixing tractors on her family's farm, spending more time learning about V6s and torque converters instead of hairstyles and dresses. Her first car was a 1968 Camaro fixer-up, and dang was it the sweetest thing she ever worked on. Heather's love of muscle cars brought her to the city, where she could work on real machines instead of tractors, and learn more about her curiosity for women too. Upbeat and hardworking, Heather is a good old-fashioned American butch.

ASPECTS

High Concept: Down to Earth Car Mechanic

Trouble: Kind of Naive

Other: Great With My Hands
Loyal Friend • Do the Right Thing

SKILLS

Great (+4)	Muscle
Good (+3)	Lingo
Fair (+2)	Sensuality, Undercover
Average (+1)	Body Language, Guns

STUNTS

Farm Girl. You're an expert at moving around heavy stuff, don't even break a sweat. Roll Muscle instead of Suave when trying to impress someone with your strength.

Lift You off Your Feet. Gain a +2 to Muscle whenever you're using it in a flirtatious show of strength by picking someone up.

Crossdressing. Gain +2 to Undercover when dressing, and attempting to pass, as a different gender.

HEART STRESS

☐☐☐

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

ALL FATE MUST BE EATEN
by ROB WIELAND

Hell Is Other People

Zombies are the great American monster. Like all great American innovations, the zombie takes elements of what came before—the reborn creatures of Haitian voodoo, the insatiable hunger of the ghoul, the infectious bite of the vampire—and blends them together into an entirely new creature. The zombie isn't scary because it could be anybody. It's scary because it's everyone.

The monster plays on fears of conformity—creatures that look human one-on-one, but soon turn into a sea of grasping hands and always chewing mouths.

The true monsters of the zombie movie aren't the creatures banging on the door. The zombies don't get inside on their own. Zombies turn our hopes and fears against us by shining an ugly mirror on our prejudices and our selfishness. Tension between human survivors leads to backstabbing, doors unlatched, and rules temporarily forgotten. Raiders strip every last gold tooth and luxury item that they can get their hands on. The powerful try to rebuild the world in their own images. When it all looks hopeless at the end of a zombie story, it's usually because, somewhere in the middle of the story, the people involved put their self-interest first.

Fate Core's focus on characters make it an excellent fit for these types of zombie stories. The rules presented here target the important drama between the survivors, with the zombies as a looming threat. We include tailored aspects, as well as advice on how to keep the tension high between survivors during play.

NIGHT OF THE LIVING ASPECTS

'Zombie story' is a pretty wide genre definition. Is this story a dramatic tale about survivors striving to live another day by battling external threats and internal friction? Is it a comedic tale about the survivors doing all the things they wished they could have done but didn't before the rise of the walking dead? Is it an action tale involving blasting through an infinite number of undead to return the world to some semblance of normalcy? Maybe it's a little of all those. When you first sit down at the table, talk about what kind of zombie story you want to tell. Discussing favorite zombie story elements with other group members will help focus what's important in this tale and narrow ideas for character concepts.

Characters still begin with five aspects, but the focus is modified to get ones that are a better fit for the genre. High Concept and Trouble stay close to their counterparts in Fate Core, but the other three aspects reflect the attitudes toward the zombies, the positive bonds that give the group strength, and the cracks in the armor that may one day let the zombies in to feast. There are several example aspects included for inspiration and for those groups who want to dive straight into the deep end of the world.

For groups that want to start on the first day of the end of the world, begin play with a high concept and trouble and fill in the others as you play through your first session. Each scene ends with at least one of the remaining three aspects filled in. Steer scenes towards ones that fill out everyone's open aspects. This works well for the classic zombie scenario of strangers thrust together trying to survive, as a convention game, or as a one-shot trying to show people how Fate works.

The high concept aspect says something about the game as well as the character. Games set during the fall of humanity will have high concepts that reflect on what the character was before the rise of the dead. Games set farther after the fall feature high concepts that reflect the character's role in the survival group. Compel pre-fall aspects to remind characters of what they lost, or maybe what they were hoping to forget. Compel post-fall aspects to generate unforeseen consequences or remind the group of past failures.

> *Examples:* **Reluctant Leader**, **Grieving Mother**, **Hopeful Seeker**, **Secretive Official**, **Reckless Anarchist**

Trouble follows characters even after the end of the world. Good thematic troubles can put the individual characters in danger from the undead with a compel. Great ones can endanger all the survivors at the table. Drunks fall asleep, curious characters push out farther into the

unexplored regions around camp, and arrogant survivors try to lead the others only to cause friction instead. Selecting a trouble that endangers everyone rather than just a single character means more opportunities for compels and character drama.

> *Examples:* ***Thinks She's in Charge, Will Do Anything to Find Him, Absent-Minded, Wants to Learn How They Work, Am I Infected?***

The phase trio from Fate Core exists to provide a group with compelling reasons to have stuck together. Zombie games featuring survivors of the zombie apocalypse use it to generate good backstories and highlight the tensions between the survivors. The phase trio defines the web of relationships in the survivor group, as well as how the character became a survivor instead of a zombie when things went to hell. The three phases generate three aspects important to your character: the **Survivor Aspect**, the **Link Aspect**, and the **Friction Aspect**.

Take a turn around the table generating each of these aspects for each of the characters. When generating link and friction aspects, make sure everyone has at least one link and friction pointing at them directly. The more tangled the web, the more drama gets made by pulling on the strands.

The survivor aspect sums up the character's first memorable encounter with the walking dead. The zombie might have been someone the character didn't know. It could have been someone the character knew quite well, like a family member or a loved one. The aspect also suggests how the character survived the encounter. It may have ended in violence. It might have tested the resourcefulness of the survivor. It might have been what killed the last group the person joined. Good examples of this aspect suggest both the nature of the encountered zombie and how the character survived.

> *Examples:* ***Killed My Zombified Mother, Outran My Undead Boy Scout Troup, Ran Over a Zombie at 2 AM, Only Survivor of Project Phoenix, Battled My Way Out of St. Francis Hospital***

The link aspect chooses the character's link to the survivor group. Yes, there's safety in numbers, but there's always going to be one person that makes life better. That person might be a potential love interest. This person may remind the character of someone they knew before the rise. The person may have saved the character's life. Even if someone had

completely balanced views on the rest of the group, there's one person that stands out just a little bit. Good examples of the link aspect define the relationship between the characters and how that relationship can be tested.

> *Examples:* **Nelson Kept Me Alive, Kelly Knows How I Feel (Right?), Beverly Is My New Mom, I Owe Frank Everything, Valerie Rescued Me**

The friction aspect indicates the character's choice for the first one to be zombie meat. The aspect should illustrate why the other survivor is so frustrating. In any social situation, someone's going to be on the bottom of the totem pole. Compels can quickly lead to tension between these two characters but don't forget to use these aspects to invoke. If two characters who don't like each other are looking for supplies, there's healthy competition to be the one who brings home actual bacon. Good examples of the friction aspect highlight the tension and also point out ways that tension is useful to the story.

> *Examples:* **Suzanne's Just a Kid, Dalton Is Dangerous, Laurie Keeps Too Many Secrets, It's Either Jim or Me, Alex Almost Got Me Killed**

WHAT ABOUT THE WEAPONS?

One of the first elements that get discussed in zombie games is weapons. Some of this discussion will come out as characters are made. The fragility of weapons can be represented by creating advantages. While an advantage has a free invoke, it's safe. Once the invoke is gone, that beloved cricket bat or shotgun is in danger. All it takes is a compel to tell the player that the axe is broken or the chainsaw is out of gas. If the character wants a trusty weapon that can never be destroyed, make it a stunt or a character aspect, like **My Father's Hunting Rifle**. That hunting rifle has backstory, making the character trust it reliably, but take dangerous risks to make sure it doesn't get pulled off by a pack of zombies. Even as a stunt, a trusty weapon can still inspire stories without the need for compel. What happens when someone discovers someone else using a **Battle-Hardened Katana** to slice off zombie heads?

FORTY MILES OF BAD ROAD

Fate has a reputation for being unable to do horror games because of the control the players have over their characters. It also has a reputation for not being gritty enough to convey the danger of a zombie setting. With

all those stress boxes and consequences, a character will never truly feel in danger. Characters can soak up all that stress and consequence and be just fine without a care in the world. This hack aims to add some grime, sweat, and blood to Fate Core.

Ninety percent of dread is in the mind's eye. Stress hits are still hits. Describe the wind getting knocked out of a character's lungs or the gnashing teeth two inches from delicate fingers. Use mental hits to remind the character of other times they were put down or upset by the person doing the arguing. Treating stress hits like close calls goes a long way to turning them into another precious resource like bottled water or pain pills. Most characters only have two stress boxes, so keep the pressure on whenever they cross one out.

Survivors push themselves to stay alive. In this hack, stress hits only recover after a conflict when the survivors have found a safe haven from zombies. Adjusting when characters recover stress keeps the pressure on players to actively seek safety. It also makes offering stress as part of a success with a cost a tougher choice. If a character stays up on watch, they don't get to recover stress. Who takes that hit? The ex-cop who already has a lost box or two but has skills that fit the profile of a guard better? Or the unstressed waitress who can keep watch but might be a liability if things turn violent?

Fate focuses on character, and characters are what drive zombie stories. The zombies are a fire simmering in the background. When the survivors get into conflicts, make them count. Arguing whether to kill someone who's been bit can quickly turn into a mental conflict, since the life of a man, or maybe a boy, lies in the balance. Ask the players if they want to turn an argument into a conflict. Compelling a friction aspect between two survivors that hate each other turns a discussion into a contest as two rivals try to get the survivors to take a side on their argument. That compel sets off other ones, as other friction aspects are compelled to air the characters' grievances and link aspects compel people into the argument. Soon, a flare-up between two rivals brings the whole group into an argument. Perfect timing for a zombie attack.

SAVE THE LAST ONE FOR YOURSELF

Hit compels hard. Especially when compels are used to get characters to act against each other. Don't be afraid to take suggestions from the players and put those fate points out there. When players push each other, they get their points once those actions have consequences. Insulting someone with the friction aspect is one thing. Insulting them to the point where they forgot to make sure the gate was locked? That's compel worthy.

Consequences from conflicts do a great job reflecting the gritty nature of a zombie setting. Medical aid is scarce, so something that might be a mild consequence elsewhere can always be **Worse Than It First Looked**. This setting is also rife with mental consequences as survivors crack under pressure. Consequences offer more compels to allow zombies to put on the pressure. Consequences are a great way to pay for success with a cost from avoiding zombies. A consequence like **I Think I Got Bit** will fuel some great scenes if the character makes it back to the safety of the hideout.

It's a hard world. Character death is common in zombie fiction and this hack is no different. As GM, declare as hard an outcome as possible. Being Taken Out of a conflict could mean a character dies in this genre. A physical conflict likely ends in death. Even a mental conflict might end in a fatal mistake that allows the dead to get in. If players negotiate concessions, you should get some continuing drama out of it. Getting medical attention might become the crux of the next storyline. A character might survive a zombie attack through conceding, but someone else gets bit. Or win the argument, but lose the group's trust. The other survivors may wonder if the character is worth putting up with all the arguments and mental conflict. Storming off in a huff isn't the best idea with zombies right outside the door. A returning character may be pestered with questions about being infected. Or blamed if something goes wrong at the camp in the interim.

NO MORE ROOM IN HELL

The zombies in this hack are an environmental threat. Aspects represent the risen dead; these aspects describe the rules of the zombie infestation. As GM, create five aspects that describe the zombies while the players are making their characters. These illustrate the strength of the zombies, as well as their weaknesses. Five allows for a good sense of discovery. You have final say over the aspects; though, in the spirit of collaborative world building, you may take suggestions from the table.

Once the survivors know the rules, they can make plans and preparations to keep themselves safe from infection. They may invoke zombie aspects for bonuses when using the aspects to their advantage. You can compel the aspects when the zombies have an advantage over the breathing characters in the story. We've included some examples below from classic zombie tropes, but don't be afraid to make your own. Borrow them from other movies, or take assumptions about zombies and twist them to keep your players on their toes.

Infectious Bite: Often, the infection is carried by the zombie's bite. Invoke the aspect for a better examination of a character's health after a run-in

with the dead. Compel the aspect to infect an NPC. Whether they turn or are put down by the other survivors can be the source of great drama.

Slow Walkers: The classic zombie moves at a slow but relentless speed. Invoke the aspect to make it easy for a character to outrun or dodge out of the grasp of a zombie. Compel the aspect to catch the character in a situation where he may be unable to maneuver away, like a walk-in freezer.

Shoot Them in the Head!: Putting down a zombie often requires a bullet to the brain. Invoke this aspect to take careful aim to put a walker back down for good. Compel the aspect and the zombie gets within grasping or biting distance while the player gets into position.

Growling Runners: More recent zombie stories feature them as fast, rage-filled beasts able to close the distance before an unlucky soul can reload. Invoke this aspect to take advantage of feral intelligence to lure or hunt them like animals. Compel this aspect to blitz an unsuspecting survivor out of nowhere.

They Just Keep Coming: As more people die, the ranks of the zombies swell. Invoke this aspect to gain a crystal clear focus in the face of so many things that want to taste the flesh of the living. Compel the aspect to have more zombies arrive just as soon as the last batch is dispatched.

A NEVERENDING HUNGER

Zombies are not made like characters. They have no stress. They take no consequences. The zombies never roll dice. Racking up zombie kills is meaningless. They are a force that doesn't negotiate or back down. Use challenges and contests when confronting a zombie threat. Save the conflicts for when human characters come to blows. The players might use a challenge to clear the zombies out of an area to keep it safe. A contest might involve players working together to restart a generator to keep their electric fence up. Be explicit with the stakes. The clearer you are with what happens if the players don't succeed, the more likely they will be willing to invoke and succeed at a cost to make it happen.

Because zombies don't roll dice, they deal stress in one of two ways: when a player chooses to succeed at a cost or when the GM invokes a zombie aspect. When a character succeeds at a cost and takes stress from a zombie, they take stress equal to the difference in shifts they need to turn the roll into a success. When you invoke a zombie aspect, the character may make an appropriate defend roll against a difficulty of +2 for each zombie aspect invoked.

> *Nathan dropped into a pit of zombies locked up in a sub-basement. They have Strength in Numbers and an Infectious Bite. The GM spends two fate points for a +4 attack on Nathan. He*

> *musters a +3 defense, taking a 1-stress hit. Even if the GM*
> *doesn't spend more fate points to hit him with another attack*
> *next round, he's still got to find a way out of here.*

Many zombie stories have an element of discovering the source of the infection and how it works. The gradual reveal also increases the threat of the zombies, since they get more opportunities to compel themselves into situations. As GM, you may use any of the zombie aspects at any time, but they are revealed when they are used. Once all the aspects are discovered, the exploration continues. The zombies continue to evolve as a threat. Maybe the dead are learning. Maybe the virus mutated. Maybe the demons are angry the survivors keep winning. When the maximum number of zombie aspects is in play, you may remove one of them whenever the characters reach a significant milestone.

Fate makes the game about the people, and people are what make a zombie tale memorable. ◼

RELATIONSHIPS WITH INFLUENCE

by STEVE RADABAUGH

Relationships with Influence

Unlike most roleplaying games, traditional fiction often has a single central character exerting influence over multiple side characters. In this variation of Fate, the players play all of the characters that surround that central character. Each character relationship, expressed as an Extra, allows influence to be exerted and received, shaping the decision-making process. Playing stories where one player ends up playing the main character makes it difficult to let all the players feel like they're contributing equally. The mechanic presented here allows you to play those stories giving all the players an equal footing.

While it may sound like a hard sell to convince a gaming group to spend some time playing secondary characters, it is fun to play games from a different perspective once in a while. Think of space pirates all influencing their captain, college students influencing the star football player, or a game based on a reality TV show where people compete for the heart of one bachelor or bachelorette.

CENTRAL CHARACTER CREATION

Creating this central character is a collaborative activity, and should be done before the players create their own characters. Grab a piece of paper and start asking the players about their main character. Start with broad questions: who are they, where did they grow up, what makes them special? As you get answers ask more specific questions based on those answers. Watch for places where the players disagree on the central

character's beliefs or morals. Those disagreements might breed aspects that some of the player characters will try to change about the central character. The players don't all have to be a fan of the central character, but they should all find the character compelling.

Once your group has started to develop the central character, give that character a high concept, trouble, and three additional aspects. Don't worry about skills, stunts, and refresh. Make sure that all of the players are happy with the character. If you don't yet have a set world, you should also go through that process as described in FATE CORE. In fact, world building and the central character building can happen concurrently, each influencing the other.

After the world and central character are created, the players each create their own character. The players need to keep in mind that their characters are not the stars of the show, but rather they are the secondary characters. They may not be creating Picard, but they are creating the rest of the bridge crew. The characters should still be compelling and interesting. However, the most important part of these characters is their relationship with the central character; make sure that you know the connection of each player character to the central character as you create them. The natural thing to do in Fate is to express the relationship as an aspect; the better solution here is to make the relationship an extra.

RELATIONSHIP AS AN EXTRA

Connection Aspect

Each player character has a relationship with the central character as an Extra taken at no additional cost. The relationship starts with a **connection aspect** that states the nature of the relationship and who it is with. Our sample character, Ricardo, has the relationship *"Nephew of Major Marge."*

Point of Contention Aspect

Because happy-go-lucky relationships aren't as interesting, this relationship needs a **point of contention** aspect. It is something that the central character and the player character don't agree on. It should be something that adds some drama to the game. Ricardo's relationship has the aspect *"Marge Doesn't Approve of Lucy, My Girlfriend."*

Bonding Moment Aspect

The relationship also starts with one bonding moment aspect that describes a specific event between the player character and the central character that helped forge their relationship. This bonding moment can be invoked to influence the central character when trying to convince them of a course of action. Over the course of a campaign a character will add new bonding moments to this relationship. When something happens between the player's character and the central character that you think makes a good bonding moment, write it down and save it. When the player reaches a milestone they get to add a bonding moment aspect to the relationship. You will hopefully have several written down for the player to choose from.

> *Ricardo is trying to convince Major Marge that they should keep more guards posted around the perimeter of the camp to watch for zombies. He rolls his Rapport and gets (+2) Fair, but needed to get (+3) Good. He spends a fate point to invoke Camping Trip in the Ozarks to remind Marge of the dangers in the wild and raise his roll to a (+4) Great.*

The relationship also has a stress track. The number of stress boxes in it is equal to the number of bonding moments that the relationship has. A new relationship will have one stress box, with more being earned as bonding moments develop.

There may be other characters who see things differently than the players do, and find that relationship a hindrance to their goals. They can work to undermine that relationship.

> *Mr. Thompson doesn't like that Major Marge keeps deferring to her nephew on all of her important decisions. In an attempt to disgrace Ricardo, he brings in some fake evidence that implicates Ricardo in some nefarious things to a meeting with Ricardo and Major Marge. Thompson rolls his Provoke (+4) Great and gets ⊞■⊞⊞ for a total of (+7) Epic. Ricardo tries to defend with his Rapport, but only rolls a total of (+3) Good. With four shifts, he needs to use up two of the stress boxes on the relationship and take a Mild consequence of In an Argument. Until that consequence passes, the GM will be able to invoke it to give Mr. Thompson bonuses to convince Major Marge that Ricardo is wrong.*

SAMPLE CHARACTERS

Major Marge

ASPECT

HIGH CONCEPT: A NATURAL LEADER

TROUBLE: SO MANY LIVES REST ON MY SHOULDERS

DE FACTO LEADER OF FT. KONI • TOUGH AS NAILS

THE WORLD IS GOING TO HELL AND I HAVE TO STOP IT

STRESS

Physical ☐ ☐   Mental ☐ ☐

Ricardo

ASPECT

HIGH CONCEPT: FORMER MARINE LOOKING FOR HIS OWN PLACE

TROUBLE: HAUNTED BY THE HORRORS OF WAR

THE CAUTIOUS SURVIVE • I HAVE TO PROTECT EVERYONE

MARGE IS ALL I HAVE LEFT

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Shoot
GOOD (+3)	Empathy, Physique
FAIR (+2)	Drive, Fight, Notice
AVERAGE (+1)	Athletics, Investigate, Rapport, Will

STUNTS

It's Easier to Make Them Dead Again. +2 to shooting when targeting a zombie.

Determined to Help Others. May use Empathy to overcome obstacles when doing so directly helps another.

All That Training Paid Off. +2 to athletics when marching or running a distance.

STRESS

Physical ☐ ☐ ☐   Mental ☐ ☐ ☐

RELATIONSHIP: NEPHEW OF MAJ MARGE

POINT OF CONTENTION: MARGE DOESN'T APPROVE OF MY GIRLFRIEND.

BONDING MOMENTS: CAMPING TRIP IN THE OZARKS • MOM'S FUNERAL

Relationship Stress: ☐ ☐

Mr. Thompson

ASPECT

HIGH CONCEPT: CIVILIAN LEADER OF THE SURVIVORS

TROUBLE: AM I IN CHARGE, OR IS MY EGO?

AGING POLITICIAN • THAT OLD FOX

GETTING TETCHY

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)   Provoke

GOOD (+3)   Rapport, Will

FAIR (+2)   Contacts, Deceive, Resources

AVERAGE (+1)   Empathy, Investigate, Lore, Stealth

STUNTS

I Fight with Words. +2 to Rapport when Survival is on the line.

Always able to work a crowd. When faced with a crowd, roll Rapport against +0 (Mediocre) and count shifts. For each shift you may ask the GM one question about how the crowd would react to a certain situation.

Intimidating with age. You may use Provoke instead of Will to defend against Provoke.

STRESS

Physical ☐ ☐   Mental ☐ ☐ ☐

RELATIONSHIP: MARGE AND I WERE ONCE LOVERS

POINT OF CONTENTION: WE NEVER DID SEE EYE TO EYE

BONDING MOMENTS: WE WILL ALWAYS HAVE PARIS • DESPITE OUR PAST, WE CAN BE FRIENDS NOW

Relationship Stress: ☐ ☐

PROGRESSION AND MILESTONES

As the campaign progresses, relationships will evolve, just like characters do. Each time a character reaches a significant milestone in addition to normal advancement, they can add a bonding moment to the relationship up to a total of three times. After the third, the player can replace an existing bonding moment with a new one. These should be things that have happened between the characters in the story. The number of stress boxes in the relationship will always match the number of bonding moments the relationship has. It will start with one, and get up to three.

Ricardo has reached a couple significant milestones after surviving several weeks in the zombie apocalypse. He and Marge saw quite a bit of combat together. He replaces the "Camping in the Ozarks" bonding moment with "We Had Each Other's Back When The Zombies Took Ft. Koni." Also, since it makes sense in the story, "Marge Doesn't Approve of Lucy, My Girlfriend" gets replaced with the new point of contention aspect "Marge Didn't Cry When the Zombies Ate Lucy".

Your group may use this mechanic just as presented, or it may end up being a smaller part of your campaign. Meaty relationships can be tricky when it comes to roleplaying, and this system will give you more options to incorporate dynamic, evolving connections. ✚

LIFEGARD RESEARCH STATION #4
by CARRIE HARRIS

When I was a kid, I wanted to be a rodeo star. Back then, my worst problem was trying to talk my parents into driving me to my aunt's horse farm so I could practice breakaway roping. I imagined myself roping cattle with a deft flick of my wrist or flying around barrels while the crowd cheered my name. Rodeo was the only thing I cared about.

Then the dead began to rise.

My family moved to the farm, where the remote location and cold weather kept the zombie attacks thin. At first, I was thrilled, but it was a hard and lonely childhood. It's not easy to be a rodeo star when the only audience is in your head. I was seventeen when the LifeGard Corporation came knocking, recruiting for their new Safe Zone Compounds, and I volunteered without a second thought. I never expected that my rodeo skills would be the thing that got me in. I was housed. Educated. Safe.

For fifteen years, zombies were a controllable menace. But that all changed one fateful day.

◆■◗◆

I hopped atop my horse, my lab coat flapping. My partner, Cantrell, gave me the kind of grin that ensured his bunk was never lonely at night, the one that crinkled the corners of his eyes, despite knowing that it had never worked on me and never would.

"'Bout time you got here, Senior Biochemist," he said in his slow drawl as his horse, Ladybell, shied away from me. She'd always been skittish. "Didja fall asleep at your lab table?"

"Who got your panties all in a bunch?" I asked, settling myself more firmly in my saddle and patting Frost's neck. He tossed his head, wanting

to get this over with so he could get back to his warm stall. The weather kept teetering on the cusp of winter without quite committing. I was already yearning for spring.

Cantrell grinned. The other techs always talked about how dreamy he was, but I couldn't get there. He was like my brother. Plus, it was hard to get worked up over someone after you saw him sweaty and wild-eyed, puking his guts out after going hand-to-hand with a zombie schoolgirl. Much better to not get involved. Much better to stick with witty banter and verbal one-upmanship.

"I'd answer that, but you always say you don't want the details," he said, flashing his ID badge at the barn scanner and leading the way out.

I decided to ignore that statement. "So what's the situation? I had to finish processing my samples or they'd over-fixate by the time we got back. I missed the radio alert."

"I don't speak lab rat, Grant," he said. "You know that. We've got an OP breach. Approximately five zombies on site."

"Ooooh. They actually made it through the outer perimeter? We got us some talented undead this time."

I let out a huff of impressed breath and brought Frost up to a canter. All 200 residents of the Safe Zone pulled double duty. Everyone—scientists, janitors, farmers, the whole kit and kaboodle—was combat trained. That was the price we paid for safety. We always followed the rules, because when you didn't people died.

It was a tough thing, but we all knew what we were up against. We'd known when we volunteered to staff the new post located well beyond the safety borders, in the hopes of creating a cure or an immunization or something. We weren't the only ones. There was an Envirogeneics compound about five miles up the road. But the two groups, working for competing companies, didn't mix well at all.

✛■▬✛

Cantrell and I were floaters. The best combatants were assigned to two-person roaming teams. We went where the action was hottest. With only five walkers, one of the other teams had probably neutralized them by now, but there might still be a live one. I'd spread the word last night at mess that I needed a new test specimen; hopefully someone had remembered.

The base was quiet as we closed on the inner perimeter. I released my rope from the pommel just in case, gripping it loosely in one hand as I checked for kinks. Cantrell fell back, flanking me, rifle at the ready. He'd been a sniper in the military, back when the United States was a thing. If any zeds got too close, he'd deal with it, but that rarely happened.

I always got a rush of adrenaline when we got a call, but I'd never felt afraid.

Not until that day, anyway.

We rounded the med building just as the sentry on the inner fence—the research director of my lab—raised a gun to her shoulder. I could see the lurching forms of the undead on the other side of the fence, trying desperately to get at her through the chain link. The muzzle of the gun dipped and swerved as panic interfered with her weapons training. Littleton had never been a natural combatant, but she was a whiz with viral transmission theories.

I dug my heels into Frost's ribcage, and he responded instantly to my silent command, surging forward into a smooth gallop. I kept the lasso out, hoping that I wouldn't have to use it on someone I considered a friend, but if Littleton got infected.... I didn't kill zombies—that was Cantrell's job. I captured them when I could, used them to test potential cures. I didn't want to use Littleton as a test subject. It was hard to see people you knew reduced to shells. I'd done it plenty and didn't like it at all.

The fence rattled, and she squeezed off a shot. One of the zombies on the other side toppled over in slow, jerky stages. But they kept coming, all mindless hunger and parched flesh and hungry, searching mouths. Where were the other teams? How had these walkers gotten so far into the compound? None of these questions could have good answers, but there was no time to dwell. Undead fingers twined in the chain link, pulling and twisting the metal as Littleton froze.

"Veer right," barked Cantrell.

We'd worked together long enough; I knew what he wanted. I peeled off to the side, out of his line of fire. He made quick work of it. Zombies went down like dominoes. Easy peasy.

Muzzle pointed carefully at the ground, Littleton turned to face me. My grin faded when I saw her expression. Her brow was lined with fear, her eyes wide, her normally sallow cheeks blotchy. She held her hand up toward me, the palm dripping onto the ground. Staining it red.

"Stay back!" she said. "Don't come any closer!"

"Grant, stay back!" Cantrell echoed, his voice high with worry. His usual unflappability was replaced with borderline panic. He'd gotten like this before when he'd thought I was in danger, and I couldn't decide whether to be offended at his lack of faith in my ability to handle myself or whether to think he cared about me after all.

"Were you bit or sprayed?" I demanded, holding my lasso at the ready. If the change began, I wouldn't have much time. My eyes were scanning her body, looking for the telltale tremor.

"I don't think so," she said, her voice shaking anyway. "I didn't put my fingers through the fence. I got hit by shrapnel."

"Sorry about that," said Cantrell, but he didn't drop his rifle. None of us expected him to.

"So you're good, then," I said, relaxing a little bit. "Hallelujah."

"Not sure about that," Cantrell put in roughly. "No offense, Littleton. But you know how easy it is to get contaminated."

"No offense taken," she said. "There's no harm in waiting."

But there was. A flash of movement over her shoulder caught my eye. I blinked, trying to make sense of what I was seeing. A zombie was running at the fence. Fast. Like, fast enough to give Frost a run for his money. I'd never seen a zed run before. And it wore a LifeGard jacket. Blue. Whoever that had been, they'd worked in Mechanics with Cantrell. It was hard to make a firm ID, though, what with all the blood and gore on its face.

"Oh shit," I said as the thing threw itself at the fence with enough force to put a dent in the post.

"Down!" yelled Cantrell.

He didn't hesitate despite the fact that the zed must have been one of his friends. I went to ground as the gun roared over my head. I was far enough away from the fence to avoid the spray of blood as the shot hit home.

Littleton was all too close.

Contaminated fluids spattered her face.

"I want to be a test subject," she gasped, but she didn't get much further than that.

Her mouth locked itself into a grimace as the virus exploded through her system. I whipped my lasso out, swung it, and released with mechanical precision. The reinforced rope slipped over her torso as she jittered and jerked with the force of the biological changes taking over her body. We only had moments before she attacked. Every second was precious.

"Frost, cage!" I shouted, leaping to the ground. The stallion bolted for the containment cages, dragging the still-changing zombie behind him through the dirt. Cantrell cantered past me, holding out an arm, and I swung up to ride pillion behind him. We followed along to make sure Littleton didn't get loose. It happened sometimes.

I radioed an update in to Command, trying to sound calm. But I wasn't. The virus had mutated again. Which meant that PB-17, our promising new inoculation, probably wasn't going to do shit. I'd try, of course. But I knew better than to get my hopes up.

Frost entered the cages, dragging Littleton through the dirt and slamming her into one of the posts anchoring the gate. For a tense moment, I thought the lasso was going to break, but it didn't happen. Littleton rolled

into the containment pen. The gates clanged shut, trapping her inside. She snarled and threw herself against the reinforced mesh, teething working hungrily. She wasn't as strong as the other zed had been. Not yet.

I dropped off Ladybell's back and hurried around the pen to Frost, patting him with soothing hands, but he didn't quiet until I detached him from the thing on the other side of the fence.

"Stand guard," I shouted to Cantrell. "I'm going for the new inoculation!"

It wasn't standard protocol, but I knew the PB-16 in the cage box wasn't going to work. PB-17, which I'd been testing just a few minutes earlier, probably wouldn't do any better. But the information I'd get analyzing the cells in the lab might lead me to PB-18. Littleton's samples might be essential to our survival, especially if zeds infected with the new strain could break down our perimeter fences like they were straws.

<p style="text-align:center">✛◼◻✛</p>

My card at the ready, I flashed through the auto-checkpoint without slowing, threw open the door, and stopped short. The lab was in shambles. Delicate and expensive machinery shattered on the ground. Glass everywhere, surrounded by puddles of what was probably infectious material. I took an instinctive step back.

And then he charged me.

The most frightening part wasn't that there was a zombie in my lab. It was that I didn't recognize him, and when you live in a compound with only 200 other people, you recognize everyone. He was rugged, all slabs of muscle and dark hair, dressed in a black shirt and pants. In one hand, he clutched a file folder.

He charged me.

I snatched up the mallet from the emergency box near the door and threw it. It was a delaying tactic at best; the hardened rubber bounced off his forehead. Made him stagger. It bought me enough time to retreat as far back as I could.

I drew my sidearm, stooped behind the arching plastic of the fume hood, and fired. The zed's head exploded, spraying infectious material all over the place. On the hood. But not—after a thorough examination— on me.

That had been too close, and it took me a moment to get a hold of myself. None of this made sense. How had a zed gotten in here? And what was he doing with one of my research files?

I tamped down the panic and made myself think. He must have gotten infected after he entered the lab. Maybe with one of my samples? It looked like the careless fool had been trying to make off with…it looked like the test results on PB-17. I could imagine how it had gone—the man hurrying through the unfamiliar lab, worried he might get caught, and

knocking over the samples I'd been working on right before the alert. The infection blazing through his system. The wild flailing of his body, dashing delicate equipment to the floor.

And that guy did look familiar the more I thought about it. I'd seen him at the Envirogeneics compound. We'd gone there for a meeting that almost ended in bloodshed. I didn't understand how we could be fighting each other when there were so few humans left, but it seemed like I was in the minority.

Only one explanation made sense. This man caused the breach, just to steal my research. If I could have kicked him without infecting myself, I would have. How many people had he killed today? And all because they'd accused Littleton of stealing their research, and she'd scoffed, and…

The whole thing disgusted me. I wished I could ask her about it, but the destruction of my lab had doomed her. Maybe her predicament was even her own fault. Maybe we'd been fighting each other just as much as we had the zombies.

I snorted and said out loud, "That's ridiculous," as if speaking the words might make them true. Except that I knew how much money a cure was worth. And there were weird things about life here that I'd never been able to explain. The off-limits areas at the Central Office. The way rule-breakers disappeared without a word. The way Research Director Littleton had suddenly changed the direction of our research to this new and promising formula.

If I'd been following protocol, I would have sealed myself in the lab and waited for a decon team to release me, but if I hadn't changed yet, I was pretty sure I wouldn't. And I hadn't really entered the lab, not all the way. I sprinted back toward the pen. As I grew closer, I heard the blast of Cantrell's gun. His face went slack with relief as I ran up.

"Thank god," he said. "I was just coming for you. I thought something must have happened."

"No, no, no!" I yelled, looking at Littleton's lifeless body slumped inside the cage.

"It's okay, Phoebe," said Cantrell, pulling me up against him.

I could feel his heartbeat, soothing and strong. But I refused to be lulled into complacency. There was too much mourning to do, too much to reconstruct. Too many questions to ask. I was beginning to suspect that LifeGard wasn't the sanctuary I thought it was. There was no way Littleton had been working on her own. Envirogeneics wasn't blameless either. Were we all just pawns in a power struggle to them? Did they care less about our survival than they did about the bottom line?

Innocent people had died today, all in the name of greed. I tilted my head to look up at Cantrell. I wanted to confide my suspicions to him. I

wanted to trust him.

But could I?

He'd saved my life too many times not to. So I took a chance. I took a deep breath.

I said, "I have a theory, and you're not going to like it."

He didn't. But he listened. And I knew that whatever happened next, we would face it together. ✚

Phoebe Grant

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: ZOMBIE HUNTING BIOCHEMIST

TROUBLE: IDEALIST IN A CAPITALIST WORLD

OTHER: NOT MY FIRST RODEO
MUST FIND A CURE • MY TRUSTY STEED

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Investigate
GOOD (+3)	Lore, Ride
FAIR (+2)	Athletics, Shoot, Will
AVERAGE (+1)	Empathy, Notice, Physique, Rapport

STUNTS

Quick Analysis. Because Grant understands the infectious stages of the zombie virus, no zombie she can see can act before her in an exchange.

Well-Stocked Lab. +2 to overcome actions made in her lab with Investigate and Lore.

Wannabe Rodeo Star. Grant can use her Ride skill when attempting to lasso zombies.

STRESS

Physical ☐ ☐ ☐   **Mental** ☐ ☐ ☐

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Ray Cantrell

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: ZOMBIE SNIPER

TROUBLE: SOFT SPOT FOR PHOEBE

OTHER: FORMER MILITARY MAN
DISARMING GRIN • FIGHT FIRST, PUKE LATER

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Shoot
GOOD (+3)	Rapport, Stealth
FAIR (+2)	Fight, Notice, Physique
AVERAGE (+1)	Athletics, Crafts, Ride, Will

STUNTS

Sniper Rifle. Cantrell gains a +2 bonus to attacks made with a rifle.

Dreamy Ex-Soldier. Cantrell can use Rapport in place of Contacts when interacting with other ex-military or with people who might be attracted to him.

Tactical Teamwork. Cantrell gets a +2 bonus to create an advantage using Shoot when working with an ally in combat.

STRESS

Physical ☐ ☐ ☐   Mental ☐ ☐ ☐

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

THE DEAD AND THE DOOMED
by BRENDAN CONWAY

This place is a sanctuary. A goddamn fortress. It's my home, where I would come to hide from… well… the hungry *public. It was safe. And it's still safe.*

You want in? You're going to follow my rules. That starts with leaving those weapons at the door…

- Olivia Allerby, former movie star, 27 days after First Rising

The Rising

It's too much to hope for that anybody would be able to explain where the dead came from. What it is that let them stand up and shamble into homes. But that doesn't matter. The Rising has spread across the world, reaching into every corner with undead hands, and now the walkers, the shamblers, the risen, the biters—the zombies—are everywhere. They fill the city, and they roam the wild. Folks might find safety for a few moments…but never for long. Not without strong walls and plenty of ammo, and even then, it's a fragile thing.

THE MANOR

That's where a place like the Manor comes in. It's a big house—huge, really. It has fences. Security measures. A back-up generator. It's well-stocked with supplies. It's defensible. Any survivors who knew of the Manor eventually found their way to it. They arrived at its gates in ones or twos or threes, and they requested entrance. They requested safety. And those in the Manor gave it to them…albeit reluctantly.

And that's where this small community has found itself, just as winter gets started. A bunch of people, stuck in this Manor together as it gets

colder outside. It's only a matter of time before somebody can't take the pressure—of zombies, lack of supplies, other people, the cold, everything—any longer and snaps. And everyday folks are finding out that the Manor maybe isn't really as safe as they thought. And that its supplies aren't quite infinite. And that maybe all they're really doing here is delaying the end.

Setting Creation

As a Quick Start Adventure, **The Dead and the Doomed** has everything you need to jump right into a zombie-ridden Fate one-shot game. Unlike other one-shots published in the THE FATE CODEX, **The Dead and the Doomed** is designed to create a single session of zombie movie-like play instead of a new campaign.

Before you start, discuss the broader setting with your group. Talk about what the characters know about the Rising. **The Dead and the Doomed** assumes that you're playing a few months after the dead started to rise, but there are holes in the story that your group should fill in. How did the infection spread? Why did the government fail to respond? What rumors have spread about the disease?

After getting the most basic elements down, create your Manor. Then go through the current and impending issues, selecting an impending issue that sounds interesting.

DEFINING YOUR MANOR

When you play **The Dead and the Doomed**, you define the particulars of your Manor. The following is always true about your Manor:

- It is isolated. The Manor is outside dense urban areas.
- It is palatial. The Manor is huge and has plenty of space in it for lots of people.
- It is protected. It has defenses that make it reasonably safe.

The Manor also has four defining aspects:

- The **location aspect** refers to the Manor's geographic location and important nearby assets and dangers.
- The **supplies aspect** refers to the Manor's most valuable or abundant supplies.
- The **security aspect** refers to the Manor's primary defenses, whatever makes the Manor a good place in which to take shelter.

- The **weakness aspect** refers to the Manor's inherent problems that threaten the struggling community or expose it to harm.

Quick Start Manor

LOCATION: EDGE OF A MAJOR CITY

SUPPLIES: GUN CLOSER

SECURITY: HIGH FENCES AND CAMERAS

WEAKNESS: TOO BIG TO MONITOR SAFELY

One at a time, each player gets to choose one of the four types of aspect for the Manor: location, supplies, security, or weakness. Each of these aspects is always present while within the Manor. PCs can invoke them for an appropriate advantage, and the GM can compel them when they cause trouble.

Populating the Manor

NPC residents of the Manor are simple Fate Core NPCs with three aspects: a high concept, motivation, and methods. The high concept is the same as it is for PCs, a general statement about who the NPC is, summarizing the most obvious and relevant elements of who they have become since the apocalypse. The motivation aspect is a statement about what drives the NPC in this particular situation. The methods aspect is a statement of the means by which the NPC pursues their motivation.

A simple way to think of how these three aspects connect is to think of the high concept, motivation, and methods as answers to the following questions, in order:

- Who are they?
- What do they want?
- How do they get it?

Go around to each player one at a time, and have them name an NPC who lives in the Manor, choosing the NPC's high concept, motivation, and methods. After the players choose these three aspects, fill out the NPC by choosing a single skill column for the NPC, and a single stunt. A skill column is a set of four skills, one each at Great +4, Good +3, Fair +2, and Average +1. Then give the NPC stress and consequences as normal for Fate Core characters.

There are certainly other folks who live in the Manor; the GM can add them to the setting as needed with the same kinds of aspects and skills.

To get started quickly, here are a couple NPCs set up in advance for you to use.

Jo Kitrall

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: TRAUMATIZED MAGAZINE MOGUL

MOTIVATION: TO SURVIVE AT ALL COSTS

METHODS: VICIOUS MANIPULATION

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Deceive
GOOD (+3)	Provoke
FAIR (+2)	Empathy
AVERAGE (+1)	Will

STUNTS

Veiled Kindness. Add +2 to attacks with Deceive when your words are couched in kindness and helpfulness.

STRESS

Physical ☐ ☐ ☐   **Mental** ☐ ☐

Darrell King

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: RENT-A-COP TURNED BRAWLER

MOTIVATION: TO PUT HIMSELF IN CHARGE

METHODS: FISTS AND BULLETS

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Physique
GOOD (+3)	Provoke
FAIR (+2)	Shoot
AVERAGE (+1)	Investigate

STUNTS

Big Man with Big Fists. You can use Physique to attack instead of Fight when you are larger than your opponents.

STRESS

Physical ☐ ☐   **Mental** ☐ ☐ ☐

CURRENT AND IMPENDING ISSUE

Explain and talk about the **current issue**, which is *The Cold, Empty Winter*. Have the players name at least two faces for the current issue, or use the two provided faces. These faces must be other residents of the Manor.

Then ask your players as a group to choose from one of the two available **impending issues**: *Oncoming Horde* or *Dwindling Supplies*. Have the players fill in two additional faces for their chosen impending issue as well, or use the provided faces.

Current Issue: The Cold, Empty Winter

The cold is here, and the snow is on its way. With the arrival of winter, it's harder and harder to leave the Manor. Refugees keep showing up, looking for warmth and safety and shelter, and that's only going to stress the Manor, its resources, and its people further and further. The decision has to be made soon—is this the place where you're going to survive for the length of the winter? Or are you going to leave now and take your chances in the cold, trying to find somewhere better?

Faces:

- Vernon Elleswood, a local retiree who heavily advocates hunkering down for winter.
- Shaundra Teek, a mother of two children who believes that running to the government (somewhere) is the only route available.

THE COLD, EMPTY WINTER

VERNON ELLESWOOD

Local retiree who heavily advocates hunkering down for winter

SHAUNDRA TEEK

Mother of two, wants to make a run to the government for help

IMPENDING ISSUES

In addition to being caught in *The Cold, Empty Winter*, there are a number of other impending issues that might occupy the PCs, including:

Oncoming Horde

Since society collapsed, zombies have clumped together into greater and greater groups, hordes gripped by a strange feral intelligence that makes them more dangerous than usual. The biggest horde anyone has ever seen is on a path directly to the Manor's front door. Whether or not the Manor can survive this onslaught depends on the newly formed community within its walls.

Faces:

- Leah Pruitt, the young woman fleeing from the horde, bringing news of its approach.
- Captain Richard Aimes, former military leader who wants to make a stand against the horde.

Dwindling Supplies

The Manor is going through supplies more quickly than normal. Maybe the survivors just didn't have as much as they thought, or maybe the colony is using up too much. The worst-case scenario is that someone is secreting away a personal stockpile in the event that anything goes wrong. One way or another, the Manor isn't going to last for long without more supplies.

Faces:

- Branson Crawford, former groundskeeper of the Manor.
- Nita Santiago, a doctor from the area who knows where to find more supplies.

ONCOMING HORDE

LEAH PRUITT

Young woman fleeing from the horde, bringing news of its approach

CAPTAIN RICHARD AIMES

Former military leader who wants to make a stand against the horde

DWINDLING SUPPLIES

BRANSON CRAWFORD

Former groundskeeper of the Manor

NITA SANTIAGO

Area doctor who knows where to find more supplies

ZOMBIES!

The zombies in **The Dead and the Doomed** follow the same rules as in Rob Wieland's piece, **All Fate Must Be Eaten**. Although zombies are a constant, looming threat, the focus in the game is on the interpersonal conflicts against the backdrop of the zombie crisis instead of zombie killing. See page 214 for more information about using zombies as environmental threats.

The zombies have five aspects representing their traits. Some aspects are known to PCs at the start of play, and some have yet to be discovered. Choose your own or use the sample provided.

Quick Start Zombies

KNOWN: INFECTIOUS BITE • SHOOT THEM IN THE HEAD! THEY NEVER STOP COMING!

UNKNOWN: FERAL HORDE HIVE MIND • SEES IN THE DARK

Don't hesitate to add more zombie aspects to the undying hordes, especially if PCs are investigating how the zombies work. It's rewarding for the PCs to discover new weaknesses in the walking dead!

Character Creation

The Dead and the Doomed is written for Fate Core with changes described below. When players are creating their survivors, they start with a **character seed** from the list below. Players should tailor the character seeds to create high concepts specific to their characters. For example, if a player picked the character seed Celebrity, then they might choose the high concept **Famous Movie Star**.

CHARACTER SEED

Each player chooses a character seed from this list:

- Celebrity
- Kid refugee
- Cop
- Criminal
- Paper pusher
- Grieving parent
- Survivalist
- Scientist

The character seed is directly tied to each character's **motivations**. Each character seed comes with three possible motivations that will determine the character's secret goals and intent in *The Dead and the Doomed*. For more on motivations, see page 241.

After each player has chosen their character seed and their high concept, they each roll a single fate die in secret and cross-reference the result with their character seed's motivation, listed on page 241. Each player writes down their motivation on an index card and keeps the card face down in front of them.

PREGENERATED SURVIVORS

If your players wish to play pregenerated survivors, you can use the four sample characters provided on page 245. Skills are provided for Fate Core versions of each character, as well as some of their aspects and stunts. Players will have one stunt and two aspects to fill in over the course of play, and they will still have to roll for their motivation.

ASPECTS

The Dead and the Doomed uses the aspects offered in Rob Wieland's essay on page 209. Characters each have a **high concept**, a **trouble**, a **survivor aspect**, a **friction aspect**, and a **link aspect**. For more details on these aspects, see page 209. If you are using the pregenerated characters from page 245, you will only have friction aspects and link aspects to fill in.

During character creation, create a high concept, a trouble, and a survivor aspect for each character. Leave friction and link aspects to fill in during play.

SKILLS

Characters in *The Dead and the Doomed* have a standard skill pyramid peaking at Great +4. *The Dead and the Doomed* uses a modified skill list from Fate Core (page 97, Fate Core). The full skill list is as follows:

- Athletics
- Burglary
- Crafts
- Deceive
- Drive
- Empathy
- Fight
- Local Knowledge
- Investigate
- Physique
- Provoke
- Rapport
- Shoot
- Stealth
- Will
- Science
- Survival
- Leadership

The only skills removed from the original list are Contacts, Notice, and Resources. The new skills are Science, Survival, and Leadership. Lore has been replaced with Local Knowledge, specifically referring to your familiarity with the area surrounding the Manor.

Science

Science is a non-specific hodgepodge of scientific and medical knowledge. Somebody with high science is somebody at home in a white coat, and probably the colony's best chance at figuring out how these zombies work, or how best to take care of a wound.

Overcome: You're applying your scientific or medical knowledge to solve a problem. You're working first aid or administering antibiotics, or you're prescribing remedies based on real medical knowledge.

Create an Advantage: Study the zombies and use your scientific know-how to figure out how the heck these monsters work, even at a high-level. Or use your scientific knowledge to put together concoctions or tools that can help you, like when you realize that if you mix this chemical and that chemical, you get something that goes boom.

STUNTS

Mortician. You are used to studying corpses and death. Take +2 to Create Advantage with Science when you have a dead body in front of you to study.

Doctor. You're as experienced and trained as an emergency room doctor—something rare and incredibly valuable nowadays. Once per session, if you have the supplies for medical treatment and the time to apply it, you can reduce a Moderate Consequence to Mild.

Survival

Survival is about your ability to forage for food in the wild, to find shelter and safety, and to keep yourself alive even when things are hunting you, trying to kill you. Survival replaces Notice for all intents and purposes; the only things you need to notice are the ones that are going to kill you.

Overcome: Survival is all about having what it takes to keep yourself alive, and that means being alert and ready for anything. When there's a zombie shambling its way across creaky floorboards to chomp on you from behind? Survival is what you use to hear it coming.

Create an Advantage: Get supplies by foraging or hunting in the wild. Or use some natural element to your advantage, maybe setting up a snare or a trap that'll catch some unwary thug who'd love to ambush you and take your hard-won deer meat.

Defend: Keeping yourself alive, that's what it's all about. When you are clinging to life, a heartbeat away from getting a zombie's chompers sunk into your leg, you're going to fight like a wild animal to keep alive, and that's when Survive can save your life.

STUNTS

Forager. You are an expert at finding food in the wilderness. Take +2 to create an advantage with Survival when hunting for food in the wild.

Home in the Wild. Once per session, you can simply disappear from any scene while you are in the wild, taking cover in camouflage and the natural environment. You can reappear in any scene later in the wild, or coming out of the wild.

Leadership

Leadership is about being someone that the others can look up to. It's about that strength of character, that presence that gets others to look your way when they need direction. It covers giving speeches, coming up with plans, and dealing with large groups of people instead of individuals.

Overcome: When somebody is giving you that angry look, refusing to listen, and you speak to them not as an equal but as a leader, someone who can take them to safety? That's overcoming their own tendency towards chaos or self-interest with Leadership.

Create an Advantage: Give a speech, make a war cry, create a plan, and get the others to follow it.

STUNTS

Listen to Me. Once per session, you can interrupt a fight between people by shouting at them to listen to you. This counts as compel on the combatants, and they get a fate point if they listen to you.

Here's the Plan…. When you create an advantage with Leadership by coming up with a complex tactical plan in advance, the plan starts with two free invokes on it, usable by anyone who was part of the plan.

New Extra: Motivations

In **The Dead and the Doomed**, each PC has a motivation, an underlying motive for their actions during the game that drives their efforts and plans. Sometimes, motivations will be positive, but some characters have motivations that are outright destructive or nihilistic. No one can know for sure what motivates their fellow PCs, until those PCs reveal their true intentions.

Players determine their characters' motivations during character creation. Each player rolls a single fate die—SECRETLY—and checks their result with the character seed motivations below. Each player writes down their motivation and goal secretly on an index card, and then keeps that index card face down in front of them.

At any time, a PC can choose to reveal their true motivation by taking an overt action directly in line with their motivation and flipping over their index card. When a PC reveals their true motivation, it becomes another aspect on their character, with two free tags on it. When a PC tags their motivation for those first free tags, they get +3, not +2.

In **The Dead and the Doomed**, all PCs have goals. Explain to the players that these goals are their motivations, the things that they are trying to accomplish over the course of play. Just as it is your job as GM to play NPCs to their motivations and desires, it is the players' jobs to drive towards their PCs' goals. In the end, as long as each PC is driving towards their goal, you'll have a game of interesting interpersonal conflict, regardless of whether or not anyone actually achieves their goal.

CHARACTER SEED MOTIVATIONS

Here are the motivations for the different character seeds offered in **The Dead and the Doomed**.

Celebrity

⊞ *Gather a Cult of Personality.* **Goal:** Get a majority of the Manor (over half) to agree to follow and protect you.

◼ *Be Alone and Fortify the Manor.* **Goal:** Have no more than 3 other people left in the Manor with you, and have the Manor be ready for winter.

⊟ *Cut a Murder Manor Video.* **Goal:** Record the people in the Manor dying one by one, until you have footage of at least 5 deaths. You sicko.

For all the motivations that might seem to require more detail, don't worry about answering every question at the start of play. Fill in the name of another PC, and then look for opportunities or explanations as you play. When it comes time for you to flip your motivation over, then you can take a quick moment to make sure you're all on the same page about the details.

Cop

■ *Make the Manor as Safe as Can Be.* **Goal:** Reinforce the Manor by keeping zombies away and creating at least two new aspects referring to the Manor's safety. Expel any dangerous human elements.

■ *Seize Control of the Manor.* **Goal:** Have everyone left in the Manor agree to follow your lead, and get rid of anyone who would dissent.

■ *Take Vengeance Upon [INSERT OTHER PC'S NAME HERE].* **Goal:** Make another PC pay for what they did to you or yours before the apocalypse.

Criminal

■ *Ensure the Manor Obeys You.* **Goal:** Have everyone left in the Manor agree to follow your lead, and get rid of anyone who won't.

■ *Be Forgiven for a Crime from [INSERT OTHER PC'S NAME HERE].* **Goal:** Get somebody to forgive you for a crime that you committed against them from before the apocalypse.

■ *Turn the Manor into a New Stronghold.* **Goal:** Collect supplies and ammunition from the environs, enough that the Manor can withstand nearly any hardship, and fortify it with at least one more aspect referring to security.

Grieving Parent

■ *Adopt a New Surrogate Child.* **Goal:** Pick out someone to be your new surrogate child and take care of them, making sure they are safe and protected and have no physical consequences by game's end.

■ *Sacrifice Yourself for the Others.* **Goal:** Die, epically, heroically, saving the others in the Manor, even if it means you have to manufacture the catastrophe.

■ *Adopt a Zombie Child.* **Goal:** Find a zombie child and then take care of it, bringing it to the Manor and keeping it safe. And feeding it. You monster.

Kid Refugee

◨ *Find a Strong Guardian.* **Goal:** Have somebody else strong and capable declare they will take care of you, and put an aspect on them related to them feeling responsible for you.

◼ *Save Your Loved Ones.* **Goal:** Find your family or friends in the areas surrounding the Manor, and get them entry to the Manor.

⊟ *Obtain a Zombie as a Pet.* **Goal:** Figure out how to make a zombie harmless enough that you can keep it safely, and then do that to at least one zombie, keeping it somewhere in the Manor. You weirdo.

Paper Pusher

◨ *Prove Your Value by Saving Them.* **Goal:** Heroically save the lives of the other denizens of the Manor through some dramatic act.

◼ *Form a Strong Bond.* **Goal:** Form a strong connection with another person in the Manor, and put an aspect on them relating to how they will never leave you.

⊟ *Feed Someone to the Zombies.* **Goal:** Be the direct cause of someone else being caught by and eaten by the zombies. You wacknut.

Scientist

◨ *Figure Out the Zombie Plague.* **Goal:** Determine all aspects of the zombies that are available to discover, and discover a useful weakness.

◼ *Organize a New Society.* **Goal:** Have new, concrete rules about how the Manor organizes and runs itself. Add a new aspect to the Manor relating to its organization.

⊟ *Experiment with the Zombie Plague.* **Goal:** Get someone infected with the zombie plague, and then test them in myriad ways (electrocution, lighting them on fire…).

Survivalist

◨ *Form a Hunting Gang.* **Goal:** Get at least 3 other people to join up with you in a gang that takes what it needs and isn't afraid of committing violence.

◼ *Create a Secret Cache of Supplies.* **Goal:** Take supplies from the Manor and secrete them away for yourself in a place where no one will find them.

⊟ *Thin the Herd of the Manor.* **Goal:** Make sure the Manor has no more than yourself and 3 other people in it by any means necessary.

Game Structure

The Dead and the Doomed will be driven primarily by PC motivations butting up against each other, by the constant pressure of zombie attacks, and by NPCs and their own motivations. This is a one-shot about a community in conflict, not a zombie hunting adventure.

Use compels to ramp up the tension and keep the PCs' lives stressful. Compel the weakness of the Manor. Compel the PCs' own aspects. Compel the zombies' aspects to have them appear at inopportune times. Your story in this game doesn't come from following a pre-charted plot so much as it comes from keeping all characters involved constantly under pressure.

Here is a simple structure for approaching the game, cutting it up into three acts. This structure is here just to give you a starting point for how to get into *The Dead and the Doomed*. Use it as fits your game.

ACT ONE: THE FIRST ATTACK

Everything begins with the Manor under attack by zombies who pose a threat to the Manor's supply cache or defenses. Use the weakness aspect of the Manor to determine how the zombies could be threatening. Pressure the PCs into dealing with the zombies and protecting the Manor, but avoid a huge conflict. Instead, use the pressure of this opening attack and its consequences to draw attention to the NPCs and their goals. Give the PCs time to pursue their own agendas as well.

ACT TWO: THE IMPENDING ISSUE APPROACHES

If there seems to be a lull in the action, compel the impending issue to generate more pressure. Make the oncoming horde appear on the horizon, or make an NPC come running through the Manor screaming about how the food supplies are ruined by leaking water. Make the impending issue a major threat, but don't forget to have the NPCs push and pull in different directions with their own goals and motivations. Zombie attacks in this section of the game can be useful, but they exist here to keep up the tension.

ACT THREE: IT ALL FALLS DOWN

From Act Two on, ramp up the tension. Keep the pressure on. Eventually, NPCs or PCs will start taking rash, dangerous actions, and that's when everything should start exploding. The impending issue should come to a head, with the oncoming horde arriving, or with NPCs stealing what few supplies remain to ensure their own survival. Violence breaks out. Compel aspects like crazy. Watch everything burst into flame. See who survives the fire. ✚

OPEN SLOTS

All of the sample characters have an open stunt slot. You can fill that in as you play and flesh out your character. They also each have an open Friction Aspect and an open Link Aspect, as defined in Rob Wieland's *All Fate Must Be Eaten* on page 209. Fill these in during play. Define one of these aspects at the end of each scene that your PC interacts with another PC.

These sample characters do not have their motivations pre-selected. When you choose your character, you will still roll for your motivation and write it secretly on an index card. Each of these characters corresponds to one of the basic high concepts above. Sonya Rasmail is a Cop, Arthur Gingrich is a Celebrity, Heather Fiers is a Refugee Kid, and Alexander Cho is a Criminal

Sonya Rasmail

Sonya is a cop, and a good one. She's capable, confident, and aware, and she always thought it was critically important to do the best she could for the people she served. Since the coming of the walking dead, that drive has been pushed harder than ever. She's seen and done things she never would've expected to do. And now, it's an open question as to whether or not Sonya is still the cop trying to do her best for the people she serves…or if she's become something different.

CHARACTER SEED: COP

High Concept: Steely Police Officer

Trouble: Drive to Do Good, No Matter the Cost

Survivor: Shot Her Way Out of an Infected Police Station

Link: _____

Friction: _____

SKILLS

Great (+4)   Shoot

Good (+3)   Leadership, Physique

Fair (+2)   Fight, Provoke, Will

Average (+1)   Athletics, Burglary, Rapport, Survival

STUNTS

Hail of Fire. You can use Shoot to defend yourself instead of Athletics if you let loose a hail of bullets.

Badge. You can use Leadership to attack someone's mental stress track when you are exerting your authority and demanding they follow your leadership.

_____ .

STRESS

Physical ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   **Mental** ☐ ☐ ☐

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Arthur Gingrich

Arthur is an Author. The capital A is important. Arthur writes *bestsellers*. Everyone and their mother has read a Gingrich. He's had a lasting impact upon the cultural scene, no matter what those critics say when they call him a hack, or say his writing is infantile. Unfortunately, zombies don't really need to read much, so he doesn't have much sway with them. But he can rest assured that every one of his fellow survivors will help keep him alive, realizing that he is probably the most valuable person among them all. Right?

CHARACTER SEED: CELEBRITY

High Concept: FAmous Arrogant Author

Trouble: Thinks He's Better and More Important

Survivor: Beat Literary Agent to Re-Death with Copy of His Own Book

Link: _____

Friction: _____

SKILLS

Great (+4)	Rapport
Good (+3)	Deceive, Local Knowledge
Fair (+2)	Empathy, Provoke, Will
Average (+1)	Fight, Investigate, Science, Shoot

STUNTS

"I Made It Heavy for a Reason!" Take +2 when attacking with Fight when you are using your own book as a weapon.

Name Carries Weight. Take +2 to create an advantage when you are using Rapport to get someone on your side by relying on your fame and status.

_____.

STRESS

Physical ☐ ☐   **Mental** ☐ ☐ ☐

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Heather Fiers

Heather is the kid who smoked behind the school. She's the kid that lots of other kids would've thought cool, except she glared at anyone who tried to get close. She was the loner, but she was always okay with that… kinda. She's the kid who bought herself a motorcycle soon as she could, with money she got from God knows where. When the zombie apocalypse started, she got on her bike, picked up a tire iron in one hand, and started bashing skulls until she got to safety.

CHARACTER SEED: REFUGEE KID

HIGH CONCEPT: TOUGH AS NAILS TEENAGER

TROUBLE: NEVER EVER OPENLY ACCEPTS HELP

SURVIVOR: RAN OVER HEAD CHEERLEADER WITH MOTORCYCLE

LINK: _____

FRICTION: _____

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Athletics
GOOD (+3)	Burglary, Fight
FAIR (+2)	Drive, Provoke, Stealth
AVERAGE (+1)	Crafts, Deceive, Science, Survival

STUNTS

My Bike Is a Weapon. When you are riding on your motorcycle, you can avoid taking the shifts of stress that you deal when you attack by colliding with your enemy.

Looks Promising. You can use Burglary instead of Investigate to find valuable supplies inside of a building.

_____.

STRESS

Physical ☐ ☐   Mental ☐ ☐

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Alexander Cho

Alexander always had a hard time charting the exact series of events that led to him working for bad people, doing bad things, breaking into people's houses on the side. He always felt that it was somebody else's fault. That's probably where the need to drink came from—to make himself feel better for having been taken advantage of by others. Yeah. That's it. Now, though, with the dead rising, he feels it. A chance to reinvent himself. To be something else. He can start anew! All he needs is a safe place, and a bottle of Jack.

CHARACTER SEED: CRIMINAL

HIGH CONCEPT: A THUG AND A THIEF

TROUBLE: ALCOHOLIC AND THIRSTY

SURVIVOR: BASHED THE UNDEAD HEAD OF THE HOMEOWNER HE WAS ROBBING

LINK: _____

FRICTION: _____

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Fight
GOOD (+3)	Deceive, Physique
FAIR (+2)	Burglary, Provoke, Shoot, Stealth
AVERAGE (+1)	Athletics, Crafts, Drive, Investigate, Survival

STUNTS

Killing Stroke. Once per scene, when you force an opponent to take a consequence, you can spend a Fate Point to force them to take a consequence of one higher step up. (see FATE CORE page 111 for more details)

Push Harder! When you use Physique to hold off zombies physically, take +2 to overcome obstacles.

_____.

STRESS

Physical ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   **Mental** ☐ ☐

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2) | Moderate (4) | Major (6)

NOTES

Refresh: 3

ACTION AS INTENT: ADDING DISCOVER TO FATE CORE

by **MARK DIAZ TRUMAN**

When I first started as a developer for Fate on TIMEWORKS, I had a tough time writing stunts. John Adamus—my patient editor—kept sending drafts back to me with the same note: "You don't need a stunt to use Shoot to lay down suppressive fire or Resources to make a problem go away with cash. The actions already take care of that."

It took me a while to internalize that a skill like Burglary works for more than just picking someone's pocket. It can be used to convince someone you're a real thief instead of an undercover cop (defend), to find high-quality tools for breaking and entering a big box store (create advantage), to run a classic con job on a mark (overcome), or to interrogate a suspect about a crime (attack). Burglary doesn't say how a character should use their skills and talents—it just outlines an arena of conflict that matters to a particular build of Fate Core.

As I've done more Fate development, I've thought a lot about how the four actions structure those arenas of conflict. In Fate Core, actions convey the intent of the players as their characters engage through the lens of their chosen action. The four actions we have, however, neglect learning as a collaborative tool in the fiction; players aren't inherently rewarded for choosing to learn something about the situation at hand. This article presents some of my thinking about how the existing actions are structured and presents a new action for use in Fate Core that explicitly puts learning into the player's hands—**discover**.

While Fate can certainly have more than four actions, discover offers unique opportunities to shift the tone and focus of Fate Core—this article also explores the option of removing attack as an action, digging deeper into drama, intrigue, and mystery and moving away from combat and injury. I hope the discover action finds a place at your table—and in your Fate Core builds—whenever investigation and discovery are central to your game.

Skills as Intent

In many roleplaying games, skills convey intent. Diplomacy as an available skill clearly offers a way to resolve problems nonviolently. If you take Diplomacy as one of your core skills, you're the talker of the group; it's your job to settle conflicts with words. On the other hand, an Appraise skill is about discovering information rather than resolving problems. The intent of Appraise is to gather data or prepare for a negotiation rather than overcome an obstacle.

In most games, you don't need to say what you intend to do with a skill when you pick it at character creation; the very act of picking the skill tells the GM and your fellow players a ton of information about your character's position in the game. "The guy with a high Firearms skill and a specialty in Shotguns? Oh, he'll be shooting people for us in combat. The rest of the time he'll hang back so our social characters can get things done." The skill conveys your intent, long before you say what you plan to do in a scene.

STRETCHING INTENT

The narrow focus of skills in most systems often results in some strange interactions at the table, as players try to find ways to use their core skills with completely new intents. The fighter tries to use whatever skill makes her good at hitting people with swords to talk someone into cooperating; the wizard tries to come up with a clever plan that uses his intelligence to harm their enemies once he's out of magic spells.

And thus the debate begins: does a skill establish an arena of conflict or does it tell us what your intent is within that arena of conflict? If you've got Swords as a core skill, does that mean you're skilled at harming people with swords (an intent!) or does it simply indicate that you have a wide degree of training in swords, such that you should dominate conflicts across the entire arena of the skill?

Actions as Intent

The subtle genius of Fate Core is that it separates the arena of conflict—a skill—from the action's intention. Differentiating the arena from the intent makes Shoot or Athletics or Rapport about more than just one mode of interaction with objects in the fiction. Instead, each skill delineates an arena of conflict and the actions allow the players to mix and match intents as needed. Players can use a skill to charge through a problem and then turn around and use the same skill to patiently prepare for future conflicts.

For example, you can use Provoke to overcome a weak-willed guard blocking your path, create an advantage by inspiring **Carnal Lust** or **Intense Jealousy** in a target, or inflict mental stress with a focused attack. In some versions of Fate Core, you might even be able to use it to defend against some actions. (There's another article I could write here about why some skills can't attack or defend…)

OVERCOME

When characters choose to overcome an obstacle, they intend to move past the obstacle *right now*. Moving past opposition can happen in stages as part of a challenge, but overcome is usually about an immediate attempt to move past a problem—which is why most experienced Fate players try to create an advantage or two before rolling to overcome.

CREATE ADVANTAGE

Create advantage, unlike overcome, is future oriented. When characters create advantages, they intend to *prepare* for future rolls and establish the context for future action by creating aspects. Clever players use create advantage to create aspects that shift or redefine conflicts, but those aspects still need to be compelled or invoked to resolve the situation.

ATTACK

Overcome is about moving past an obstacle; attack is about *harming or weakening* an obstacle in a significant way. Superheroes might overcome the guard outside the supervillain's lair to get to the bad guy, but they intend to weaken the villain so he can be taken into custody. Attack is about sticking with a target until that target is defeated, removing the opposition from the narrative instead of moving past it to the next obstacle.

DEFEND

Characters can defend against more than attacks: they might oppose other characters learning things about them, protect important aspects or other characters, or maintain their focus in the face of distractions. Defense is about *resistance*. The intent is to say "No!" and continue on the current trajectory instead of allowing other characters to act.

Learning New Information

Of course, create advantage is also used to learn more about a situation or a character in the scene. Empathy, for example, is often used to uncover existing aspects or place an existing aspect on a target. Unfortunately, the overlap between preparation and learning isn't as clean and simple as we might like it to be.

PREPARATION VS. LEARNING

Create advantage works primarily because preparation and learning have some overlap. If a vigilante superhero detective runs tests on fragments of a bullet found at a crime scene, he's both trying to learn something about the murderer and prepare for future confrontations. Ideally, the vigilante learns something meaningful about his opposition that he can also call upon later in the story to assist him in capturing the villain.

But preparation often doesn't have any learning component at all. If our friendly neighborhood hedge magician is cooking up a **Potion of Strength**, it's unlikely she suddenly gains any knowledge during the ritual. The same goes for a kid detective gathering up **A Crew of Misfits** or a rugged space marine equipping a **Heavy Minigun**. Characters can clearly get ready for a future conflict without learning any new information about their opposition.

Yet characters can learn something new about the opposition without also preparing for a future conflict. I think there's room in our stories for players to ask interesting questions that don't lead to aspects, provided there's a way to make the information matter to the story.

FICTIONAL POSITIONING IN FATE

In Fate, the players create the narrative in which the game takes place, collectively determining the **fictional positioning** of the story elements. Fictional positioning in an agreement we develop through talking during a game, the way we all agree that goblins would probably run from a giant troll or that bullets don't hurt vampires. This kind of positioning builds on itself, and we track it in the game—even if we don't notice we're tracking it—so actions in the past tend to influence actions in the future. If goblins ran last time, for example, shouldn't they run this time?

Determining fictional positioning in Fate frequently means creating aspects, but that's not the only way to do the job. If your Fate game is about a team of bionic detectives investigating crime, you can add the aspect **Bionic City Blues** or you can simply state "We're all bionic detectives, investigating crime in a near-future city." The lack of an aspect doesn't make it less true; it only means you can't spend a fate point to invoke the aspect on a roll.

The lack of mechanics around fictional positioning sometimes leads players to want to create aspects for everything. But if every new piece of information warrants an aspect, you end up "spamming" aspects, overwhelming the narrative with ten aspects on the table that are never reincorporated into the fiction. When every invoke is a free invoke on a new aspect, we miss the satisfaction of returning to the aspects that grounded the story in the first place.

In my experience, most players intuitively understand that aspect spamming distracts from the narrative, and they limit their create advantage actions to meaningful moments of preparation. And since the vocabulary of create advantage doesn't imply discovery to most players, those create advantage actions don't usually involve listening, learning, observing. Characters prepare, act, and react, but they don't take much time to learn in any formal sense, even when they're creating aspects.

The Player's Gaze

One solution to the absence of create advantage actions dedicated to learning is to just give players the information they need when they need it. Compels are great for this, since the GM can introduce information that's complicated—"No, I am your father"; tricksy—"I am not left-handed either"; or downright devastating—"What's in the box?" Information is often less important than action, so giving the players the information they need to get to the action is the priority.

But this model isn't really collaborative; the GM delivers information and the players act on that information. The magic of roleplaying is that information is really part of a broader conversation between the players and the GM. **The questions the players ask are as important as the answers the GM gives because they determine what parts of the world get defined.** Discovery only has a collaborative element if the players have an equal say in what merits disclosure.

Imagine a game as a cluttered, darkened attic, filled with books and artifacts. Sure, the GM called out some specific parts as relevant before the players sat down to play—the major antagonists, some set pieces, a few themes—but the back and forth between the players and GM shapes

the space. Where do the players direct their flashlights? What objects hold their interest? What questions do they ask about the space? The answers to these questions define the space as much as anything the GM presents.

Moving Toward Discover

What's needed is a method of learning new things about the setting that frame the action without overwhelming the system with aspects. Information straight from the GM is useful but ultimately limiting, since it works against the collaborative nature of Fate. We need something more robustly in the players' control, something that allows them to trigger when information is learned without needing to place a new aspect on the table—a discover action!

The Discover Action

Use the discover action to learn new information about environments, obstacles, and characters in a scene.

The discover action allows your character to get new information about what's going on in the current scene without creating a new aspect. Sometimes you'll need to dig deeper into a situation to discover answers, but other times a quick glance is all you need to start learning more about the situation.

When you undertake a discover action, you get the chance to ask the GM a question about the situation through the lens of the skill you've chosen. If you want to know more about a threatening gunman, you can try to determine more about the gun itself (Shoot), the emotional state of the gunman (Empathy), or the position the gunman is occupying (Notice). The GM answers honestly, but failure results in your question pushing you into danger, revealing unpleasant information, or costing you precious time or resources.

After you finish your discover action, you may want to create an aspect on the scene by creating an advantage with your new knowledge or taking advantage of the boost you created if you succeeded with style.

USING CREATE ADVANTAGE AND DISCOVER

If you include discover as an action, players can't use create advantage to learn new information. All of those actions now fall under discover. Players can use create advantage to capitalize on the information they've gained, such as using Provoke to place the aspect *Hot Tempered* on an NPC after discovering the NPC's weakness using Empathy.

When you fail using discover, you either ask a question of the Gamemaster related to the skill you used at a major cost or the opposition asks questions about your character, delving into your secrets and weaknesses.

When you tie with discover, you ask one question of the Gamemaster related to the skill you used at a minor cost.

When you succeed with discover, you ask one question of the Gamemaster related to the skill you used.

When you succeed with style, you ask one question of the Gamemaster related to the skill you used, followed by either another question or the creation of a boost.

Katherine's spectral photographer, Deborah, is taking photos of a child's bedroom. Deborah's team has been hired to cleanse the house of evil spirits, and they'd like to know what they're up against.

Katherine says, "I'll take a bunch of different shots all over the house, using the **Spectral Film** I brought. I've got a cheap instant camera in addition to my normal rig. I'd like to use Investigate to discover what kind of ghosts or demons might be haunting this place."

Marissa, her GM, says, "Sure. That sounds good. I think you've got all the gear you need for a quick survey. It's a Good (+3) difficulty with passive opposition."

Deborah has a Good (+3) Investigate and rolls ⊞⊞⊟⊟ for a total of Good (+3). Not quite enough to succeed without any costs.

Marissa asks, "Do you want to use the free invoke on your **Spectral Film**?"
Katherine says, "Yup! I'll use that for +2, and I'll also spend a fate point on my **Sharp Eye for the Supernatural** to succeed with style. Here's my question: 'What kind of supernatural forces are we dealing with?'"

Marissa smiles and says, "There are definite signs of demonic possession throughout the building…and signs that something mortal fought them off in the past. You also see signs of new demonic activity, as if they've been reawoken."

Katherine thinks for a moment about taking a followup question or a boost. She settles on **Demonic Signs** as a boost so her team can take immediate advantage of what she's learned.

EXAMPLE DISCOVER ACTIONS

Here are a few Fate Core skills presented with an appropriate discover action. These should give you some idea about what discover might look like in your game, including a few skills that might be difficult to imagine using with discover.

Crafts

Discover: Use Crafts to learn about the properties, strengths, and weaknesses of various objects. You might use it to learn about how a building or device was constructed, to find out what materials were used to make an object, or to discover who made a particular item, assuming the creator would leave telltale evidence. You may need additional scientific equipment or time with an object to use this action with Crafts.

Drive

Discover: Use Drive to learn more about vehicles and the evidence they leave behind or to judge speed and distance while driving. You can also locate the quickest or safest route to a destination or find the correct parts or gear to get a vehicle up and running again.

Investigate

Discover: Use Investigate to ask questions about a crime scene, learn information from records, or get any other information that's best learned through careful study. It's important to differentiate this from discovering information using other skills—i.e., specifics about cars (Drive)—and information gained through a quick overview (Notice).

Physique

Discover: Use Physique to ask questions about physical training, exercise equipment, and your own body. Ask questions about your physical limits and abilities, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of physical objects. You can also gain information about the world through physical tests using Physique, e.g., how much does this thing weigh?

Provoke

Discover: Provoke lets you learn more about your opponent's strengths and weaknesses, but in a social sphere instead of a physical one. Use Provoke to ask questions about how people react to specific stimuli, spotting reactions that might not be immediately apparent. Note that you need

to differentiate Provoke and Empathy; the latter provides much richer information about the intent and emotions of the target.

Will

Discover: Use Will to learn more about the mental defenses of others—especially when you see them tried and tested—and, through reflection and concentration, recall what you may have overlooked. Discovering information with Will may also be possible in contests of mental strength, like interrogating a difficult witness.

Five Actions in Fate Core?

What does adding the discover action mean to your Fate Core games? Well…it works pretty well to just drop it into an existing setting. Players internalize what discover can do fairly quickly, and nothing in Fate Core limits you to four actions. Five actions diversify intentions in scenes, giving players many tools to use when interacting with the environment and each other.

OVERCOME AS ATTACK

If you want to keep your Fate game to four actions, think about cutting attack. In your setting, do folks often turn to physical or social violence to damage their opposition? Or do characters mostly try to accomplish their goals without harming others at all? Maybe you don't actually need an attack action.

If you want to cut attack, let overcome do the heavy lifting for you during combat. Since most fights can be thought of as moving past opposition instead of harming people, your players can use overcome to take out their opposition in a conflict. Targets of an overcome action can mark stress boxes or consequences—one for a success and two for a success with style—to resist being taken out.

This has a few huge advantages:

- **Avoids the Arms Race:** Without an attack action, there's no longer any advantage to having a +10 to a roll. Anything above 3 shifts (a success with style) is wasted. Players can focus more on non-combat skills—and spend more fate points outside of combat—even if combat is a solid chunk of the game.

- **Cuts Down on Conflicts:** Since overcome doesn't inflict stress, many fights are over after a single roll. Characters have to choose to stay in, marking stress boxes and

consequences to represent that they aren't willing to give up the fight just yet. That's always the case in Fate, but treating attacks as overcome actions helps dramatize the choice.

- **Diversifies Takedowns:** In addition to minimizing fights, it also puts social, mental, and physical skills on the same level. Taking someone out with Deceive or Provoke works the same as taking someone out with Fight or Shoot. Staying in the fight against mental and social attacks works the same too!

PASSIVE DISCOVERY

This discover action works well with Ryan Macklin's take on Passive Discovery (page 10 in The Fate Codex, Vol. 1, Issue 2). Instead of rolling, characters with a Good (+3) or better in a skill can choose to succeed without style on any passive discovery action.

As you might guess, I've got some other stuff planned that makes use of swapping out attack for discover. In the meantime, I look forward to what you all do with this version of discover!

Special thanks to Emily Care Boss for her work on fictional positioning, Ryan Macklin for his early thoughts on the potential for a discover action, and Bruce Baugh for sharing his thoughts on actions and intent. There are sure to be many versions of discover, but this one owes a debt to all of you.

HEEL HEAT

by EDDY WEBB

When Justin stopped breathing in the middle of the ring, I knew I was in trouble.

It was the main event: Justin Green against me for the ECPW Heavy-weight title. We had been battling for months in bingo halls and school gymnasiums, at thirty bucks a match. Just when he'd get close to a win over me, I'd snatch it away from him with some dirty trick, and the crowd ate it up. Kids screamed at me and their parents threw popcorn while I slumped to the back trying to remember if I had gas in my car.

"Heel heat" we called it: the more the crowd hates the bad guy, the more they get behind the underdog, and the more they'll pay to see the next match. I'm fantastic at getting people to hate me. That's why I was billed as "Violent Victor Keyes" by Rainier Rousseau, the part-time announcer and full-time owner of East Coast Pro Wrestling. In fact, I'm so good at being hated, that last month, some old man in New Jersey hit me in the face with a crutch.

Justin laughed at that one, but then, he laughed at everything after he'd had a couple of pills. He was taking them after every show while we were on the road. I never used them, and I said so, but he said it was just to deal with the pain, just to make himself a little stronger, just to get an edge in the ring. "We're contractors, Vic," he told me once. "Ain't no one gonna look out for us but us. Not the bookers, not the owners, nobody. You do what you gotta do."

"Where'd you get them?" I asked.

He laughed again. "I like you, Vic. But not that much."

That's how it was for months. We worked well together, and we

watched out for each other. But this was the blow off, the final match in the feud where I drop the belt to Justin. Yukiko, the booker (though she always told us to call her the "head writer"), decided that our match would be in a steel cage, pin or escape to win. It was a classic, something that played well both in Japan where she used to wrestle and here in the States. I was making Justin look good before I let him win. He'd earned it.

At the fifteen minute mark, Justin hit me with his signature finishing move, a DDT he called The Stoplight. My vision blurred when my face hit the mat. Justin rolled me over, and I barely managed to raise my shoulder before the referee slapped the mat the third time.

Justin turned away, playing to the crowd as they cheered him on and I got my head together. The ref came to check on me, and whispered in my ear, "Finish, pin, reverse for three." He wanted me to nail Justin with my finisher, a powerbomb the announcers had been calling the "Violent Storm," before he reversed the move and pinned me for the win.

I nodded, wiped the sweat out of my eyes, and ran across the ring. I grabbed Justin's arm and whipped Justin into the ropes, his face smashing into the chain link fence around the edge of the ring. He grabbed his chest and staggered, and I picked him up by his waist and slammed him to the ground with the Violent Storm. The referee started counting.

That's when I noticed Justin wasn't breathing.

The ref's hand started to come down for the third time. I pulled off of Justin, leering at the crowd. "I'm not done with him yet!" I yelled. I walked away, shoving the referee contemptuously. He knew the signal, and checked on Justin. After a second, he came back to me and started arguing, poking me in the chest before pointing to his own shirt to tell me that I need to respect his authority.

Oh no. That meant Justin was badly hurt. Now I had to go against the script and win the match.

I stormed past the referee and punched Justin in the face and neck, hoping that would bring him around. When it didn't, I pulled him into his own move, The Stoplight, and nailed him to the mat. The ref quickly counted to three, and just like that I was still champion.

I got up and started talking trash, distracting the crowd while security ran down to the ring to get Justin out of there. When my music started to play and Rainier announced my win, I glanced over my shoulder, and saw them propping Justin up to make it look like he was just groggy. I snatched my belt from the referee and made my way through the curtain, hot dog wrappers and curses bouncing off my back.

All of the workers were crammed into the tiny locker room, either trying to rubberneck or pushing guys back to keep them from

rubbernecking. I shoved my way through the crowd and found Justin. He was laid out on one of the benches in the locker room, where Yukiko was giving him CPR. I dropped the belt on the floor and stared at Justin. Outside I could hear Rainier thanking the crowd and shooing them out of the convention center.

Then it was quiet, and I kept staring at Justin as Yukiko's arms got tired. An ambulance came, and I watched them wheel Justin out of the locker room. But I wasn't seeing any of it. I kept thinking about all the pills Justin took, playing my responses over and over in my head as I stared at the empty bench.

I felt a hand on my shoulder. I looked over to see Yukiko there. "You okay?" she asked.

"I don't think so," I said, looking down at the belt still on the floor. "I carried that hunk of gold for months, and it didn't feel heavy until I saw Justin like that."

"It wasn't your fault."

I ignored her and kept staring at the belt.

"You should probably go out the back, though," she continued. "There's still some pissed-off true believers hanging around. They think you sent their favorite to the hospital. If they do see you, you'll have to keep kayfabe."

"Keep…?" I finally looked over at Yukiko. "You want me to stay in character out there? To take credit for this?"

She took her hand off my shoulder, carefully, like I might explode. She was right. "Maybe now's not the time…."

"You're right," I said, grabbing the belt off the floor. "This isn't the time. I don't know how they did things in Japan, but we're not doing this. I'm not going out there to brag about sending Justin to the hospital until I know what happened out there. I don't give a damn about the storyline. If you don't like it, take this damned belt right now."

"It's not up to me, Vic. Rainier says this is the most attention he's gotten in months, and he wants to use it as momentum for the next few shows. And you're brilliant at getting the crowd against you. This could be huge. Maybe even get you some attention for the major feds."

I threw the belt on the bench. She rushed over and picked it up as I stomped out of the locker room to look for Rainier. I found him outside, standing on the delivery ramp, around the corner from the parking lot where the fans were probably still lurking to get a piece of me. Ray was smoking a cigarette, and arguing with a man in a track suit that I'd never seen before.

I didn't care. I walked up to the two of them and launched into a tirade. "What the hell, Ray? Someone got hurt at your event, and you're

already booking the next one with Yukiko?" My fists clenched at my side, trembled.

The owner waved without looking at me. "Later, Vic," he said. His French-Canadian accent always got worse after hours of trying to sound American on the mic. "I'm in the middle of a business meeting."

"I don't care. We need to talk about what happened out there with Justin."

"Exactly my concern," the man in the track suit sneered.

His accent said "Russian," and his finger tattoos said "Mob money manager." I met a few guys like him when I spent some time upstate for armed robbery. A buddy of mine tried to rob a convenience store, and put the gun in my hands before he started beating the owner. The cops arrived, and just like that, I was an accessory. I've tried hard to keep that kind of trouble out of my life ever since.

I ignored the Russian, focusing on Rainier. "Ray, this is a huge problem. I'm not just going to—"

Rainier pointed at me, dropping ash all over his shirt. "I don't think you realize how big of a problem it really is."

I looked at the Russian. "I think I'm starting to."

The Russian shrugged. "I will leave you to your business," he said. "Just remember, if any of this comes back on us, it will be more than our money we come looking for."

He turned and walked off. I debated going after him, but decided against it.

Rainier was still whining. "Look, just drop it, Vic."

"One of your workers is hurt, Ray. I was working with him when it happened. I'm involved."

"Not hurt." He took another drag on his cigarette.

I waited for an answer, and when I didn't get one, my brain shut off. The only word I could choke out was "Dead?"

Rainier nodded.

I swayed and leaned against the rough concrete wall. "He can't be dead. He can't. I was just...."

"The police are on their way."

That snapped me back. "What are you going to tell them?"

He shrugged. "What can I tell them? You were locked in a steel cage with him when he died. You and the referee are literally the only suspects."

"Suspects?" The gears in my brain finally started turning. "It was a drug overdose."

"Maybe it was, but the cops are going to want to know where those drugs came from, and the ECPW can't handle that exposure or expense.

We're barely keeping above water as it is. This was a….” He waved his hands in the air. “…a personal matter.”

I blinked. Something wasn't adding up. “We were at your show. We work for you. And you know as much as I do that no one can keep a secret in the back. You had to know about the drugs.”

“You're *contractors*, Vic. If one of my contractors turns out to be a violent ex-con, I have to cooperate with the police in their investigation.”

I suddenly realized I had raised my fist. Ray noticed it, too, and took a step back, putting his hands up. “You don't want to do this. You'll just make things worse.”

“You son of a *bitch*,” I snarled. “You were going to have me go out there and claim credit for Justin's death.”

“Only if everything was cleared up! He told me that it would keep the police off my back.” He tried to take another drag from the cigarette in his trembling hands.

I took the cigarette out from between his fingers. “The Russian.”

Rainier frowned. “Yeah. The Russian. I'm in deep, and they don't want their drug operation coming back on them, you know? It's not just a little jail time with those guys, and….”

I stopped listening. His shirt was in my hands, his eyes right in front of mine, wide as saucers. “The Russians sold Justin the drugs?”

“Yeah. He said it just a little something to give him an edge, you know? I wasn't happy about it, but had made his own decisions. He's a grown man.”

“Was.” I let him go, and he dropped to the concrete. “He *was* a grown man. Now he's dead, and you're ready to let me take the fall to save your ass.”

Rainier was trembling now. He must have seen something in my face that he didn't like. If it was half as ugly as how I felt inside, I didn't blame him. “Look, Vic. Don't even worry about the booking right now. Just explain your side to the cops when they get here. Leave me and the Russians out of your story, and maybe you'll only do a few months. You keep your mouth shut, you get back out, and you come see me. I'll have you back at the top in no time.”

I walked away. He kept calling my name, but I didn't listen to him. I couldn't let this go. I wasn't going to cover this up. Justin may have been an ass, but he was my friend, and you watch out for each other in the ring. So I'm going to find that Russian. I'm going to explain to him what he did to Justin. And then I'm going to keep beating him until the cops find me and pull me off of him. The Russian and all his friends who sold him this poison are going to hate me.

And I'm fantastic at getting people to hate me ✚

"Violent" Victor Keyes

ASPECT

HIGH CONCEPT: ECPW HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE WORLD

TROUBLE: EX-CON WANTED FOR A CRIME HE DIDN'T COMMIT. YET.

FANTASTIC AT GETTING PEOPLE TO HATE ME

I DID TIME IN PRISON • I WATCH OUT FOR MY FRIENDS

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Provoke
GOOD (+3)	Athletics, Fight
FAIR (+2)	Empathy, Physique, Will
AVERAGE (+1)	Deceive, Drive, Notice, Rapport

Yukiko Yoshima

ASPECT

HIGH CONCEPT: "HEAD WRITER"/BOOKER FOR THE ECPW

TROUBLE: CARES TOO MUCH FOR THE TALENT

THE CROWD'S ALWAYS WATCHING

USED TO BE ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S CHAMPION

I CAN'T PLAY FAVORITES

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Rapport
GOOD (+3)	Empathy, Lore
FAIR (+2)	Athletics, Notice, Will
AVERAGE (+1)	Contacts, Deceive, Investigate, Physique

Rainier Rousseau

ASPECT

HIGH CONCEPT: ECPW OWNER AND RING ANNOUNCER

TROUBLE: ABOUT TO BE IN EVEN DEEPER WITH THE RUSSIAN MOB

THE SHOW MUST GO ON • I'M A BUSINESSMAN • FRENCH-CANADIAN

SKILLS

GREAT (+4)	Contacts
GOOD (+3)	Deceive, Provoke
FAIR (+2)	Contacts, Notice, Physique
AVERAGE (+1)	Drive, Empathy, Rapport, Resources

ADDING REALITY TO YOUR FANTASY

by **NICOLE WINCHESTER** and **CHEYENNE RAY GRIMES**

Stop thinking like a normal human with empathy and compassion…and start exploiting people's private lives, human faults, and intense emotions for ratings and personal gain. Congratulations! You've just become a reality TV producer! Your players are your cast, and you need a good story out of them to keep your job—one way or another.

In this article, we'll show you how to build a Fate Core game set in a reality TV show, both behind the scenes and on-screen. We'll detail special mechanics that replicate the most common features of reality shows, including "ratings" stress, reality-specific skills, and everything else you need to play through a full "season" of trashy television. Enjoy immersing yourself in the on-set drama and high stakes of reality television production without the messy business of starving on a desert island or cooking in a kitchen with an abusive head chef.

Creating Your Show

In order to bring reality TV to your Fate game, start by creating the show itself as if it were a character with aspects, stress tracks, and a name.

REALITY TELEVISION

Reality is favored in television production because it's cheap to produce and hugely popular due to its "anything can happen" reputation. In truth, reality of all kinds is predictable—there will be interpersonal drama, fighting, tears, backstabbing, and train wreck moments whether you're watching a competition show or following the weekly life of an average family. Reality shows have a regimented structure, five "acts" that always have the same challenges, the same roadblocks, the same cooking tasks, and the same highs and lows at roughly the same times.

Choosing a Genre

When you initially get together with your players, discuss the reality shows you love and the reality shows you love to hate. What shows or genres would you like to play in? What is it about them that makes them compelling? Once you settle on a type of show you'd like to use, decide if the concept seems interesting enough to the group to play on its own, or if you need a twist, like placing it in the past or future, or drastically changing the setting. Ask questions to zero in on the points of interest.

For example, if your group was interested in playing Big Brother on a space station, what do they find *most* interesting about being trapped with a bunch of fame-hungry people in space? The chance of technology going wrong? Aliens and humans trying to socially interact? Zero-gravity challenges? Losers getting airlocked? *Why* is it an exciting setting to play in? Take notes, as they will be helpful in creating aspects, and for ideas for future sessions.

Crafting Reality Events

After you've chosen an idea for your reality show, discuss what events need to happen in every episode you play. Are there important competitions, ceremonies, or challenges that come up before the end of every episode? Are there scenes at "work," family dinners, or even regular arguments?

Note a couple of things that happen every episode and prepare to introduce those scenes when the opportunity arises. These scenes can be on-camera or off-camera, depending on the needs and interests of your group. ("Previously on…"s and character introductions are fine to include if they're important to your show.) A Fate game of Survivor, for example,

would have a challenge and a tribal council every "episode." It's up to the producer to determine the best time for each, taking both time and dramatic impact into account.

SHOW ASPECTS

You have a show! Give it a few aspects to bring it to life, starting with a high concept and a trouble. Remember to reach for the stars!

High Concept

Your show's high concept should explain the essence of your show, why it exists, or some combination of the two. This is the elevator pitch, the quick recap that tells people why they should tune in every week.

> *Examples: **Don't Wear That, Wear This, Real People Become Fantasy Heroes, Human Hamsters Trapped to Win Money, or 19 People, 39 Days, 1 Survivor.***

Trouble

There's always something about a reality show that critics can't stand, recappers hate, or fans complain about. It's as if the show can't avoid these pitfalls, no matter how many seasons it lasts.

> *Examples: **Cast to Fail, Just a Little Mean, Too Much Drama, or Cheesy.***

RATINGS STRESS

Shows are measured by ratings, so each reality show has a stress track that measures ratings stress. When your show takes stress, you're losing viewers, buzz, and interest, and you'll have to clear that stress to climb back up the ratings board.

Shows start with three ratings stress boxes, and each box absorbs shifts equal to its number. When a cast member fails a skill roll in Body, Fight, Gossip, Notice, Party, Stealth, or Will (as described on page 271 or beginning on page 98 in Fate Core System), the show takes an amount of stress equal to the number of shifts by which the character failed the roll. The show clears the highest box of ratings stress at the end of each session of play. When the show is "taken out," it is cancelled, at which point the producer and cast work out the aftermath of being on a briefly successful reality show.

Ratings Consequences

Like characters, each show has a -2, -4, and -6 slot, and taking show consequences can help a show avoid ratings stress. Possible consequences for a show could include a *Schedule Change*, *Pre-Emption* for a significant event, *No Network Promotion*, or a particularly *Brutal Review*. Mild consequences clear after an episode, while moderate and severe consequences will take several episodes to heal. The cast collectively chooses whether or not to take consequences on their show and works with the producer to define them appropriately. Show consequences heal at the same rate as normal consequences; see pages 162-166 in FATE CORE SYSTEM for more information.

SHOW NAMES

Don't stress much over the naming of your show. The people who come up with perfectly evocative show names have been doing it for a long time. It's their job to be good at it—and even if they are, many show names sound a bit ridiculous before you get used to them.

Reality TV Mechanics

Although you can play reality TV stars in Fate with the traditional aspect, skill, and stunt mechanics, these three mechanics replicate the most fascinating features of Reality TV to help producer and cast recreate the genre. Feel free to use all or none of them, as fits your show!

OFF-CAMERA VS. ON-CAMERA

When the cast is on-camera, their every move can be edited, manipulated, and broadcast to the world; when they're off-camera, they have some small pretense of privacy, but the producers always have demands. It's not long before the cast will try to take conflict off-camera to save face… or turn the cameras on to catch their rivals in compromising positions.

As the producer, you'll frame each scene as on-camera or off-camera when it starts; however, players can use their fate points to turn the cameras on or off at moments they'd like to show to the world—or hide from everyone.

Cameras On…or Off

Whenever cast members want to "flip" the cameras on or off, they must spend a fate point to take control of the scene. Other cast members (or the producer) can flip the cameras back, but they have to spend another fate point! Turning the camera off can allow players to have private conversations, discussions with production, or production meetings, while

turning the cameras on can let them catch each other in bad behavior, arrange advantageous discussions, or set themselves up to look good.

Reality shows are famous for hidden cameras that can to be turned on at a moment's notice and camera crews on-call to shoot film at the drop of a hat. Framing each scene as specifically on- or off-camera not only provides the opportunity to put exciting moments and drama in the show as they happen, but also gives the cast the chance to develop an on-screen persona separate from their off-screen reality.

> Janet has deeply disliked Nate since day one of the show. During an off-camera scene where Nate confesses a deep, dark secret to another character, Janet spends her fate point to go "on-camera," so Nate's secret is broadcast to the world—and reframes the scene so she's been secretly listening in the whole time. She has ensured Nate's secret is now hot new gossip for the audience, and has information she can use against him.

REALITY TV EDITING

This mechanic replicates the show's ability to manipulate recorded events, editing them to appear differently. Editors have immense power in their darkened suites, creating storylines or drama out of the hundred-plus hours of tape they winnow down into one episode.

Editing for Drama

When on-camera, characters can spend a fate point to use Reality TV Editing when they are trying to mislead other characters or mask villainous deeds or embarrassing moments. Off-camera, Editing can be used to ensure a rival's worst tantrum makes it to air post-haste. Producer and cast are encouraged to be as creative with editing as their real-life counterparts—if there's a terrible unseen moment from the past that would be dramatically appropriate to surface right now…maybe that makes the best story.

> In an "on-camera" scene, Janet and Nate argue about Nate's secrets that Janet has exposed to others on the show. Though Janet professes her innocence sincerely, Nate would like the viewers to catch Janet in a lie. Nate spends a fate point to "edit" in a scene break, and the producer then narrarates a clip from an off-camera scene two sessions ago, where Janet tells another character Nate's secret. Janet is revealed as not only a gossip, but also a liar!

CONFESSIONALS

This mechanic recreates one of the most compelling staples of the reality genre—the direct-to-camera address in which cast members reveal their dastardly tactics and darkest thoughts.

Forcing a Confessional

Confessional can be used once per character per game for free, while fate points can be spent for additional calls for Confessional. The cast members "in Confessional" have a short scene with the producer at the time the call is made in which they discuss the current situation, their feelings and thoughts, and the other cast members, assuming the audience is watching. The character calling for Confessional then gains +2 to the next action in a scene with the character "called in"—*related to what was discussed in the Confessional*. Confessional scenes can provide excellent Milestone moments for characters, particularly in situations of high drama or intense emotion.

> Nate has discovered Janet's lies, and he is infuriated that she has betrayed his trust. In the midst of a heated argument between them, another player breaks in to call for Janet's Confessional, wanting to hear her real thoughts and motivations for exposing Nate's secrets. As Janet has not yet had a Confessional in the session, a fate point is not necessary. The producer and Janet take a few minutes to discuss the situation and what she **actually** thinks before returning to the argument with Nate.

Casting Your Show

Now that you've created your show and learned how to run it, it's time for casting! Do you want to have a cast full of Type A personalities that are bound to clash? Is everyone working together for the purpose of creating a specific environment? Are the player characters only housemates or can they also work on the production of the show?

CHARACTER ASPECTS

For the most part, character generation is just like a regular Fate Core game. Give each character a high concept and trouble as normal, focusing on big and bold statements that will create drama and generate ratings!

After creating the first two aspects, leave the other character aspects blank on each character. Everyone is a stranger! Through the course of the first session, each player should add two more aspects: something that defines their character on the show and a story from the past that

comes out in the first episode. Whether this story is true or not is up to the player. However, if the story is false and ends up being exposed as a lie, the character loses this aspect.

REALITY SHOW SKILLS

The skills available to each character are Body, Deceive, Empathy, Fame, Fascinate, Fight, Gossip, Notice, Party, Provoke, Rapport, Stealth, Tears, and Will. Skills are to be chosen according to the traditional skill pyramid, peaking at a Good (+3). Existing skills (Deceive, Empathy, Fight, Notice, Provoke, Rapport, Stealth, and Will) can be found in Fate Core on pages 97-127. New skills (Body, Fame, Fascinate, Gossip, Party, and Tears) are presented here:

Body (replaces Physique, Athletics)

This skill encompasses all aspects of what your body can do. Everything from what you are physically capable of doing to what you look like doing it.

- **Overcome:** Using your looks to change a decision or someone's opinion of you, showing your physical ability to be a true competitor.
- **Create an Advantage:** Whether it's your ability to perform in a physical challenge, win a beauty contest, or knowing how to look like you can.
- **Attack:** Physically attacking or lashing out at someone, tearing someone's looks apart based on your own.
- **Defend:** Use Body to defend against attacks against your physical self or your looks.

Fame

This skill is all about who knows you and who you know. Many times, reality TV shows will bring in (minor) celebrities to boost ratings. Having access to trust funds, your parent's fame (or celebrity friends), or being "internet famous" are wonderful assets.

- **Overcome:** Using your fame as an excuse, knowing the right people to "pull some strings for you."
- **Create an Advantage:** Name-dropping famous people, catching people off-guard with your big name charm.
- **Attack:** Claiming to be more famous than other minor celebrity on show, getting more airtime than others due to name recognition.
- **Defend:** Deflecting attacks by rising above the petty problems of the less famous.

Fascinate

This skill is for that certain *something* that makes everyone want to pay attention to you: from having an air of mystery to being so magnetic, people just want to be around you. Fascinate is sure to keep the focus on you and no one else.

- **Overcome:** Fascinate is not used to directly overcome obstacles.

- **Create an Advantage:** Putting yourself in the middle of every situation to make sure you have camera time, pulling focus from others.

- **Attack:** This skill is not used to attack.

- **Defend:** Skillful contestants know that they can defend against attacks on their character by soaking up the attention.

Gossip (replaces Lore)

This skill is used to spread information. Rumors, first hand accounts, hearsay, and information being passed off as the truth are vital parts of getting face time. Having a wealth of knowledge about the other contestants can be very useful. Just be careful of what dirt they have on you....

- **Overcome:** Gossip is not used to directly overcome obstacles.

- **Create an Advantage:** Knowing when to speak up and when to lie. Controlling the Gossip that floats around about yourself or others can be downright deadly.

- **Attack:** This is the primary use of Gossip. Whether it's a lie or an ugly truth, what people say about you can make or break a successful run on a reality show. Keeping what you want known about someone a secret can be a huge asset.

- **Defend:** Placing blame on someone else or shifting focus onto the wrongdoings of another contestant can be the easiest way to get yourself out of hot water.

Party

This skill is about knowing how to be the center of attention. Being the life of the party is a great way to become a ratings darling. Who doesn't love a fun housemate? The ability to have a great time and cause others to do the same could be your saving grace.

- **Overcome:** With Party, you can smooth over hurt feelings by bringing the fun. Diffusing tension could be the best way to keep friends, avoid making enemies, and win the hearts of the viewers.

- **Create an Advantage:** Bringing attention to your own fun-loving personality, keeping the atmosphere in the house light and friendly,

and highlighting the achievements of your housemates by throwing them a bitchin' party.

- 🜨 **Attack:** This skill is not used for attack.
- 🜨 **Defend:** This skill is not used for defense.

Tears

This skill is exactly as it sounds: being able to turn on the waterworks on cue and using them as leverage.

- 🜨 **Overcome:** Using your tears to change someone's decision, crying during a made-up story about your past to convince the audience it's legit.
- 🜨 **Create an Advantage:** Sobbing during any situation to gain sympathy, crying to draw attention away from someone else.
- 🜨 **Attack:** This skill is not used to attack.
- 🜨 **Defend:** Tears is really a defense mechanism in every social situation; nothing keeps you out of the crosshairs like a few tears.

FATE POINTS

Though reality shows don't have fate points of their own, the characters that work and star on reality shows can use fate points to affect the show through the use of the Confessional or Editing aspects or show stunts. Characters can also use fate points to flip a scene from "on-camera" to "off-camera" or vice versa (see Off-Camera vs. On-Camera on page 268).

CHARACTER STRESS TRACK: Q SCORE

A "Q Score" is a metric that determines the familiarity and appeal of a celebrity, TV show, property, or brand. In a reality TV game, Q score measures how much viewers love or love to hate the characters, and it helps producers decide who to keep and who to fire. In addition to physical and mental stress tracks, all reality cast members also add a Q Score stress track to their sheet.

The Fame skill allows characters to take more stress boxes in Q Score, like with Physique and Will for Physical and Mental stress tracks. Each cast member starts with two stress boxes in Q Score; Average (+1) or Fair (+2) Fame will give the character a three point box, while Good (+3) or Great (+4) Fame will give the character a three point and a four point stress box.

Q SCORE STRESS TRACK
1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4☐

Marking Q Score Stress

When cast members fail a Deceive, Empathy, Fame, Fascinate, Provoke, Rapport, or Tears skill roll on-camera, they take an amount of stress equal to the number of shifts by which they failed the roll. As always, cast members can take consequences to avoid marking Q Score stress from failed rolls. Q Score stress can be healed by succeeding with style in one of the above skills *on-camera*—essentially in televised actions that redeem the cast member in the public's eyes. Each success with style clears the highest box of Q Score stress.

When cast members are taken out with Q Score stress, they choose one of two options: pay double the cost for turning cameras on and off, Editing, and Confessionals, or only participate in scenes framed as "off-camera." Being taken out through Q Score means you're no longer in the public consciousness—you're a nobody!

Running a Season

Now it's time to bring your show to air! Have your notes at hand from your initial discussions to keep what's most compelling to the cast in mind, and use the show's basic structure to pace out the main events. In the Survivor example, the producer would aim for the challenge to come in the middle of the episode and end the show with the tribal council. If events on- or off-camera cause these to move around in different episodes, so be it. The road of production never runs smoothly.

KEEP THE PACE

Use the conventions of reality shows to provide a speedy pace to "episodes." Keep them quick, self-contained, and to a set time limit—try for an hour. Stop scenes mid-way to provide cliffhangers to end the episode; frame scenes with specific parameters and aspects, as they might end up on television post-editing; pause scenes to demand a confessional from the cast! Playing multiple episodes per session will provide a four to five hour session of gaming, but keep each scene short, focused, and goal-oriented—even if that goal is to decide who will be voted off the island.

KEEP IT FRESH

As reality show seasons usually run twelve to twenty-four episodes with a rotating cast, one season provides an option to play out a limited campaign with a fixed number of sessions. In shows where characters are "voted off the island," players can become part of the jury that awards the prize, pick up an NPC rival as a new character, or some combination of the two. Don't forget many competition shows include a twist where

eliminated players can return to the game! If the group is more interested in an ongoing show, many shows go on for years with the same cast living out their lives on camera. Others regularly implement "All-Star" seasons or invite old players to return; reality "stars" from one genre often move to another, or lead a whole new show during the summer break… the possibilities are only as endless as "production resources" and your group's interest and imagination. ✚
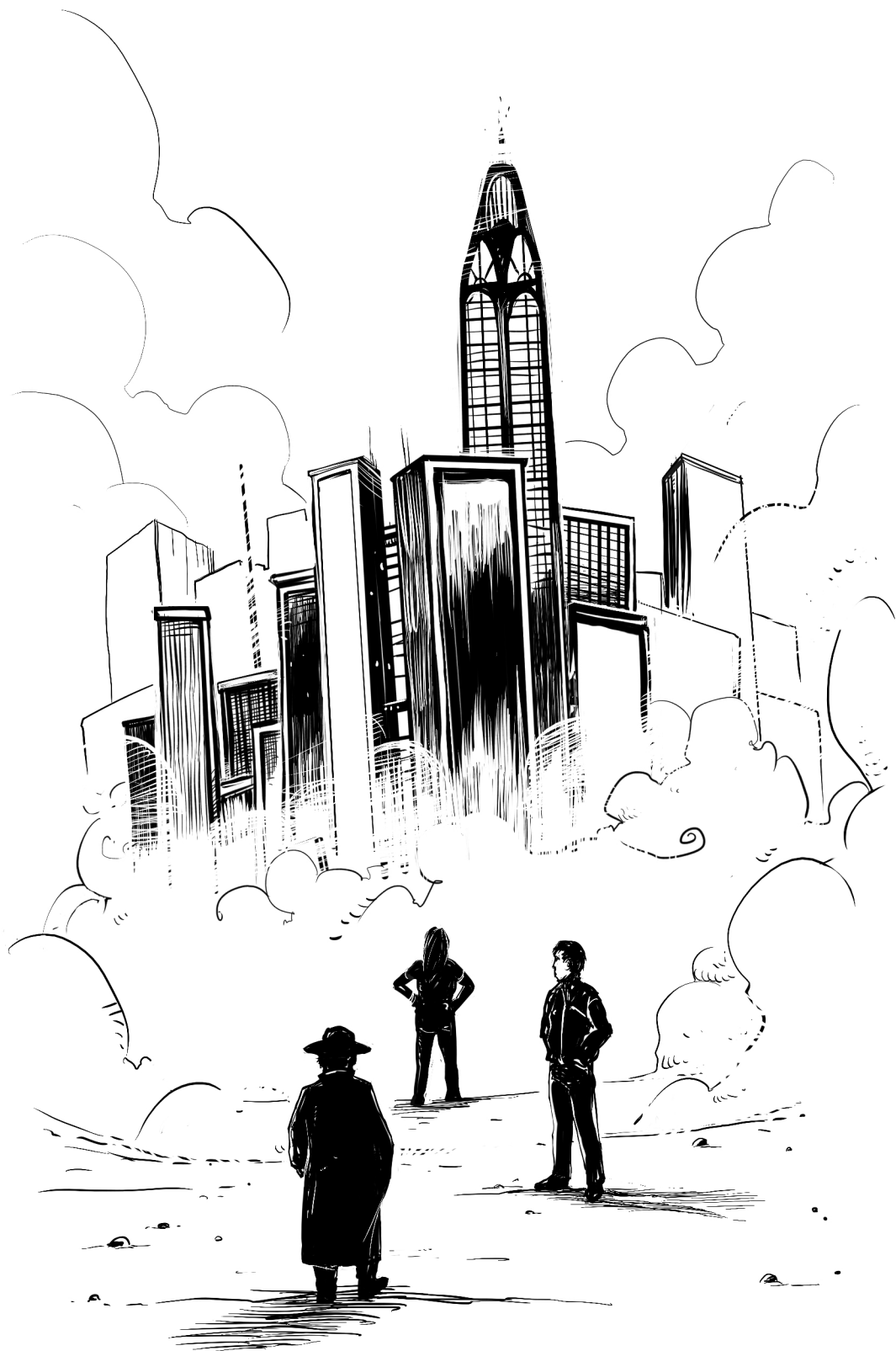
S.P.I.R.I.T.S.
by TARA ZUBER

One last chance. When a person has filled their life with cruelty and injustice despite opportunities to grow and change, they sometimes get one last chance.

They get you.

Your team delves into the minds of the hopeless—the Scrooges of the world—and finds some small degree of salvation. Your clients are a mess of insecurities and hatreds that have solidified into a coal lump of a person. You help them rediscover their spark, to become a light in the world once more.

You're not sure how you got this gig or how your clients are chosen, but you do know that you're doing good.

And that's all that matters.

Right?

S.P.I.R.I.T.S.

The Special Philanthropic Identity Reprogramming and Internalization Technicians do not work for money or fame. They work for results only they can achieve, the good only they can do. They offer redemption to the irredeemable, beating back the world's darkness with hearts reignited by hope and love.

The world is teeming with terrible people. Heartless CEOs who build their empires from others' bones. Twisted people who promise comfort and provide pain. Liars. Cheats. Cold misers who demand everything and give nothing.

Scumbags who get one last chance.

Clients.

The SPIRITs dive into their minds and confront their darkest fears and deepest anxieties. They investigate the web of people who have molded them and unearth their good memories and forgotten passions. SPIRITs meet these louses face-to-face, share memories and stories from the clients' own lives, and convince them to change. Those fortunate enough to receive a visit from SPIRITS think of them as dreams, passing ghosts who turned their lives around in their darkest hour.

THE MENTAL LANDSCAPE

SPIRITs do not slip down into their clients' minds and commune with electrical impulses and foggy morasses of thoughts and memories. For one night, their client's mind is given order and shape—a mental landscape in which the SPIRITS can work.

SPIRITs must be ready for anything—cities, old houses, bayous, carnivals, or spaceships. The landscapes obey their own rules; the SPIRITS must do the same. People from the client's memories fill the mental landscape, living out "normal" lives for the night the SPIRITs visit, and wearing colors that indicate relationships and opportunities for the spectral agents.

Every mental landscape is unique to the client, concrete, and full of dangers. The clients did not become the way they are because they thought *happy* thoughts.

THE FIGMENTS

Memories aren't the only inhabitants of the mental landscape. As the mind coalesces into a specific place, the client's three strongest fears, doubts, and anxieties also take form.

- The angel-of-mercy doctor pushing a syringe into an IV.
- The sea dragon toppling villages with giant waves.
- The queen bee wielding rumors with a sweet smile.
- The news editor publishing misery with every headline.

Each client has their own figments of the imagination, each secure in a stronghold—a lair—within the mental landscape. If the SPIRITs can take down these figments, convincing the client to change gets that much easier. But the figments are always the ones with the power, the keepers of secrets. They will not go quietly.

THE KEYS

The clients' minds are filled with more than nightmares. Memories of people they know fill their mental landscapes: some from long ago and some from a chance meeting the day before. Many of these people have only an average effect on the client, even those tied to the same strong emotions as the figments.

Three of their memories, though, are important to the SPIRITs' work: the people who left sticky fingerprints all over the client's mind and heart. The people they'll never be able to wash away. These keys are the person the client feels they've let down, the person whose good opinion matters to the client, and the person the client somehow loves.

These three keys are almost always vital tools the SPIRITs must use to convince the client to change.

THE DOSSIER

The SPIRITs have a secret weapon in their mission: the dossier. Information. The dossier squeezes into the SPIRITs' minds like an ice cream headache while the client's mental mists are condensing into the fixed landscape. The knowledge is instant; they know the client's name and the strong emotions that hold them in thrall.

As the SPIRITs meet people in the mental landscape, the dossier associates information with each name. *This person is associated with one of the figments. The client loves that person. That person is a figment.* With the dossier, the SPIRITs know all the key people as soon as they meet them.

The edge may be slight, but when dealing with a mind of tangled memories filtered through the client's emotions, the SPIRITS rely on this crucial information to finish each job.

Setting Creation

As a Quick Start Adventure, **SPIRITs** has everything you need to jump right into your first session. Before you start, discuss the broader setting with your group, perhaps even reading aloud the descriptions of *The Mental Landscape*, *The Figments*, *The Keys*, and *The Dossier* so everyone is on the same page.

At the start of play, explain the **current client** to your players and ask them to fill in one or two additional **negative aspects**—with the accompanying **faces** and **locations**—associated with Anthony Small listed below.

CURRENT CLIENT: ANTHONY SMALL

The current client is Anthony Small, a client desperately in need of some redemption. The dossier doesn't give any immediate information, but it's clear that Anthony is a cold man who hides his loneliness under a fierce temper and a bully's demeanor.

Anthony once wanted to be an artist, but gave up his passion for the security of cash. He delights in forcing others to also give up the things they love, justifying his sacrifices through their loss. He is an influential man who could do a lot of good in the world, if he ever had the care to do so.

Anthony's Landscape: Prohibition City

Anthony Small's mental landscape takes the form of a Prohibition-era city complete with the Mob, speakeasies, and jazz. Heavy on style and light on accuracy, the city stinks of illegal booze and money. Cops stuff themselves at Rita's, trading smiles and small talk with mobsters. Down the road, a street band jangles out a danceable tune. Flappers' fringes fly as their heels kick and hands wave. Down a hall and a flight of stairs, smoother music seeps out over a smoky room like oil. A bartender pulls out a bottle of the "real stuff" with a wink and a marked-up price. A city of vices that feign at virtue on Sunday mornings. This is the shape of Anthony's mind.

Ask your players for images they associate with a Prohibition-era city and work them into the landscape. Note down some of the themes of Anthony's story—deception, hypocrisy, sacrifice—to guide the tone of game while inside his mind.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS

Anthony's mind has three negative aspects, the primary negative emotions (e.g., fears, doubts, anxieties, cynicisms) that have helped shaped him into a horrible person who refuses to change his ways. The SPIRITs will strive to change these aspects and redeem Anthony's future.

Two of the three negative aspects for Anthony Small are below; your players will create the third negative aspect:

- *Someday I Will Die Alone*
- *Art Is a Waste*

Creating the Third Negative Aspect

Give each of your players an index card on which to write down a possible negative aspect. The negative aspects affect how Anthony acts in his daily life. They will be something that limit his perception, predispose him toward destructive behaviors and disengagement, or arrange his priorities in a toxic way. Ask each player to write down an idea for the third aspect on their card.

Collect the index cards from your players and read each out loud. Let the players decide which aspect they prefer. If they can't reach a consensus, work with them to re-word one of the aspects to something they do agree on or pick one for them to keep things moving.

FACES

Each negative aspect has three faces. The first is the figment or mental avatar of the emotion behind the aspect. The second and third faces are memories of real people outside the client's mind: someone who helped to create the emotion or who has recently reinforced it. The faces for each aspect are unique and do not overlap.

Aspect: *Someday I Will Die Alone*
Figment: Naomi Pine, owner of a popular club and all the dancers within it.
Originated by: Angela Small, his mother who abandoned him as a child.
Reinforced by: Quinn, his administrative assistant who writes mean blog posts about him.

Aspect: *Art Is a Waste*
Figment: Felix Morello, the city's criminal kingpin.
Originated by: Gerald Maddox, his uncle—a painter who died poor.
Reinforced by: Alice, his niece who wants money to attend art school.

Ask your players to think of three faces for the third negative aspect: one figment, one originator, and one reinforcer. Figments need a name and a brief explanation of how or why they have power and influence in the mental landscape. The people who originated and reinforced the negative aspect need a name, a relationship to the client, and a brief explanation of how they're related to the negative aspect.

Write the names and information of the six people who are memories, not figments, on separate index cards.
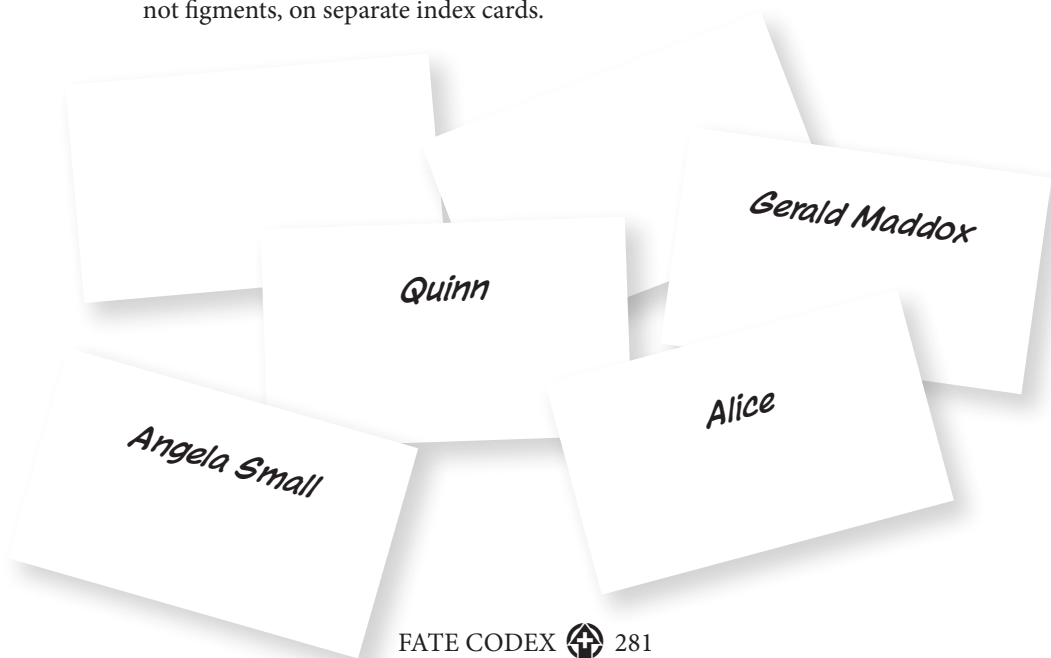
Developing the Figments

Select approaches for the three figments. Each figment has one approach at Great (+4), one at Good (+3), two at Fair (+2), one at Average (+1) and one at Mediocre (+0). In addition, they have three aspects and up to two stunts. If you already have ideas for the aspects and stunts, add those. Otherwise, create them during gameplay. The figments have three stress boxes and one moderate consequence.

Felix Morello

Gregarious Felix Morello believes in keeping his enemies close. His restaurant, Rita's, offers discounts for law enforcement and he makes sure to greet each badge at every meal. Anyone who doesn't consent to playing nice is eliminated. End of story. A cannier man than he feigns to be, Felix Morello always has an escape route.

ASPECTS

CRIMINAL KINGPIN OF THE CITY • LUSTS FOR BEAUTY

MY BEST FRIENDS ARE COPS

APPROACHES

GREAT (+4)	Forceful
GOOD (+3)	Careful
FAIR (+2)	Clever, Flashy
AVERAGE (+1)	Sneaky
MEDIOCRE (+0)	Quick

STUNTS

Because I am an *Escape Artist*, once per game session I can find a way out from a conflict or tense situation, no matter how impossible it seems.

Because I *Have Many Friends*, I get +2 when I Cleverly create an advantage by
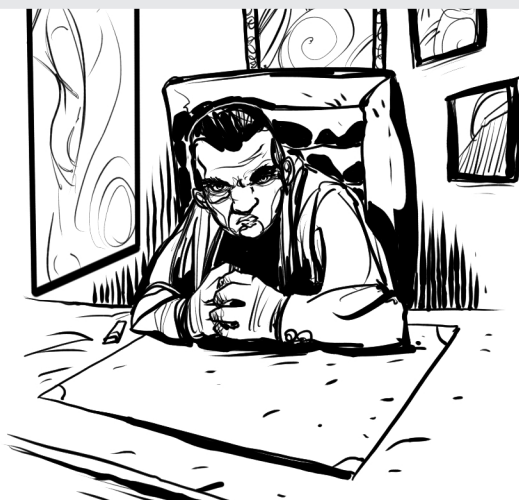
Naomi Pine

Naomi Pine built *Le Rêve* with blackmail and bribery. She's a watchful woman whose taste is both impeccable and ruthless. She's cultivated her club as the social hub of the city. Get on her blacklist and you're a pariah.

ASPECTS

THE QUEEN OF LE RÊVE • EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE

CENTER OF THE RUMOR MILL

APPROACHES

GREAT (+4)	Clever
GOOD (+3)	Flashy
FAIR (+2)	Careful, Sneaky
AVERAGE (+1)	Quick
MEDIOCRE (+0)	Forceful

STUNTS

Because I am a *Tastemaster*, I get +2 when I Cleverly attack someone by insulting their personal style.

Because I *Have Dirt on Everyone*, I get +2 when I Sneakily create an advantage by blackmailing one of Anthony's memories.

THE LAIRS

Like a mad scientist and her lab or a king and his castle, each of the three figments has a stronghold or **lair**. Action, secrets, and memories congregate around these key locations. A lair is where the figment has the most power in the mental landscape. Each figment designates one approach that's tied to the lair; any action the figment takes involving that approach receives a +2 to the roll.

Naomi's lair is *Le Rêve*, her nightclub and speakeasy (Flashy). The spacious club with its generous dancefloor, real crystal chandeliers, and large booths is *the* place to be seen in the city. Playing at *Le Rêve* can make a musician's career. With a bit of money and the right words, patrons can find themselves gaining access to Backstage, an intimate speakeasy with real alcohol, smoother music, and beautiful people all willing to trade their bodies for some coin.

Felix's lair is Rita's, his legitimate business and favorite restaurant (Careful). He holds court from a wall booth from which he has full view of the front and back entrances and kitchen door. He keeps an office on the upper floor. The office and restaurant both are full of art Anthony would have painted, had he stuck with art. The restaurant also has a

couple trap doors and tunnels out to the street in case Felix needs to make a quick escape. Criminals and cops alike mingle freely at Rita's and enjoy the superb spaghetti made from Felix's "own grandmother's recipe."

Ask your players to decide on a lair for the third figment. If needed, prompt your players with the setting and figment descriptions. What kinds of places fit into the setting? Where would the figment spend most of their time? Add a name and a brief description that sets the mood and explains how the figment is connected to the lair, including which of the figment's approaches is tied to the stronghold.

RELATIONSHIPS

Each client's mind is a network of connections between haunted thoughts, persistent memories, and the people associated with each. Hidden among these connections are the dreams, desires, and passions the client has forgotten or repressed. Some have been so pushed down, they are present only as colors tying memories together, hinting at deeper relationships. The SPIRITs use these relationships to change their clients' perception of their darker beliefs and remind them of the humanity they've lost.

Take the six cards you previously created when developing the non-figment faces and mix them in with six blank cards. These twelve cards and the three figments are the primary people your players will interact with during gameplay. You'll use this deck of cards to establish the keys the SPIRITs need to connect with in order to save Anthony.

Keys for Anthony

Hold out the stack of twelve cards and ask your players to draw three. The first card is someone Anthony feels he has failed. On the NPC's card write "Key: Failed." The second card is someone whose good opinion matters to Anthony. On this card write, "Key: Opinion Matters." The third card is someone Anthony loves romantically or as family. On this card write, "Key: Loves."

If a card is blank, ask your players to make up a new NPC. The NPC needs a name and relationship to the client. Fill in the blank index cards as your players meet new NPCs. Using this index card system ensures new NPCs have a built-in relationship to the other characters in the landscape.

Color Groups

Each color group is associated with a dream, desire, or passion the client has forgotten or repressed. SPIRITs locate and talk with everyone wearing a certain color, trying to discover how those people are linked and why that link matters to Anthony. During gameplay, encourage your players to exercise their inner therapist as they determine what each color means

by figuring out what the four people have in common—no matter how odd—and why that commonality is important. Players can then convert these meanings into aspects.

Shuffle the three key people back into the stack of twelve and mix up the cards. Shuffle the cards, face down, into three piles of four. Ask the players to assign a color to each pile. Write these colors down. Then, without showing the players, write down who is in each color's pile. Leave the blanks to fill in later.

When you describe these characters to your players, incorporate each character's color into their clothing. For example, a character may wear a green tie or red shoes. Remember to only describe each character wearing one color to avoid confusing your players.

COLOR: ORANGE	COLOR: VIOLET	COLOR: GREEN
Relationship	Relationship	Relationship
1.	1. Angela Small (violet scarf)	1. Alice (green skirt)
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.

Character Creation

SPIRITs works best with FATE ACCELERATED characters. Because all action in SPIRITs is an exertion of the character's willpower, they could conceivably have any skill. How players approach and accomplish actions matters more in SPIRITs than detailing skills for each mental landscape.

Character creation follows the same process explained in FATE ACCELERATED. Instruct your players to select their aspects following the guidelines in FATE ACCELERATED (page 8): characters have one approach at Good (+3), two at Fair (+2), two at Average (+2), and one at Mediocre (+0).

Once the mental landscape is shaped, it is concrete. Everything within it operates by the rules of the setting. Everyone, including the memories, figments, and SPIRITs, interacts with that landscape as though it were a real place, so approaches work as they do in any other Fate setting.

ASPECTS FOR SPIRITS

In SPIRITs, the characters are experienced technicians who don't remember anything about their lives outside of their jobs. They do, however, remember their past clients.

Players should create at least three aspects: a High Concept, a Trouble, and one additional aspect based on their character's previous experiences helping clients or their relationships within the team. SPIRITs can have up to five aspects, but more can be filled in during the missions.

Since the mental landscapes the SPIRITs enter vary wildly, character aspects must be setting-agnostic. Instead of being **The World's Best Swordfighter**, a character has **Whatever the Weapon….** In a castle landscape, this may mean being an excellent swordfighter. In a landscape of suburban malls, however, the aspect could mean the character is an expert with a cell phone and social media.

If your players struggle with writing good aspects, ask them to think about how their characters approach life and what experiences they have had as SPIRITs. For example, why do or don't they enjoy being a SPIRIT? Have they fallen in love with someone else's memory? Do they easily blend in with the client's mind or do they always stick out? Do they have a fellow SPIRIT with whom they prefer to work?

PET THEORIES

Most SPIRITs have at least one pet theory about their work. Ask your players to consider what their character thinks about the job and what they think their "real life" might be. SPIRITs may be dead, comatose, anthropomorphized ideas, memories, dreaming, spiritual time travelers, or something else—what is their character's pet theory? What is the character's idea about what comes next, if they think a "next" even exists?

PREGENERATED S.P.I.R.I.T.S.

If your players wish to play pregenerated SPIRITs, you can use the three sample characters provided on page 293 of this adventure. Stats are provided for FATE ACCELERATED versions of each character, including their individual aspects, approaches, and stunts.

Opening Scene: Trouble at Rita's

The scene opens in a small alleyway across the street from an inviting Italian restaurant. Warm light spills over the sidewalk out of large picture windows and the restaurant bustles with activity. Over the door, a sign reads *Rita's*. The noise stops suddenly like a held breath and you watch a man be dragged out the front door and tossed onto the sidewalk. Behind them, a man in a well-tailored suit follows, his hands casually in his pockets. "I'm disappointed in you, Gerald," he says.

Gerald Maddox, the mental dossier supplies, *Anthony's painter uncle who died penniless. He helped form Anthony's aspect,* **Art Is a Waste** *and is associated with the figment, Felix Morello, and Alice, Anthony's niece..*

"I want that sketchbook. Bring it to me in three days, or I'll forget that we've always been great friends," the suited man—Morello, probably—says. He nods to his men and they follow him back into Rita's, leaving Gerald on the sidewalk.

Down toward one end of the street, raucous music jangles out of a large nightclub. Down toward the other end, your players can find the third lair they designed.

Will the SPIRITs talk with Gerald and learn more about this sketchbook? Or will they head into Rita's and find out what Felix Morello is planning?

DOING THE JOB

This opening scene starts the "laying groundwork" phase of the SPIRITs' task. Convincing the client to change is a massive challenge. Laying groundwork makes the challenge manageable by changing Anthony's perception, digging up his lost humanity, and nullifying the figments' toxic influence.

When the SPIRITs finally confront Anthony, the GM has 30 challenge points to distribute among the three arguments they make to him about why he should change his ways. If the SPIRITs don't lay any groundwork, each argument will be a +10 difficulty—nearly impossible to overcome. Since the SPIRITs need to successfully make two of their three arguments, laying groundwork to reduce these difficulties and build up positive assets is critical.

SPIRITs lay groundwork three ways:

- Changing the negative aspects
- Creating new, positive aspects
- Taking down the three figments

Each of these methods relies on interacting with the figments and memories of people in the landscape. Changing or creating aspects often requires investigation, while taking down the figments requires planning and often direct action.

Changing the Negative Aspects

Changing a negative aspect is an overcome action, similar to removing an aspect from play. Before the SPIRITs can overcome the negative aspect, however, they must collect evidence undermining the aspect so that they

can launch their attack from within Anthony's mind.

For example, to counter Anthony's negative aspect **Art Is a Waste**, the SPIRITs may find one of his old sketchbooks or talk with someone who once encouraged him to pursue art. The better the evidence they find, the easier the overcome roll will be.

Once they have found evidence, the SPIRITs write the negative aspect on a wall or other space and cross it out. If they use tools relevant to the environment (create advantage!), they may find it easier to get rid of the negative thoughts. Everything is symbolic.

The players roll to overcome the aspect. If the roll is successful, they revise the aspect to be more positive. If they succeed with style, the aspect becomes especially positive.

The focus of the aspect must always remain the same. Anthony's aspect about his relationship with art must remain about his relationship with art. However, **Art Is a Waste** may shift to **Art Isn't Worthless** or, if they succeed with style on their roll, **Art Has a Place in My Life**.

When they overcome the old aspects, the SPIRITs write the new aspect on the wall. They know their change has been successful when their mental dossier includes the revised aspect. Each revised aspect has one free invoke during the client confrontation. As the SPIRITs gather more counter-evidence, they can choose to change the aspect again, making it increasingly positive, and adding more free invokes for use later.

Creating New, Positive Aspects

Creating positive aspects within Anthony's mind requires interacting with at least three of the four people in one of the color groups; how those four people are connected and why that connection is significant reveals the color's meaning. A color may represent the client's desire to travel, love of baking, or any other dream, desire, or passion they've pushed out of mind.

Remind your players to keep track of the possible common factors among the people within a color group and determine what each color might mean. As long as they can justify the meaning, anything goes. If they decide the connection is Santa Claus, bedtime stories, and the Peanuts Halloween special, they could declare the color represents Anthony's wonder or belief in the improbable.

Once your players decide what a color means, they can spend a fate point to convert that meaning into an aspect that is added to their mental dossier. Possible new aspects include **Freedom in Flight**, **Seeking Safe Harbor**, and **Pie Goes with Everything**. The new aspects, each with one free invoke, becomes another tool in the SPIRITs' arsenal when confronting the client.

As with initial three negative aspects, the SPIRITs can work to make these aspects more positive by gathering evidence and rolling to create more advantages on the aspects, adding additional free invokes.

Taking Down the Three Figments

Besides revising and creating aspects, SPIRITs also work to take down the figments that hold sway in the client's mind by removing the figment's social or political cachet. Taking the figments down means ending their influence more than it means ending their life. With Naomi Pine, discrediting her reputation as the trend leader of the city would remove her power; getting Morello arrested for his many crimes would remove his sway over Anthony's mind.

Each figment that is taken down removes five points from the GM's challenge pool, greatly reducing the difficulty of the final confrontation.

Middle Scene: A Gallery Opening

After improving and creating some aspects, the SPIRITs are ready to try to take down one of the figments.

An art gallery is opening across the street from *Le Rêve*. The featured artist (a blank card if you have one; any of the established NPCs if you don't) is flitting between people browsing the art, answering questions with a nervous smile. Then Naomi Pine quietly leads several people through the front door. Naomi stops by a painting and shakes her head. "Trash," she says, tutting. "Look at those lines and the muddiness of the color. Simply trash." The people around her murmur their assent. The gallery slowly empties.

The artist withdraws, diminishing more with each cruel comment.

Will the SPIRITs allow Naomi, the tastemaker of the city, to demean the artist? Will they take the opportunity to remove Naomi's influence from Anthony's mind?

Final Scene: Convincing Anthony

Once the SPIRITs feel they are ready to convince Anthony to change, they announce, "We are ready for the client," and all action stops. The landscape wavers as wind thrusts up around them. The SPIRITs close their eyes and open them in Anthony's bedroom. The SPIRITs are still only mental energy and so appear as ghosts.

Anthony twists in his sleep and awakens fitfully. He stares at the SPIRITs wide-eyed, his comforter pulled up to nose. "Ghosts aren't real," he says, his voice muffled.

Unless the SPIRITs can convince Anthony to change, all of the work they did to end the power of the negative emotions controlling him and change his perspective will fade like a dream in the morning.

CONVINCING THE CLIENT

SPIRITs convince the client to change by presenting three compelling arguments to the client in the form of stories or scenarios. Three of your players will each present a single argument to the client. If you have fewer than three players, one person goes multiple times.

The arguments draw on what the SPIRITs have learned about the client and may involve reminding the client of past events, important people, or old goals. To make it easier for your players, prompt them by telling them to each address one time period: past, present, or future.

Remind them of *The Christmas Carol*—their argument can be kind and beautiful or scary and intimidating. They can sneak up to their point or outright tell the client what they need to know. Let the players decide their own approach.

The story or scenario allows the players to create an advantage to raise their roll by framing the argument to be its most persuasive. Players can also invoke any positive aspects from the dossier that fit within their argument, building to a final roll at the conclusion of the argument against the difficulty set by the GM.

The client's initial resistance overall is a +30 challenge, divided evenly into three. For each figment the SPIRITs disempowered, the resistance lowers by 5 points. If the SPIRITs defeat all three figments, the challenge level is +15. This means that the difficulty of each of the three arguments must overcome will range from +5 to +10. Any leftover points are assigned at the GM's discretion.

To convince the client to change, the SPIRITs must have at least two successful arguments. If all three arguments are successful, then they succeed with style and may treat the completed client as a significant milestone (see FATE: ACCELERATED, page 33). If any of the three arguments fail, each SPIRIT receives a moderate consequence for mental fatigue at the end of the confrontation.

Aftermath of Failure

If SPIRITs do not convince the client to change, they have two choices: try again or take the failure.

If the SPIRITs decide to try again, they state their intention and touch the client's forehead. They return to the mental landscape and resume laying groundwork. Because the client is aware of the SPIRITs, all actions become one step more difficult.

If the SPIRITs take the failure, they return to wherever they spend their off-time until the next job. The players alter one of their character's aspects to reflect the failure; Anthony's mind will have an impact on them for some time to come.

Plot Hooks & Adventure Seeds

Each client the SPIRITs help allows them to strengthen their skills and improve their team; each client also provides opportunities for the GM to work in hints of a grander plan. SPIRITs' episodic nature also makes it easy for new people to join in or for other players to miss a session or two. Here are a few plot hooks and adventure seeds to keep the story going, in addition to simply providing new client assignments.

THE BLACK KNIGHTS

The SPIRITs are attacked. No warning. In the aftermath of the battle, the SPIRITs learn their assailants call themselves the Black Knights. "We protect people from mind-controlling parasites like you," the Knights tell them. "Cease your work here immediately or we will cease it for you."

Will the SPIRITs give in? If they best the Knights this time, what's to stop them from showing up in the next mind and the next? Who are these people? Why are they so opposed to the SPIRITs work? How can they be stopped? *Should* they be stopped?

THE PINOCCHIO MEMORY

Every newbie makes the mistake at least once. The mental landscapes and people within them are so real, they forget that everyone they meet is either a figment or a memory. But this memory is different. They've asked for the impossible—a way out.

But can a memory ever leave the mind that houses it? And, where would they go? Are SPIRITs memories who got out of their cages?

SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH THE DIRECTOR

When the SPIRITs leave the current mental landscape to confront their client, they are surprised by an additional woman at the client's bedside. She tells the team she needs their help. The director of the SPIRIT agency has been acting strangely and making questionable, irresponsible decisions. She offers them a chance to explore the director's mind and find out why.

This job won't be like any other, though. They'll be on their own without a dossier. Will they seek out the truth? What will they find? Can they help the director return to normal? ✚

Molly Weyland

Molly knows more stories than you. And, she's been in worse situations than this. Molly is so far past caring that she's come out the other side; very little is worth the effort of being serious about it. Don't let her cavalier attitude fool you, though. Molly is an experienced SPIRIT who draws on her excellent memory to devise creative solutions no matter what she's facing. She and Alexander Gogolin, who she calls Sasha, have worked the past sixteen clients together. She delights in watching others misjudge him.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: THIS REMINDS ME OF A TIME…

TROUBLE: WHY SO SERIOUS?

OTHER: SASHA IS WORTH THE EFFORT.

APPROACHES

GOOD (+3)   Clever

FAIR (+2)   Flashy, Forceful

AVERAGE (+1)   Careful, Quick

MEDIOCRE (+0) Sneaky

STUNTS

Because I *Mask My Skills* with humor, I get +2 when I Forcefully attack by deciding to take something seriously.

Because I have a *Perfect Memory*, I can create an advantage once per session from my recollections of any room in the mental landscape.

[Open Slot]

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Pet theories: Molly argues they are all brains in jars or maybe they're just a computer-debugging program. No theory is too outlandish. But, honestly, does it really matter?

Alexander "Sasha" Gogolin

According to Alexander, anything that needs doing is worth doing well. He brings his craftsman sensibilities into all aspects of his life, including slyly dropping the right word at just the right moment to crack a joke. When Alexander does act, he is swift and decisive; he wields his comfort with silence as a weapon and is always amused when others break to fill the space with chatter. Initially irritated by Molly Weyland, he now enjoys her conversation. He also takes his role as a mentor to the new SPIRIT, Gabe Simmonds, very seriously.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: RIGHT ACTION, RIGHT MOMENT

TROUBLE: RUSH PERFECTION

OTHER: MY ROOKIE WILL BE THE BEST

APPROACHES

GOOD (+3)   Careful

FAIR (+2)   Forceful, Sneaky

AVERAGE (+1)   Careful, Quick

MEDIOCRE (+0) Flashy

STUNTS

Because *Silence Is My Weapon*, I get +2 when I Carefully overcome someone's reluctance to talk by silently waiting them out.

Because *People Misjudge Me*, I get +2 when I Cleverly create an advantage by surprising someone with a well-timed quip.

[Open Slot]

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Pet theories: Alexander thinks they are dreaming, that their minds have been pulled to help while they sleep. Or maybe it is all just a dream, but that doesn't mean it isn't worth taking seriously.

Gabe Simmonds

Gabe has never found a question he didn't want to ask or a boundary he didn't want to test. In a landscape of winged people, he'd be the first SPIRIT to fly. The risks are worth the reward. Nothing excites him more than exploration—except collecting the stories of what others have seen and done. Every person is an entire world to discover. Gabe is new to being a SPIRIT, but he already loves it. The universe is full of so many experiences and he wants to have all of them.

ASPECTS

HIGH CONCEPT: LIFE IS CONSTANT EXPLORATION

TROUBLE: LEAPS BEFORE LOOKING

OTHER: MOLLY IS A TREASURE TROVE

APPROACHES

GOOD (+3) Quick

FAIR (+2) Clever, Flashy

AVERAGE (+1) Forceful, Sneaky

MEDIOCRE (+0) Careful

STUNTS

Because I *Ignore Risks*, I get +2 when I Flashily overcome an obstacle when trapped or hemmed in.

Because I *Love People's Stories*, once per game session I can start a contest with one victory already marked by expressing interest in my opponent.

[Open Slot]

NOTES

Refresh: 3

Pet theories: Gabe hasn't formed any theories yet, but he enjoys collecting ideas from Molly. His favorite is that they're all serving in Purgatory.

CREDITS

JOHN ADAMUS is a frequent editor and player of many Fate-powered games, and his work can be found in both Fate Worlds books, the forthcoming *Paranet Papers* supplement for *The Dresden Files Roleplaying Game*, and *Iron Edda*. He spends his days helping game designers and authors be more awesome. He frequently tweets about game design and writing techniques on Twitter at @awesome_john and blogs regularly at writernextdoor.com.

LEONARD BALSERA is the lead designer of FATE CORE. He has been working on the Fate system in one incarnation or another since 2003. He has not yet won the Diana Jones Award because of Jason Morningstar. Currently, Leonard lives and works in Austin, TX, as Brian Engard's lord and master at Steve Jackson Games. You may find him on Twitter at @leonardbalsera, a screen name that betrays his lack of perspective on the emergent consequences of character limits.

NICK BATE is a galactic archaeologist, which he swears is an actual thing. When he's not mapping dwarf galaxies, Nick draws stick figure comics, builds Lego robots, and reads just about anything. He has written an adventure scenario for the Fate-powered game *Bulldogs!* called *Ghost Pirates of the Bandeth Sector*, which you should totally try out. You can find him on twitter at @ickbat. If he's being honest, he'd rather be playing something science fictional.

CLAUDIA CANGINI is a full time freelance illustrator, comic artist, gamer, and an improvisation theatre amateur. She began working as a manga letterer. In the following years she worked in video and manga publishing dealing, among other things, in manga localization, packaging, graphic

design for web and print, advertising, art direction, corporate identity, editing, project management, typographic printing, and comic book writing and illustration. She has collaborated mainly with Italian publisher StudioShadow and Narrattiva and from 2008 to 2014 organized with Michele Gelli the Italian indie gaming convention InterNosCon. In 2014 she launched her Patreon page: Sexy Illos for the Ladies. As an improvisation theatre amateur she's one of the founders of the On The Fly Theatre group and Stille theatre company.

When not writing or editing, **Sally Christensen** crochets unspeakable evil. She lives in the wilds of north Toronto, along with two cats, a Portuguese viking, and her tiny overlord.

Brendan Conway is a longtime gamer who has more recently started writing for and contributing to RPGs. He wrote for the *Firefly RPG* and will soon be releasing a *Dungeon World* supplement. He is an Assistant Developer for Magpie Games. He enjoys bacon, egg, and ketchup sandwiches.

Liz Court blames her brother for all of this. An avid gamer for over twenty years, Liz has worked on over 40 different RPG products, helped organize the first unofficial PaizoCon, started and headed the Wayfinder fanzine for its first four issues, then went on to work for Paizo Publishing after being a member of its community for five years. Liz also likes art, baking, coffee, and all things ninja, but not always in that order.

Thomas Deeny is a graphic designer who specializes in book layout and game design. His layout and design work can be found in Margaret Weis Productions' *Firefly RPG* line, Crafty Games' *Mistborn RPG*, and AEG's *Nightfall* and *Tempest* game lines. Thomas is an evangelist for hobby gaming, and helped to organize the gaming community in southern Arizona, working with manufacturers, retailers, and gamers to develop community awareness of the hobby. You can review his published works at denaghdesign.com and follow him on Twitter at @denaghdesign.

Brian Engard spends most of his days walking his dogs, procuring live badgers for Leonard Balsera, and writing furiously about things that don't exist. He likes karaoke, coffee, and running dungeons with his wife, Nicole.

Cheyenne Rae Grimes is an avid gamer, knitter, pop culturist, and kitten whisperer. She is currently pursuing a degree in Psychology in Cleveland, Ohio. Finally making the jump into writing games, she is a

new member of IGDN (www.igdnonline.com) and is currently working on a reality television-based game with Nicole Winchester.

SHELLEY HARLAN is an editor by day, and by night…is also an editor, because you can't get too much of a good thing. She works for the the indie RPG company Faster Monkey Games and still can't quite get used to the idea that people will pay her money to read gaming material. She also thinks it's a fun game to see if you can spot the typo in this bio.

CARRIE HARRIS is the official Evil Hat Productions marketing manager and official pink lion—her business card says so. Way back in the day, she got her start freelancing for White Wolf but left to work in a lab where they kept brains in jars on the counters. Now she's brain-in-jar-free, which is a pity, but that gives her time to write teen novels for Random House including *Bad Taste in Boys* and *Demon Derby*. She also writes tie-in fiction for Evil Hat such as *Sally Slick and the Steel Syndicate* and the upcoming *Dinocalypse Forever*, and she'll soon be returning to her RPG roots with the publication of the *Young Centurions RPG*, co-written with Clark Valentine. If she were a Fate character, one of her aspects would be ***Sparkly New Idea! CANNOT RESIST!!!***

MARISSA KELLY (MK) grew up with roleplaying as a favorite hobby; her father often made up house rules for classic roleplaying games, spinning epic tales of bravery and heart. From a young age, MK was inspired to draw the characters and scenes from these stories. As an adult, she now finds herself drawn to tweaking and changing systems in order to bring those kinds of experiences to a new generation of roleplayers. With her partner, Mark Diaz Truman, she founded Magpie Games in early 2011 and currently serves as Magpie's Senior Art Developer and one of its designers.

SHOSHANA KESSOCK is a writer, game designer, and scholar specializing in tabletop and live action roleplaying. She is also co-founder of Phoenix Outlaw Productions, an independent roleplay game design company, and co-developer on *Dresden Lives*, the dramatic live action role-play game for The Dresden Files universe for Evil Hat Productions. She is the author of such freeform LARPs as *SERVICE*, *The Last Ten Minutes*, and *Dangers Untold* and has staffed and organized live events for nearly eight years. When she isn't running and writing games, she travels the world speaking about innovation and design in analog games and topics like social action and activism in gaming spaces. She hails from Brooklyn, New York.

JEREMY KOSTIEW is a technical designer by day and a graphic-doer, sorta-writer by night. He's done art for Growling Door Games, Machine Age Productions, Zero Point Information, and the Indie Game Developer Network. He has written for Machine Age Productions' Fate-powered *ADX* and Onyx Path's *Werewolf: the Apocalypse*. He has the highest tolerance for spicy food out of any human being alive, possibly due to some kind of dragon blood. Dude loves werewolves and gnolls because they are obviously the best monsters ever.

ANDRÉ LA ROCHE is a gamer and an attorney. Despite this otherwise deadly combination of character flaws, he's pretty relaxed at the gaming table. He previously worked on Margaret Weis Productions' *Dragonlance* game line. André aspires to be a warrior-poet, and spends his free time randomly spouting existential platitudes.

PHIL LEWIS was featured on Hoarders Episode 302: "Too Many RPGs." When not involved in an intervention, he spends his time developing his competitive kingdom-building RPG *Wrath of the Autarch*, playing games with his friends and family, and studying the rules to *Magic Realm*.

RYAN MACKLIN is a human who likes to make and play games. He was one of the principal architects in THE DRESDEN FILES ROLEPLAYING GAME and FATE CORE SYSTEM, and has written for and edited dozens of books from various game publishers and independent authors. Ryan also collects shot glasses, drinks way too much coffee, dances in the kitchen like no one's watching, and makes cool stuff with his fiancée, Lillian Cohen-Moore. He's mouthy on the Internet: you can find him on Twitter ([@RyanMacklin](https://twitter.com/RyanMacklin)), G+ ([+RyanMacklin](https://plus.google.com/+RyanMacklin)), and his blog at RyanMacklin.com. If you like stabbing gods in the face, maybe you would like his free game, MYTHENDER (MythenderRPG.com). Do a little dance, make a little love, get down tonight, get down tonight.

KIRA MAGRANN is an artist, game designer, and queer feminist living in Columbus, Ohio. She organizes Indie Games on Demand at Origins and Gen Con and designed the fetishistic car game *Crash Into You*. An advocate for weird, sexy, and queer RPGs and LARPs, her tastes in gaming tend toward the conceptual and contemporary. She's also working on many fronts to help build more inclusive and diverse spaces in gaming for all genders, sexualities, and races. Read her thoughts on gender and roleplaying games at www.gamingaswomen.com and see her enameled jewelry at www.animametals.etsy.com. Follow her on twitter [@kiranansi](https://twitter.com/kiranansi).

Tom Miskey has been an avid gamer and RPG collector for the past 33 years. He's written for various RPGs, such as contributing to *Legends of Anglerre* for Cubicle 7, writing *More Pulp Villains* for Precis Intermedia, and penning system hacks for *Spirit of the Century*, *BESM*, and *Godlike*, among others. Tom has done artwork for RPGs, from character sketches for individual gamers to published work for companies like Hero Games and has illustrated everything from children's books to t-shirt designs. Currently Tom is writing *The Hand of Fate*, a fantasy steampulp Victorian setting that includes rules for playing FATE CORE with a standard deck of playing cards instead of dice.

Mike Mumah has worked for the better part of a decade as a roleplaying game illustrator. His work has appeared in such games as *Shadowrun*, *Rifts*, *Dead Reign*, *Part-Time Gods*, *Babylon 5*, and several others. The Michigan-based artist is currently at large from the Briarsbrook Institute for the Criminally Insane and considered extremely dangerous. If sighted, do not approach him! He may seem very affable and friendly but don't be fooled! Please call the authorities and delay him with free coffee, bourbon, and/or hot wings. He will take the time to enjoy this bait until he can be apprehended. This is for the public's best interest.

Quinn Murphy thinks about games constantly. When he's not ranting on twitter ([@qh_murphy](#)) or his blog ([ThoughtCrimeGames.net](#)), he is designing material for any number of game systems or designing the next great RPG (he hopes).

Juan Ochoa: Gumshoe whistleblower reporter hero? A narcissistic antagonist out for blood? Fall-guy for a horrifying nanite invasion? Sleeper agent for extraplanar feline intelligence? The FACTS on El Mucho Colombianisimo: he is a straight-dealing, smooth-lined, grit-toothed artist, twainsplit mirror-master-magician-carouser-cavorter, and noted wizard, with knowledge bilingual, exotic, and esoteric, who theoretically does most of his thinking in Español.

Kaitlynn Peavler, better known on the internet as thedandmom, is a freelance illustrator and graphic designer. She has been producing fantasy art and fun cartoony images for years and has done artwork for Prismatic Art, Conquering Corsairs, Whispering Road, and more. Her own projects include *Deck of Legends*, *Experiment 073*, and a new comic in the works called *Falsely Outrageous*.

Steve Radabaugh, first of his name, is a high school teacher, freelance app developer, technology consultant, and game designer. He founded SPQR Soft LLC in 2012 to explore the convergence of technology with tabletop gaming. In addition to developing apps and websites for the private and public sector, his app store releases include *Fate Core Folio* and *Dungeon Marauders*. In the analogue realm, look for his work in *The Sound of Water*, the companion book to *A World of Dew*.

Brie Sheldon is a writer and proofreader, as well as co-designer at Daedalum Analog Productions. She currently has work in production for Daedalum A.P. projects *Clash* and *Tabletop Blockbuster*, and for FASA Games Inc.'s *1879* line. Brie is a fan of cyberpunk (obvs.) and fantasy, and spends an unreasonable amount of time hoping that George Lucas won't remake *Willow*. She is also a writer for Gaming as Women, Imaginary Funerals, and her own personal blog. She's a video, tabletop, and board gamer and hopes to see you on the 'net, chummers.

June Shores has only been in the role play gaming hobby for a few years now. Her first experience with a tabletop RPG was with Fate, back when the *Dresden Files RPG* came out, and she has been in love with the system ever since. With this new hobby came an all-consuming urge to hack and drift games to suit her needs. From pastel-colored magic ponies to anime-flavored fantasy, June has produced many solo projects that are scattered across the internet today. This is her first time being published. She attends The University of Maine at Farmington to pursue a degree in new media and blogs at her web site, Headpigeons.

J. Huston Todd is a middle-school English teacher by day and ardent GM by night who has been gaming in one form or another for over 12 years. Although he has been creating content for most of that time, this is his first time being published. You can find him on Tumblr (huston-thetodd.tumblr.com), Twitter (@HustonTheTodd), or poking around Google+. He has been a lifelong native of the Las Vegas Valley and lives there with his wife and two and a third kids.

Mark Diaz Truman is an independent game developer and the co-owner of Magpie Games (magpiegames.com). Mark has authored two indie RPGs—*The Play's the Thing* and *Our Last Best Hope*—and written a number of pieces for Evil Hat Productions, including parts of The Fate Toolkit and *Timeworks*. Mark is passionate about creating an inclusive and diverse gaming community and is thrilled to have the chance to put forward pieces by both fresh voices and old friends in The Fate Codex!

Amanda Valentine is a freelance RPG editor and developer. Her work includes the *Dresden Files RPG*, *Marvel Heroic Roleplaying*, *Fate Accelerated Edition*, *Little Wizards*, and many others. She also edits fiction, including several of the *Spirit of the Century* novels. She blogs sporadically at ayvalentine.com about editing, parenting, and gaming. At reads4tweens.com she writes spolierific book reviews for adults who care about what the kids in their lives are reading. You can find her on Twitter as @ayvalentine and @reads4tweens.

Phil Vecchione is one of the founders of award-winning Gnome Stew: The Game Mastering Blog. As a freelance writer and designer, Phil has worked with Engine Publishing, Third Eye Games, and Evil Beagle Games. He is founder of Encoded Designs. **Chris Sniezak** is the founder and co-host, along with Phil, of the Misdirected Mark Podcast, and producer of Misdirected Mark Productions. He is an author and freelance game designer, as well as a member of Encoded Designs.

Eddy Webb (with a "y," thank you) is an award-winning writer, game designer, and Sherlockian. He has worked on over 100 products, including five years on the World of Darkness MMO. Today he writes for video games and anything else when he can. He can be found at eddyfate.com.

Rob Wieland is an author, blogger, pop culture writer and game designer who writes about pirates, gangsters, Jedi, dragons, zombies and whatever else pays. He is best known for his work on the *Firefly RPG*, *Star Wars Saga Edition*, *Shadowrun*, and *CAMELOT Trigger*. Other projects include work on *Honor and Intrigue*, *Edge of Midnight*, *Hillfolk*, *Our Last Best Hope*, *7th Sea/Swashbuckling Adventures*, *Night's Black Agents*, and *13th Age*. His online presence includes multiple game blogs, interviews and articles for Milwaukee Record. He lives in scenic Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with his wife, who has many more skills useful for the zombie apocalypse.

Nicole Winchester is a social media professional specializing in micro-content, management, and strategy in sports and entertainment, last managing social media for the Sochi 2014 Olympics for the CBC. A freelance game writer and designer, travel blogger at www.culturaddicthistorynerd.com, and owner of the city's only social media events service (www.partytimesocial.com), she could probably spend less time tweeting about culture and politics @noizangel, but it's her job. She is working on a reality television-based game with Cheyenne Rae Grimes.

Tara Zuber grew up yearning to explore. Now she expands her world through stories and games. Though this is Tara's first article about gaming, she has also scripted comics published under a pseudonym in the Chicago-based *Ladies' Night Anthology*, Volumes 1 and 2, and the upcoming crowdfunded anthology, *Then It Was Dark*.

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