

# A NIGHTMARE AT HILL MANOR™

the World of Darkness

FREE  
RPG  
DAY

2011

There are times when the rational world seems, if only for a second, to fall away.

The leaves rustling in the trees on a still day.

The movement just past the corner of your eye.

We are taught to ignore the foolish impulse to react.  
But for those who look too long, too closely,  
there is another world pulsing

just behind the façade of the one we know.

Unimaginable things skitter by in the darkness.

and sometimes

they intrude on the reasonable, ordered world.

They seep from the shadows.

they rattle their chains

and they force you to look.

If you're lucky—

very, very lucky—

you'll survive what you see.

This Free RPG Day-exclusive quickstart for the **World of Darkness** contains everything you need to play through a scenario (except for some 10-sided dice).

But you'll never be the same again.

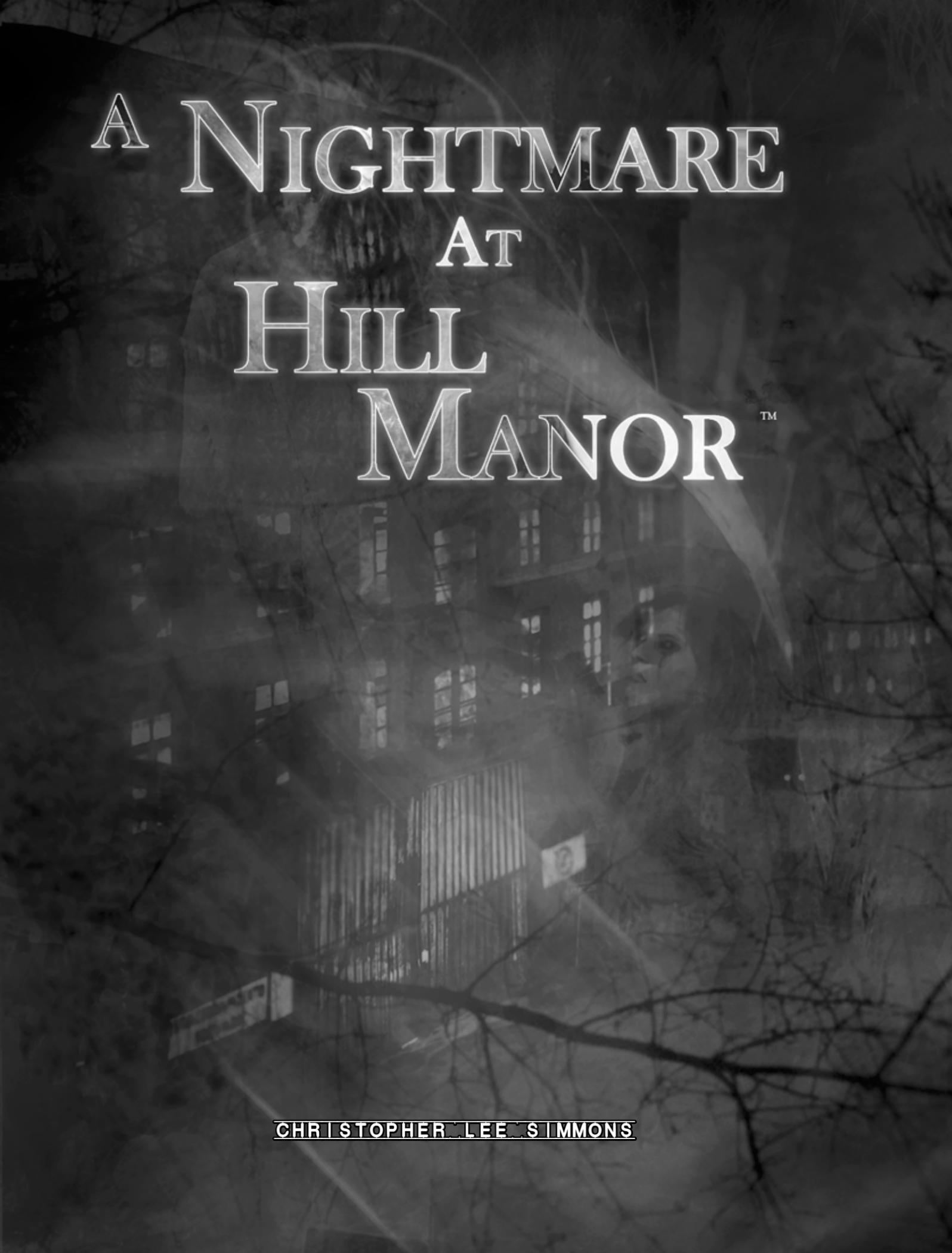


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the **World of Darkness**

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A NIGHTMARE  
AT  
HILL  
MANOR™

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# A NIGHTMARE AT HILL MANOR™

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# The System

**If evil spirits could perceive that they were associated with man, and yet that they were spirits separate from him, and if they could flow in into the things of his body, they would attempt by a thousand means to destroy him; for they hate man with a deadly hatred.**

**— J. Sheridan Le Fanu,  
"Green Tea"**

Everyone has had the sense at least once in their lives that things aren't right with the world. There are times when the rational world seems, if only for a second, to fall away. The leaves rustling in the trees on a still day. The movement just past the corner of your eye. The way the darkness at the bottom of the basement staircase seems to crawl and writhe if you stare at it too long. We are taught to ignore the foolish impulse to react. It's just your imagination, they say. There is no monster under the bed, in your closet, outside your window. It's all in your head. Better to just shrug it off and go on with your safe and sheltered life.

But for those who look too long, too closely, there is another world pulsing just behind the façade of the one we know. Elegant, deadly things stalk the alleys and nightclubs of the city. Darkling beasts lope in the margins between physical and spirit. Men burn their fingers grasping at lightning, but still manage to mold it into vibrant beauty. Faded shades long for their living loved ones or rage at the injustice of their existence.

Unimaginable things skitter by in the darkness, and sometimes they intrude on the reasonable, ordered. They seep from the shadows, they rattle their chains and they force you to look. If you're lucky—very, very lucky—you'll survive.

But you'll never be the same again.

The **World of Darkness** is a stylized version of our world—one in which monsters exist. Players take on the role of mortals in that world, working and playing in ignorance of the deeper shadows that hide terrible creatures. Vampires, werewolves, ghosts and other bogeymen exist alongside mortals, each race hidden from the world at large. Their machinations use mortals; their unholy appetites devour them. But not all mortals go quietly into that dark night. Not all of them are lucky enough to be recruited by an occult organization that knows the truth about the things that go bump in the night, but that doesn't mean that they can't fight back against the unknown. The **World of Darkness** core rulebook allows you to tell the stories of those who do not seek out the ghouls and goblins that dwell in the shadows, but rise to the occasion when those monsters encroach upon the light.

## The Game

The **World of Darkness** is a Storytelling (or roleplaying) game. In it, a group of players cooperates to tell a story. Each player takes on the role of a single character, except for the Storyteller. This player essentially takes on every other role, describing the world to the other players, acting out the parts of other characters and determining what challenges the players' characters face. Players roll dice to determine whether their characters can overcome the obstacles before them. In a typical exchange, the Storyteller describes the scene in which the players' characters find themselves. ("You approach the basement door at the end of the darkened hallway. On the other side, something scratches softly. What do you do?") The players in turn describe their characters' actions, usually in the first person. ("I sneak up to the door and try to listen for identifiable sounds.") The Storyteller then describes the results of the action, and he and the players go back and forth until the scene is resolved. Dice are rolled when players have their characters try things that aren't guaranteed success. Jumping out of a moving car without getting hurt would require a dice roll; leaving a stationary one wouldn't.

This booklet contains everything you and five of your friends will need to play your first game in the **World of Darkness**, except for some pencils, paper for notes and several 10-sided dice. (These specialty dice are available in most hobby shops and are sometimes called “d10s.”) Those of you who are going to be players should read over the character backgrounds in the back of this booklet and choose the one you want to play, unless the Storyteller allows you to make up your own character. The Storyteller should read the rest of the booklet in preparation before playing.

## WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?

By default, the **World of Darkness** casts players in the role of mortals, unprepared for the full consequences of encounters with the supernatural. These are not elite agents tasked with thinning the monstrous herd or religious fanatics called to rid the world of an unholy blight. At least, not yet. Mortals from the **World of Darkness** can surely be recruited into any number of monster hunting organizations. For that, you want **Hunter: the Vigil**.

Or perhaps your character gets too close to a bloodsucker and is embraced into the damned existence of **Vampire: the Requiem**. Maybe they discover their true, bestial nature in **Werewolf: the Forsaken**. Your characters might hear the call of the Watchtowers and become powerful magicians in **Mage: the Awakening**. They could be taken by the unknowable Fae and escape back to our world with **Changeling: the Lost** or become bound to a ghostly partner in **Geist: the Sin-Eaters**.

For information on those games and more, visit <http://www.white-wolf.com>, or look for our free quickstart downloads at <http://www.drivethrurpg.com>.

## Rules

**World of Darkness** uses a set of rules called the Storytelling System. The rules are not complex, but there are a few basics that form the foundation of the system, and you should take a moment to familiarize yourself with them before diving in.

**Rolling Dice:** When rolling dice in the Storytelling System, you do not add the numbers together. Instead, any single die that comes up 8 or better is considered a *success*. You usually need only one success to accomplish a task, but more is always better (causing more damage in combat, for

example). Any die that comes up 0 (considered a 10) counts as a success and can be rolled again to potentially get another success; this is called the 10-again rule. If you roll no successes at all, your character has failed that action.

**Dice Pools:** The number of dice you roll to attempt something is called your dice pool. It is usually made up of the total of one Attribute and one Skill on your character sheet, along with modifiers imposed by adverse conditions or any special equipment your character uses.

**Modifiers:** The Storyteller determines what *modifiers* apply to any dice pool. These either add to or subtract from the number of dice rolled in the dice pool. Modifiers usually come from tools used, Merits the character has (see p. 16) or general circumstances. The Storyteller should grant or impose a bonus or penalty if the circumstances are especially favorable or deleterious, usually ranging from +5 to -5 (although modifiers tend to be closer to +2 to -2). For example, an attempt to climb a wall that is slick with rain and slime could suffer a -2 penalty, whereas doing so on one with a few handholds could gain a +1.

**Chance Die:** If modifiers reduce your dice pool to zero or below, you should roll a single die called a *chance die*. A 10 rolled on a chance die generates a single success, while any other result is a failure. Rolling a 1 on a chance die indicates a dramatic failure, and the Storyteller should describe especially troublesome results (a gun jamming, a blowout during a car chase, etc.).

**Actions:** Almost anything a character does is considered a *simple action*. You determine the dice pool, roll the dice and see whether you succeed or fail. In combat you can perform one simple action per turn.

Sometimes you'll be asked to take an *extended action*, which represents doing something over a period of time, like researching something in a library or searching a room. In this case, each roll of the dice represents a fixed amount of time (usually 10 minutes, but it varies for some more involved actions). You accumulate successes from roll to roll until you run out of time or get a certain number described in the text.

Some actions can also be *contested*, which means two people are working against one another, such as in an arm-wrestling match or when a character tries to sneak past a watchful guard. In a contested action, each player (or the player and the Storyteller) rolls the dice pool for his character, and the person with the most successes wins.

Finally, some actions are *reflexive*, which means they happen automatically and don't take up any time. You can perform them and still perform a simple action that turn.

**Teamwork:** Characters can aid one another to achieve the same goal. They might work together to assemble an engine, break down a door or exorcise a ghost. Choose which character is the primary actor. A normal dice pool is assembled for him based on the action, such as Dexterity + Medicine to administer first aid. The same roll is made for each secondary actor. Any successes collected from assistants

are added to the primary actor's dice pool as bonus dice. So, contributors' rolls are made before that of the primary actor.

A dramatic failure on a secondary's roll levies a -4 penalty to the primary actor's roll—it hinders rather than helps his chances. The primary cannot decide to abandon his action if a contributor's roll contributes few successes or a penalty. He must proceed.

The Storyteller decides how many secondary actors can participate in teamwork, and can limit the actors however he desires. Three people might find space around a patient in order to provide first aid, for example, while five people might be able to work together to build a house.

**Success:** Each die that rolls an 8, 9 or 10 yields one success. (Exception: A chance roll must produce a 10 to succeed.) In an instant action, a player must roll at least one success for his character to accomplish a task. In an extended action, the number of successes required (accumulated over a series of rolls) depends on the task. In an attack roll, each success produces one point of damage.

*Example:* Nicky (one of the characters included in the scenario) is entering a bad neighborhood, and he doesn't want to offend the gang who claims this turf. To remember who's in charge, the Storyteller asks Nicky's player to roll Intelligence + Streetwise. Since Nicky has an Intelligence of 2 and a Streetwise of 2, he rolls four dice. They come up 4, 9, 6, and 3; Nicky has achieved one success. As a simple action, one success is all he needs. Nicky remembers that this area belongs to a group called the Westside Kings, and may act accordingly.

**Exceptional success:** Whenever five or more successes are rolled, the character achieves an exceptional success. This achievement sometimes provides an extra perk over and above the effect of having multiple successes.

*Example:* Let's say Nicky tried the same roll from above, to find out if he remembers which gang controls the neighborhood he just walked into. In this case, he rolls amazingly well: 9, 8, 8, and 10. He rerolls the 10 (see "Rolling Dice," above for the 10-again rule), and gets another 9, bringing his total up to five successes. Nicky not only remembers that this is Westside Kings turf, he remembers that the Kings are beefing with another set called the Benjamins, whose colors are green. He changes his green shirt out with a spare in the trunk of his car, so as to avoid offending any Kings he happens to run across.

**Failure:** A dice roll that yields no successes is a failure—the character does not succeed at his task.

*Example:* Again, we revisit Nicky's roll from above. In this case, Nicky rolls 4, 2, 6, and 3. Nothing came up a success; Nicky fails. He racks his brain, but he can't remember whose turf he just entered.

**Dramatic failure:** A result of 1 on a chance roll causes a dramatic failure, a catastrophe worse than a normal failure. The character's gun might jam or he might wind up shooting a friend by accident. The Storyteller determines and describes the result.

*Example:* Once more, we revisit Nicky's Intelligence + Streetwise roll to recall whose turf he just entered. This time, however, he hasn't been around for a while, and things change fast in the criminal underworld. In addition, he's had a little too much to drink. The Storyteller determines that he gets a -2 penalty due to his ignorance of the area, and a -2 from the five drinks he had only minutes ago. His dice pool reduced to 0, Nicky's player has no recourse except to roll a chance die. And he rolls a 1. The Storyteller rules that Nicky remembers—incorrectly—that this area is the domain of the Benjamins, so he takes off his jacket, the better to show off his green shirt.

**Turns and Scenes:** A *turn* is a 3-second period used to track time passing in combat. A *scene* is a longer period of time, usually as long as it takes for everyone to do what they want in a particular place.

## Character Sheets

This booklet includes character sheets and backgrounds for five characters that the players may use in the included scenario, "A Nightmare at Hill Manor." These sheets contain all the game numbers that define a character's capabilities, divided into a variety of traits. Most traits are rated from one dot (•) to five dots (•••••), much like a star rating system for movies. Different traits represent different things.

**Attributes** represent inherent capabilities such as Strength, Intelligence or Presence. Nearly every roll uses one of these as a basis for the dice pool.

**Skills** represent learned abilities, like Firearms or Medicine. A word or phrase in parentheses next to a Skill indicates a Specialty—an area of the overall Skill in which the character is particularly talented. If you are asked to roll a dice pool in which your character doesn't have the right Skill, you suffer a penalty of either -1 (for a missing Physical or Social Skill) or -3 (for a missing Mental Skill). If, on the other hand, you have a relevant specialty in the Skill, you get a +1 modifier.

**Health** determines how wounded your character is, and it has both dots and points. Your character's dots are filled in on your character sheet, and they represent the total number of Health points available to him when he is uninjured. His lost Health points are recorded in the corresponding boxes, denoting his current state of health. (See "Health and Damage" on p. 22 for how to mark off Health points and the effects of wound penalties.)

**Willpower** represents your character's reserves. You can spend one point of Willpower on any roll, and you get three additional dice in your dice pool. You may only spend one point on a single roll. Alternatively, you can spend a point to raise your Defense trait by two against a single attack. Willpower is valuable, and it's regained by acting in accordance with your character's Virtue and Vice. (See "Virtues and Vices" on p. 13 or individual character descriptions for details) It is ranked from 1 to 10, unlike most other traits.

**Morality** is a measure of your character's moral, ethical and even psychological standing and wellbeing. Morality is ranked from 1 to 10 like Willpower, and can be lost due to *degeneration* by performing unethical or criminal acts. See "Morality" on p. 23 for more information.

**Merits** are special advantages a character has, such as Contacts, Resources, or Striking Looks. (See "Merits" on p. 16 for a small selection.)

**Defense** and **Initiative Modifiers** are traits used in combat, and are explained below.

**Speed** is the number of yards a character can move in one combat turn and still perform an action. A character can run up to twice his Speed rating in yards in a turn if he sacrifices his action. Speed will most likely come into play in a chase.

## Attributes

The following is a short summary of what each Attribute entails and how it may be applied. Some tasks rely on your character's Attribute dots alone and these traits are rolled or even combined to determine how well he performs certain tasks. Such feats are typically ones any impaired person can perform such as holding one's breath or lifting objects, and don't require any special training or expertise.

## Mental Attributes

**Intelligence:** The inherent capacity to digest, comprehend and remember information. Intelligence is valued by planners, theorists, scholars and leaders. It is used whenever your character requires brute mental power, such as when she wants to remember something, research an ancient tome, hack a computer or solve a puzzle.

**Wits:** The ability to think on one's feet, under pressure or duress. Wits also encompasses an eye for detail and your character's ability to react and adapt to changing situations. Wits is useful for entrepreneurs, charlatans, athletes, tacticians, lawyers and criminals. It is used whenever your character needs mental finesse for noticing details or subtle changes in her environment, from investigating a crime scene, to determining whether she is surprised by the creature slinking through the bushes ahead. The lower of a character's Wits or Dexterity determines his Defense score. (See p. 21.)

**Resolve:** The focus and determination to see your character's wishes done. The capacity to stay on target and ignore distractions, resist coercion or bullying. This Attribute is vital to resisting supernatural forms of mental control; it acts as a defense of the mind. Resolve is valuable to leaders, motivators, soldiers, athletes, police, organizers and writers. It is used by your character whenever he is resisting coercion or concentrating. Resolve contributes to your character's Willpower trait. (See p. 6.)

## Physical Attributes

**Strength:** Physical might. Sheer bodily power. The capacity to lift objects, move items, hit things and people, and do damage. Strength is a measure of muscle. This trait is instrumental to laborers, thugs, athletes, brawlers and law-

### LIFTING/MOVING OBJECTS

**Dice Pool:** Strength (+ Stamina)

**Action:** Instant

Lifting and moving objects involve brute force: might over matter. In some cases, however, Stamina plays a part. Power alone doesn't have immediate effects, but power combined with the endurance to apply it does.

Working together, people can combine their might to accomplish task. Add all participants' Strength scores and refer to the chart below to gauge what can be moved just by spending an action (no Strength roll is necessary). To exceed this limit, a Strength + Stamina roll is required, with successes achieved added to your character's Strength score to determine what kind of task he can accomplish in that action. In a group effort to move something really heavy, a Strength + Stamina roll is made for each supporting participant. Successes rolled are added to a primary actor's roll as bonus dice. (See "Teamwork," p. 5 for full rules on cooperating this way.)

If your character's modified Strength total exceeds that required to lift an object, it can be relocated as desired. If his Strength total matches that which is required to lift an object, it can be moved about a yard.

The chart indicates how much a character can lift, but that amount represents a focused, one-time act. That weight isn't what he can walk around holding and wearing, day to day. Your character can realistically carry around 25 pounds per dot of Strength without penalty. If he attempts to carry more, every action involving physical exertion incurs an automatic -1 penalty for every 25 pounds of excess gear that he has. Furthermore, every 25 pounds he piles on beyond what he can carry reduces his Speed by one. Perhaps he can actually lift everything he's wearing and holding, but he can't go anywhere with it. The Storyteller makes the final call on what your character may realistically carry.



Strength	Feat	Lift
1	Lift a chair	40 lbs.
2	Lift a large dog	100lbs.
3	Lift a public mailbox	250 lbs.
4	Lift a wooden crate	400 lbs.
5	Lift a coffin	650 lbs.
6	Lift a refrigerator	800 lbs.
7	Overturn a small car	900 lbs.
8	Lift a motorcycle	1000 lbs.
9	Overturn a mid-sized car	1200 lbs.
10	Lift a large tree trunk	1500 lbs.



enforcement agents. Your character uses her Strength score whenever pure physical power is required, such as in hand-to-hand combat, when breaking down barriers, and when lifting/moving objects. Strength is one of the Attributes that determine your Speed. (See p. 7.)

**Dexterity:** Quickness. Response time. A delicate touch. Dexterity indicates how quickly and with how much finesse your character responds to his physical world. While high Wits dots helps your character spot trouble, high Dexterity dots help him react to it, whether with a counteraction or to simply get the hell out of the way. Dexterity is invaluable to criminals, sports stars, surgeons and dancers. It is used whenever your character requires physical finesse, like when you need to hit something with accuracy, avoid something or keep your balance on the rolling deck of a storm-tossed ship. Dexterity helps to determine your Speed. (See p. 7.) The lower of a character's Wits or Dexterity determines her Defense score. (See p. 21.)

**Stamina:** Sturdiness. Steadfastness. Sheer physical resilience. Stamina is a measure of how tough your character is. It indicates how far she can push her body, and how much physical abuse she can endure. Bouncers, brawlers, triathletes, survivalists, heavy lifters and workaholics thrive on Stamina. Your character uses Stamina whenever she needs physical resistance, such as when resisting poisons, holding her breath or staying awake on a long stakeout. Stamina is a factor in determining your character's Health dots. (See p. 6.)

## Social Attributes

**Presence:** Bearing. Stature. Assertiveness. Presence suggests the power of your character's command over the attention of others. This trait is essential to leaders, enforcers, interrogators, models, politicians and salespeople.

Note that physical attractiveness alone is represented by the Striking Looks Merit (p. 21), which grants bonus dice to Presence rolls. Your character uses Presence when trying to impose her will on others by being socially aggressive or powerful.

**Manipulation:** Charm. Persuasiveness. Charisma. The capacity to play upon the desires, hopes and needs of others to influence them. Manipulation reflects your character's finesse in social situations. It's the tool and trade of businesspeople, politicians, and publicists. Your character uses Manipulation when he's trying to win smiles, to put people at ease or to gain favors. Where Presence is getting your way through force, Manipulation is more subtle.

**Composure:** Poise. Dignity. The capacity to remain calm and unfazed in tense and threatening situations. This trait is a measure of emotional fortitude, restraint and calm. It is vital for leaders, soldiers, moderators, socialites and anyone whose movements are in the public eye. Composure is pivotal for resisting social influence and supernatural forms of emotional control. Composure, along with Resolve, is a factor in determining your character's Willpower (see p. 6). Composure is also added to Dexterity to determine your character's Initiative at the beginning of a fight (see p. 21).

## Skills

A character's Attributes measure his innate physical, mental and social qualities—how strong he is, how quickly he thinks on his feet and how well he interacts with other people. The different ways in which a character can apply these Attributes are determined by his Skills. A character's Skills reflect the education and training he's acquired over the course of his life, and are a reflection of his origins and interests.

## Skill Specialties

Skills represent broad bases of knowledge and physical training in a given subject. An auto mechanic doesn't just know about fixing engines, for example, but is versed in repairing tires, replacing windows and painting the body. In addition to this broad foundation of knowledge, characters can specialize in a particular aspect of a Skill, giving them an edge in a particular application due to their increased focus. Rolls involving a Skill Specialty gain a +1 modifier over and above any other situational modifiers. So, if your character has Crafts, but also has a Specialty in Automobiles, you gain a +1 bonus when he works on cars.

You are limited only by your imagination when devising your character's Specialties, although their focus should be fairly specific. A character possessing the Drive skill might focus on sports cars, trucks, off-road or high-speed driving. Each Skill listed below has a number of suggested Specialties to give you an idea of the possibilities.

## SKILL DOTS

Skills are rated from 1 to 5, with each score suggesting your character's relative level of proficiency and knowledge in that area.

### Dots

### Proficiency Level

- Novice. Basic knowledge or techniques.
- Practitioner. Solid working knowledge or techniques.
- Professional. Broad, detailed knowledge or techniques.
- Expert. Exceptional Depth of knowledge or techniques.
- Master. Unsurpassed depth of knowledge or techniques. A leader in the field.

## Mental Skills

Mental Skills are applications of a character's insight, acumen and focus, such as examining a crime scene for clues, unraveling an enigma or diagnosing an illness. These Skills are almost entirely gained from a period of formal education, and most characters with high Mental Skills can claim a degree or even a doctorate in their field of study. These traits are generally associated with your character's Mental Attributes, but can also be paired with Physical Attributes for hands-on applications such as performing surgery (Dexterity + Medicine) or computer repair (Dexterity + Crafts).

**Untrained Skill Use:** If your character doesn't have the necessary Mental Skill required for an action, she can still make the attempt. Roll her Attribute alone, but with a -3 penalty.

## Academics

Academics is a broad-based Skill that represents a character's degree of higher education and general knowledge in the Arts and Humanities—everything from English to history, economics to law. Dots in this Skill do not directly correlate to a given level of education. Your character could have entered a doctorate program but spent more time partying than studying, resulting in fewer dots. Conversely a self-taught individual who read voraciously and studied intensively could have higher dots without ever earning a diploma.

**Possessed By:** College graduates, executives, lawyers, librarians, scholars, students

**Suggested Specialties:** Anthropology, Art, English, History, Law, Religion, Research

## Computer

Characters possessing this Skill have the necessary training or experience to operate a computer. At high levels (3 or more), a character can create his own computer programs. People with high levels in this Skill are familiar with a variety of programming languages and operating systems.

Note that dots in Computer do not apply to manually fixing or building machines, only to operating them. Construction and repair is the province of the Crafts Skill (see below).

**Possessed By:** Businesspeople, professors, programmers, students, sysadmins

**Suggested Specialties:** Artificial Intelligence, Data Retrieval, Graphics, Hacking, Internet

## Crafts

Crafts represents a character's training or experience in creating works of physical art or construction with his hands, from paintings to car engines to classical sculpture. Characters possessing this Skill typically have the knowledge, but not necessarily the tools or facilities to make use of their capabilities. A character might be an exceptional mechanic, for example, but still needs to sweet-talk his boss into opening up the garage after hours to work on his friend's car. Crafting a piece of art or creating an object is almost always an extended roll, with the length of time and number of successes required determined by the complexity of the piece. The Storyteller has final say on the time required and the number of successes needed for a particular item.

**Possessed By:** Contractors, mechanics, plumbers, sculptors, welders

**Suggested Specialties:** Automobiles, Aircraft, Forging, Jury-Rigging, Sculpting, Sewing

## Investigation

Investigation is the art and science of solving mysteries, examining seemingly disparate evidence to find a connection, answering riddles and overcoming paradoxes. It not only allows your character to get into the head of a killer to grasp his motives or plans, it allows her to look beyond the mundane world to guess at answers to mysterious problems, or to have a "eureka" moment that offers insight into baffling circumstances. Your character might realize that all murder victims have the same digits jumbled in their phone numbers, she might interpret a dream that has striking similarities to events in the real world, or she could recognize why an intruder took the time to paint a room red. Certain individuals such as law-enforcement officers, forensic specialists, scientists and investigators are trained in the art of examination, while others simply develop the knack through years of practice.

Investigation-based rolls are typically made when a character actively studies a situation. Dots in Investigation don't

give a character sudden insight or capability in the realms of other Skills, however. She can't miraculously identify changing brushstrokes in a painting, for example. That would be the realm of Academics or Crafts. But she might identify how the placement of paintings throughout a house creates a pattern and imparts a message.

**Possessed By:** Criminals, doctors, forensic examiners, police officers, scientists, scholars, librarians

**Suggested Specialties:** Artifacts, Body Language, Crime Scenes, Cryptography, Dreams, Autopsy Diagnoses, Puzzles, Riddles, Scientific Experiments

## Medicine

The Medicine Skill reflects a character's training and expertise in human physiology and how to treat injuries and illness. The trait represents knowledge of human anatomy and basic medical treatments. Characters with a low level in this Skill (1 to 2) often possess only rudimentary first-aid training, while characters with high levels (3+) are the equivalent of nurses, physicians or surgeons.

**Possessed By:** Medical students, paramedics, physicians, psychiatrists, surgeons

**Suggested Specialties:** Emergency Care, Pathology, Pharmaceuticals, Physical Therapy, Surgery

## Occult

The Occult Skill reflects a character's knowledge and experience with the world's various legends and lore about the supernatural. A character with this Skill not only knows the theories, myths and legends of the occult, but can generally discern "fact" from rumor. Characters may come by this Skill in a variety of ways, from oddball college courses to learning legends and myths from superstitious family members.

**Possessed By:** Anthropologists, authors, neo-pagans, occult scholars, parapsychologists

**Suggested Specialties:** Cultural Beliefs, Ghosts, Magic, Monsters, Superstitions, Witchcraft

## Politics

Characters possessing this Skill are not only familiar with the way the political process works, they're experienced with bureaucracies and know exactly who to call in a given situation to get something done. Your character keeps track of who's in power and how she got there, along with her potential rivals. He has a grasp of the issues of the moment and how they affect the political process, and he knows whose palms to grease. It's possible that your character acquired this Skill by running for political office at some point, or by working on a campaign or as a public servant. Or he could simply be someone who follows the news and understands the money trail.

**Possessed By:** Bureaucrats, civil servants, journalists, lawyers, lobbyists, politicians

**Suggested Specialties:** Bribery, Elections, Federal, Local, State, Scandals

## Science

This Skill represents your character's understanding of the physical and natural sciences: biology, chemistry, geology, meteorology, physics and so on. Science is useful not only for understanding how the world works, but it helps characters make the most of the resources at hand to achieve their goals. A character with a strong Science background could describe the chemical process for plating metals, for example, allowing another character with Crafts to make a silver-edged steel sword.

**Possessed By:** Engineers, scientists, students, teachers, technicians

**Suggested Specialties:** Biology, Chemistry, Geology, Metallurgy, Physics

## Physical Skills

Physical Skills are applications of a character's might, endurance and coordination, such as climbing a mountain, driving a car or shooting a gun. They are most often paired with a character's Physical Attributes in various combinations, but can also be paired with Mental Attributes when the character tries to draw on his Skill to identify an object or answer a question. Intelligence + Firearms is required to identify a particular rifle, for example, or Intelligence + Survival to read a map. Physical Skill scores represent a combination of personal experience and formal training rather than extensive schooling. You can't earn a degree in fist-fighting, but you can graduate at the top of your class in the school of hard knocks.

**Untrained Skill Use:** If your character doesn't have the necessary Physical Skill required for a roll, he can still attempt the action. Roll his Attribute alone with a -1 penalty.

## Athletics

Athletics encompasses a broad category of physical training, from rock climbing to kayaking to professional sports such as football or hockey. The Athletics Skill can be applied to any action that requires prolonged physical exertion or that demands considerable agility or hand-eye coordination. Examples include climbing a high wall, marching long distances and leaping between rooftops. In combat, the Skill is combined with Dexterity to determine the accuracy of thrown weapons.

**Possessed By:** Professional athletes, police officers, soldiers, survivalists, physical trainers

**Suggested Specialties:** Acrobatics, Climbing, Kayaking, Long-Distance Running, Sprinting, Swimming, Throwing

## Brawl

Brawl defines your character's prowess at unarmed combat, whether he's a black belt in karate, a hard-bitten street tough or a college student who's taken a few self-defense courses. Characters with this Skill know how to hit an opponent, where to hit for maximum effect and how to defend

themselves from attack. It can mean using fists, but also elbows, knees, shoulders, head butts, wrestling, joint locks and choke holds. Characters with a several dots could be familiar with multiple techniques of unarmed combat. Expertise in such techniques is reflected in the Fighting Style Merits (such as “Kung Fu” on p. 17), which are based on Brawl.

Brawl is added to your character’s Strength to battle people in unarmed combat.

**Possessed By:** Bikers, boxers, gangsters, police officers, soldiers

**Suggested Specialties:** Blocking, Boxing, Dirty Tricks, Grappling, Kung Fu, Throws

## Drive

The Drive Skill allows your character to operate a vehicle under difficult or dangerous conditions. Characters don’t need this Skill simply to drive a car. It’s safe to assume in a modern society that most individuals are familiar with automobiles and the rules of the road. Rather, this trait covers the training or experience necessary to operate at high speeds, to tackle hazardous road conditions and to push a vehicle to the limits of its performance. Drive is the difference between a typical suburban parent with a minivan and a police officer, car thief or racecar driver.

The Skill also applies to piloting and controlling boats; your character’s Drive dots are applied equally to handling boats. In order for your character to be able to pilot a plane, he needs a Pilot Specialty in the Skill. With that, efforts to control a plane call for a Drive-based roll, plus one die for your character’s Pilot Specialty. A character with the Drive Skill who does not possess a Pilot Specialty cannot effectively operate a plane. His efforts to fly are based on Attribute alone, at a -1 untrained penalty.

Note that dots in Drive do not apply to manually fixing or building vehicles, only to operating them. Construction and repair is the province of the Crafts Skill (see p. 9).

**Possessed By:** Car thieves, couriers, delivery drivers, emergency responders, police officers, racecar drivers

**Suggested Specialties:** High-Performance Cars, Motorcycles, Off-Road, Pursuit, Shaking Tails, Stunts

## Firearms

Firearms allows your character to identify, operate and maintain most types of guns, from pistols to rifles to military weapons such as submachine guns, assault rifles and machine guns. This Skill can represent the kind of formal training provided to police and the military, or the basic, hands-on experience common to hunters, criminals and gun enthusiasts. Firearms also applies to using bows. Your character can use guns and bows equally.

Note that dots in Firearms do not apply to manually fixing or building guns, only to wielding them. Construction and repair is the province of the Crafts Skill (see p. 9).

**Possessed By:** Criminals, gun dealers, hunters, police officers, soldiers, survivalists

**Suggested Specialties:** Autofire, Bow, Pistol, Rifle, Shotgun, Sniping, Trick Shot

## Larceny

Larceny is a broad Skill that covers everything from picking locks to concealing stolen goods and everything in between. Most characters obtain this Skill the hard way, by committing crimes and often paying the price for their mistakes. Some individuals such as government agents and members of the military receive formal training in bypassing security systems and stealing valuable assets.

**Possessed By:** Burglars, commandos, government agents, private eyes, locksmiths

**Suggested Specialties:** Concealing Stolen Goods, Lockpicking, Pickpocketing, Security Systems, Safecracking

## Stealth

The Stealth Skill represents a character’s experience or training in avoiding notice, whether by moving silently, making use of cover or blending into a crowd. When at-



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tempting to sneak silently through an area or to use the local terrain as concealment, roll Dexterity + Stealth + equipment. When trying to remain unseen in a crowd, Wits + Stealth is appropriate. The Storyteller may make Stealth rolls secretly on your behalf, since your character usually has no way of knowing he's been noticed until it's too late. If your character attempts to avoid notice by a group of alert observers, a contested roll versus the observers' Wits + Composure + equipment is required.

**Possessed By:** Criminals, hunters, police officers, private investigators

**Suggested Specialties:** Camouflage, Crowds, Moving in Darkness, Moving in Woods

## Survival

Survival represents your character's experience or training in "living off the land." He knows where to find food and shelter, and how to endure harsh environmental conditions. The more capable your character is, the fewer resources he needs in order to prevail. A master survivalist can walk into a forest, desert or mountainous region with little more than a pocketknife and the clothes on his back and survive for weeks if necessary.

Note that Survival is not synonymous with Animal Ken (see p. 12). The former helps your character stay alive in the wilderness, living off the land with whatever supplies he has brought with him. The latter involves understanding animal behavior and interacting directly with animals. Your character could be knowledgeable about creating shelter and gathering plants to eat (Survival), but might know nothing about anticipating the actions of a bear in his camp (Animal Ken).

**Possessed By:** Explorers, hunters, soldiers, survivalists

**Suggested Specialties:** Foraging, Navigation, Meteorology, Shelter

## Weaponry

As the name implies, the Weaponry Skill represents your character's experience or training in fighting with everything from beer bottles to pipes, knives to swords. While formal instruction in Weaponry is uncommon (restricted to military and law-enforcement training and a few martial arts), any character who has grown up on the street or spent a lot of time in seedy bars has had ample opportunity to learn this Skill.

A character's Weaponry is added to his Strength to stage armed attacks. For more information, see "Combat," p. 21.

Note that dots in Weaponry do not apply to manually fixing or creating weapons, only to wielding them. Construction and repair is the province of the Crafts Skill (see p. 9).

**Possessed By:** Bikers, criminals, martial artists, police officers, soldiers

**Suggested Specialties:** Improvised Weapons, Knives, Swords

## Social Skills

Social Skills are applications of your character's bearing, charm and poise, such as negotiating with a bank robber, wooing a crowd or telling a faultless lie. These Skills most commonly represent innate capabilities honed by years of experience rather than by any formal training. These Skills are generally paired with your character's Social Attributes, but can also be used with Physical and Mental Attributes in cases such as bodily threats (Strength + Intimidation) or orchestrating a complex deal (Wits + Persuasion).

**Untrained Skill Use:** If your character doesn't have the necessary Social Skill required for a feat, he can still make the attempt. Roll his Attribute alone at a -1 penalty.

## Animal Ken

Anticipating and understanding human emotions is one thing, but being able to interpret and recognize the behavior of animals is something else entirely. Your character intuitively grasps or has been trained to read animals to know how they react to situations. The Skill also involves innately understanding how the animal mind operates, and what may appease or enrage beasts. The knack often coincides with a respect for animals, but it could derive from the analytical observation of a lab scientist or from years of abuse inflicted by a callous animal handler.

Animal Ken could be applied to grasp the thoughts or intentions of supernatural animals, if the Storyteller allows. Sometimes these beings have human or greater intelligence and cannot be read by this Skill alone.

**Possessed By:** Animal rescue workers, hunters, long-time pet owners, park rangers, ranchers, trainers, veterinarians

**Suggested Specialties:** Animal Needs, Imminent Attack, Specific Kind of Animal, Training

## Empathy

This Skill represents your character's intuition for reading people's emotions. For some, it's a matter of observing body language and non-verbal cues. Others employ an extraordinary sense that helps them divine a person's true mood. As the name implies, Empathy also involves the capacity to understand other people's views and perspectives, whether your character agrees with those positions or not. This is useful in everything from negotiations and crisis counseling to reading faces in a crowd and looking for potential trouble. If a subject actively conceals his emotions or motives, make a contested roll versus the person's Wits + Subterfuge + equipment.

**Possessed By:** Counselors, diplomats, entertainers, profilers, psychiatrists, police officers

**Suggested Specialties:** Emotion, Lies, Motives, Personalities

## Expression

Expression reflects your character's training or experience in the art of communication, both to entertain and

inform. This Skill covers both the written and spoken word and other forms of entertainment, from journalism to poetry, creative writing to acting, music to dance. Characters can use it to compose written works or to put the right words together at the spur of the moment to deliver a rousing speech or a memorable toast. Used well, Expression can sway others' opinions or even hold an audience captive.

**When composing a poem or writing a novel, roll Wits or Intelligence (depending on whether the work is poetic or factual) + Expression. When reciting to an audience, roll Presence + Expression. Playing an instrument involves Intelligence + Expression for a known piece, and Wits + Expression for an improvised one. Dance calls for Dexterity + Expression.**

**Possessed By:** Actors, ballet dancers, journalists, musicians, poets, rock stars, writers

**Suggested Specialties:** Classical Dance, Drama, Exposés, Musical Instrument, Newspaper Articles, Speeches

## Intimidation

Intimidation is the art and technique of persuading others through the use of fear. Your character can intimidate someone with a show of brute force (Strength + Intimidation), through more subtle means such as verbal threats (Manipulation + Intimidation), or simply through menacing body language (Presence + Intimidation). It can be used to get other people to cooperate (even against their better judgment), back down from a confrontation, or reveal information that they'd rather not share.

**Possessed By:** Bodyguards, bouncers, gangsters, executives, police officers, soldiers

**Suggested Specialties:** Bluster, Physical Threats, Stare-Downs, Torture, Veiled Threats

## Persuasion

Persuasion is the art of inspiring or changing minds through logic, charm or sheer, glib fast-talking. Though it can be taught to varying degrees of success, most characters with the Skill possess a natural talent and have honed it over years through trial and error, practicing their delivery until it rolls effortlessly off the tongue. Persuasion is the Skill of convincing others by force of personality alone, making one's point through carefully chosen words, body language and emotion.

**Possessed By:** Con artists, executives, generals, lawyers, politicians, salesmen, sexual predators

**Suggested Specialties:** Fast-Talking, Motivational Speeches, Sales Pitches, Seduction

## Socialize

Socialize reflects your character's ability to interact with others in a variety of situations, from chatting people up at bars to comporting himself with dignity at state dinners. This Skill represents equal parts gregariousness, sensitivity, etiquette and custom. Knowing how to make friends is no

less important than understanding how to treat guests in formal situations. Characters with low dots might be naturally entertaining or approachable, but unschooled in the finer arts of social interaction. Or they could be punctilious with their manners but difficult to approach. Conversely, characters with high dots could have the social graces of a practiced diplomat or raconteur, knowing just what to say and when to say it in any given situation.

**Possessed By:** Diplomats, entertainers, executives, politicians, salesmen

**Suggested Specialties:** Bar Hopping, Dress Balls, Formal Events, Frat Parties, State Dinners

## Streetwise

Characters possessing this Skill know how life on the streets works and are adept at surviving by its harsh rules. Streetwise characters can gather information, make contacts, buy and sell on the black market, and otherwise make use of the street's unique resources. The Skill is also important for navigating urban dangers, avoiding the law, and staying on the right side of the wrong people.

**Possessed By:** Criminals, gangsters, homeless people, private investigators, police officers

**Suggested Specialties:** Black Market, Gangs, Rumors, Undercover Operations

## Subterfuge

Subterfuge is the art of deception. Characters possessing this Skill know how to lie convincingly, and they recognize when they're being lied to. Subterfuge is used when telling a convincing falsehood, hiding one's emotions or reactions, or trying to pick up on the same in others. The Skill is most often used to trick other people, but characters also learn it to avoid being tricked themselves.

**Possessed By:** Actors, con artists, grifters, lawyers, politicians, teenagers

**Suggested Specialties:** Con Jobs, Hiding Emotions, Lying, Misdirection, Spotting Lies

# Virtues and Vices

All characters have strengths and weaknesses, noble aspects and dark sides to their personalities. While most people try to cultivate virtues and eschew vices, both are intrinsic elements of identity and both equally reinforce a sense of self, whether we like to admit it or not.

Every character starts play with one defining Virtue and one defining Vice, chosen during character creation. Virtue and Vice may clearly reflect your character's background and concept, or they can be used to contrast his outward nature to create sources of conflict that make for excellent roleplaying. When a character's actions in dif-



ficult situations reflect his particular Virtue or Vice, he reinforces his fundamental sense of self. If the Storyteller judges that your character's actions during a scene reflect his Vice, he regains one Willpower point that has been spent. If the Storyteller judges that your character's actions during a chapter (a game session) reflect his Virtue, he regains all spent Willpower points. Note that these actions must be made in situations that pose some risk to your character, whereby he stands to pay a price for acting according to his Virtue or Vice. Everyday expressions of, say, Faith or Pride are not enough to reaffirm a character's determination or sense of self.

Your character does not gain extra Virtues or Vices during play. The fundamental qualities that define him do not change. Nor are they compounded with more such traits.

## Virtues

### Charity

True Charity comes from sharing gifts with others, be it money or possessions, or simply giving time to help another in need. A charitable character is guided by her compassion to share what she has in order to improve the plight of those around her. Charitable individuals are guided by the principle of treating others as they would be treated themselves. By sharing gifts and taking on the role of the Samaritan, they hope to cultivate goodwill in others, and the gifts they give will eventually return to them in their hour of need.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points whenever she helps another at the risk of loss or harm to herself. It isn't enough to share what your character has in abundance. She must make a real sacrifice in terms of time,

possessions or energy, or she must risk life and limb to help another.

**Possessed By:** Philanthropists, saints, soup-kitchen workers

### Faith

Those with Faith know that the universe is not random, meaningless chaos, but ordered by a higher power. No matter how horrifying the world might be, everything has its place in the Plan and ultimately serves that Purpose. This Virtue does not necessarily involve belief in a personified deity. It might involve belief in a Grand Unified Theory whereby the seeming randomness of the universe is ultimately an expression of mathematical precision. Or it might be a view that everything is One and that even evil is indistinguishable from good when all discriminating illusions are overcome.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points whenever he is able to forge meaning from chaos and tragedy.

**Possessed By:** Detectives, philosophers, priests, scientists, true believers

### Fortitude

A person's ideals are meaningless unless they're tested. When it seems as though the entire world is arrayed against him because of his beliefs, a person possessing Fortitude weathers the storm and emerges with his convictions intact. Fortitude is about standing up for one's beliefs and holding the course no matter how tempting it may be to relent or give up. By staying the course—regardless of the cost—he proves the worth of his ideals.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points whenever he withstands overwhelming or tempting pressure to alter his goals. This does not include temporary distractions from his course of action, only pressure that might cause him to abandon or change his goals altogether.

**Possessed By:** Dictators, fanatics, gumshoes

### Hope

Being hopeful means believing that evil and misfortune cannot prevail, no matter how grim things become. Not only do the hopeful believe in the ultimate triumph of morality and decency over malevolence, they maintain steadfast belief in a greater sense of cosmic justice—whether it's Karma or the idea of an all-knowing, all-seeing God who waits to punish the wicked. All will turn out right in the end, and the hopeful mean to be around when it happens.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points whenever she refuses to let others give in to despair,

even though doing so risks harming her own goals or wellbeing. This is similar to Fortitude, above, except that your character tries to prevent others from losing hope in their goals. She need not share those goals herself or even be successful in upholding them, but there must be a risk involved.

**Possessed By:** Anti-globalization activists, entrepreneurs, martyrs, visionaries

## Justice

Wrongs cannot go unpunished. This is the central tenet of the just, who believe that protecting the innocent and confronting inequity is the responsibility of every decent person, even in the face of great personal danger. The just believe that evil cannot prosper so long as one good person strives to do what is right, regardless of the consequences.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points whenever he does the right thing at risk of personal loss or setback. The “right thing” can be defined by the letter or spirit of a particular code of conduct, whether it be the United States penal code or a biblical Commandment.

**Possessed By:** Critics, judges, parents, role models

## Prudence

The Virtue of Prudence places wisdom and restraint above rash action and thoughtless behavior. One maintains integrity and principles by moderating actions and avoiding unnecessary risks. While that means a prudent person might never take big gambles that bring huge rewards, neither is his life ruined by a bad roll of the dice. By choosing wisely and avoiding the easy road he prospers slowly but surely.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points whenever he refuses a tempting course of action by which he could gain significantly. The “temptation” must involve some reward that, by refusing it, might cost him later on.

**Possessed By:** Businessmen, doctors, priests, scientists

## Temperance

Moderation in all things is the secret to happiness, so says the doctrine of Temperance. It’s all about balance. Everything has its place in a person’s life, from anger to forgiveness, lust to chastity. The temperate do not believe in denying their urges, as none of it is unnatural or unholy. The trouble comes when things are taken to excess, whether it’s a noble or base impulse. Too much righteousness can be just as bad as too much wickedness.

Your character regains all spent Willpower when he resists a temptation to indulge in an excess of any behavior, whether good or bad, despite the obvious rewards it might offer.

**Possessed By:** Clergy, police officers, social workers

## Vices

### Envy

An envious person is never satisfied with what she has. No matter her wealth, status or accomplishments, there is always someone else who seems to have more—and she wants it. Envious characters are never secure or content with their place in life. They always measure themselves against their rivals and look for ways to get what they deserve. They might be considered paranoid or just consumed by a self-loathing that they project onto others.

Your character regains one Willpower point whenever she gains something important from a rival or has a hand in harming that rival’s wellbeing.

**Possessed By:** Celebrities, executives, politicians

### Gluttony

Gluttony is about indulging appetites to the exclusion of everything else. It’s about dedicating oneself to sensual pleasures or chasing the next high. A glutton makes any sacrifice to feed his insatiable appetite for pleasure, regardless of the cost to himself or those around him. He might be considered a junky or even a kleptomaniac (he steals things he doesn’t need just for the thrill of it). Your character regains one spent Willpower point whenever he indulges in his addiction or appetites at some risk to himself or a loved one.

**Possessed By:** Celebrities, junkies, thieves

### Greed

Like the envious, the greedy are never satisfied with what they have. They want more—more money, a bigger house, more status or influence—though they may already have more than they can possibly handle. Everything is taken to excess. To the greedy, there is no such thing as having too much. If that means snatching someone else’s hard-earned reward just to feather one’s own nest, well, that’s the way it goes.

Your character regains one Willpower point whenever he acquires something at the expense of another. Gaining it must come at some potential risk (of assault, arrest or simple loss of respect).

**Possessed By:** CEOs, lawyers, stock brokers

### Lust

The Vice of Lust is the sin of uncontrolled desire. A lusty individual is driven by a passion for something (usually sex, but it can be a craving for virtually any experience or activity) that he acts upon without consideration for the needs or feelings of others. A lusty individual uses any means at his disposal to indulge his desires, from deception to manipulation to acts of violence.

Your character is consumed by a passion for something. He regains one Willpower point whenever he satisfies his lust or compulsion in a way that victimizes others.

**Possessed By:** Movie producers, politicians, rock stars

## Pride

Pride is the Vice of self-confidence run amok. It is the belief that one's every action is inherently right, even when it should be obvious that it is anything but. A prideful person refuses to back down when his decision or reputation is called into question, even when the evidence is clear that he is in the wrong. His ego does not accept any outcome that suggests fallibility, and he is willing to see others suffer rather than admit that he's wrong.

Your character regains one Willpower point whenever he exerts his own wants (not needs) over others at some potential risk to himself. This is most commonly the desire for adulation, but it could be the desire to make others do as he commands.

**Possessed By:** Corporate executives, movie stars, street thugs

## Sloth

The Vice of Sloth is about avoiding work until someone else has to step in to get the job done. Rather than put in the effort—and possibly risk failure—in a difficult situation, the slothful person simply refuses to do anything, knowing that someone else will step in and fix the problem sooner or later. The fact that people might needlessly suffer while the slothful person sits on his thumbs doesn't matter one bit.

Your character regains one Willpower point whenever he successfully avoids a difficult task but achieves the same goal nonetheless.

**Possessed By:** Couch potatoes, trust-fund heirs, welfare cheats

## Wrath

The Vice of Wrath is the sin of uncontrolled anger. The wrathful look for ways to vent their anger and frustration on people or objects at the slightest provocation. In most cases the reaction is far out of proportion to the perceived slight. A wrathful person cut off on the freeway might try to force another driver off the road, or a wrathful cop might delight in beating each and every person he arrests, regardless of the offense. Your character regains one spent Willpower point whenever he unleashes his anger in a situation where doing so is dangerous. If the fight has already begun, no Willpower points are regained. It must take place in a situation where anger is unwarranted or inappropriate.

**Possessed By:** Bullies, drill sergeants, street thugs

# Merits

Merits are special capabilities or knacks that add individuality to your character. Some apply to your character's basic traits to enhance them in particular situations. Some have prerequisites that must be met before they can be purchased. For example, a character with the Gunslinger Merit

must have a Dexterity of 3 and Firearms of 3 or higher to be able to accurately fire two weapons at the same time. By the same token, some merits apply drawbacks that balance out their inherent advantages. A character with the Fame Merit, for example, is treated like a star wherever he goes—but has a hard time blending into the crowd when he wants to.

Each Merit has a number of dots (•) associated with it. These dots represent the number of points that must be spent to purchase the Merit. Some Merits allow for a range of dots (say, • to •••). These allow you to purchase a low rating if it's appropriate to your character concept, or you can start with a low level and increase it over time with experience points.

## Mental Merits

### Danger Sense ,(•)

**Effect:** You gain a +2 modifier on reflexive Wits + Composure rolls for your character to detect an impending ambush. This kind of roll is typically made prior to the first turn of a surprise attack.

Your character has a well-developed survival instinct that warns him of impending danger. Perhaps he's adept at reading subtle clues in his environment or he possesses an uncanny "sixth sense" when it comes to avoiding trouble.

### Eidetic Memory ,(•)

**Effect:** You do not normally need to make a roll for your character to remember an obscure fact or past experience, unless he is under stress (such as in combat). Under stress, there is a +2 modifier on any Intelligence + Composure or other Skill-based roll (say, Academics, to remember a fact) for memory recall. *Available at character creation only.*

Your character has a near-photographic memory, being able to recall vast amounts of observed detail with astonishing accuracy.

### Encyclopedic Knowledge ,(••••)

**Effect:** Your character is a veritable font of useful (and sometimes useless) information on a wide variety of topics. Chances are he can come up with an anecdote pertaining to any situation based on something he's read, witnessed or seen on TV.

You can make an Intelligence + Wits roll any time your character is confronted with a situation or phenomenon outside his normal realm of experience. If the roll is successful, he may recall a "factoid" that he's heard at some point that may shed light on matters.

### Language ,(•)

**Effect:** Your character knows an additional language besides his own, one that he can read, write and speak with fluency. If he wishes to convince others that he is a native speaker, however, the Storyteller might call for an Intelligence

+ Expression roll, contested with a reflexive Intelligence + Academics roll by anyone who is suspicious.

You must specify which language your character is familiar with when purchasing this Merit. You may take this Merit multiple times, with a different language for each.

## Unseen Sense / (••••)

**Prerequisite:** Mortal (non-supernatural); Wits ••

**Effect:** Your character has a “sixth sense” when it comes to the supernatural. Perhaps his hair stands on end, goose bumps race along his arms, or a shiver runs up his spine. Regardless of the manner, his body reacts to the presence of unseen forces. He can’t see or hear anything, and in fact he might not know at first what causes this reaction. It might be a response to a specific type of supernatural phenomenon such as ghosts or vampires, or it might be a general sense that something isn’t right. Over time and with a little trial and error, he might be able to quantify what his body tries to tell him.

The specific type of supernatural phenomenon to which your character is sensitive must be determined when this Merit is purchased. It can be something as vague as a creepy feeling when in the presence of ghosts, or something as specific as a sudden chill when a vampire is nearby. The Storyteller has final say on the exact nature and trigger of your character’s sixth sense, and can keep its nature secret if desired, leaving you to figure it out during play.

Only mortal, mundane characters can possess this Merit. The pivotal moment of becoming or being changed into a being with supernatural capabilities eliminates it.

## Physical Merits

### Brawling Dodge / (••)

**Prerequisite:** Strength •• and Brawl •

**Effect:** Whenever your character performs a dodge (see “Dodge,” p. 21), you can choose to add his Brawl Skill dots to his Defense instead of doubling his Defense. He essentially draws on his training in blocking and evading attacks rather than relying on his raw ability alone. While this might provide little benefit to a brawling novice, it can give the advanced fighter an edge.

Brawling Dodge applies against incoming Brawl- and Weaponry-based attacks, against thrown-weapon attacks, and against Firearms attacks made within close-combat range. Your character can move up to his Speed and perform a Brawling Dodge maneuver in a turn.

A character can possess both the Brawling Dodge and Weaponry Dodge merits, but only one can be used per turn.

### Fast Reflexes / (• or ••)

**Prerequisite:** Dexterity •••

**Effect:** +1 Initiative per dot.

Your character’s mix of sharp reflexes and steady nerves helps him get the drop on adversaries.

### Fighting Finesse / (••)

**Prerequisite:** Dexterity ••• and Weaponry ••

**Effect:** Your character prefers to fight with a chosen weapon in a manner that favors agility over power. With that one weapon (a rapier or katana, for example), you may substitute your character’s Dexterity for Strength when making attack rolls.

This Merit may be purchased multiple times to gain agility with more weapons, one for each purchase.

### Fighting Style: Kung Fu / (• to •••••)

**Prerequisite:** Strength ••, Dexterity ••, Stamina •• and Brawl ••

**Effect:** Your character is trained in one of the many forms of Kung Fu, conditioning his mind and body for the purposes of focus and self-defense. He may have begun his training at an early age, following in the footsteps of family or friends, or he may have joined a school as an adult for the purposes of exercise or protection.

Dots purchased in this Merit allow access to special combat maneuvers. Each maneuver is a prerequisite for the next. So, your character can’t have “Iron Skin” until he has “Focused Attack.” The maneuvers and their effects are listed below, most of which are based on the Brawl Skill.

**Focused Attack (•):** Physical conditioning and accuracy allow your character to deliver blows at vulnerable spots on targets. Penalties to hit specific targets are reduced by one. See “Specifying Targets,” p. 22. Even when a specific part of an opponent is not targeted, armor penalties to your character’s Brawl attacks are reduced by one.

**Iron Skin (••):** Your character has hardened her body to physical blows, allowing her to withstand repeated hits with minimal effect. She has an effective armor trait of 1 against bashing attacks only.

**Defensive Attack (•••):** Your character has mastered the ability to fight defensively. When using this maneuver, you character gains +2 to his Defense for the turn, but any attack he makes suffers a -2 penalty. He can move no more than his Speed while performing a Defense Attack maneuver in a turn.

**Whirlwind Strike (•••):** Your character can unleash a storm of blows against an opponent. He can make one extra Brawl attack for each point of Dexterity that he has above 2 in a single action. Each extra attack is made at a cumulative -1 modifier. Thus, he can perform a total of two attacks at Dexterity 3 (the second of which is at -1), three attacks at Dexterity 4 (the third of which is at -2), and four at Dexterity 5 (the fourth of which is at -3). All attacks must be on the same target.

The drawback is that your character cannot use his Defense against any attack in the same turn in which he intends to use this maneuver. If he uses Defense against attacks that occur earlier in the Initiative roster, before he can

perform this maneuver, he cannot perform the maneuver this turn. He is too busy bobbing and weaving out of the way of attacks.

**Lethal Strike (•••••):** By focusing his might and concentration, your character can kill or maim an opponent with a well-placed strike. A strike inflicts lethal instead of bashing damage. You must spend one Willpower point per attack. Note that this Willpower expenditure does not add three dice to the attack.

### Fleet of Foot (• to •••)

**Effect:** Your character's athletic training has given her the ability to run quite swiftly when necessary. She gains +1 Speed per Merit dot spent.

### Gunstinger (••••)

**Prerequisite:** Dexterity ••• and Firearms •••

**Effect:** Your character's capability and experience with firearms is such that he can accurately fire two pistols at the same time. Your character still suffers the -2 offhand penalty for shooting with his second hand, but he can shoot both pistols as a single action during a turn. The second attack is also at -1 penalty. Your character may shoot at two different targets if he wishes, but the amount of concentration required negates his Defense for the turn.

This Merit can only be used with pistols.

Your character cannot use his Defense against any attack in the same turn in which he intends to use this Merit on two separate targets in the same turn. If he uses Defense against attacks that occur earlier in the Initiative roster, before he can perform this maneuver, he cannot perform the maneuver this turn. He is too busy bobbing and weaving out of the way of attacks.

### Iron Stamina (• to •••)

**Prerequisite:** Stamina ••• or Resolve •••

**Effect:** Each dot eliminates a negative modifier (on a one-for-one basis) when resisting the effects of fatigue or injury. For Example: A character with Iron Stamina •• is able to ignore up to a -2 modifier brought on by fatigue. See "Fatigue," p. 23. The Merit also counteracts the effects of wound penalties. So, if all your character's Health boxes are filled (which normally imposes a -3 penalty to his actions) and he has Iron Stamina •, those penalties are reduced to -2. This Merit cannot be used to gain positive modifiers for actions, only to cancel out negative ones.

Your character can push his body well past the limits of physical endurance when he has to, pressing on in the face of mounting exhaustion or pain. Perhaps he trained himself to go without sleep for days at a time in order to get through college, or a lifetime of sports has taught your character how to play through the pain no matter how bad it gets.

When your character does finally rest, he sleeps like the dead. After staying awake for an extended period, your character is extremely difficult to wake until he's slept for a minimum of 12 hours, regardless of the situation.

### Natural Immunity (•)

**Prerequisite:** Stamina ••

**Effect:** Your character gains a +2 modifier on Stamina rolls to resist infection, sickness and disease. His immune system is exceptionally effective at resisting infections, viruses and bacteria. Your character can probably count on one hand the number of times he's been seriously ill.

### Quick Draw (•)

**Prerequisite:** Dexterity •••

**Effect:** Your character can draw a pistol and fire or pull a melee weapon and attack without penalty as a single action in a turn. If a weapon is hidden on your character's person (under a coat or in a purse), it can be drawn and used in the same turn without the normal loss of Defense. A separate Quick Draw Merit must be acquired for use with firearms and melee weapons.

### Quick Healer (•••••)

**Prerequisite:** Stamina •••••

**Effect:** Your character's healing abilities are remarkable, allowing him to bounce back quickly from injuries that would leave most people bedridden for months.

Your character recovers from injuries in half the time that others do. One point of bashing damage is healed in eight minutes. One point of lethal damage is healed in one day. One point of aggravated damage is healed in four days.

### Strong Lungs (••••)

**Prerequisite:** Athletics •••

**Effect:** Your character is practiced at holding his breath for long periods of time. He might be a pearl diver or escape artist, capable of staying underwater without aid for longer than most people believe is possible.

When determining how long your character can hold his breath, add two to Stamina when referencing the Holding Breath chart. For example, if your character's Stamina is 2, he can hold his breath for four minutes before you need to make a roll.

### Weaponry Dodge (•)

**Prerequisite:** Strength •• and Weaponry •

**Effect:** Whenever your character performs a dodge (See "Dodge," p. 21), you can choose to add his Weaponry Skill dots to his Defense instead of doubling his Defense. He essentially draws on his training in parrying and evading attacks rather than relying on his raw ability alone. While this

might provide little benefit to a fencing novice, it can give the advanced fighter an edge.

Weaponry Dodge applies against incoming Brawl- and Weaponry-based attacks, against thrown-weapon attacks, and against Firearms attacks made within close-combat range. Your character can move up to his Speed and perform a Weaponry Dodge maneuver in a turn.

A character can possess both the Brawling Dodge and Weaponry Dodge Merits, but only one can be used per turn.

## Social Merits

### Allies (• to •••••)

**Effect:** Allies are people who are willing to help your character from time to time. They may be associates, friends of convenience or people who owe your character a favor. Each acquisition of this Merit is dedicated to one type of ally, whether in an organization, society or circle. Examples include the police, City Hall, criminals, unions, banks, university faculty and hospital staff. In order to have alliances in more than one venue, you need to purchase this Merit multiple times, each trait with its own dots. Thus, your character might have Allies (Police) ••, Allies (Criminals) ••• and Allies (City Hall) •, each acquired separately at character creation or during play.

Each dot that your character has indicates how deep his influence runs in that group. One dot might mean he can ask for minor favors, such as being spared a parking ticket if alliance is among the police, or being allowed to see an article before it goes to press if alliance is among reporters. Three dots garner considerable favors, such as a building permit “going missing” at City Hall, or a strike resolution being wrapped up early among union leaders. Five dots allow for dangerous and even overtly criminal favors, such as a stock being sabotaged on Wall Street or the answers to an exam being shared by a university professor.

The Storyteller has final say over what is an acceptable request and what is not. If there’s any doubt, the Storyteller could call for a Manipulation + Persuasion roll, with a bonus equal to your character’s Allies dots. Penalties might also apply based on the importance or danger of the request. Asking someone to do something already in the bounds of their role imposes no modifier, while asking them to do something that could get them suspended imposes a -3 penalty, and asking for something that could get them jailed or killed is -5. Frequent favors asked of the same group also impose a penalty as group members grow tired of being called upon.

Similarly, a roll of Manipulation + Persuasion + Allies dots could determine how many police answer your character’s call for help, or how many longshoremen turn up when your character needs a show of force (one per success rolled).

Allies doesn’t have to be defined in terms of specific individuals over whom your character has sway. He could

simply know a variety of people among city reporters and he can call upon them in general from time to time. You should, however, explain why your character has influence in a particular body. Maybe he worked there himself at one time and still has friends in the organization. Or he has done a group a favor and its members still owe him.

Allies are not automatons, waiting for your character to ask for help. They have their own lives and needs. An alliance is a two-way relationship. Calling for favors makes your character indebted to his friends, and they are sure to call such favors in when they need help. The Storyteller can use such debts as inspiration for future stories.

### Contacts (• to •••••)

**Effect:** Contacts provide your character information in a particular area of awareness. Each dot in this Merit represents one arena or circle in which your character has a web of connections and from which he may draw information. If he has Contacts •••, his dots might be assigned to computer hackers, couriers and big business, respectively. Contacts can include individuals whom you or the Storyteller defines, but more likely they comprise an array of people from whom your character can draw information with a phone call, email or face-to-face query. The benefit from Contacts is strictly in information-gathering. Contacts do not come perform services for your character or rush to his aid. Those actions are the purview of other Merits such as Allies and Retainer.

Gaining information from contacts requires a successful Manipulation + Persuasion or Socialize roll, depending on the relationship between your character and the people in question. Penalties might apply if the information sought is little known (-1 to -3), confidential (-3), or if sharing it could get people in trouble or harmed (-3 to -5). Success doesn’t guarantee exactly the information for which your character looks. Contacts aren’t all-knowing, and the Storyteller is perfectly justified in saying that a particular contact simply doesn’t know something.

### Fame (• to •••)

**Effect:** Your character has a measure of recognition in today’s media-saturated society, possibly as a performer, athlete, politician or other sort of public personality. He’s frequently identified and can often get star treatment. On the other hand, it’s difficult for your character to go places without getting recognized, and the media watches him carefully.

Each dot adds a +1 modifier to your character’s Socialize (or Persuasion, where applicable) rolls among those who are impressed by his celebrity status.

The more famous your character is, the more easily he is recognized by the public. The Storyteller should apply the same +1 modifier per dot to a general Wits + Composure roll to see if he is recognized by anyone on the street. An exceptional success indicates that one or more people are loyal fans who approach him for autographs, pictures and long conversations.

## Resources / (• to •••••)

**Effect:** This Merit measures your character's material resources, both possessions and wealth. All characters are assumed to have a job or a source of income (trust fund, parents) that is sufficient to cover their basic needs: food, shelter and transportation. Dots in this Merit represent disposable income—wealth and assets that can be liquidated for more money in case of emergency.

The number of dots indicates your character's general level of wealth. One dot suggests lower disposable income: \$500 a month and approximately \$1,000 worth of assets. Two dots suggest moderate disposable income: \$1,000 a month and approximately \$5000 worth of assets. Three dots suggest significant disposable income: \$2000 a month and maybe \$10,000 worth of assets. Four dots suggest substantial disposable income: \$10,000 a month and \$500,000 worth of assets. Five dots suggest significant wealth: \$50,000 a month and as much as \$5,000,000 worth of assets.

Resources can be used to determine if your character can reasonably afford a purchase or expenditure. Equipment, weapons and items throughout these rules are assigned costs in dots. The Storyteller can assign cost dots to other items during play based on what's here. If your character has the same or more dots in Resources, he can afford the item on his disposable income. That doesn't mean he has a blank check with which to buy everything he sees. He might be able to afford one or two items with a cost equal to his Resources dots in a single month. Items with lower costs can be acquired more often. The Storyteller has final say on what's too much or what's too often.

Your character's Resources dots aren't spent and don't go away. They represent available cash at any given moment. The only means by which your character's Resource dots might decrease is if story events conspire against them. Perhaps your character's fortune is wiped out, he loses his job or his company is subjected to a hostile takeover. The Storyteller therefore influences how your character's dots might decrease, and whether they can be salvaged.

## Retainer / (• to •••••)

**Effect:** Your character has an assistant, aide, indentured servant or fanatical follower on whom she can rely. You need to establish how this trusty companion was acquired. He may be paid exorbitant amounts of money that buy his unwavering loyalty. He might owe his life to your character (or to your character's predecessors). Your character might blackmail this person or threaten his family with harm if services are not rendered. Or your character might have a supernatural hold over this poor person. Regardless of the circumstances, this person is constantly loyal and follows almost any order without question.

A retainer can be called upon to perform many duties without fail. A bodyguard might be willing to hurt other people on a mere command. A dedicated street kid might

hang on your character's every word and get her information or contacts without being asked. Unless your character has direct control over a retainer's mind, however, this person can't be made to perform any task. He might not risk his own life unduly or perform a task that violates his own morals. You or the Storyteller should detail your retainer with an identity, background and character sheet of his own. The Storyteller usually plays your character's retainer.

Each acquisition of this Merit grants your character one follower. Dots spent in the trait indicate the training, capability or flexibility of the aide. One dot suggests a child, an automaton or a madman with limited capabilities and freedom of thought. Two dots indicate an ordinary person over whom your character has sway. The servant is completely mundane and has no particular training above the human norm (he has two dots in all of his Attributes and Skills). Three dots represent a capable employee with a range of training at his disposal (three or four of his traits have three dots). Four dots represent a valued and irreplaceable assistant (Someone with a handful of traits with four dots each). Five dots indicate an extraordinary follower. He is exceptional in many ways (five dots in a couple of traits, and four in many others) or he may be capable of supernatural feats.

Retainer is different from Allies in that no roll is ever made to get results from an aide. He performs the task requested, unless subjected to repeated abuse or an utterly intolerable assignment (as decided by the Storyteller based on the assistant's personality).

If your retainer is ever hurt he may be incapable of service while recovering. If he is killed, he's lost forever unless supernatural in origin. A retainer who possesses his own will and who is forced to perform a duty that offends his sensibilities or defies his morals may abandon your character, temporarily or permanently. Points spent to acquire a retainer who is killed or driven off are lost.

## Status / (• to •••••)

**Prerequisite:** Varies (see below)

**Effect:** Your character has standing, credentials, authority or respect within an organization, group, company or social body. He might have an official position or title, or might simply be revered and honored within the group and therefore accorded a degree of authority. Your character might be a company vice president, a police sergeant or lieutenant, an army corporal or a nurse at a hospital. Or he could be a lowly member of the group whom everyone likes or who has won some acclaim and is allowed more standing than he is officially entitled.

Each acquisition of this Merit is dedicated to one type of authority, whether in an organization, society or circle. Examples include police, City Hall, criminals, unions, banks, a university faculty or hospital staff. In order to have authority in more than one venue, you need to purchase this Merit multiple times, each trait with its own dots. Thus, your character might have Status (Police) ••, Status (Criminals)

••• and Status (City Hall) •, each acquired separately at character creation or during play. You would need to explain how he reconciles all this authority in the setting. The aforementioned character might be a dirty police sergeant who has paid his dues in civil elections and gained some recognition among city officials.

Status represents the privileges and liberties that your character is authorized to take *within the confines and definitions of his group*. Increasing dots reflect increasing clout. A cop with Status 1 can enter the suspect lockup and interrogation rooms, while a cop with Status 4 can enter the evidence locker without supervision or get involved in a crime-scene investigation without specifically being called in.

While Status might allow your character to give orders to underlings, the Merit doesn't automatically get results. Subordinates or co-workers might resent their assignments, dislike your character or have personal agendas that interfere with your character's needs. Efforts to get things done through official channels still call for Manipulation + Intimidation, Persuasion or Socialize rolls, whichever Skill is appropriate to the request, circumstances and your character's standing within the organization. Bonus dice equal to your character's Status dots. Penalties might apply if your character browbeats someone (-1), uses threats (-2), skirts the limits of his authority (-2) or exceeds his authority (-3 to -5).

Your character's standing in a given organization is dependent on the fulfillment of his duties and on abiding by the regulations required of members.

## Striking Looks (•• or ••••)

**Effect:** Your character is exceptionally attractive by modern standards; heads turn and conversations stop when she enters a room.

For two dots, your character gets a +1 modifier to all presence or Manipulation rolls when she attempts to use her looks to entertain, persuade, distract or deceive others.

For four dots, your character's looks are angelic; she gets a +2 modifier.

The more attractive your character is, the harder it is for her to avoid notice in public. Witnesses to any criminal acts are much more likely to remember your character's appearance, and easily recognize her in a lineup. Your character is also likely to receive a great degree of unwanted attention in social situations.

## Combat

It is an unfortunate truth that violence is a common side-effect of existence in the World of Darkness. Life is precarious enough in a world where vampires and werewolves don't stalk the city streets. Here, you sometimes have no choice but to fight to survive. When a fight breaks out, it can be important to keep track of who is doing what, and how badly the combatants are hurting each other.

First, the Storyteller tells the players their characters are entering combat. Until the combat ends, everyone acts turn-by-turn, with each character getting one chance to act each turn.

Next, have everyone roll Initiative, which is the result of the roll of a single die + the characters Initiative modifier as listed on the character sheet. This is a rare case in which you add the number that comes up on a die to the value of your trait, instead of rolling a dice pool and looking for successes.

Starting with the character with the highest Initiative result and continuing to the lowest, each character gets to take a single action (usually an attack). The player can choose to yield her character's action until later in the Initiative queue, or until the next turn if she wishes. The Storyteller resolves each character's action before asking the next player what her character does.

If a character attacks another character, the attacker rolls the appropriate Dice Pool:

**Unarmed Close Combat:** Strength + Brawl, minus target's Defense and armor (if any)

**Armed Close Combat:** Strength + Weaponry, minus target's Defense and armor (if any)

**Touching an Opponent:** Dexterity + Brawl, minus target's Defense

**Ranged Combat (Guns and Bows):** Dexterity + Firearms, minus target's armor (if any)

**Ranged Combat (Thrown Weapons):** Dexterity + Athletics, minus target's Defense and armor (if any)

Add bonus dice based upon what weapon is being used or what effect is being performed, then subtract penalties for circumstance conditions. The player rolls the remaining pool. Each success equates to a Health point of damage inflicted, the type of which is determined by the nature of the attack. The Storyteller describes the attack and wound in narrative terms.

Once everyone has acted, a new turn starts and the player with the highest Initiative gets to act again. Players do not make new Initiative rolls every turn.

## Complications

**Avoiding Damage in Close Combat:** Your character's Defense trait represents his instinctive ability to duck and weave and make an enemy's close-combat attacks more difficult, and so serves as a penalty to incoming attacks. If your character hasn't yet acted this turn and is willing to forgo that action, he can dodge, which doubles his Defense for the rest of the turn.

If your character is attacked multiple times in the same turn, however, it becomes harder for him to avoid being hurt. For every attack targeted at him past the first, reduce the character's Defense by 1 (to a minimum of 0). If your character is dodging, the doubled Defense reduces by 1 for each additional attack.

**Avoiding Damage in Ranged Combat:** Unless a ranged attacker is only a few feet away or is throwing a weapon, Defense doesn't apply. To avoid damage in a firefight you can either hide behind something solid or fall prone to the ground. Falling prone constitutes a character's action for the turn but levies a -2 penalty on ranged attacks. Anyone within a few feet gets a +2 bonus to hit a prone character, though.

**Concealment and Cover:** If your character is partially concealed behind an object, she is harder to hit with ranged attacks. The penalty goes from -1 (crouching behind an office chair) to -3 (poking up out of a foxhole). If you are completely concealed, the attacker suffers no dice pool penalty but has to score enough successes to shoot through the intervening object (called the cover). Piercing an object reduces the number of successes rolled by a number based upon the durability of the cover: from 1 (for wood or thick glass) to 3 (for steel). If this penalty reduces the number of successes to 0, the attack fails to penetrate the cover and you take no damage.

**Improved Weapons:** Combatants invariably grab whatever items come to hand to use as weapons against one another, especially when they come to a fight unarmed and opponents prove to be well-armed. Use of an improvised weapon, like a bottle or a wooden plank, incurs a -1 penalty due to the awkward nature of fighting with an item that isn't built for combat.

**Range:** Every ranged weapon has three ranges listed in yards, in the format "short range/medium range/long range." An attacker suffers no penalty when her target is within the short range. If the target is at medium range, she suffers a -2 penalty. At long range, this penalty goes to -4.

**Specifying Targets:** Sometimes your character wants to direct an attack at a particular part of an opponent, or at an object carried by an opponent in order to achieve a specific effect. Since smaller targets are harder to hit in this way, the Storyteller must impose penalties to the attack roll based on the size of the intended target. A torso might be at -1, a leg or arm -2, a head -3, a hand -4 and an eye (or the "off" button of a machine) -5. If no successes are gained, the attack misses altogether.

The results of a successful attack are determined by the Storyteller. A successful Strength + Athletics roll might be required for a victim to hold onto a held object, with a penalty to the effort equal to the damage done in the attack. A successful attack staged on a body part might ignore armor, because none is worn there. A blow to the head with a blunt object that normally inflicts bashing damage might inflict lethal damage, or cause the victim to be stunned.

## States of Being

Combat is about hurting and killing opponents. You therefore need a means of gauging your character's physical condition during and after a fight, whether he's simply bruised and battered or crippled or dead. But there are other states of being (and forms of injury) beyond those resulting

from combat. All forms of harm may befall your character, from fire to disease to electrocution. And yet, when he's faced with the horrors that lurk in the night, and supernatural creatures threaten his very existence, he may dismiss the pain as best he can and forge ahead against the unknown.

## Health and Damage

There are three types of damage, each more serious than the last: bashing, lethal and aggravated. *Bashing damage* generally results from blunt or stunning attacks. *Lethal damage* often comes from cuts, gunshots and more serious attacks. *Aggravated damage* is the result of especially vile supernatural attacks, extremely damaging effects or from sources that play upon a supernatural weakness, such as a werewolf's weakness to silver or a vampire's weakness to sunlight. Mortals, like the characters you play in default **World of Darkness** setting, very rarely suffer aggravated damage, but the creatures they encounter might.

**Marking Damage:** When a character suffers damage, the player marks off that number of Health points, starting with the box under the leftmost dot of his Health trait and proceeding left to right. The symbol used depends upon the type of damage.

Bashing damage is marked with a slash (/) in the first available empty box. So imagining that Thomas (one of the characters in this scenario, who has seven Health dots) had just taken one point of bashing damage, his Health boxes would look like this:

☐/☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Lethal damage is marked with an X, and it pushes any existing bashing damage right on the track (so that it always appears to the left of bashing damage). If Thomas next took a point of lethal damage, his track would be:

☐X/☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Aggravated damage is marked with a large asterisk (\*) by adding a vertical bar to an X. It also pushes any existing lethal and bashing damage right on the track (so that it always appears to the left of lethal or bashing damage). If Thomas next suffered a point of aggravated damage, his track would be:

☐\*X/☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

**No More Health:** Marking off a character's last Health box usually means the character has become incapacitated. If that rightmost wound is bashing, he falls unconscious. If that rightmost wound is lethal or aggravated, the character quickly bleeds to death. Note that this would mean the character has no bashing damage at all, since it will always be the rightmost. Some supernatural creatures may react differently to damage.

**Additional Damage:** An unconscious or severely battered person can still be damaged by further attacks. Without

further Health boxes to mark off, you represent this damage by upgrading existing wounds. Any new bashing wound upgrades an existing bashing wound to lethal (make the leftmost / into an X), while new lethal damage can upgrade older wounds to aggravated (make the leftmost X into an asterisk). Additional aggravated damage also converts a point of bashing or lethal damage to aggravated (make the leftmost / or X into an asterisk).

**Healing:** Mortals recover from damage with rest and medical attention. Left to heal naturally, characters recover one point of bashing damage every 15 minutes, one point of lethal damage every two days, and one point of aggravated damage every week. Lost Health is recovered from right to left on the character sheet.

## Deprivation

People go hungry and without proper drinking water every day in the World of Darkness. They might eke out a meager existence in poor or war-torn countries, or could struggle to survive in inner cities where brown water drips from corroded pipes. Or a person might fall ill, be unconscious, or be imprisoned and starved for days on end. He could even send his spirit on an incorporeal journey during which his body languishes. Regardless of the circumstances, denied proper food and water for an extended period, a mortal being suffers.

Your character can go a number of days equal to his Stamina before being inhibited by lack of water. Once that threshold is exceeded, he suffers one point of bashing damage for each day that passes. He can go without food for a number of days equal to his Stamina + Resolve. After that point, he suffers another point of bashing damage a day. Denied both food and water, he suffers two bashing wounds a day.

Health points lost due to deprivation cannot be healed until your character gains access to a sustained supply of food and/or water. If he has gone without both and comes upon a water supply alone, the Health he has lost to thirst heals normally. Still denied food, however, he continues to lose Health to starvation and cannot heal damage lost to it until he gets a steady food supply, too.

## Fatigue

Sometimes the demands of dealing with the world and the threats it poses do not allow for such luxuries as sleep. Your character may need to remain vigilant or on guard over a person or item. He may need to get across the country as soon as possible, but an airplane ticket is out of the question. So, just how long can he remain awake and to what effect?

Your character can push himself beyond normal limits, but exhaustion soon impairs his abilities. Almost anyone can go without rest for 24 hours, but to continue on is challenging. For every six-hour period that your character persists

beyond 24 hours, make a Stamina + Resolve roll. If it fails, he falls asleep. If the roll succeeds, your character remains alert and active. Spending one Willpower on a roll adds three dice to the effort. No more than one Willpower point can be dedicated to a single roll to remain awake.

Burning the candle at both ends impairs your character's performance. For each six-hour period in excess of 24 hours in which he foregoes sleep, his dice pools suffer a cumulative -1 penalty. He has trouble focusing and might suffer mild hallucinations. This penalty also applies to successive Stamina + Resolve rolls to remain awake.

If your character performs physically demanding activities such as running, conducting combat or performing a magical ritual while he stays awake, the Storyteller can impose an additional 1 to -3 penalty on your rolls to remain awake.

The longest a person can go without sleep is a number of days equal to the lowest of his Stamina or Resolve, at which point he passes out.

Once your character does sleep, it's for eight hours, plus one hour for each six-hour period (in excess of 24 hours) that he forced himself to remain active.

## Holding Breath

**Dice Pool:** Stamina

**Action:** Reflexive

A character can hold her breath for a number of turns based on her Stamina dots, as follows:

Stamina	Time*
•	30 seconds
••	One minute
•••	Two minutes
••••	Four minutes
•••••	Eight minutes

\* If your character is in combat, she can hold her breath for one turn per Stamina dot.

When she has reached her normal limit, a Stamina roll is made to continue. Each success grants 30 extra seconds (or one extra turn per success in combat). When she can no longer hold her breath, she begins suffocating/drowning. She suffers one lethal Health wound per turn.

## Morality

**Base Value:** 7

Morality reflects a character's sense of compassion for his fellow human being and basic respect for the rule of law. This isn't an absolute value. As people grow and change over time their perspectives on society and morality often shift. Some individuals strive to become more compassionate and

virtuous, while others, driven by desperation or embittered by dire circumstances, reject their old convictions and adopt a more callous and selfish approach to existence.

Your character's Morality is not fixed. Depending on his actions, it can increase or decrease during play. A starting character has a Morality of 7—a basic respect for the law and a realistic sense of compassion for other people. He believes in the need to uphold the law, and treats others as he would expect to be treated himself. He has the potential to become more selfless and virtuous, or has a long way to fall into the depths of human barbarity. The course he follows depends entirely on the choices he makes during the course of the chronicle.

Each Morality rating has a threshold of sinful behavior from your character must refrain in order to avoid degeneration to a lower moral state.

### Morality Sin

10	Selfish thoughts. (Roll five dice.)
9	Minor selfish act (withholding charity). (Roll five dice.)
8	Injury to another (accidental or otherwise). (Roll four dice.)
7	Petty theft (shoplifting). (Roll four dice.)
6	Grand theft (burglary). (Roll three dice.)
5	Intentional, mass property damage (arson). (Roll three dice.)
4	Impassioned crime (manslaughter). (Roll three dice.)
3	Planned crime (murder). (Roll two dice.)
2	Casual/callous crime (serial murder). (Roll two dice.)
1	Utter perversion, heinous act (mass murder). (Roll two dice.)

## Losing Morality Dots — Degeneration Rolls

If a character commits a sin equal to or worse than the threshold of his current Morality trait, roll the number of dice associated with the sin performed to avoid degeneration. If the roll succeeds, the character's overall sense of compassion remains intact, and his Morality does not change. If the degeneration roll fails, your character's sense of right and wrong is altered by his experience and he loses a point of Morality. His soul hardens to the needs of others and he becomes inured to greater acts of selfishness or violence.

**Example:** Joan has a Morality of 7. Referring to the chart, she does not risk degeneration unless she commits a deliberate act of petty theft or worse. She loses her job during play. Her savings

run out and she is about to be thrown out of her apartment. One evening she walks downtown and notices that someone has left their wallet in their open car. Desperate, she reaches through the car window and steals the wallet. This crime (petty theft) is equal to the threshold of her current Morality, so a degeneration roll must be made to determine if Joan loses a Morality point. Petty theft allows for a roll of four dice.

If Joan had committed an impassioned crime such as manslaughter to get some money (a sin more severe than Joan's 7 Morality can tolerate), her player would have rolled three dice to see if Joan suffered degeneration.

As a character's Morality slips ever lower, she becomes more deranged and perhaps more of a monster, capable of virtually any depraved act. When a Morality point is lost because of a sin perpetrated, roll your character's new Morality trait as a dice pool. If the roll succeeds, she finds some kind of balance or existence at her new state of spiritual and ethical standing. If the roll fails, she manifests a derangement. Derangements are mental and emotional ailments or conditions, in this case brought on by your character's stress, grief or even remorselessness over acts performed. Derangements are detailed later in this section.

If your character develops such a condition, you and the Storyteller can decide which is appropriate based on the circumstances. An avoidance condition might set in whenever your character enters a situation that reminds her of the sin she committed. If she decided to harm a child and paid the emotional price, being around children thereafter might cause her to escape. Note that the conditions detailed later each have a mild and severe form. Your character probably starts with a mild ailment in any new derangement, unless something horribly traumatic occurs and you feel that she should descend directly into a severe problem.

On your character sheet, write the derangement gained on the line associated with the Morality trait to which she has fallen. If your character manifests a fixation when she drops from 6 to 5 Morality, write "Fixation" on the line associated with 5 Morality.

**Example:** Let's say that the degeneration roll made for Joan's theft fails. The four dice turn up no successes. That means her Morality drops from 7 to 6. A check must now be made to see if she suffers mental or emotional damage for her sin. Her player rolls her new Morality of 6 as a dice pool, with a 1, 3, 3, 5, 6 and 7 as the result. No successes. That means Joan does indeed manifest a derangement. The player and Storyteller decide that Joan exhibits depression, and that's entered on the line next to 6 Morality on her character sheet.

Repeated degeneration and Morality rolls that fail cause your character to incur more and more or worse and worse conditions. If you want to minimize the diversity of ailments that she manifests, focus on increasingly intense ones, acquiring the mild form of any condition first and then assigning the severe one the next time your characters incurs another problem.

If a character descends so far that her Morality drops to zero, she can no longer be played in any meaningful way.

She becomes a true monster, inflicting pain and suffering on everyone around her without the slightest hint of remorse and no hope of redemption. At that point control of the character passes to the Storyteller.

## Derangements

Derangements are behaviors that occur when the mind is forced to confront intolerable or conflicting feelings, such as overwhelming terror or profound guilt. When your character is faced with impressions or emotions that he cannot reconcile, his mind attempts to ease the inner turmoil by stimulating behavior such as megalomania, schizophrenia or hysteria as an outlet. People in the World of Darkness, unwittingly tormented, persecuted and preyed upon by incomprehensible beings, often develop these ailments by the mere fact of existing. Alternatively, regret, guilt or remorselessness for inflicting abuses eats away at mind and soul. The night's creatures are not immune to such pressures, either. Existence as an unnatural thing overwhelms what little humanity these beings might have left, driving them mad.

Each of the following ailments is defined in terms of mild and severe. The first might apply to your character if an action or experience imbalances him, but he remains functional. The second can apply if a previously mild condition intensifies with more irreconcilable behavior or spectacles, or if a single act or scene is so mind numbing that only full-blown insanity and dysfunction can result. If treatment or reconciliation occurs and ailments are alleviated, a severe case of a condition must be addressed and overcome before a mild case of the same derangement.

Mild	Severe
Depression	Melancholia
Phobia	Hysteria
Narcissism	Megalomania
Fixation	Obsessive Compulsion
Suspicion	Paranoia
Inferiority Complex	Anxiety
Vocalization	Schizophrenia*
Irrationality	Multiple Personality*
Avoidance	Fugue*

\*Your character must experience a life-altering trauma or supernatural tragedy to acquire one of these extreme derangements. They cannot normally be acquired by failing a Morality roll unless the sin performed is truly gut wrenching or horrific, such as murdering one's own children.

**Depression (mild):** If your character fails to achieve a goal (not just fails a roll, but fails to accomplish some personal, desired end such as getting a job or saving a friend's life), he might go into a bout of depression for the remainder of the scene. A dramatic failure that occurs in any activity might also bring on a bout of depression. Regardless of the circumstances, make a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll. If the roll fails, your character loses one Willpower point and cannot spend any Willpower points for the remainder of the scene.

**Melancholia (severe):** Severe depression. In addition to the above effects of a failed Resolve + Composure roll, all dice pools suffer a -2 penalty for the remainder of the scene.

**Phobia (mild):** Your character is scared of a particular type of person, place or thing such as lawyers, heights or spiders. When that trigger is encountered, a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll must be made successfully or your character suffers a bout of fear, moving away from the object of her phobia. If she must be near it, she can tolerate being no closer than her Speed in yards. If it approaches her, she must move away at least her Speed in distance in her next action. She cannot easily target the trigger with close combat or ranged attacks. Such attacks suffer a -5 penalty as your character shakes just looking at it. If space or circumstances don't allow her to maintain her distance, she freezes like a deer in headlights until she finds an opening by which to escape. (Her Defense still applies if attacked and she can choose to dodge and can take cover from Firearms attacks, but she can take no other actions while "frozen.")

**Hysteria (severe):** This condition operates as a phobia, but on a failed Resolve + Composure roll your character cannot be in the same room with the object of her fear. She must run away from it immediately, and cannot tolerate being within sensory range (sight, sound, smell) of it. If the trigger comes within sensory range, she must run away at full running Speed as soon as she can take an action. She cannot target it for an attack under any circumstance. If it touches her, make another Resolve + Composure roll for her to not freak out and run as far away as she can, thinking of nothing else until she's left the subject far behind. (Even if this roll succeeds, your character must still leave the room or area.) If any of your Resolve + Composure rolls suffer a dramatic failure or your character is unable to escape, she faints and loses consciousness for the remainder of the scene. If it touches her where she can't see it but she can feel it — a spider dropping on her neck or in her hair — the penalty is -5.

**Narcissism (mild):** Whenever your character succeeds at a reasonably remarkable goal (such as hacking into a well-protected computer or knocking a challenging opponent unconscious) it might go to his head and pump up his overweening ego. Roll Resolve + Composure to avoid a bout of vanity. On a failed roll, your character becomes self-focused. Any task he attempts that isn't focused on him or his needs and wants suffers a -3 penalty when participating in teamwork efforts (p. 5). He also suffers a -1 penalty for any Social roll

due to his self-involvement.

**Megalomania (severe):** The effects of Narcissism apply, except that the penalties intensify by one. Your character is also highly competitive. He cannot allow himself to fail a contest (even a contested roll). If he does, he obsesses about it and works to arrange a rematch when it's most beneficial for him regardless of the circumstances. If your character ever loses a contest to someone he feels is socially inferior, he loses one point of Willpower due to shame and self-loathing (which is at the heart of his megalomania; he secretly fears that he's a fraud).

**Fixation (mild):** If your character fails or succeeds at an important action such as leaping between buildings or making a getaway in a sports car, he might fixate on his loss or victory. Roll Resolve + Composure after such an event for him to avoid this unhealthy obsession. If your Resolve + Composure roll fails, roll a single die. For that number of scenes, the character suffers a -1 penalty on any task not related to his fixation, to the possible exclusion of more important goals. He fixates on what he believes caused him to lose or win his goal, whether it's an opponent, a broken shoelace or the model of car driven.

**Obsessive Compulsion (severe):** The trauma, guilt or inner conflict that causes this derangement forces your character to focus nearly all of his attention and energy on a single repetitive behavior or action. Obsession relates to an individual's desire to control his environment — keeping clean, keeping an area quiet and peaceful, or keeping undesirable individuals out. A compulsion is an action or set of actions that an individual is driven to perform to soothe his anxieties — placing objects in an exact order, constantly checking to make sure a weapon is loaded, praying every few hours to give thanks for surviving that long.

**Effect:** Determine a set of specific actions or behaviors that your character follows to the exclusion of all else (even if doing so interferes with his current agenda or endangers his life or others'). The effects of obsessive compulsion can be negated for the course of one scene by making a successful Resolve + Composure roll at a -2 penalty. If your character is forcibly prevented from adhering to his derangement, he may lose control among enemies or allies and attack either (or both) indiscriminately.

**Suspicion (mild):** Anytime your character suffers intentional misfortune at the hands of another, he might become extremely suspicious of everyone's motives toward him. He might crash as a result of being cut off in traffic or receive little help from assistants in a teamwork effort (see p. 5.) Roll Resolve + Composure for your character to resist the suspicion compulsion. Combat does not necessarily trigger this derangement. A roll is made only if combat is the means by which someone intentionally prevents your character from achieving a goal. If the roll fails, your character's trust is undermined for the remainder of the scene, regardless of whether or not the person or persons who did him wrong meant any harm. He questions everyone's sincerity and doubts that anyone tries to help him, even if someone saves

his life. He suffers a -1 penalty on all Social rolls. Note that, even though your character is suspicious, he can still be taken in by con men and hucksters. He gets no special bonus to resist their attempts to sway him even though he suspects them of being as bad as everyone else.

**Paranoia (severe):** Your character believes that her misery and insecurity stem from external persecution and hostility. Paranoids obsess over their persecution complexes, often creating vast and intricate conspiracy theories to explain who torments them and why. Anyone or anything perceived to be "one of them" might be subjected to violence. A character who suffers from paranoia automatically suffers a -2 penalty on Social rolls. The character is distrustful and wary of everyone, even close friends and family. The slightest hint of suspicious behavior is enough to provoke a Resolve + Composure roll to retain control (made at a -2 penalty). A failed roll indicates that your character flees or attacks an offender.

**Inferiority Complex (mild):** Whenever your character is subjected to a stressful situation in which the result of a single choice or dice roll can determine success or failure, she might be overcome with such self-doubt that she threatens the outcome. She might need to tell a convincing lie to get out of a dangerous situation or cut a wire to disable a bomb. Roll your character's Resolve + Composure for her to remain composed. If your roll fails, the weight of the momentous choice is too much for your character and she becomes flustered. Once in this state, any rolls made for the remainder of the scene — including the momentous act itself — suffer a -1 penalty. In addition, a Willpower point cannot be spent on the singular roll that inspires her bout of inferiority.

**Anxiety (severe):** As Inferiority Complex, but your character's general anxiety plagues things so badly that she suffers a -2 penalty on all rolls for the remainder of the scene, and Willpower points cannot be spent to bolster any rolls in that period.

**Vocalization (mild):** Whenever your character is stymied by a quandary and must make an important decision about a course of action, or is under extreme stress, she might talk to herself without realizing it. Roll Resolve + Composure to avoid this discomforting habit. If you fail, your character vocalizes her internal monologue but only realizes it if it's pointed out by others, at which point she can stop for one turn per dot of Wits that she has. After that period, she forgets herself and starts doing it all over again. This behavior persists for the remainder of the scene. Your character vocalizes even if opponents or rivals can hear. It's hard to keep her thoughts and feelings secret when she speaks them aloud. For example, a rival might demand that she reveal the location of a hidden heirloom. She smirks and thinks to herself (and unwittingly speaks aloud), "You'll never find it in my hidden wall safe."

**Schizophrenia (severe; extreme):** Conflicting sets of feelings and impulses that cannot be resolved can cause your character to develop schizophrenia, which manifests as a withdrawal from reality, violent changes in behavior and



hallucinations. This derangement is the classic sort, causing victims to talk to walls, imagine themselves to be the King of Siam, or to receive murderous instructions from their pets. A character with this derangement is unpredictable and dangerous. He automatically suffers a -2 penalty on all Social rolls and may be aggressive or violent toward people who confront him with trauma such as accusations, disturbing truths or heated arguments. Make a Resolve + Composure roll for your character to avoid escaping or attacking the source of trauma.

**Irrationality (mild):** Whenever your character is threatened with violence or suffers extreme tension by being persecuted, challenged or accused, she might react without logic or reason. The persecution, challenge or accusation needs to bear some realistic threat to your character's well-being, whether related to finances, emotional security or social standing. Roll her Resolve + Composure to keep her cool. On a failed roll, your character's only way to comfortably deal with confrontation is to act crazy or over the top, in wild hopes that she will scare away her oppressor or at least mitigate her own fears. This behavior persists for the remainder of the scene. For example, if a bouncer demands to know what your character is doing in an off-limits part of a club, she might overreact and get in his face. Make a Wits + Composure roll for her to be able to take any action that removes her from the scene or that directly diffuses the situation (such as accepting a hand offered in a conciliatory handshake). The truly ironic part about this behavior is that during such a bout, your character cannot initiate violence, but only respond to it if it occurs. She can threaten or cajole challengers, but can't take the first swing. (That, in fact, is what her crazed behavior tries to avoid.)

**Multiple Personality (severe; extreme):** More properly known as Dissociative Identity Disorder, the trauma that

spawns this derangement fractures your character's personality into one or more additional personas, allowing her to deny her trauma or any actions the trauma causes by placing the blame on "someone else." Each personality is created to respond to certain emotional stimuli. An abused person might develop a tough-as-nails survivor personality, create a "protector" or even become a murderer to deny the abuse she suffers. In most cases, none of these personalities is aware of the others, and they come and go through your character's mind in response to specific situations or conditions. A character with multiple personalities can manifest different Skills or perhaps increased or diminished Social Attributes for each identity (the number of dots allocated to your character's Social Attributes are rearranged

by anywhere from one to three).

**Avoidance (mild):** When confronted with a situation or person associated with a previous, significant failure or trauma (a long-term rival, an ex-wife, the house in which one suffered a painful childhood), your character prefers not to face the situation and might do everything he can to avoid it. Roll Resolve + Composure for him to master his nervousness. On a failed roll, your character does everything in his power to avoid the situation, short of harming himself or others. He might escape the scene or disguise himself as a bystander to sidle away. If he must confront (or can't escape) the situation, any rolls made suffer a -1 penalty.

**Fugue (severe; extreme):** Victims suffering from fugue experience "blackouts" and loss of memory. When subjected to a particular variety of stress, your character goes into a state similar to sleepwalking, and performs a specific, rigid set of behaviors to remove the stressful symptoms. Decide on the kind of circumstance or exposure that triggers this state, be it the death of a defenseless person by his hand, a confrontation with a specific sort of creature or confinement in a small, dark room. Make a Resolve + Composure roll when your character is subjected to his trigger. If the roll fails, roleplay your character's trance-like state by performing a sequence of behaviors that he performs almost robotically. He might repetitively untie and tie his shoes, walk to the corner of the room and refuse to come out, or curl into the fetal position. If the Storyteller is not satisfied by your character's reaction, he might take control of your character for the duration of the bout. The spell lasts for the remainder of the scene. At the end of the fugue, your character "regains consciousness" with no memory of his actions. If outsiders (including friends and enemies) interfere with or try to prevent your character's mechanical activities, he may attack them in order to carry on.

# Creating Your Own Characters

This quickstart includes a number of characters designed to complement the included scenario and allow you to get started immediately. It's always possible that you or your friends won't find characters that appeal to you. Or maybe you just prefer to have a more direct hand in the destiny of your character. The World of Darkness is about your imagination. The horrors lurking behind the shining veneer of normalcy are all the more terrible if the character you play is one of your own design.

## Step One: Choose Background

First, create your character's concept. To help get a handle on your character's identity and motivations, you might come up with a short, two- or three-word description of her. This usually, but not always includes some idea of a career: "burnt-out cop," "night-stalking journalist," "discredited scientist," "neighborhood drunk," "idealistic gang-banger."

Keep in mind that your idea (often called *high concept* or *elevator pitch*) isn't a straitjacket. Burnt-out cop describes *Die Hard*'s John McClane and *The Shield*'s Vic Mackey, but they're extremely different characters. This is just shorthand; a launch pad for your ideas. Two people can have exactly the same experiences, yet react to them in ways that completely alter the shape of their lives.

## Step Two: Select Attributes

Your character's innate capabilities are called Attributes. These nine Attributes are separated into three categories: Mental, Physical and Social. Prioritize the three categories by how important they are to your character's concept. Distribute 5 dots in the most important (Primary) category, 4 dots in the next most important (Secondary) and 3 points in the final (Tertiary) category. Your character begins with one dot in each Attribute automatically, already filled in on the character sheet. Dots spent now are in addition to these starting ones. The fifth dot in any Attribute costs two dots to purchase. For more information, see "Attributes" on p. 7.

**Example:** Merritt wants his character to have a Dexterity of 5. This costs him five dots. His first dot is free and his fifth one costs two.

## Step Three: Select Skills

Skills are your character's learned capabilities. Like Attributes, there are three categories: Mental, Physical and Social.

Prioritize the three categories and distribute 11 dots among the primary category, 7 dots in the secondary category and 4 dots in the final category. Each category has eight Skills. The fifth dot in any Skill costs two dots to purchase, and there are no free starting dots in any skill. For more information, see "Skills," p. 8.

## Step Four: Select Skill Specialties

Your character's focused areas of expertise. Take three Skill Specialties of your choice. You can assign each how you like, whether each to a separate Skill or all three to a single Skill. There is no limit to how many Specialties can be assigned to a single Skill. For more information, see "Skills," p. 8.

## Step Five: Determine Advantages

Advantages are traits derived from your character's Attributes:

**Size:** 5 for most humans.

**Defense:** The lowest of Dexterity or Wits.

**Health:** Stamina + Size.

**Initiative:** Dexterity + Composure.

**Morality:** 7 for Starting characters.

**Speed:** Strength + Dexterity + 5.

**Willpower:** Resolve + Composure.

**Virtues and Vices:** Choose one of each. See "Virtues and Vices," p. 13.

## Step Six: Select Merits

A character may be customized using Merits, which represent enhancements and background elements. Spend 7 dots on Merits. As with Skills and Attributes, the fifth dot in any Merit costs two dots to purchase. Note that many Merits have prerequisites. For a selection of available Merits, see "Merits," p. 16.

## Step Seven: Final Touches

To round out details on your character sheet, fill in the name of the chronicle in which your character will participate (provided by the Storyteller), and the name of his group of companions (if any). Finally, list all equipment he carries. He is now ready to confront whatever fate awaits him in the World of Darkness.

# A Nightmare at Hill Manor

This scenario is meant as a crash-course introduction into the strange and terrifying things that lurk in the shadows of the World of Darkness. “A Nightmare at Hill Manor” can serve as a stand-alone story or as a launching point from which you can begin chronicles of your own devising. Hill Manor Apartments can exist in whichever city you choose, though its nature (a multi-story apartment building) lends itself best to large urban centers, and might require some modification or hand-waving if you choose a smaller town to host the characters.

This portion of the booklet is meant for the Storyteller’s eyes only. If you are planning to take on the role of one of the characters (or one of your own devising) in “A Nightmare at Hill Manor,” please stop reading now. Storytelling games are much more enjoyable if you experience the plot twists and surprises along with your characters, so don’t spoil the fun for yourself.

## Preparing For Play

First, read through the rules at the beginning of this booklet, just to get an idea of how the mechanics of the game work. Then take a look at the character sheets at the end of the booklet and note the characters’ different capabilities and advantages. We don’t expect you or the players to memorize everything right out of the gate, but if you give the characters a quick once-over in conjunction with the rules, the numbers will make more sense in game play. Let the players read over their characters’ backgrounds, roleplaying hints and traits, and answer any questions they might have. Help them understand how the rules work with regard to the dots and numbers on the character sheets. Also, read through “A Nightmare at Hill Manor” at least once before attempting to act as Storyteller. We’ve tried to make it as easy as possible on you, but you should have an idea of what’s coming up. Plus, players will always make decisions that you—and we—didn’t see coming. That’s great! That’s part of roleplaying. It does, however, require you to think on your feet.

If you know how the plot progresses, you can take what the players do and allow those decisions to steer the game toward a satisfying conclusion, rather than having to say, “No, you can’t do that because it would take us too far off track.”

## ABOUT THE FORMAT

The format we use for scenes in this quickstart is our Storyteller Adventure System (or SAS for short). To keep this quickstart lean and focused, we haven’t included many of the core premises and Storyteller suggestions that are at the heart of the SAS. If you want to learn more about how our stories work in this system, be sure to read the free SAS Guide:

[www.white-wolf.com/sas](http://www.white-wolf.com/sas)

## Characters and Background

The characters in “A Nightmare at Hill Manor” are all tenants in the same apartment building. They’re familiar with each other because of that proximity, and know each other well enough to get together for biweekly poker games put together by Janice from 6C. Beyond that, a nod in the hall, a hand getting furniture into the old-fashioned elevators or maybe a few short conversations here and there is the extent of their interactions. The one thing they all have in common is living in the same apartment building.

All of the characters have been in the apartment building long enough to have a vague sense of the history of the building, if only from reading the plaque from the local historical society on the wall outside:

### HILL MANOR APARTMENTS REGISTERED HISTORICAL LANDMARK

**This building stands on the grounds of the original Hill Manor, home of Josiah Hill and his family. The Hills were benefactors of our community in its earliest stages. Without their philanthropy and the jobs it provided, the city as we know it may not exist today. The original manor house was tragically destroyed in a fire. Construction of these apartments was completed in 1929.**

The plaque also includes a familiar relief portrait of Josiah Hill’s profile that local children call the “Hill Penny.”

# Treatment

"A Nightmare at Hill Manor" starts with the characters at their biweekly poker game. It's late getting started because of construction on the road outside the apartment building. Janice gets everyone set up in the common area and ready to go, but needs to get snacks. So the group gets settled and plays a few hands before they hear two gunshots from upstairs, followed after a short interval by a third. Janice returns, distracted and acting odd. She says something strange is happening, and wants the others to come see it too. She did not hear the gunfire.

Janice says that she saw Keenan from 6F heading up the stairs towards the top floor earlier, but he never came down. She hasn't seen anyone else other than the characters and the maid.

The characters find out that trying to go down to the lobby simply doesn't work. The stairways loop back on themselves and the elevator won't open lower than the fifth floor. All the windows are black, and seem to open into a void. Cell phones and telephones don't work. The building is, for all intents and purposes, sealed off from the outside world.

The characters can either explore the floors they *can* access, hoping to find other "survivors," or they can head upstairs to the penthouse to see if Keenan is up there and what condition he's in. Most people either weren't home or fell through the same void that made the rest of the world seem to disappear. In their searches, the characters encounter many strange, haunted zones: rooms or hallways where time seems to work differently, where the air is as thick as water, or where the temperature drops to freezing. They also encounter the shades of past tenants, members of the Hill family or their servants, twisted and torn by their harsh silver prison. Finally, they find others who survived the event, whatever it was. But some of them are possessed, violent and without reason. The characters must either find ways to avoid the possessed entirely, incapacitate them or kill them.

Eventually they make their way to the penthouse, which is locked. The only keys to the floor outside of the owner's are kept in the maintenance office on the fifth floor, guarded by the feral remnants of the maintenance crew. After retrieving the keys, the characters return to the penthouse, where they find Keenan dead by self-inflicted gunshot wound, and the body of the penthouse's owner, killed by two shots to the chest. Up here, they can hear a storm outside, and near-constant strikes on the lightning rod on the roof. The spirit of Brian Sullivan (also known as Sullivan Barnes) remains, and the room visibly pulses with a strange energy. He can answer some questions, but his time is short. He focuses on telling the characters what they can do to get out of this alive. They need to take Josiah Hill's pocket watch up onto the roof, and destroy it by attaching it to the lightning rod so that nature may take its course.

The only problem with that plan is Hill's crazed ghost is on the roof, where he tries to possess one of the characters to wrest the watch free and kill the others.

# Theme: Trapped!

The theme of "Nightmare at Hill Manor" is one of isolation. The characters can't get out of the building. As far as they can tell, there is no "out" to get to anymore.

We live in an age of constant connection. Everyone has any number of invisible tethers grounding them and connecting them to their loved ones and friends. Here, there is no one the characters can reach out to. The apartment building is a self-contained hunting ground for the tortured, unhinged shades newly freed from their own prison. Separated from the world, from friends and lovers, the characters have no way of knowing that this isn't permanent. They don't know if something happened to them, or to the rest of the world. Are they the last few people alive? Are they dead, trapped in hell or limbo? The only thing to do is keep moving.

# Mood: Horror and Terror

Horror movies are often misnamed. Horror is a slow, existential fear that builds. Terror is the immediate fight or flight reaction of seeing a maniac with a chainsaw lumbering through an old farmhouse. "A Nightmare at Hill Manor" can provide both experiences, depending on your preferences. The scenario is designed to combine the two, but it should be relatively simple to fiddle with the knobs and adjust the mix to fit your group.

In *horror*, the anticipation is nearly everything. Linger when the characters realize they are trapped in a building by forces they don't understand. Let them try to push and pull at the edges of the trap, no matter how futile *you* know it is. Give the characters a little lead and watch the predicament wear at them.

Play up the weirdness of the haunting. Small noises in the distance. Strange, localized temperature variations. The chair that was on the right side of the door when the characters walked in is on the left when they look back. The familiar is twisted and turned into the alien.

Make sure you tie these hauntings into the characters' past. Remind them of their conversations with Maureen when they first see her clouded eyes staring out from that contorted face. When he's chasing them down the hall, let them see echoes of how Mark always limped a little when he ran to catch the elevator.

On the other hand, *terror* is the stock and trade of the bulk of contemporary scary movies. Flashier, in-your-face scares that start the adrenaline pumping and leave you shout-

ing at the characters to *RUN!* Ratchet up the terror by giving them sudden, shocking scares.

Make each trip into the hall a harrowing run from apartment to apartment, a blood-drenched search for safety from marauding ghosts that never comes. The possessed, rage-fueled creatures that roam Hill Manor Apartments are embodiments of terror. Vicious, unrelenting things stalking the characters for amusement. They aren't even eating their prey, like zombies. They kill for the sheer joy of it, the rush of being able to touch and rip and tear after so long imprisoned in the crushing trap of Sullivan's ward. There are no shreds of humanity left, and nothing in their eyes but clouded cataracts.

## Background

"A Nightmare at Hill Manor" does not rely on the characters ever discovering the whole story. However, it is a good idea for you as a Storyteller to know the history of the building so as to better understand the motivations of the mad ghosts within. It will also help you to improvise when the players go off the beaten track and do something we didn't plan for, which is inevitable.

## Hill Manor Apartments

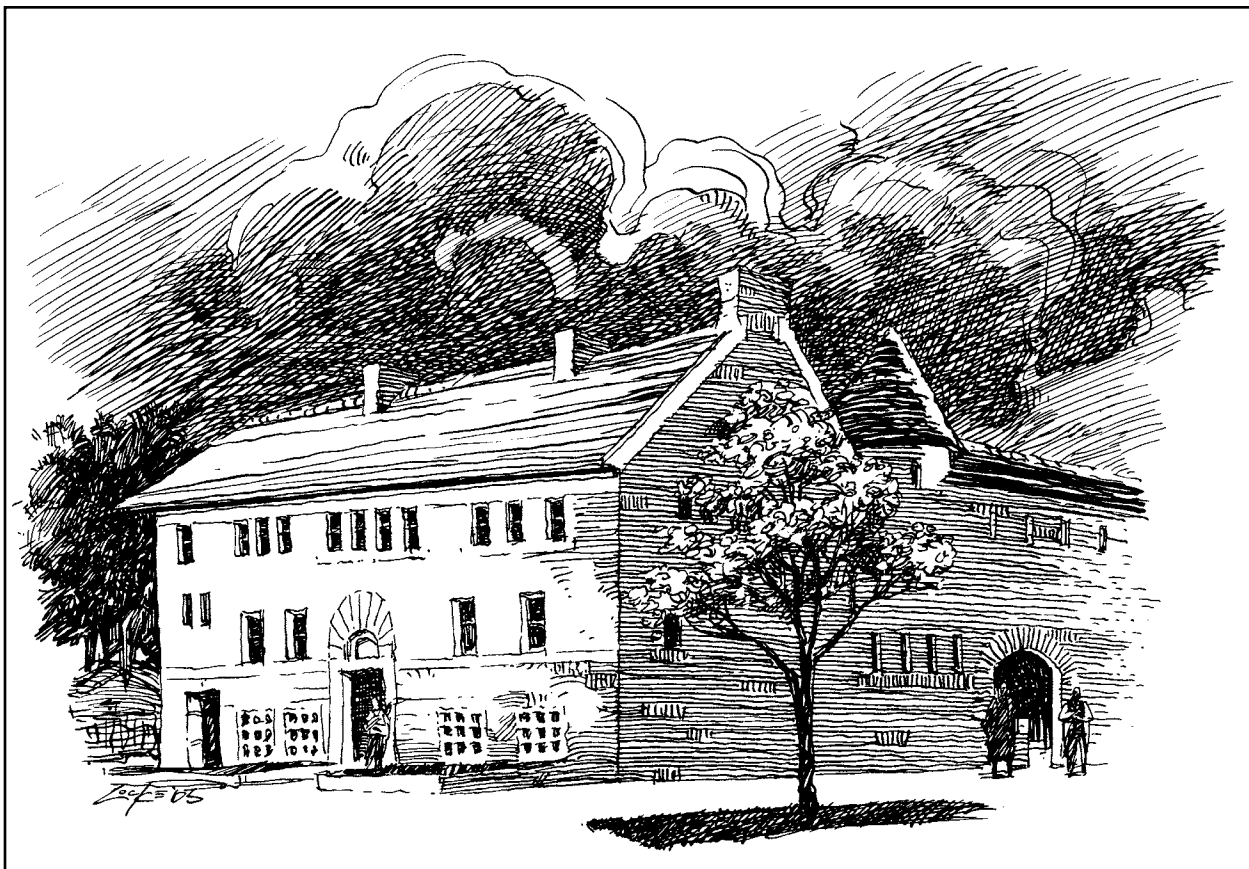
When the city was younger, this land all belonged to Josiah Hill and his family. They lived in a sprawling man-


sion surrounded by vast stone walls bearing the legend, "Hill Manor." A private family, the Hills hosted few guests and kept themselves to themselves. Their considerable impact on the burgeoning city was cut tragically short when a fire tore through the manor, leveling the building and leaving no survivors.

The Hill Manor Apartment building was eventually built on the razed land. Here and there, the architect incorporated salvaged metalwork and tile taken from the gutted mansion, and the keystone of the building bears the original engraved Hill Manor sign.

Josiah Hill fled here, stalked by a thing he didn't understand—something that lived beyond the edge of vision, just out of reach of the keenest hearing. He did not see it, did not hear it, but he felt it. It stood at the bottom of the stairs in the crawling darkness, but it fled when he turned up the gas. It whispered while he slept, but went mute when he awoke. Driven to distraction, unable to sleep or concentrate, he traveled the world looking for somewhere he could find peace.

When he came upon the town he would settle in, he did not plan to stop. But a local named Sullivan Barnes saw, if not the stalking creature, the marks it left upon Hill. He offered the harried man a respite from the slinking thing. Hill began to build his Manor based on Barnes' occult instruction. The land was turned and leveled, and a silver dust was mixed into the earth, creating a pattern of protection, a mystical ward against the thing that tor-





tured Josiah Hill. The land itself was taught to shun the malevolent creature. Here, Hill was safe, so long as he didn't leave the grounds of Hill Manor. Sullivan became his most trusted friend. He was given free rein over the manor, but he chose to live in a small cottage on the southern lawn.

Local fringe lore paints Sullivan as some kind of warlock, leading a satanic cult of dissolute, jaded gentry in debauched rites while holding Hill under his thrall. In truth, while he was a wizard, the truth is that most wizards live relatively quiet, boring lives. The only way in which he took advantage of Hill's gratitude was by using his considerable resources to gather a collection of obscure books. Sullivan spent most of his prime "debauched rite" time reading and studying.

Hill's family orbited around him, a veritable soap opera of strife and backstabbing as they jockeyed to be named the patriarch's heir. As the family, staff and assorted hangers-on grew, so too did the manor. The Hills annexed the lands around their estate, but Hill remained solely in the original, warded lands. Portions of his own house became a foreign land to him.

Finally, the creature found a way to reach him indirectly. One night, a maid in one of the annexed wings heard a whisper. She listened, straining to understand the words, and was caught. The thing moved through the annex clothed in the housekeeper's flesh, but the ward was strong. It could not enter the core of the house. So it started a fire. The annex burnt, and tongues of flame paid the warded earth no heed. The entire house was destroyed. Only Sullivan Barnes survived, in his cottage separated from the house.

At the reading of the will, it turned out that Hill had left everything to Sullivan. With no surviving relatives to contest the will, he took ownership of the razed land for a full month before he sold it to the company that would eventually build the Hill Manor Apartment building.

## The Haunting of Hill Manor Apartments

Over time, the construction workers working on the high-rise apartment building reported a number of strange events. They saw things they couldn't explain or forget. A number of employees died after falling from great heights while the building's skeleton was being erected. Other accidents plagued the site, but in a time of lax safety regulations, the construction continued. Finally, the building was finished. Sullivan Barnes was the first paying tenant. He took up residence in a penthouse apartment on the top floor.

Sullivan Barnes had discovered that his ward was too good. The ghosts of the Hill family, the servants, everyone who died on the property—in the blaze or afterward—were trapped in the ward. They could not move on. Moreover, it hurt. There was no respite for these shades. They went mad with pain, and began to take it out on the construc-

tion workers working on the building. When Barnes investigated, he saw echoes of people he had known in life, twisted in agony. He saw the crazed remnant of his friend, Josiah Hill. And he knew that this was *his* fault. When the building was finished, he bought the top floor with the money he had made selling the land, and he moved in. He sought a way to free his old friend and the others, but until then Barnes created a ritual space in his new home, one that he could use to bind and suppress the ghosts haunting the warded site.

Though he has lived an extraordinarily long, magically extended life, he has only held the deranged spirits at bay. They are still trapped in the cage he unwittingly created. Until tonight.

## Sullivan's New Friend

Almost a year ago, one of the characters' neighbors, a young man named Keenan, met Sullivan, now living under the assumed identity "Brian Sullivan." The old man was trying to wrestle groceries into the elevator, and Keenan helped him out. Over time, the pair formed a friendship. Keenan visited Brian, and they played chess and talked. Sullivan was starved for companionship after focusing for so long on the magical problems before him. Keenan's simple normalcy was a welcome respite from a search that had proved fruitless for almost a century. Sullivan also felt that his time was coming to an end. Though he was a wizard, he did not have the power to extend his life indefinitely. He was becoming infirm, physically and mentally.

As he weakened, so too did his protections. The firelight that kept the coyotes away flickered, and a malevolent, maddened ghost took notice. Josiah Hill, once Sullivan Barnes' friend, now viewed him as a captor. The burning agony of his death went on and on, turning fondness into seething hatred. And Hill saw a hole. Keenan, trusted by Sullivan, was the key. Subtly, Hill began to toy with the young man, compelling him, cajoling and tempting him. Every ghost has an anchor, a thing that symbolizes their connection to this world. Hill's is an antique pocket watch that belonged to him in life, a family heirloom that had been passed down from father to son in the Hill family until the family line ended. The watch was passed on to Sullivan, who kept it in memory of his dead companion. Sullivan's end began with a small betrayal: Keenan started to covet the watch. He didn't know why. It was beautiful, yes, but there was more to it than that. He *needed* that watch. The old man would never notice it was gone. Keenan gave in to Hill and stole the pocket watch.

As the story begins, Josiah Hill possesses Keenan for the final time. He knocks on Sullivan's door and, clothed in the young man's form, is welcomed. He takes out the gun that he compelled Keenan to buy, and he shoots his old friend twice.

# Characters

## Janice Poole, the Den Mother

**Quotes:** “Come on, it’ll be fun!”

“We’re nothing if we don’t have friends.”

“Her name’s Naomi, and she lives up in 6F. I’ll introduce you.”



**Background:** Janice has always been the glue that binds the community together. She makes the effort to go from door to door and invite her neighbors to various social gatherings she puts together. She works as a secretary in an architect’s office. She moved to the city from a small town—the kind, she says, where everyone knew one another like family. She misses that connection, so she does what she can to foster a microcosm here in Hill Manor Apartments, her own small town in the big city.

**Description:** Janice is an average looking woman in her mid-to-late 30s. She has shoulder-length brown hair and wears glasses. She’s been told she looks like Tina Fey, and though she denies it, she secretly loves the idea.

**Storytelling Hints:** Anyone else would be a busybody, but people feel like you legitimately care about them. Look players in the eye when you talk to them, and listen actively. Make them feel like they are the only thing you are paying attention to when they talk.

**Virtue:** Hope

**Vice:** Envy

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

**Skills:** Academics 1, Computer 2, Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Athletics 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 1, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3

**Health:** 7

**Willpower:** 5

**Morality:** 7

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 9

**Defense:** 2

**Initiative:** 5



## Brandon Oliva

**Quotes:** “Dude, there’s going to be a great show tonight. You should check it out.”

“I’ve got a work order here for a clogged toilet. Got a minute?”

“GRAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!”

**Background:** Brandon is the youngest member of the maintenance staff. He’s the most likely to have talked with the players about their musical tastes, or current movies. He spent his nights before this practicing his drums in a soundproofed room in the basement with his punk band.

**Description:** Brandon has curly black hair, currently matted and dirty with blood and dust. His tattooed arms have scrapes and scratches on them, and a piece of wood from what looks like a door sticks out of his left forearm.

**Storytelling Hints:** Brandon is being controlled by an insane spirit. He is, for all intents and purposes, feral.

**Note:** The shade possessing Brandon does not affect his statistics, except his Willpower (the possessed Willpower is noted in parentheses next to his normal trait). If you choose to start your story earlier or the characters drive the spirit out by knocking it unconscious or using one of Sullivan’s blessed objects, his statistics remain the same.

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Wrath

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 1

**Skills:** Crafts 3, Science 1, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Stealth 2, Weaponry 1, Expression (drums) 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2

**Merits:** Barfly 1, Fast Reflexes 2, Mentor 1, Resources 1

**Health:** 8

**Willpower:** 3

**Morality:** 7

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 10

**Defense:** 3

**Initiative:** 4

## Orlando Oliva

**Quotes:** “No problem. I’ll have it fixed as soon as the part comes in.”

“Have you submitted a work order?”

“If you guys want to play for some real money, come sit in on our poker game.”



**Background:** Orlando’s been a maintenance guy for years, in one way or another. He fixed cars first, then got a job repairing appliances at a complex out in Jersey before wandering down to Florida for a bit. His life is a series of temporary homes and jobs. He’s been raising Brandon alone since his wife left a few years back.

**Description:** Orlando’s a stocky guy with more salt than pepper in his hair and goatee. His skin is tanned and his arms are covered in the tiny scars and burns that come with the job.

**Storytelling Hints:** Orlando is possessed by a ravaging spirit. He is, for all intents and purposes, feral.

**Note:** The shade possessing Orlando does not affect his statistics, except his Willpower (the possessed Willpower is noted in parentheses next to his normal trait). If you choose to start your story earlier or the characters drive the spirit out by knocking it unconscious or using one of Sullivan's blessed objects, his statistics remain the same.

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Wrath

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

**Skills:** Crafts 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Firearms 1, Stealth 1, Weaponry 3, Intimidation 4, Socialize 3

**Merits:** Ambidextrous 3, Brawling Dodge 1, Language (Spanish) 1, Resources 2

**Health:** 8

**Willpower:** 3

**Morality:** 7

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 10

**Defense:** 2

**Initiative:** 4



## Ben Holt

**Quotes:** "Do like the poster says, man. Keep Calm and Carry On."

"I am so tweeting this."

"This is some fucked up shit, right here."

**Background:** Ben is a graphic design major over at the University. He moved here from a smaller town, not that he'll admit to that. He loved city life, and the coffee shops and blogs he frequented bred him into the archetypical urbanite hipster.

**Description:** Ben's a skinny white guy, with close-cropped brown hair and a hairline already in danger of retreat. He wears horn-rimmed glasses and skinny Rag and Bone jeans. He's wiry, from riding his fixed-gear bike everywhere.

**Storytelling Hints:** Ben is totally scared out of his wits. But he's trying to cover by looking "cool." He's the ultimate ironic, disaffected hipster. If he had one in his wardrobe, he'd wear a Night of the Living Dead shirt just to make people think this wasn't affecting him as badly as it is.

**Virtue:** Justice

**Vice:** Pride

**Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

**Skills:** Academics 2, Computer (Graphics, Internet) 4, Crafts (Jury-Rigging) 3, Politics 1, Science 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Weaponry 1, Expression 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1

**Merits:** Eidetic Memory 2, Language (French), Language (Spanish), Resources 3

**Willpower:** 3

**Morality:** 7

**Initiative:** 4

**Defense:** 2

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 9

**Health:** 8

## WEAPONS/ATTACKS

Type	Dmg	Range	Shots	Dice Pool
Revolver, Lt.	2	20/40/80	6	5
Aluminum Katana	2(L)	—	—	5

## Sullivan Barnes

**Quotes:** "You must understand, we had no idea."

"It wasn't my fault."

"It's time. I hope you can free us all."

**Background:** Sullivan Barnes was a magician, but he was only interested in the theoretical aspects. He had no inclination toward an adventurous lifestyle. He was born in the last century, when the city was just a small town. He was initiated into the magical arts when he was in his early twenties, and he learned quickly. With the proper focus and dedication, he could have become a great wizard. Certainly his mentor saw his potential and tried to encourage it. But Barnes was quite content to stay in his provincial town and live out his life reading books about the magic that fascinated him. Eventually, even his mentor gave up on the academic-minded student.

When Josiah Hill came to town, Barnes was finally spurred into action. He talked to the haunted young man, and found in him something that he admired. Hill seemed exotic, and his experiential knowledge had a very different flavor than what Sullivan had absorbed from his ancient tomes. It was as if he had spent his life eating oatmeal, only to be presented with filet mignon. He had to help him.



## GHOSTS? HOW DO THEY WORK?

You may notice, looking at the statistics for Sullivan and Hill that their traits and abilities are not the same as the mortals you've seen so far. These changes, as well as other ways in which ghosts differ from mortals and how mortals can deal with them, are detailed in the appendix.

So Sullivan scoured his tomes and found the necessary ward. He chose to turn it into the earth, mixing silver and soil rather than creating a more mobile—now that he had found Hill, he didn't want him to leave.

**Description:** Alive, Sullivan looked to be in his twilight years. He could have passed for a rough seventy. His long, white hair is kept in a ponytail, and he wears a pair of antique, tarnished silver glasses.

Dead, Sullivan Barnes' body looks every day of two centuries old. A hawkish nose juts out from beneath a bushy, heavy brow. Thick, white stubble peppers the intricate map of his face. His skin is almost translucent, dry and brittle like parchment. He is stooped and shrunk by the years.

As a ghost, Sullivan looks much as he did alive. He looks a little bewildered and infinitely sad.

**Storytelling Hints:** You are disoriented by age, recent death and the new pain of the ward. It's not that you're senile, it's just that remembering things that happened thirty years ago is difficult for most people, and you have a few centuries worth of memories to sift through. At this point, it's completely possible that your memories of Hill and his family are less than accurate. To your mind, Hill was a saint, corrupted and destroyed by you. The first real, practical magic spell you ever cast on someone else's behalf ended up destroying them. That guilt is what has kept you going all this time. If the players can free Hill (and coincidentally, you) from this prison, you'll do everything in your power to help them.

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Sloth

**Attributes:** Power 4, Finesse 4, Resistance 3

**Willpower:** 7

**Morality:** 4

**Initiative:** 7

**Defense:** 4

**Speed:** 18 (species factor 10)

**Size:** 5

**Corpus:** 8

**Essence:** 10

#### NUMINA AND ABILITIES

**Enhanced Ghost Speech** (dice pool 9): Sullivan is capable of speaking directly to mortals when he manifests. Spend two Essence points and roll Power + Finesse. If the roll succeeds, he may speak for the rest of the scene.

**Magnetic Disruption** (dice pool 8): Sullivan's manifestation causes electronic equipment to malfunction due to an intense magnetic distortion. No roll is required. If Sullivan manifests successfully, his presence disrupts electronics within 4 yards.

**Manifestation** (dice pool 9): Sullivan may manifest within one yard of his anchor (the pocket watch) automatically, with no roll required. Otherwise, he must roll Power + Finesse, with a base penalty of -3 dice to do so. If there is more than one mortal present, each person after the first imposes a -1 modifier to the roll.

## Josiah Hill, the Crazed Specter

**Quotes:** "This... is my land."

"WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?"

"We will... have... our... revenge!"

**Background:** Josiah Hill was a powerful man, once. His family rose to prominence through real estate deals around the nascent United States. He should have had a comfortable, lavish life. But one day, the hair on the back of his neck stood on end. He knew someone was there, watching him. Everywhere he went, they followed. The feeling of being watched never left him. Late at night, he heard whispering; it was too quiet to make out words, but loud enough to drill into his head and keep him from sleeping.

Nobody believed him. There wasn't any proof, after all, just a few things moved out of place, a hair adhered to the door and its frame split. Nothing that unequivocally proved the presence of an intruder. But he could not escape the thing, no matter what he did. He lodged with friends, but it was there. He went on holidays, and it stood in the darkness of foreign places. He traveled by boat, by wagon and by horse, and it was always there.

He could not find respite for more than a few days at a time.

**Description:** Hill's ghost is that of a shattered man. He looks like patchwork, burned and withered flesh giving way to raw, bleeding muscle. His only covering is a smoldering thing draped over him. There is a distinct smell of charred flesh. The hair on his head is alight in a crackling, ever roaming smolder. His teeth are black and glowing, and his eyes are boiling in their sockets, the vitreous humor spilling out and scalding the flesh of his cheeks. When the lightning strikes him, he glows, translucent, as the electricity crawls through his veins.

**Storytelling Hints:** Yours is not the voiceless rage of the lesser ghosts below. While you are no less broken by your time of torment, you have maintained a semblance of your old wits and intelligence. You are constantly wracked with the agony of your torment, and it takes you a minute to think about anything that isn't directly connected to killing another person, but you can think, and you can speak. This does not mean you can be reasoned with. You have no interest in the living world beyond punishing it for the wrongs it has caused you to suffer. Speak to the characters. Speak through the characters. But do not back down from killing them or your plans to destroy every life in the building, including the other ghosts.

**Virtue:** Justice

**Vice:** Wrath

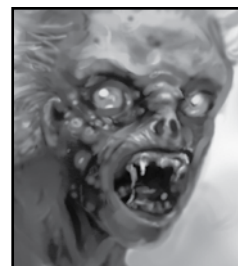
**Attributes:** Power 5, Finesse 4, Resistance 5

**Willpower:** 10

**Morality:** 3

**Initiative:** 9

**Defense:** 5



**Speed:** 19 (species factor 10)

**Size:** 5

**Corpus:** 10

**Essence:** 15

#### NUMINA AND ABILITIES

**Animal Control** (dice pool 9): Hill is able to exert his will over an animal, controlling it completely. Spend one Essence and roll Power + Finesse, subtracting the animal's Resolve from the Dice Pool. Success means Hill is able to command the animal to perform any task he desires, to the limit of the animal's physical abilities. Hill can control the animal for the duration of the scene if desired. He can control up to 4 animals simultaneously, provided he has sufficient Essence.

**Compulsion:** (dice pool 9): Hill is able to exert his will over a living person, commanding him to perform actions like a puppet. Spend one Essence and roll Power + Finesse in a contested roll versus the victim's Resolve + Composure. If the ghost fails or ties the roll (or the mortal wins), the victim is unaffected. If the ghost wins the roll, it seizes control of the victim and can command him to perform any acts the spirit desires, within the victim's capabilities. The victim can attempt to throw off Hill's control each successive turn with another contested roll. Use the victim's own dice pools to determine the outcome of his actions. Hill can compel up to 4 victims simultaneously, provided he has sufficient Essence.

**Ghost Speech** (dice pool 9): Hill is capable of speaking directly to mortals when he manifests. Spend one Essence point and roll Power + Finesse. If the roll succeeds, he may utter a single sentence.

**Manifestation** (dice pool 9): Hill may manifest within one yard of the pocket watch automatically, with no roll required. Otherwise, he must roll Power + Finesse, with a base penalty of -3 dice to do so. If there is more than one mortal present, each person after the first imposes a -1 modifier to the roll.

**Possession** (dice pool 9): Hill may attempt to possess a living human being and control his or her body for a short time. Spend one Essence point and roll Power + Finesse in a contested roll versus the victim's Resolve + Composure. If Hill wins, he gains control of the victim's body for the duration of a single scene. Use the victim's available traits (except Willpower points, which are equal to Hill's current Willpower points) and dice pools for any action he wishes to take. If the mortal wins or ties the roll, Hill fails his possession attempt. As long as Hill has Essence points remaining, he can continue to make possession attempts against a target. If a possessed body is killed or knocked unconscious, Hill is forced out and must possess another victim if he still wishes to act.

Attacks using a blessed object against one of Hill's hosts damage his Corpus instead of the physical host.

**Projection** (dice pool 9): Hill can directly project his own memories and experiences into the mind of a living character. Spend one Essence point and roll six dice. If the roll fails, nothing happens. If the roll succeeds, Hill can impart one memory; a single "scene." This is usually the event that led to the shade's death. The target experiences the memory over the course of

a single turn, regardless of how long the memory takes. While experiencing the memory, the target is in a fugue state and cannot act. In addition, the disorientation caused by the effect incurs a -1 penalty to all dice rolls in the next turn.

**Terrify** (dice pool 9): Hill has the power to strike terror in the hearts of mortals who witness his manifestation. Roll Power + Finesse in a contested roll against the Resolve + Composure of each mortal who witnesses his manifestation firsthand. If Hill loses or ties, mortals in the area are unaffected and are immune to uses of this power for the remainder of the scene. Mortals who lose flee from him and will not return to the haunted area for at least one hour.

## Generic Possessed Resident

These are not zombies. Their eyes are clouded by the presence of the creature, but they still possess keen vision. They are not dead, despite being inhabited by the dead. Their bodies are vital and alive, perhaps even more capable than they might otherwise be, because the shade possessing them cares nothing for pushing the body beyond its limits and ignores seemingly unendurable pain. From a rules perspective, the possessed creatures halve all wound penalties.

**Description:** The residents all have the same glazed, filmed-over eyes while possessed. Their clothes have quickly become ragged and stained by violence.

**Storytelling Hints:** You are without reason, but not without cunning. Think of them as sadistic, rabid animals. They can even be quite inventive in their cruelty.

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Wrath

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Stealth 1, Weaponry 2

**Merits:** Ambidextrous 3, Fleet of Foot 1

**Health:** 8

**Willpower:** 3

**Morality:** 4

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 10

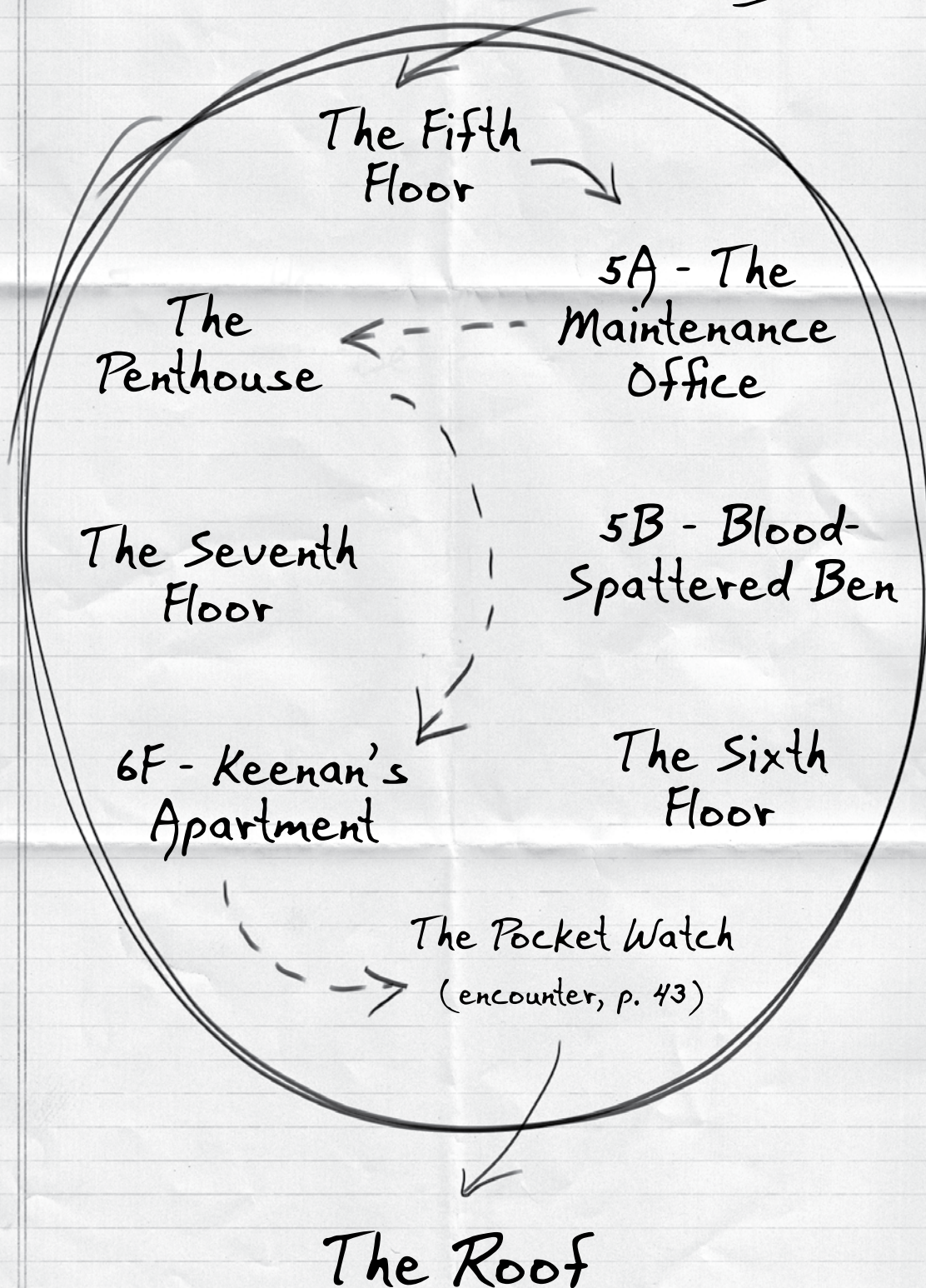
**Defense:** 2

**Initiative:** 5

## HOW MANY CAN THERE REALLY BE?

Keep in mind that the characters are trapped on only three floors of the apartment building. This is a large building, but that still limits the number of madmen and survivors to an extent. Don't feel too limited, though. Even if there are, say, 20 apartments per floor, that's still 60 apartments with 1-4 people living in each one. Assuming most people were home when the event happened, you're talking 40-240 possible residents.

Dealing In → ...And Cashing Out



# Dealing In

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL -

SOCIAL •••

## Overview

The characters get together for their biweekly poker game.

## Description

Read the following out loud:

*The table's set up, and the chips are down. You were all a little late, thanks to road construction out front. Janice was even late, and she's the one who keeps everything organized and sets up the game. But there she is, in her green dealer's visor, shuffling the deck. She smiles at each of you as you take your seats.*

*"Sorry guys," she says. "I didn't have time to get the snacks together. I figured it'd be best if I got you set up and going before I run back down to grab them."*

The poker game is set up in the common room on the sixth floor, one of two in the building (the other is on the third floor) that is used for birthday parties, neighborhood watch meetings and other events. The walls are the same dingy beige as the rest of the building, and the plaster is cracked and flaking. The once-green carpet is almost black with wear under the folding table Janice drags out from a storage closet in the corner each game. A cheap chandelier lights the room adequately. It's not a dive, but it's not exactly new, either.

As for the poker, you have a few options. You can actually get a deck of cards and some chips and go to town, if you know how to play. This is probably the easiest way to encourage your players to become immersed in their characters. For some, it's easier to do a thing than it is to imagine doing it through an abstracted set of rules. If you prefer not to do that, you can just have the characters roll for each hand (see the "A Simple Hand" action below). That said, the outcome of the poker game is irrelevant to the rest of the story, aside from giving the characters something to talk about and during.

## Storyteller Goals

This scene should let you set up the "normal" baseline before the ghosts start to take over the apartment building. You can introduce a little of Janice, and give the players a little leeway to get into their characters and get to know the other characters a bit as well. Take as long as you feel is necessary for the players to get comfortable before you move on.

On the other hand, if you're shooting for terror over horror, you can gloss over this scene with a bit of description and move directly on to "...And Cashing Out."

## Character Goals

The main goal here is to get to know the characters. Even with all of the background and information written down (or

not, if the player created a custom character for the scenario), there's no better way of getting to know the character than walking the proverbial mile in their shoes. Sitting around with a few acquaintances and playing a few hands, basically shooting the breeze, is a great way of doing that.

## Actions

### A Simple Hand

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Subterfuge + Equipment (see below)

This is an extremely abstracted set of rules for Texas Hold 'em. It doesn't even begin to model the statistics of a real set of hands. Each character antes up ten dollars in chips to buy into the hand.

A character can choose one of the following strategies to improve their chances.

**Cheating:** Roll Wits + Larceny. Each success adds +1 bonus dice to your pool for the current roll, up to +3. Each opposing player may roll Intelligence + Composure to spot the cheat. If any single opposing player rolls more successes than the cheater, it negates the cheater's bonus dice.

**Bluffing:** Manipulation + Subterfuge. Each success adds +1 bonus dice to your pool for the current roll, up to +3. Each opposing player may roll Intelligence + Empathy to see through your bluff. Any opposing player who garners more successes than the bluffer sees through the bluff, negating the bluffer's bonus dice.

**Action:** Extended and Contested. Each character rolls at each stage/flop. The character who ends the hand with the highest number of successes wins the hand.

**Hindrances:** None.

**Help:** Cheating or Bluffing (+1 to +3)

### ROLL RESULTS

**Dramatic Failure:** The character went for it when he should have folded. He loses anywhere from half his chips on up. If the character was cheating, he is caught in the act.

**Failure:** The character fails to get a decent hand, or to bluff the others into believing he has a decent hand.

**Success:** The character gets lucky on the flop, increasing his chances of winning.

**Exceptional Success:** The character gets extraordinarily lucky on the flop. Winning is almost guaranteed.

## Conclusion

This scene moves directly on to "...And Cashing Out," where the characters' evening is disrupted by gunfire.

# ...And Cashing Out

MENTAL ...

PHYSICAL ..

SOCIAL ..

## Overview

The characters hear gunshots upstairs, and then encounter the ghost's trap.

## Description

Read the following aloud:

*The game's moving along, and Janice should be back with the snacks any time now. Suddenly, from upstairs, you hear POP! POP!, two gunshots. Then, after a few seconds, POP! a third shot goes off. Almost immediately, there's a tiny, almost imperceptible shudder in the building, a minor earthquake that shakes the poker chips on the table.*

If you have access to a computer, you might find a flash soundboard or otherwise cue up a gunshot sound effect that you can play suddenly while the players are interacting in character instead, to actually startle them.

While the characters are reacting to the gunshots, Janice returns sans snacks and looking a bit disturbed. She didn't hear the gunshots, but she discovered something else.

*"Ok, look. I'm sure it's my fault or maybe the elevator's broken, but... I can't get down to my apartment to grab the snacks. Could you come show me what I'm doing wrong?"*

If anyone grabs their cell to call the cops (or Rachel tries to call backup), they have no service. Landlines are equally dead. Have anyone who goes back to their apartment roll Wits + Composure to see if they notice anything strange about the windows. You might want to make the character's roll yourself in secret, to maintain the player's ignorance if the roll fails. It may seem strange to make them roll to notice something as obvious as the world being gone, but in the face of events this strange, people tend to become a bit myopic. A dark window is hardly worth noticing.

If any player succeeds, read the following:

*The view through the window is black. There is nothing, no streetlights, no stars in the sky. It doesn't seem like they've gone out so much as vanished. There's no street below you, no sky above. The building seems to just be hanging in a void.*

Janice leads the character or characters that agree to help her to the elevators.

Janice gets in the elevator and pulls the old metal gate closed, latching it firmly.

*"I don't know what could be wrong. I mean... You'll see," she says pressing the button marked "3." The elevator judders and shakes, under your feet, going down. You*

*watch the indicator sweep past six, five, four, and come to a halt on three. But when she opens the gate, the wall on the outside says "5." She pulls the gate closed and hits "3" again. Again, the elevator goes down, and again, when the gate is opened, it says "5."*

No matter what they do, the elevator only succeeds in visiting floors 5, 6 and 7. If a character stays on the fifth floor, he sees the elevator descend out of view, only to come down from above moments later.

*Janice stops, sobbing. She leans against the wall and slides down slowly, unable to speak through her tears. You can almost feel the panic and fear rolling off of her. She starts to hyperventilate. She looks around desperately and asks, "Are we in hell?"*

The characters can calm Janice down with an extended Presence or Manipulation + Persuasion roll, if they achieve 4 total successes.

*Once calmed, Janice looks around, as if just realizing something.*

*"Where is everyone else?"*

The fifth floor is the first to become overwhelmed by the lesser ghosts who have possessed some of the tenants.

## WHERE ARE THEY?

Has the building been ripped from its foundation and relocated in some sort of otherworldly dimension? Is it a hallucination or a dream? That's up to you. Here are some of your options:

- The characters have, along with four floors of the building and the roof, been transported somehow into a vast underworld realm by some eldritch mix of Josiah Hill's undying fury and Barnes' final demise.

- The void outside is an illusion, part of the haunting itself. If someone falls or jumps out of a window, they disappear from view and fall to the pavement below. This is the easiest and most definitive escape from the characters' harrowing experience.

- Everything happens in some sort of shared unconscious space. The characters wake up at the end, freed from Hill's clutches at the poker table. The building and all the other tenants seem untouched...

Ultimately the decision lies with you. You can choose one of these options or something else entirely. That's the great thing about being the Storyteller.

This makes it the most dangerous place for the characters to be.

If they remain—and particularly if they fail to calm Janice or just choose to let her cry and make a racket—give them their first encounter with a possessed resident. They don't want to eat the character's brains or flesh, but they do want to kill them in the most sadistic way possible. If the characters run, see the foot chase rules in the Action section, below.

Once the characters have escaped the possessed resident, read the following aloud:

*As you catch your breath, you remember: this all started after you heard those gunshots coming from upstairs at the penthouse. But to get there, you'll need the elevator key. The maintenance guys keep one in their office on this floor. Apartment 5A.*

## Storyteller Goals

This is when we go down the rabbit hole, so you want to knock the characters out of their comfort zone. One of the best ways to do that is to let them argue amongst themselves. If they start to get too rational, you can use Janice to ratchet up the panic.

## Character Goals

The main goal of the characters in this scene is simple. They just need to figure out the extent of their predicament.

Ultimately, this scene is when the characters decide how they're going to react to the situation and how they're going to proceed from here. That could create tension and conflict between the characters, as Thomas might want to learn more about what's going on, while Rachel and Michael's first impulse will likely be finding anyone else who made it through and save the survivors from the dangerous madmen wandering the halls.

## Actions

### Foot Chase

**Dice Pool:** Stamina + Athletics + Equipment (each possessed resident has a dice pool of 5)

**Action:** Extended and contested (each roll represents one turn of running)

A chase is a matter of endurance, reflexes and fleetness of foot. Roll Stamina + Athletics for each participant. This is not quite the conventional extended and contested task, however. Rolls are made for each participant in each stage (in each turn), but the quarry—in this case, the players—has a different goal than the pursuer. The number of successes that must be acquired for the quarry equals the possessed resident's speed of 10. The possessed resident, however, does

not seek to get away. His goal is much more specific: to stop the characters from escaping. He seeks to acquire a number that equals or exceeds one of his quarry's current total of successes at any point in the chase. If the possessed resident gets that number, he catches up.

At your discretion, you might give the players a head start, giving a number of automatic successes at the beginning of the chase. Any successes rolled for one of them throughout the extended and contested task are added to that number from turn to turn, giving the players an advantage throughout. As a rule of thumb, a 5-yard head start is worth one automatic success. So, if Rachel were 15 yards away from the possessed resident when the chase broke out, she would have a foundation of three successes on which to add her own throughout the chase. In this way, you can handicap the possessed tenant and affect the outcome without fudging die rolls.

All of a participant's actions must be dedicated to running in a chase. If someone performs a different action in any turn, such as firing a gun, his Stamina + Athletics roll for that turn is forfeit. The character might even perform another action and travel his Speed, but he loses momentum in the race; he adds no successes to his total.

The actual distance between quarry and pursuer at any point in a chase is based on the difference of total successes between them. Each success is worth about 5 yards. So, if Rachel has six successes and her pursuer has two, she is 20 yards ahead.

If a pursuer's total successes ever equal or exceed a quarry's in any given turn, the pursuer catches up. The race comes to an end. The pursuer is allowed one free action against the quarry, such as a charge maneuver. The quarry is fully aware of the threat, is not surprised and is entitled to her Defense. Initiative is rolled thereafter for both participants if combat breaks out.

**Hindrances:** Debris littering the hall (-1)

**Help:** Athletic shoes (+1)

### ROLL RESULTS

**Dramatic Failure:** The participant trips and falls. He may suffer a Health point of bashing damage at the Storyteller's discretion. The race is over.

**Failure:** The participant gains no ground in the pursuit.

**Success:** The participant gains some ground in the chase, whether fleeing or in pursuit.

**Exceptional Success:** The participant gains a great deal of ground through a mixture of luck and capability.

## Conclusion

If one of the characters is caught by the possessed resident, use the Generic Possessed Resident's stats on p. 36 for the ensuing combat. Otherwise, they escape, and move into "The Fifth Floor," during their journey to "5A - The Maintenance Office."

# The Fifth Floor

MENTAL • • • •

PHYSICAL • • • •

SOCIAL • • • •

## Overview

This is not actually a “scene” per se, but more of a series of options. Think of it as a grab bag of events, if you will, of the various curious effects of the haunting that may be encountered when the characters are wandering the halls of the fifth floor, going from room to room. Feel free to throw any of these effects or encounters at the characters at any time, to break up the rhythm of room-to-room exploration or to interrupt the players’ flow if they get too comfortable with their plans. Events marked “unique” are intended to be one-time occurrences. Others are static or recurring. In the case of recurring scenes, you should feel free to switch things up, changing up the description to keep things fresh, rather than “oh, that again.”

In other scenes, we’ve documented what’s in a few of the apartments on each floor. There are many more apartments than we have room to describe, and that’s by design. Those other apartments are yours to run with, to tailor to your group. This personalization can help enhance the experience for players or storytellers who have played in or run this scenario before.

## Description

Read the following aloud, the first time the characters visit the fifth floor:

*Once you escape the crazy bastard long enough to take note of your surroundings, you realize that the fifth floor is a horror show. Broken lights flicker and dark stains streak the walls. Cackles and growls can be heard in the distance. Wandering is foolhardy, since the tenants down here seem to have gone violently mad.*

## The Stench of Blood

Read the following to the players:

*Your nostrils fill with the sickly-sweet smell of rotting blood, but you can’t find the source of the scent. The walls have scuffs and smudges on them, even a big scrape. However, there’s no blood. The smell is almost enough to turn your stomach. As you continue, you feel something drip onto your upper lip. Your nose is bleeding.*

## Distant Possessed

Read the following aloud: Suddenly, you hear the riotous laughter of the insane and a wet gurgle. The acoustics here are vague; it could be around the corner ahead, behind you, or on the other side of the building entirely. There’s no telling where the creature is.

This event is a good precursor to “The Reek of Decay,” below. Keeping the possessed at a distance helps to build tension. Being chased by a monster is inherently more horrifying than facing it. On a more pragmatic note, every time the characters get into a physical altercation, no matter how simple it seems, there is a chance that one of them will be killed. If you’ve turned up the terror (see p. 30, “Mood: Horror and Terror”), then a high body count may not be a problem. In that case, you may want to follow this event up with an actual combat encounter. If so, use the Generic Possessed Resident stats on p. 36.

## The Reek of Decay

The characters encounter a dead body. Read the following aloud:

*You smell something rank ahead. A bloated body lays sprawled against the wall, its blood soaking into the matted carpet. His stomach is torn across with some kind of sharp, ragged instrument. The intestines loop and coil in his lap and spill out onto the floor, blackening and viscous with congealing blood. His face is crushed into a pulp. Perhaps mercifully, you can’t recognize him.*

Given the disgusting nature of the find, it would be appropriate to make the players roll Fortitude + Composure to see if their character is nauseated by the body (if so, they might lose a Willpower point due to the nausea). It might be tedious and narratively boring to force this roll every time the characters encounter a dead body unless it is a particularly vicious case, but the first few times they encounter something so far outside their comfort zone, it can help drive things home.

The characters may also examine the body (see below) to see if they can learn anything beyond the obvious violence of his death. If any player succeeds, read the following aloud: This only started a little while ago, and everything was normal before that. The body must be fresh, yet the lividity and bloating marks it as much older, and the blood around it is black and coagulated. The wound on the stomach seems to be the one that killed him, and the intestines seem to have been pulled out through the hole intentionally.

## Hot. Hot. Hot

In various places throughout the floor, the temperature is remarkably intense.

Read the following aloud to your players:

*As you walk, you feel as if you’ve walked in front of an open furnace. Your skin feels tight, and sweat beads up on your forehead. As far as you can see, there’s no physical source for the heat. Stepping back, you immediately feel cooler, like a fever has broken.*

The phenomenon of localized temperature changes is well-documented in hauntings, but it's usually a difference of no more than a few degrees. In this case, the feeling is more dramatic. If the characters find a thermometer, the temperature jumps from a reasonable room temperature of 70°F to just over 100°F in a patch of space only a few feet wide before dropping precipitously back to the normal temperature.

## A Murder of Whispers

Choose a player at random and read the following:

*All of a sudden, you hear a whisper in your ear. You turn, and there's nothing there. The others don't seem to hear it, but the voice seems to be all around you. You can't make out the words; they sound like nonsense. The first voice is joined by another, then another, and so on until there is a cacophony of whispers filling your head with a throbbing pain. You suddenly feel the urge to lash out, to rip and tear at the walls, at the others.*

The player should make a roll to resist the compulsion (see below). This is not full possession, but rather a kind of influence—a prodding compulsion from a fairly weak ghost, but no less dangerous for that.

If the character fails to resist the compulsion, they are at the mercy of the shade for at least a turn. The ghost will use the character to attack the others at random. Unless the character suffered a dramatic failure, they may regain control as soon as the next turn. For any attacks or other actions, use the character's dice pools. Note that the ghost, while cunning, is not in its right mind, and will not necessarily choose the character with the most amount of martial skill. It may not even *want* the one who will be the best fighter, because if it kills all of the characters too quickly, it won't have the fun of seeing them demoralized and beaten as they are picked off or forced to kill one another.

## A Shade in Survivor's Clothing (Unique)

The characters will confront many maddened ghosts and save a number of survivors over the course of their search for answers. As a rule, the ghosts are crazed to the point of mindless brutality, and the survivors are confused and afraid. But this time, the characters discover what they believe to be a survivor. She is thankful, so thankful that the characters have saved her. She waits for the proper moment and tries to get time alone with one of the survivors the characters have already saved. Only then does the shade possessing her reveal its true colors. In this way, she slowly whittles away at the survivors until she is caught or they are all dead.

It is important not to show your hand when introducing the shade in survivor's clothing. You don't want to spend more time describing her or her salvation than other survivors, because it can signal the players that she "means something," and her strength lies in her ordinariness.



## Survivors

While it's important to keep the characters (and the players) off-balance, it is also important to temper their fear with hope. Otherwise you run the danger of causing a sort of fatigue to set in. A good way to give them hope is to remind them what they're fighting for. Let them save someone.

These are, essentially, extras to your players' stars. You're free to add quirks and personality traits of your

own, and these bit players might even become the players' favorite characters in the story. Sometimes it works like that. To further personalize the scenario, you might make a survivor or two yourself using the character creation rules on p. 28. Otherwise, just assume that the survivors are fodder. They should be largely useless in a fight, to emphasize the player characters' role as protagonists of this story.

## The Pocket Watch (unique)

The characters finally find the lost pocket watch (see "6F - Keenan's Apartment" on p. 47 for more information). This event assumes that the characters have already visited the Penthouse and Keenan's Apartment. It is the key to the final climactic battle of the story, so don't fire this event off until you're ready for the characters to confront Hill on the roof.

Read the following aloud:

*Under the debris, you notice the gleam of gold. When you clear it away, you find what you've been seeking— the pocket watch! The casing is adorned with the Hill family crest on the front and an engraved message on the back: "Tempus omnia sed memorias privat – S.B." Its hands still tick, but they tick backwards. Fitted into the cover's interior is a faded sepia photograph of Josiah Hill and Sullivan Barnes standing side-by-side. The search is over.*

The pocket watch's inscription translates to "time steals all but memories." If any character speaks Latin, such as Thomas, he can translate the inscription without a roll. Failing that, any character might roll Intelligence + Academics to translate it.

## Storyteller Goals

This floor is the most immediately, physically dangerous. If you're aiming to tell a horror story, pump up the descriptions to evoke personal, emotional connections between the characters' memories of tenants from this floor from before the "event," and transpose them with the torn and bloody remnants of the halls and rooms. If you're shooting for terror, keep the halls packed with adrenaline-pumped, fear-inducing action. Ravening, sadistic stalkers are constantly racing down the halls after the characters, turning the room-to-room search for survivors into a series of harrowing chases separated by unpredictable apartments; one is a bastion of safety where the characters can catch their breath while the next is a terrible encounter with a crazed ghost.

If you know something that specifically creeps out your players without actually upsetting them, use it. If they shiver after watching Japanese horror films, perhaps one of the tenants is a girl in a long, stained white nightgown with disheveled black hair that alternately limps and crawls down the hall toward them.

## Character Goals

In the various encounters the characters might experience on this floor, their primary goal is to survive from room to room, gathering survivors along the way.

## Actions

### Examining the Body

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Medicine

**Action:** Instant

**Hindrances:** Poor lighting (-1)

**Help:** Flashlight (+1)

#### ROLL RESULTS

**Dramatic Failure:** The character finds himself disturbed by examining the body in such detail. Make another Fortitude + Composure roll to resist being overcome by nausea.

**Failure:** The character notices nothing odd about the body.

**Success:** The character notices that the body is in a far more advanced state of decay than it should be, considering how long it could possibly have been dead.

**Exceptional Success:** The character notices that the body is actually slumped on top of the weapon that must have exposed its viscera. It's a pitted and gouged workman's chisel.

### Resisting the Compulsion

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Composure

**Action:** Contested (vs. the ghost's dice pool of 6 rolled by the Storyteller)

**Hindrances:** N/A

**Help:** N/A

#### ROLL RESULTS

**Dramatic Failure:** The victim fails to resist the voices utterly, ceding control to the puppeteering shade. He may try to resist again with the same contested roll in two turns.

**Failure:** The victim fails to resist the voices, ceding control to the puppeteering shade. He may try to resist again with the same contested roll next turn.

**Success:** The character resists the voices, freeing himself from the violent impulses.

**Exceptional Success:** The character shrugs off the violent impulses completely, and may not be targeted again for the rest of the scene.

## Conclusion

The first time the characters enter this floor, they should proceed to "5A - The Maintenance Office." Otherwise, they are moving from room to room, searching for survivors and, eventually, Josiah Hill's pocket watch.

# 5A – The Maintenance Office

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL ••••

SOCIAL –

## Overview

The characters find the maintenance crew, or what's left of them.

## Description

Read the following aloud:

*The door to the maintenance office hangs open, and you hear rustling within. An iPod lies on the ground just outside the door, its headphones still blaring punk music.*

If the players enter quietly or defensively, read this:

*Brandon and Orlando, the two maintenance men, are pushing and shoving at each other, fighting over a corpse slumped against the wall. They make angry growling noises and speak in broken gibberish. The corpse's clothes are torn and bloody, apparently from a wound in his throat. One eye hangs free from its socket. Brandon stops fighting for the corpse and looks up, his eyes cloudy and faded. He screeches and bounds over the desk toward you.*

If they enter with weaponry, kicking the door open, or otherwise make a lot of commotion, read this:

*The two maintenance men scatter to either side, leaving a corpse slumped against the wall. Orlando, the older one, scurries into the back room, while Brandon screeches and bounds over the desk toward you.*

## Character Goals

The characters need the keys to the penthouse. They should be looking for them (Brandon and Orlando each have a set of keys attached to their belts, but there is also a locker in the back room with copies of the keys on hooks). The players can roll Wits + Investigation to search for the keys after dealing with Brandon and Orlando.

## Actions

This scene is almost entirely combat.

Brandon's tactics are straight-forward. He's likely to dive right in and attack head-on. Orlando, on the other hand, has been possessed by a more patient spirit. He'll retreat deeper into the offices and wait in ambush for the characters. If Brandon is gravely injured or killed, roll Orlando's Willpower using his unpossessed traits. If he garners three successes, he ejects the possessing shade. Once free, Orlando may still attack the characters (particularly the one who hurt or killed his son), disoriented as he is by grief and the possession. The attacks



are noticeably different from the feral, maddened assaults the characters have experienced, and they can attempt to reason with Orlando in this case.

## Storyteller Goals

Brandon and Orlando are, essentially, gatekeepers. They hold the keys to the penthouse, which is itself the key to surviving the night. If you need to, tweak things so that the pair are a challenge, but not so powerful that they become an insurmountable obstacle.

## Conclusion

From here, the characters should be able to enter any apartment in their search for survivors. They can try to save the survivors who are in immediate danger, at which point you can send them into room 5b, to meet "Blood-Spattered Ben." Alternately, they can head directly up to "The Penthouse," and investigate the gunshots.

# 5B – Blood-Spattered Ben

MENTAL ...

PHYSICAL ..

SOCIAL ..

## Overview

The characters discover one of the possessed residents and one method of exorcising the spirit within them.

## Description

Read the following to the players:

*This apartment is wrecked. Cheap furniture lies in shambles, and blood is splattered on everything. The carpet squelches under your feet, soaked with it. One of the madmen has his back to you, scrabbling at the bedroom door, trying to get in. From the bedroom, you hear a low moan. It sounds male, and in pain.*

*"I've got a gun, you zombie fucks! Don't you come in here, or I'll blow your heads off!" The voice sounds pained. The madman stops scrabbling, and cocks his head to the side. He's noticed you.*

The madman attacks the players (see the Actions section for more). The man in the bedroom is Ben Holt, the university student who lives here. He doesn't come out of his room, despite the fight going on. If the characters engage him after the combat and things sound calm, he'll come back out to the living room. He's got a snub-nose .38 pistol and a crappy aluminum "samurai sword," and his clothes are covered in blood just like his apartment. He's hurt, but there's no sign that he was bitten or otherwise infected by the possessed tenant he killed. The "infection" doesn't spread through bites or blood, but it's unlikely that the characters will know that.

According to him, he didn't know what was going on at all until someone knocked on his front door. He answered, and the possessed tenant attacked him. They struggled around the room until Ben fell over the entertainment center and toppled his decorative samurai sword. He yanked it free of its scabbard and slashed his attacker, getting enough wiggle room to run for the bedroom. His once-neighbor grabbed him, and he slashed him again, and once more, until eventually he fell over the destroyed coffee table. Then, Ben retrieved his gun and started fortifying his bedroom.

If Ben approaches the body, read the following:

*The body of the madman shudders, and its mouth falls open in a rasping howl. A very faint green mist issues forth, and swirls around the corpse for a moment, before shooting into Ben. He staggers backward, into the kitchen, and begins coughing vehemently. When he looks up, his eyes are clouded cataracts. He screams and launches*

*himself toward you, but slips in the blood on the kitchen floor. Ben falls and cracks his head on the counter.*

*He is unconscious.*

*The green mist seeps out of his mouth and fades away.*

If Janice is still with the characters, she will try to stop anyone from killing Ben once he's unconscious. She points out that the mist was expelled when he was knocked out, and suggests tying him up to test her hypothesis. If one of the player characters seems to be arguing the same thing as Janice, she should back that character up. If you have a choice whether to have a Storyteller character present something or to let a player's character shine, always choose the player character. When Ben comes to, which only takes a few minutes, he is clear of the ghost's influence. This should signal the characters that they don't actually have to kill the possessed tenants.

## Storyteller Goals

This is an informational scene. Your goal here is to give the characters (and players) a crucial piece of data: the spirits are expelled if their host is knocked unconscious. If you're aiming for the feel of a traditional "zombie" film using the possessed tenants, that option may not be in the best interests of your game. In that case, just use poor Ben as another combat encounter. Otherwise, you can actually use this scene to inject a bit of humor into a story that remains pretty bleak otherwise.

## Character Goals

The optimal outcome is for Ben to get knocked out, but survive the encounter. Depending on the situation, and the players' actions, this may not happen. The characters have a chance to learn how to save more people here, but if they fail (or they take too long to make it to this room), you can always teach them the same lesson using a Storyteller character getting knocked out.

## Actions

The possessed resident should use the stats for the Generic Possessed Resident (see p. 36). He has already suffered three points of lethal damage due to his fight with Ben when he attacks the characters. The maddened ghost is looking to do massive amounts of damage. He's not thinking strategy. He flails and kicks and punches with little regard to who he's hitting. He just wants to hit them.

# The Sixth Floor

MENTAL • • • •

PHYSICAL • • • •

SOCIAL • • • •

## Overview

This is the floor most of the characters (except for Janice) actually live on, and it is the closest thing they have to a safe zone, at least until the possessed things from downstairs come up or the few tenants left on this floor find their way out of their apartments. Since most of the tenants on this floor belong to the players, their abodes are left undescribed, to give them a chance to make their own mark on the characters.

## Description

### The Maid (Unique)

Read the following aloud to the players:

*At the end of the hall, you see someone working. A maid in an extremely old-fashioned uniform is dusting the frames of paintings hung from the wall. She seems to be ignoring you entirely.*

At first glance, the maid appears to be a solid, living person, but upon closer inspection, she is slightly translucent. This is the specter of the maid who set the fire that destroyed Hill Manor. The portraits on the wall are also manifestations. They depict various members of the family over time. The largest portrait is of Josiah Hill and Sullivan Barnes. Hill sits in a high-backed, old-fashioned chair, while Sullivan stands behind him, looking both mysterious and somehow protective.

*One of the portraits, the largest, depicts a pair of men: one seated, the other standing with his hands upon the chair's back. Both men look familiar, one more than the other. Upon closer inspection, the maid's skin seems to darken and wither into burned flesh. As you watch, her uniform smolders and starts to smoke. The portraits also start to burn with unseen flame, the canvas stretching taut as it is consumed by the spectral heat and turned to ash. The maid turns and looks, not at you, but through you. She seems to be pleading, begging for release.*

If Thomas is with the characters, he recognizes the faces in the main portrait as those of Josiah Hill and Sullivan Barnes; otherwise, the character present with the highest Investigation rating recognizes them.

### Sighting the Watch

At the end of the hall, the characters see the possessed resident who took the watch from Keenan's room—and he has the watch! While this encounter only makes sense to the characters if they know they need the watch, it can add to the strangeness if they see it *before* they visit the Penthouse. It can also help to nudge the characters if they seem a little lost.

Read the following:

*Something moves in your eye line. At the end of the hall, someone steps into view. Their tattered clothes and the strange way they move marks them as one of the madmen from downstairs. Dangling from his hand is a pocket watch. He sees you, and takes off back around the corner. By the time you reach the end of the hall, he's nowhere to be seen.*

## Survivors

This floor has a number of survivors as well, from quiet neighbors to known acquaintances of the characters. The survivors here are less aware of what's going on. Some of them may not even be aware of what's going on, if they were napping or playing music too loudly when the event occurred.

## Other Events

Some events from previous floors may also occur on the seventh floor: "Hot, Hot, Hot," "The Stench of Blood," "Distant Possessed," and "The Pocket Watch" are the most appropriate, but you may choose to have other scenes from the fifth floor begin to occur here as time passes and the chaos of the lower floor starts to creep upward.

When creating your own events, keep in mind that the events on this floor are somewhat low-key. The fifth floor acts as a magnet for the antics of the crazed shades intent on an orgy of destruction, while the seventh floor attracts the more coherent ghosts to batter at the edges of Sullivan's penthouse protections. That status quo won't remain for long, but until it changes, the characters are safest on the sixth floor or in the penthouse.

## Storyteller Goals

This floor is, at least at first, mostly normal. As time goes on, the possessed creatures will find their way up here, and you can start to merge the hallway scenes from "The Fifth Floor" into this one. The characters live on this floor, so if you're looking to ramp up the horror or terror, invade their apartments. The sense of violation is terrifying enough, but if it looks like the invader changed things subtly, or took things that were private, you can create a hollow horror in their guts.

## Character Goals

This floor is—more than the others—the characters' *home*. Defending it or trying to solve this before it *needs* defending is a priority. It's also a good floor to use as a temporary command post and refugee camp for the survivors, at least until the characters discover the safe haven of the Penthouse or the possessed residents from downstairs come up.

# 6F – Keenan's Apartment

MENTAL ...

PHYSICAL –

SOCIAL –

## Overview

Keenan is not here, but there are some signs of his fate and why he shot Brian Sullivan upstairs.

## Description

Read this section aloud:

*The door to Keenan's room hangs loose from its frame. It looks like a horror movie in here. The walls, furniture and ceiling are covered by the mad ravings of a broken mind. The spidery text appears to have been written by a madman, but there is a common thread here. Nothing here seems to fit the tidy, friendly man you know.*

If the characters have been to the penthouse and are here to find the watch, read the following:

*The watch must be here, somewhere. It wasn't on Keenan's body upstairs. But the place already looks ransacked.*

After searching (you might want to have the players roll Wits + Investigation to maintain tension), the characters find nothing. Read this section aloud:

*As you search it becomes more and more obvious: the watch is not here. Whoever ransacked the apartment must have taken it. Which means it could be hidden*

*anywhere on the fifth, sixth or seventh floors. This isn't going to be easy.*

## Storyteller Goals

This room is the private space of a person subsumed by a stronger personality. It is a physical symbol of Hill's possession of Keenan. Try to pick out pieces of the room that show Keenan's personality contrasted with the maddened specter inhabiting his body.

## Character Goals

The characters primary goal in this room is to find the pocket watch that belongs to Josiah Hill, which they learn of from "The Penthouse." If they haven't been to the penthouse yet, visiting this room won't give them much beyond the knowledge that their neighbor was very, very broken.

## Actions

### Finding Patterns

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult

Thomas has devoured books on just about any subject imaginable. Of the characters included with this scenario, he's



### WHERE IS THE POCKET WATCH?

You may place "The Pocket Watch" event wherever you choose. By default, we suggest using the fifth floor (see "The Fifth Floor" for information on p. 41), since it is where the madmen wander most. In the long run, though, its actual location is entirely up to you. It could be on any floor except the penthouse, in any of the rooms. This, even more than the search for survivors, is the driving force behind the characters' room-by-room search of the building. You can hide the pocket watch in whichever room you like. That way you can choose to reveal the watch whenever your group is ready to move on to the climax of the story, rather than leaving it to the luck of the draw.

the most likely to be able make any sense out of the jumble of ravings on the walls.

If a character succeeds, read the following:

*You do your best to follow the thread, but there is so much chaos. You can only get the gist of it.*

*"We are trapped. We will be free. Barnes will pay with his life. THEY WILL PAY FOR THEIR LIVES."*

If the character achieves an exceptional success, read the following:

*It's not easy, but you untangle the thread.*

*"The wizard's trap closed on me with fire. I knew that he shouldn't have been trusted, but I was so desperate for peace from that thing which stalked me.*

*He bewitched me, he played me for a fool, and I gave him everything he needed to make his magic. I thought it was for my benefit, but with magic, you always pay a price.*

*"He was patient. He waited for the toll to be worth his efforts, until my family had grown fat and complacent in his trap. Then he struck and we were burned and torn from our flesh. Our souls were trapped in the raging storm of his will.*

*We may be trapped, but we will be free. The wizard Barnes will pay with his life. ALL WHO LIVE ON MY LAND WILL PAY WITH THEIR LIVES."*

**Action:** Instant

**Hindrances:** N/A

**Help:** N/A

#### ROLL RESULTS

**Dramatic Failure:** The character discerns connections and patterns where there are none. What he "learns" is misleading at best, maddening at worst.

**Failure:** The character simply can't decipher the scrawls.

**Success:** The character makes some sense of the crazed writing on the wall (see above).

**Exceptional Success:** The character understands a great deal of the spirit's purpose through his writing.

## Conclusion

Since the characters do not find the watch, they must search the parts of the building they can reach: the fifth, sixth and seventh floors. We leave the traditional scene-to-scene structure here, and enter the sandbox. Decide what floor they visit first, and go to that scene.

# The Seventh Floor

MENTAL • • • • •

PHYSICAL • • • • •

SOCIAL • • • • •

## Overview

As the characters get closer to the penthouse, they start to encounter stronger manifestations. Unlike most of the floors below, the ghosts encountered here are bare of flesh, in all their ectoplasmic glory. On this floor, the characters also begin to feel glimmers of the deprivation the shades have gone through; hunger wracks the bodies of those who spend too long exploring.

As with the other floors, this scene has a series of events you can choose from to make the characters' time in the halls of the seventh floor a little more interesting.

## Description

Read the following aloud:

*It's quiet here—unnaturally so. Everything seems muffled, even your own footsteps sound somehow far away. The walls and carpeting are untouched. The madmen downstairs have left this area completely alone. And yet, you still feel like you're being watched.*

## Blood Flows Up

Read the following aloud:

*A body lies sprawled in the hallway, a knife still embedded in his chest. There is no blood on the floor, though the chest is abraded and slashed. The blood dripping from the body is dripping upward. A large pool of blood is spreading, staining the ceiling above the body.*

## The Immolation of Ichabod Hill

The characters run across the burning form of Ichabod Hill.

Read the following aloud:

*The silence is broken by a horrifying, gurgling scream. Ahead, a man engulfed in flame runs toward you! You suddenly feel as if your exposed skin has a sunburn, and*

*the heat leaves you feeling dehydrated. There's no time to get out of his way!*

*The burning man runs right through you, leaving you untouched. He bursts into a cloud of ash and greasy smoke. The hallway is still again.*

## Other Events

Some events from previous floors may also occur on the seventh floor: "Hot, Hot, Hot," "The Stench of Blood," and "Sighting the Watch" are the most appropriate, but you may choose to have "The Maid" from the sixth floor appear on the seventh instead.

When creating your own events, keep in mind that the events on this floor are more eldritch than physical. They can be deadly, but they're generally deadly in a more blatantly supernatural way than the relatively easy-to-understand confrontations on the fifth floor. Showcase the strangeness of ghosts with environmental violence. In one room, a character may find themselves drowning in the bathroom haunted by a suicide. In another, the ghost of a man murdered by his wife's lover might try to compel the characters into paranoia and jealousy, sparking violence between allies.

## Storyteller Goals

If you're looking to play up the horror, play with the weirdness of the situation. Focus in on the atmospheric scares, like blood that drips upward. If you're aiming for terror, startle the players with sudden noises, create more dangerous shades that attack the characters directly or cause property damage through poltergeist activity. Any way you play it, these things are ghosts. There's hardly a more blatant reminder of the characters' mortality than this.

## Character Goals

There are survivors here, and it's possible the pocket watch was hidden on this level.

## RAVENOUS HUNGER

A character who spends any time on the seventh floor will fall prey to a ravenous hunger. He can explore for a number of minutes equal to his Stamina + Resolve. After that point, he begins to suffer the effects of starvation (see "States of Being" for more information). He suffers a point of bashing damage, plus another point of bashing damage for every five minutes he remains on the seventh floor.

It is possible to die of starvation in a matter of hours, if the character does not escape.

# The Penthouse

MENTAL •••

PHYSICAL -

SOCIAL -

## Overview

Brian Sullivan's penthouse is, essentially, the eye of the storm. The only spirit inhabiting these rooms at the moment is Sullivan himself. His mystical protections are still active up here, but they are fading with time and will be gone soon.

The penthouse itself does not take up the entire floor. It is easily the largest single space in the building, except perhaps the lobby. But access to the penthouse floor via stairwell or elevator does not immediately place the characters inside Sullivan's home. The penthouse is lined on one side by a perimeter hallway, and two-thirds of the top floor (behind the penthouse) is used by maintenance as storage. Sullivan Barnes, the magician of Hill Manor, uses nearly one-third of the top floor.

Once inside, the characters find Keenan's body, and meet Brian Sullivan, aka Sullivan Barnes, the magician who

created the ward that unintentionally trapped the ghosts in this building.

## Description

When the characters first arrive on the eighth floor, read the following aloud:

*You step out onto the eighth floor. Your footsteps echo off white tile floors polished to a reflective sheen. A pair of dark green double doors that lead into the penthouse apartment are directly ahead. To the right of the doors is a hallway that leads around the apartment. Up here, the void is replaced by a violent storm. Bloody rain and bone hail clatter against the windows lining the hallway. Lightning strikes on the roof create a near-constant strobing light show and a crackling, arrhythmic drumbeat.*

*The penthouse suite is very different from the rest of the building. Where the floors throughout the rest have tightly-woven carpeting, the floors here are of a deeply lustrous red wood. The foyer looks as if it once looked classically elegant, but years of neglect have covered everything but the floor in a thick layer of dust. The floor seems to be immaculate except for the body and the blood.*

*Keenan's corpse is slumped against the wall to your right, just at the entryway into the main room. Blood splatters on the wall and the gun on the floor near his hand tell the story. Your neighbor took his own life.*

*A trail of blood leads into the next room.*

If the characters search Keenan's corpse, they find nothing but the keys to his apartment on the sixth floor.

When the characters follow the trail of blood, read the following aloud:

*The trail of blood leads to another body crumpled on the marble floor. The body lies on its side, and looks impossibly old. Hair so thin it's almost spider silk obscures the face. The hands are covered in an elaborate trace work of wrinkles. The floor in here is a vast series of concentric circles and lines, with strange symbols running parallel to many of the patterns. Lightning continues to arc outside, followed by the constant rumble of heavy thunder. A languid swirl of greenish-white light begins to rise from the corpse, and it incorporates into a translucent old man with bullet wounds in his chest.*

*He stares at his body for a moment, as if lost. Then he looks at you. "You must help me," he says.*

Sullivan will do his best to answer the player's questions. The answers to a few are included below, but your players will come up with questions we haven't answered here:



Who are you?

*My name is—was—Sullivan Barnes. (You can have the characters roll Intelligence + Composure to recognize the name. A single success is sufficient.) I was trying to keep this from happening. I seem to have failed. But I can tell you what needs to be done.*

What's happening here?

*I'm sorry, but I'm just not sure of the specifics. As far as I can tell, my death released all the spirits I'd been trying to help from the wards I put up to protect you from them. I can feel them battering at the protections I've placed on these rooms, but you're safe here for the time being.*

"Protections"? What are you?

*I am a man. I was a man, at any rate. A seeker of knowledge. If you are more comfortable calling me a wizard, then do so. I am more than that, but that's the answer you're looking for, isn't it?*

You said you can tell us what needs to be done. What is it?

*The spirit responsible for this was once a man I knew well. He came to be trapped here after death, and he's gone mad. Hill must be stopped. There's only one sure way. There is an antique pocket watch that boy out there stole from me. He gestures to the foyer, where Keenan's body is. It must be found. The watch once belonged to Hill. It was his most precious possession, and it is that which ties him to this world now. Get the watch.*

How does it tie him to this world?

*Ghosts need to be anchored to the physical world. They are kept here by unfinished business, by an inability to move on... But there is always something that represents that connection, a physical object that symbolizes their attachment to this world. If you can find that, and destroy it, the spirit is unmoored and fades into the underworld.*

What do we do once we have the watch?

*It has to be destroyed utterly. The easiest way to do it would be to take it up to the roof and attach it to the lightning rod. Let the heavens destroy that which anchors him to this realm and free you, and all of us.*

What about the people downstairs? They've gone crazy.

*They are possessed by angry shades. If you destroy the watch, those ghosts will be ripped from them and returned to the other side of the shroud. In that chest over there, there are a few relics blessed by holy hands that will allow you to harm the ghosts, rather than their hosts. The innocents can be saved.*

## Storyteller Goals

In this scene, you have three main pieces of information that must be imparted. Everything else is fluff in the sense that it will make the characters (and players) more

## BLESSED RELICS

In the case, there are as many blessed relics (each with a rating of 2 dots) as you require for your troupe. You can describe these in any way you desire. One might be a withered, shrunken hand or paw from some beast. Another might be a set of Buddhist prayer beads. Another could be a rosary, while one is a fetish made of feathers and a raven's skull. The relics don't have to belong to any specific belief system. They just have to have been imbued with the blessing of someone who had a powerful faith in that belief system.

As long as a character is in possession of one of these relics, they may damage manifested ghosts or those that in possession of a physical host. To use a blessed item, make a normal attack roll as you would with a mundane weapon, but instead of adding a damage rating as bonus dice, add the item's blessing rating (2) to your dice pool. If the attack hits, each success inflicts a point of Corpus damage. If the ghost is in possession of a physical host, the blessed object damages the ghost's Corpus instead of the host's Health. (For more information, see "Blessed Items," p. 56.)

comfortable. The main pieces of information they need to save themselves and continue the story are that this will all end if the pocket watch is properly destroyed, where to find the pocket watch and that the blessed items in this room will give the characters a better chance to survive. This is not to say that Sullivan's story is not useful or interesting, particularly if you plan to continue beyond the end of this scenario, but it won't immediately contribute to the characters' survival.

## Character Goals

This is the one time the characters will get to talk to anyone with anything resembling an understanding of what's going on. On the other hand, Sullivan Barnes is an unreliable narrator at this point. His death came at the end of an extraordinarily long life, and his ghost is still trying to get its bearings. Still, humans are wired to try and find out the *why*, and though many things are left unexplained in the real world, in fiction we have the luxury of control.

## Conclusion

From here, the character's goal is to retrieve Hill's pocket watch. Their first stop on that journey is to visit "6F - Keenan's Apartment."

# The Roof

Mental • • •

Physical • • • •

Social • •

## Overview

The characters need to brave a supernaturally powerful lightning storm to destroy the pocket watch that acts as the anchor of Josiah Hill. On top of the pounding rain and erratic, nearly constant lightning, the characters must also face down Josiah Hill himself, at the height of his mad power.

## Description

Read the following aloud:

*A bloody rain whips across the roof in torrential waves. There are no clouds above, only the same black void you saw through the windows downstairs. Lightning strikes the rod almost constantly, accompanied by thunderclaps that rattle your very bones. Wind plucks at your clothes like an impatient lover. The bloody rain soaks your clothes red as a hail of bone shards clatters on the rooftop.*

*In front of you, a.... thing... stands in the scarlet rain, its arms outstretched to the heavens. It might have been a man, once, but now it is a distorted, ragged thing, a patchwork of flesh and bare, bleeding muscle under a smoldering garment. His hair crackles and smokes in the rain, and the smell of burning hair and flesh fills your nostrils. He lowers his arms and turns to you. His face is a nightmare. The eyes boil in their sockets, dripping and running like iridescent tears down his ravaged cheeks. He grins, slowly, his teeth glowing like coal.*

## Combat

Hill is deadly serious here. He will attempt to compel the characters to attack one another before trying to possess one of them (the one with the pocket watch will be his primary target) to do the job himself. Hill will also use his projection numen to throw the characters off-guard, making them experience bits and pieces of his life—particularly the part where he was burned alive.

## Storyteller Goals

This is the climax of the story, the iconic rooftop battle that seals the fate of the characters, one way or the other. Your job here is to make it awesome. Use evocative imagery to describe the scene. The characters are fighting for their lives against a burning ghost in a rainstorm of blood and bone and lightning on a rooftop. With a little planning on your part, you can give each character a moment to

shine in the fight, where they get to do something great. Nicky and Rachel might be the best choices to try and keep Hill's attention while Thomas tethers the watch. If any of them are hurt, Michael may heroically brave Hill's wrath to perform triage... And if Thomas fails to tether the watch, he may step up and do it himself, no matter the consequences.

## Character Goals

The characters must banish the spirit of Josiah Hill. His power is what pulled the building into this pocket of strangeness, and it has to be broken before the building returns to any semblance of normalcy. The easiest way for the characters to banish him is to destroy the pocket watch he left Sullivan Barnes by tethering it to the lightning rod between cracks of lightning. This is a risky undertaking, made doubly so by the presence of Josiah Hill himself.

## Actions

### Tethering the Watch

**Dice Pool:** Dexterity + Crafts

If the characters succeed in tethering the watch to the lightning rod, read the following aloud:

*You throw yourself away from the lightning rod as soon as you get the watch tied on. And just in time, too! Lightning courses through the iron, and an ear-shattering clap of thunder knocks you all on your asses.*

*Everything slows to a crawl. You see, quite clearly, the lightning spidering along the chain of the pocket watch, the metal bubbling and melting. The face explodes in tiny shards of glass. Gears rain from the watch, themselves bending and melting from the superheated force of the electricity tearing through them.*

*Josiah Hill's fire flares. The smoldering ruins of his body darken, and start to disincorporate. His scream brings back the stars.*

*You are home.*

**Action:** Instant

**Hindrances:** Regular lightning strikes (-1), tearing wind (-1)

**Help:** N/A

**ROLL RESULTS**

**Dramatic Failure:** The character times her attempt badly, and is holding the rod when lightning strikes it. She is knocked back five to ten feet and suffers five points of Bashing Damage from the electrocution.

**Failure:** The character fails to tether the watch to the rod. She hesitates out of fear of the lightning strikes or simply misses her chance.

**Success:** The character tethers the watch successfully.

**Exceptional Success:** The character tethers the watch successfully. There is no additional reward beyond the satisfaction of a job well done.

## Conclusion

If the characters succeed in destroying the watch or otherwise getting rid of Hill, the apartment building returns to normal, and the shades fade back across the shroud. The dead remain, and the destruction that was wrought is still there. And the characters, well, they have a lot of explaining to do. One thing that Sullivan didn't mention to the characters is that the pocket watch was also *his* anchor. By destroying the watch, the characters consign him and Hill to the same oblivion.

## Aftermath

The characters in this story have been through an incredibly traumatic event, very few people will believe their experiences. In a way, they are one another's only outlet. They're a built-in support group. They might work to investigate haunted places, trying to keep something similar from happening to others. Or they might have developed a taste for it. Danger can be addictive.

It's always possible that with a little experience under their belts, your players will want to spread their creative wings and abandon the pre-generated characters in favor of making up their own personas to tell stories through. If that's the case, see "Creating Your Own Character," p. 28 for more information.

And above all, have fun.



# Appendix: Rules for Ghosts

Ghosts are the spirits of mortals that linger in the physical world. Some are mere echoes of the dead, the residue of a soul repeating a simple pattern of actions over and over again like a looping videotape. Others are true spirits that have become “lost” after death. Unable to continue on into the spirit realms, they haunt their old homes or workplaces, growing ever more lonely and frustrated with each passing decade. Still others cling to the physical realm through sheer force of will, unable to leave behind unfinished business or an unsolved crime.

This section provides basic rules for including these different kinds of ghosts in your stories, detailing some of their natures, goals, abilities and powers. Likewise, a few of the methods that mortals can use to combat these spirits or lay them to rest are also covered.

## Ghost Traits

Ghosts have attributes similar to living characters, but they are abbreviated to the three general categories of Power, Finesse and Resistance. Power represents a ghost’s ability to affect its environment, from throwing objects to opening and slamming doors. Finesse represents a ghost’s capability to interact with or manipulate elements of its environment, from noticing the intrusions of trespassers into its “home” to terrifying someone with horrifying illusions. Resistance represents a ghost’s ability to withstand forces that could banish or destroy it, from prayers to exorcisms to physical attacks with blessed objects. These Attributes can potentially range from 1 to 10, although only very old and powerful ghosts have traits higher than 5.

Ghosts do not have Skills or Merits unless they possess a living body. Nor do they have a Size trait in the conventional sense. A ghost is a being of ephemera, a sort of spiritual matter. As such, it has a “body” of sorts, but one that is insubstantial to material beings and things. This ephemeral body’s relative “health” is represented by a Corpus score. The only weapons with which a mortal can affect a ghost’s Corpus are blessed or enchanted. In most cases, a mortal’s primary method of defeating a ghost is not a direct attack on the shade itself, but rather the destruction of the physical anchors that tie it to this world.

Ghosts also possess a Willpower score and Willpower points may be used for them just as they are for mortals. Ghosts regain Willpower by acting in accordance with their

Virtues and Vices, just as living characters do. Additionally, they automatically regain one point of spent Willpower at the start of each day.

Finally, ghosts have Essence points that are spent to activate their Numina. Most ghosts can have up to 10 Essence points (though truly old ghosts can have even more).

## The Nature of Ghosts

A ghost is an intangible spirit that exists in the physical world. A ghost with Finesse 1 or 2 is only aware of the area around its anchor (see below), while those with Finesse 3 or more can perceive the rest of their surroundings much as a mortal does.

Ghosts cannot be seen or felt by mortals unless a spirit makes a special effort to manifest (see below). Even when manifested, a ghost is an ethereal, insubstantial presence. Ghosts with a Power of 1 to 3 often appear as little more than an eerie, glowing mist or ball of light. Ghosts with a Power of 4 or 5 might seem as real and substantial as a living mortal—until someone tries to touch them. Ghosts pass effortlessly through solid objects, even when manifested. By the same token, they can’t physically touch or manipulate physical objects unless they possess a specific power to do so. They are immune to all types of mundane damage, and can see and hear clearly regardless of environmental conditions, whether in total darkness, fog or a raging storm.

## Anchors

Ghosts are bound to the physical world by something that anchors them there, a physical object, place or even person that keeps them from moving on to whatever afterlife awaits. Every ghost has at least one anchor, but some (particularly the more powerful) may have a number of them. If a ghost’s anchors are altered (subjected to sanctification or exorcism—see “Dealing with Ghosts”) or destroyed, the ghost can no longer remain in the physical world. It passes on into the underworld and cannot return. For example, when Josiah Hill, from “A Nightmare at Hill Manor” died, his spirit remained trapped by the ward that was created to protect him, but it also had ties to an antique pocket watch that belonged to Josiah Hill that ended in the possession of Sullivan Barnes after Hill’s death. With Barnes’ passing, the ward was shattered, “resolving” that anchor. However, his ties to the pocket watch kept him fettered to the physical

world. Only through the destruction of the watch (or other means of resolving the anchor) could he truly be consigned to the underworld.

## Manifestations

When a ghost wishes to interact with mortals or the physical world, it must manifest, focusing its energies into a form just substantial enough to allow it a discernible presence. A ghostly manifestation doesn't necessarily have to be visible. A sentient ghost can choose to manifest invisibly if it wishes, but its presence still leaves traces that mortals can detect. Examples of invisible ghostly manifestations include cold spots, strange or intense odors and heightened magnetic fields. See the various effects from each floor in the included scenario for some examples.

## Dealing With Ghosts

As antagonists, ghosts are difficult beings to confront or thwart. They are immune to virtually all forms of physical damage, can travel through solid objects and if pressed can literally de-materialize beyond mortal reach.

Generally speaking, the only way for mortals to deal with ghosts is through the people, places and things that anchor them to the physical world. By addressing the ties that bind ghosts to the Earth, it's possible to lay them to rest—or send them to the judgment they richly deserve. The included scenario includes expected methods of dealing with the main ghosts therein, but a short overview of the other options is included here to help you prepare for the inevitable player who wants to do things their own way.

## Severing Anchors

The simplest (but not necessarily easiest) method of dealing with a ghost is to locate its anchors and destroy them. The trouble is, anchors are not immediately obvious. Oftentimes, a ghost itself isn't aware of what ties it to the physical realm. Discerning what object or objects anchor a spirit requires observation, research and careful investigation. Determining the identity of the ghost is the first step. Then comes investigating the circumstances of its death. If the ghost's death does not provide sufficient clues to suggest its anchor, more research is required to identify any personal effects that could possibly act as a tie.

Once an anchor is identified, all that remains is to destroy the object, which is sometimes easier said than done. The anchor must be damaged to the degree that it no longer exists in the form that the ghost knew it. The stone of a diamond ring has to be separated from the band, the band melted down, and the stone split.

If a ghost's anchor is a physical location rather than an object, the destruction process can be difficult or even impossible. If the spirit haunts a particular hotel room, how can one completely destroy a single room and leave the surrounding

building intact? Such situations require extraordinary measures such as an exorcism.

## Fulfilling Unfinished Business

If a ghost exists to fulfill some obligation or desire that it couldn't complete in life, it's possible to lay the spirit to rest by identifying what the ghost wants and resolving the situation. Doing so can involve considerable detective work, identifying the ghost and researching its past, or it might require attempts to communicate directly with the spirit to learn what it wants. Once the ghost's needs are met, its anchors disappear and it departs the physical world forever.

## Abjurations

Abjurations are prayers or rites meant to banish a ghost from the presence of the faithful, disrupting its manifestation and keeping it at bay for a short time. Abjuration calls for a contested Resolve + Composure roll versus the ghost's Power + Resistance.

Characters can acquire the specifics of an abjuration prayer or rite with a little time and research. What's most important is the knowledge and focus of the person performing the prayer. To perform an abjuration without suffering any penalties, a character must have a minimum Morality of 8 and a minimum Occult or Academics (Religion) of 3. The Morality score reflects the character's purity of thought and intent, while the Skill dots reflect a minimum degree of experience and training in the performance of the rite. For every dot of Morality below 8 or Skill below 3, the abjuration roll suffers a -1 penalty. By the same token, every dot of Morality above 8 or Skill above 3 offers a +1 modifier, reflecting the character's extraordinary focus and experience.

**Dramatic Failure:** Your character is utterly overwhelmed by the sheer force of the ghost's drive and determination. He loses one point of Willpower and can perform no further abjurations for the rest of the day.


**Failure:** Your character's faith or capability is found wanting, and the ghost is unmoved by the prayer. Your character can attempt the abjuration again if he wishes.

**Success:** Your character's faith or capability drives the ghost from his vicinity. The ghost is forced to de-manifest and cannot manifest again within the character's line of sight until the following day.

**Exceptional Success:** The ghost is completely overawed by your character's faith or capability. The ghost is forced to de-manifest and cannot manifest again anywhere until the following day.

## Exorcisms

Exorcisms are special rites of sanctification that popular myth has relegated to cases of demonic Possession, but



they in fact can be used to uproot and banish any form of spirit from the physical world. Like an abjuration, an exorcism is more about the person who performs the rite than the words spoken, and is primarily a contest of wills between mortal and spirit. A character who performs an exorcism wants a minimum Morality of 8 and a minimum Occult or Academics (Religion) of 3 to avoid incurring penalties on the exorcism roll. For every dot of Morality below 8 or Skill below 3, a -1 penalty is suffered. For every dot of Morality above 8 or Skill above 3, a +1 bonus is gained.

An exorcism is a contested and extended action, with each roll representing five minutes of incantation and prayer. Roll Resolve + Composure for the character performing the exorcism, and the ghost's Power + Resistance. On each roll, the side with the most successes (regardless of total successes achieved) causes the other to lose one point of Willpower. The exorcism rolls continue until the character voluntarily abandons the attempt or one side runs out of Willpower. If the character runs out of Willpower, he falls into a catatonic state, ravaged both physically and emotionally. If the ghost runs out of Willpower, it is unable to maintain its hold on its anchor(s) and is banished from the physical realm, never to return.

If neither side gets any successes or both sides get the same number of successes in a roll, the battle continues for another five minutes with no one losing Willpower.

If multiple people participate in an exorcism, treat the effort like teamwork (p. 5). One participant is the primary, and all secondaries may or may not contribute bonuses to the primary's roll in each stage of the rite. The primary loses all Willpower for his "side."

**Dramatic Failure:** Your character (or the ghost) suffers a terrible shock that reverberates to the core of his being. A -2 penalty is imposed on his next roll.

**Failure:** Your character (or the ghost) comes up short in the battle of wills.

**Success:** Your character (or the ghost) has energy and determination. The opponent loses one Willpower point if you get the most successes.

**Exceptional Success:** Your character (or the ghost) inflicts a crippling blow against the opposition's faith or conviction. If you get the most successes, your opponent loses two Willpower points instead of one.

## Blessed Items

Like prayers or rites, blessed or sanctified objects that are infused with faith can be used to physically disrupt a ghost, damaging or destroying it utterly. Blessed or enchanted items are among the only means by which a physical attack can harm a manifested spirit. Damage comes from the faith invested in the object rather than from the force of the swing.

A blessed or sacred object can be anything from an ancient wooden cross to a well-worn Qur'an to a set of Buddhist prayer beads. Blessed items have a ranking from 1 to 5, representing the weight of belief imbued in them. Truly blessed items in the modern world are almost always relics from older, more superstitious times. Their blessing is a mysterious power afforded by faith. It is entirely up to the Storyteller to determine if an item is blessed or not. A cross that was carried for years by a saintly missionary might come to possess an aura of faith, while a book used by a popular preacher on a nationally televised show might never acquire such resonance. It is impossible to predict where faith will flower into physical manifestation. Likewise, it's hard for mere mortals to know whether or not a holy relic is infused with faith until it's tested against the supernatural. Certain supernatural creatures can sometimes sense a divine aura, but mortals have no such capability.

# Thomas Booth

**Quote:** "Sure, I can help you study. Come over around... seven?"

**Virtue:** Charity. Thomas can't resist helping those in need.

**Vice:** Lust. Thomas has a definite weakness for the ladies.

**Background:** A bright child, Thomas grew up on the university campus where his parents taught. His mother was an English professor, while his father coached the school's baseball team. Each of his parents made (what they thought were) subtle attempts to encourage Thom's interest in their chosen passion, but he never understood why he couldn't love both. Throughout school, Thomas pursued three things: knowledge, athletics and girls, not necessarily in that order. By the time he actually enrolled at the university he was already well-known to the faculty. They kept an eye on him like family, which turned out to be a double-edged sword. They were glad to help, but just as glad to dish out advice and meddle in his affairs. ("Oh Thomas, I don't mean to pry, but do you really mean to date *her*? She's a C student at best. You can do better.")

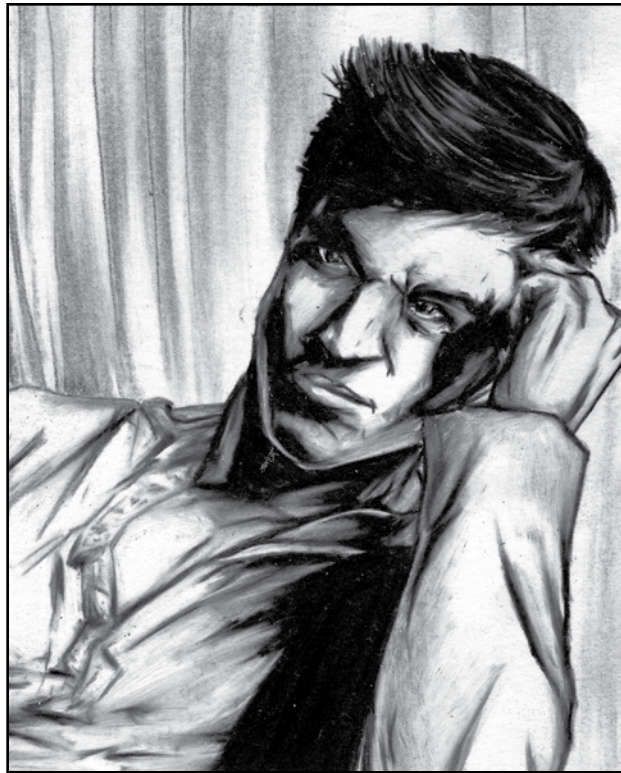
Eventually, it became something of a badge of honor for his professors to disapprove of his girlfriends. But that's where his rebellion stopped. He worked his way through the university and graduated with a degree in English before getting his masters in library science.

For Thomas, the decision was always easy. He knew he wasn't good enough to go pro, no matter how much he loved baseball. He also couldn't imagine leaving the halls of academia. It afforded him access to books and kept him on campus which means, at least for now, that it keeps him close to girls. Eventually, he'll grow up and settle down, but he sees no reason to do that just yet.

Thomas moved into Hill Manor Apartments just over a year ago. He likes the place; it's a far cry from the wood paneling and old world design of his parents' house, but the early 20th century architecture of the building feels familiar. Within a month, Thomas was recruited by Janice for the poker game. Another neighbor, Keenan is a student at the university, and Thomas knows him from the library.

**Description:** Thomas is a wiry man of average height, with brown hair. He plays to his strengths, dressing well, with a kind of geek *chic* that makes him attractive instead of nerdy. He carries himself with a grace and athleticism that surprises people who expect the awkward and clumsy stereotypical librarian.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You're smart, but not in a pedantic way. You use your observational skills and knowledge to surprise and impress people, particularly girls, not to make them feel stupid. On the other hand, you're nearly as comfortable on the field as in the library, so you're not afraid to get your hands dirty.



# the World of Darkness

Name: Thomas Booth

Virtue: Charity

Faction:

Concept: Rough and Tumble Librarian Vice: Lust

Group Name:

Intelligence	●●●●●	Strength	●●●●●	Presence	●●●●●
Wits	●●●●●	Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●●
Resolve	●●●●●	Stamina	●●●●●	Composure	●●●●●

## Skills

Academics (English lit)	●●●●●
Computer	●●●●●
Investigation	●●●●●
Occult	●●●●●
Science	●●●●●
Athletics (Running)	●●●●●
Brawl	●●●●●
Empathy	●●●●●
Expression	●●●●●
Persuasion (Flirting)	●●●●●
Socialize	●●●●●
Streetwise	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●

## Merits

Encyclopedic Knowledge	●●●●●
Fighting Style (Kung Fu)	●●●●●
Language (Latin)	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
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## Health

●●●●●●●●●●●●●●  
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## Willpower

●●●●●●●●●●●●●●  
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Morality 7  
Size 5  
Speed 11  
Defense 3  
Initiative Mod 5  
Armor \_\_\_\_\_

## Flaws

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	●●●●●
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## Notes



## Nishan "Nicky Sims" Sadoyan

**Quote:** "I do what I gotta do."

**Virtue:** Fortitude. Nicky has a somewhat stoic, "it is what it is" mentality about hardship.

**Vice:** Wrath. Nishan tries to remain hopeful, to believe in another way, but his life has continually presented him with obstacles that needed to be knocked down.

**Background:** Nishan grew up a nomad. His father kept him moving, from one score to the next, across the rapidly changing landscape of the former Soviet Union. He sat in the back of a Lada Niva playing with toys while his father brokered drug deals in Gori. As a teen, he kept a lookout for Russian authorities while his father broke into a house in Moscow. When they came, he ran.

For a while, he bounced around the region on his own, stealing food to get by, squatting in abandoned factories and half-finished "luxury" apartment buildings. Eventually he fell into a smuggling operation and ended up on a ship bound for Canada. From there, he snuck across the border into the United States, and eventually wound up here.

Nishan tried to go legit. He called in a favor with someone he'd known in Chambarak, and got himself decent papers. He got a job, working in a convenience store on the late shift. People liked "Nicky," and Nicky liked people. Everything was going well, life was boring and predictable and oh, so peaceful.

Until the robbery.

He was there with the fucking gun in his stupid, shaking hand. He was strung out, looking for a score. Nicky knew that was the end of it. A junky like that is more dangerous than a pro—hand over the cash and the pro'll get the hell out without risking extra charges. "Never trust a junky, Nisha," his father used to say, so Nicky took the gun away from him. Stupid junky. Now the cops would come, and they'd look too closely at his ID and Nishan would have to move on. Nicky pulled the would-be robber over the counter. He was still beating him when Anton, the store's owner got there and pulled him off.

The cops never came. It turned out that the store was a front, used by Anton and his associates to launder money. Anton was, as he put it, "diversifying." And he was impressed with Nicky's performance. Nishan was told that the robber had died from the beating. A shame, but Anton's friends could channel Nicky's temper to more profitable ends.

Nicky started doing odd jobs for Anton. Nothing big, at first. Acting as a black-market gofer wasn't what he wanted for his life in America, but got used to it. Eventually he graduated to delivering strange, locked coolers that he suspected held more than a few sodas and ice. Finally, Anton sent Nicky out to do collections. He tried to make it simple. Pay the money or get out of town, he offered, but they always strung him along. "I'll pay you this Friday," they'd say, but then they wouldn't have it. They'd cajole and argue and, when that didn't work, they'd yell at Nicky. Like he was the one who got them so far in debt to someone like his boss. Like he was hassling them, when he had tried to do them a favor. So he hurt them, like Anton wanted.

He started to get used to that, too.

As the pay got better, Nicky moved into Hill Manor Apartments. He pays his rent on time, and keeps anything related to work at the convenience store in a lockbox hidden in the back of the freezer. Home is supposed to be quiet, a safe haven away from the inevitable demands Anton makes on him. He wasn't there a week before Janice started coming around, inviting him to poker games and socials. She's a nice person, and her poker game is actually kind of fun, when he can make it.

**Description:** Nicky is a thickly built, hirsute man who stands a few inches under six feet tall. He has a perpetual five o'clock shadow even just after shaving. He looks older than he is—the life of a vagabond stray took its toll before he found his way to Hill Manor Apartments.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You do your best to fit in. Nicky doesn't want to be remembered as "that foreign guy." Despite your Armenian accent, you try hard to be seen as American. Part of this is an attempt to forget your past and make a new life here in the United States, but another part of it is camouflage. You know Rachel is a cop, and the last thing you want is for her to find out about your extra-curricular activities. You don't actually want to be a criminal, but you will always do what's necessary to survive, and crime is where your skills lie.

# the World of Darkness

Name: Nicky Sims

Virtue: Fortitude

Faction:

Concept: Small Time Hood

Vice: Wrath

Group Name:

Intelligence	●●○○○	Strength	●●○○○	Presence	●●○○○
Wits	●●○○○	Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●○○○
Resolve	●●○○○	Stamina	●●○○○	Composure	●●○○○

## Skills

Computer	●●○○○
Crafts	●●○○○
Investigation	
(Casing)	●●○○○
Athletics	
(Escape)	●●○○○
Brawl	●●○○○
Firearms	●●○○○
Larceny	
(Lockpicking)	●●○○○
Stealth	●●○○○
Weaponry	●●○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○
Persuasion	●●○○○
Streetwise	●●○○○
Subterfuge	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

## Merits

Language (English)	●○○○○
Resources	●○○○○
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## Health

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## Willpower

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Morality 7  
Size 5  
Speed 10  
Defense 2  
Initiative Mod 4  
Armor \_\_\_\_\_

## Flaws

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	○○○○○

## Notes

# Rachel O'Hara

**Quote:** "Put on the cuffs and I won't have to hurt you."

**Virtue:** Justice. Rachel feels fulfilled when things go right and justice is served.

**Vice:** Gluttony. When things get bad, Rachel drowns her sorrows in a bottle of whisky.

**Background:** Rachel comes from a cop family. Her father, Joe, was a good Irish Catholic boy, the favorite son. At least, he was until he married a Jewish girl named Irene. His brothers mocked him for it, but his dad just said, "at least she's not a Protestant." Irene's family threatened to disown her for marrying a gentile. So Rachel grew up here, away from the bulk of the family in Boston, just because her dad was tired of getting grief from both sides of the family.

Joe was a cop, old fashioned and hard-nosed. Rachel's granddad once told her that Joe'd been born with the nightstick in his hand. He'd been a cop too until he retired, along with her great-grandfather and his father before him. Joe figured the dynasty was done, but to Rachel, it was never a question. She joined the academy as soon as she was of age.

She worked her way up from pounding pavement on the street to her current position as a detective. When she got her detective badge, her granddad told her it was "adequate," despite the fact that he'd never made detective in his entire career.

Rachel moved into Hill Manor apartments with a guy, but they broke up. She liked the place, so she kept it. She even likes the poker game, though she has a feeling Mike's got a problem.

**Description:** Rachel has shoulder-length brown hair that she usually keeps pulled back into a ponytail, and a scattering of freckles across her strong face. Physically, she's pretty, but the tension in her—the intensity—makes her beautiful.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You're constantly trying to prove yourself. You grew up on the crossroads between two worlds, and you were never quite good enough for either. So you have to be better than both. Given the situation here, your first priority is to gather survivors and protect them while leading your people out of this.



# the World of Darkness

Name: Rachel O'Hara

Virtue: Justice

Faction:

Concept: Legacy Cop

Vice: Gluttony

Group Name:

Intelligence	●●●●●	Strength	●●●●●	Presence	●●●●●
Wits	●●●●●	Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●●
Resolve	●●●●●	Stamina	●●●●●	Composure	●●●●●

## Skills

Academics	●●●●●
Computer	●●●●●
Investigation	●●●●●
Politics	●●●●●
Athletics	●●●●●
Brawl	●●●●●
Drive	●●●●●
Firearms	●●●●●
Larceny	●●●●●
Weaponry	●●●●●
Empathy	●●●●●
Intimidation	●●●●●
Streetwise	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●

## Merits

Resources	●●●●●
Status (Police)	●●●●●
Strong Lungs	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
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## Health

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## Willpower

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Morality 7  
Size 5  
Speed 9  
Defense 2  
Initiative Mod 5  
Armor \_\_\_\_\_

## Flaws

_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●
_____	●●●●●

## Notes

### WEAPONS/ATTACKS

Type	Dmg	Range	Shots	Dice Pool
Pistol, Lt.	2	20/40/80	17+1	7



## Michael Nero

**Quote:** "Apply pressure."

**Virtue:** Faith. Michael has faith that in preserving life, he gives meaning to his own.

**Vice:** Gluttony. Michael's got a weakness for painkillers.

**Background:** Michael's a hard worker. He always has been. When he was young, Michael spent his summers helping his grandfather renovate the family's vacation house. It was his escape from the harsh city and its dangers. He was convinced that everyone in his family was going to get mugged or hit by a drunk driver or any number of other morbid nightmares he had about the city's horrors. But it was different here. Calm, soothing. He rehung walls with his grandfather, installed new windows and even helped out with the roofing. It was nice to do things with his hands, to see the immediate difference from his work.

One day, while he was on the roof, he saw his grandfather fall in the yard. He whispered to the boy that it felt like a demon was sitting on his chest. By the time the paramedics arrived, Michael's grandfather was dead. They tried for twenty minutes to resuscitate him, but there was nothing they could do.

Michael never went out to the vacation house again. The family sold it a few summers later, but Michael had already learned a lesson from it and moved on: death comes everywhere. He blamed himself for failing his grandfather. *He* should have been able to help him. He read up on heart attacks, and if he had only done *this*, or given him *that*, he could have saved him. His family thought he was being noble when he started school to be a paramedic.

To Michael, death is meaningless violence, fear and indignity. Life has meaning, and must be preserved, if only to stave off the entropy of death. He started riding the night streets with his partner, and soon he discovered that he doesn't actually have the resources to deal with the constant loss of patients.

But the pills take the edge off that.

**Description:** Michael has a gaunt look to him, like he doesn't get nearly enough sleep. His uncombed hair is wild and thick. Three days of stubble is scattered across his cheeks and chin, and the worst part is, it works for him. He's more attractive when everything's just slightly askew than he is when he cleans up. Which is basically how he likes it.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You look like you don't get enough sleep because you seriously don't get enough sleep. Between the wonky hours of driving an ambulance and the dreams, you have severe insomnia most of the time. You're tempted to blow off the ghost thing as hallucinations, whether from the drugs or the sleep deprivation, you don't know.



# the World of Darkness

Name: Michael Nero

Virtue: Faith

Faction:

Concept: Strung Out Paramedic

Vice: Gluttony

Group Name:

Intelligence	●●●●●	Strength	●●●●●	Presence	●●●●●
Wits	●●●●●	Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●●
Resolve	●●●●●	Stamina	●●●●●	Composure	●●●●●

## Skills

Academics	●●●●●
Investigation	●●●●●
Medicine	
(Emergency Care)	●●●●●
Occult	●●●●●
Science	
(Chemistry)	●●●●●
Athletics	●●●●●
Brawl	
(Dirty Tricks)	●●●●●
Drive	●●●●●
Weaponry	●●●●●
Empathy	●●●●●
Persuasion	●●●●●
Streetwise	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●

## Merits

Iron Stamina	●●●●●
Natural Immunity	●●●●●
Resources	●●●●●
Status (Paramedic)	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
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	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●

## Health

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## Willpower

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Morality 7  
Size 5  
Speed 10  
Defense 2  
Initiative Mod 5  
Armor \_\_\_\_\_

## Flaws

	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●

## Notes