THE GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL

A ROLEPLAYING GAME

CHRISTOPHER GREY

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For the world's best author, my incredible wife.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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PROLOGUE

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

—Maya Angelou

The Great American Novel conjures images of a the desperate journey across the country in *The Grapes of Wrath*, or the starlit flappers and wild parties on Long Island in *The Great Gatsby*. Or the universally lauded modern works, such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, or even more recently Franzen's *Freedom* and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*.

Many of these novels authentically expressed American life--some more than others. But even the classics didn't tell the whole story. They were often written from a privileged point of view. We cannot forget the novels that are "great American" even if they don't commonly have the label. We can't forget the likes of Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Sister Souljah's *The Coldest Winter Ever*, to name a few.

As a novelist and game designer, fusing the two together has always been a passion project of mine. I wanted an experience at the game table that drives dramatic character arcs and compels players to explore the many challenges of living in America throughout its volatile history. I wanted to explore the stories of real people rising above society to claim their own lives, or fail trying to do so. And to reveal hard truths about ourselves.

The Great American Novel, A Roleplaying Game was designed to do those things. Its framework does more than emulate the experience of a novel; it puts you right in the pages—directly into the characters' shoes as they navigate their world of conflict and relationships.

I hope you'll find the same type of emotional journey I've found at the table with this game, and that you create your own stories with the power to make a lasting imprint on your life.

—Christopher Grey, 2019

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ARC	A scale that represents if a Novel Character is rising or falling in the story
CHAPTERS	Consecutive scenes in the game
CHARACTER CONFLICTS	Conflicts introduced into the game as a result of problems between Novel Characters
CHARACTER PLAYERS	The players (not the Novelist) that play Novel Characters
CONFLICTS	Obstacles in the way of what characters want. Conflicts are confronted with Moves
CONFLICT PHASES	A countdown of events that the Novelist tracks for major Conflicts to move the story forward
FALLING	A Novel Character confronting Conflicts and declining from the experience
FALLING MOVES	Moves that can only be used when a Novel Character is Falling
FLAT	The state a Novel Character begins, when their Arc is neither Rising or Falling
FLAT MOVES	Moves that can be used no matter what the Novel Character's Arc is

LACUNAE	Ideas and topics that players do not want to explore in the game
MOVES	Actions that confront a Conflict and trigger dice rolls to adjudicate the outcome
NARRATIVE CONTROL	The ability to introduce setting elements, plot components, and characters as truth in the game
NOVEL CHARACTERS	Characters played by players that are not the Novelist
NOVELIST	The player that facilitates the game
NOVEL THEME	Ideas and topics that players want explored in the game
PLOT POINTS	Currency that Character Players use to take Narrative Control of the game
RISING	A Novel Character confronting Conflicts and growing from the experience
RISING MOVES	Moves that can only be used when a Novel Character is Rising
TRAPPINGS	Narrative boundaries that help define what a story is going to be about, including setting and genre

CREATING YOUR NOVEL

> "There is no end to what a living world will demand of you."
>
> —Octavia E. Butler

There is quite a bit of debate as to the specific criteria for a Great American Novel, but there are certain qualities that all accepted works of this prestigious category hold. Firstly, the novel **must be literary**. That does not need to exclude speculative fiction, pulp fiction, or other more popular works. Although there is a history in academia and popular culture to only define "high-brow" works by privileged voices instead of genre fiction or fiction by women and persons of color. For our purposes, we are loosening up this very narrow view of the literary novel, and expand it to include any work authentic to the American experience. In this context, the word "literary" means that the storytelling is packaged in a journalistic way, without flowery language, million dollar words, or speculation. Just the facts, as it were, that by themselves create connections with characters and commitment to the story. A novel that is more focused on the voice of the characters than on the plot.

Secondly, the work must be **uniquely American**. As much as I adore Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*, it is really an outsider's view on America. It doesn't capture a uniquely American experience in the way that *To Kill a Mockingbird* does. For a work to fit nicely in the Great American Novel category, the book must present something that could not or would not happen anywhere other than America.

This leads to the third point: the Great American Novel must be **a realistic approach to Americana**—another reason *American Gods* would not check the box. This realistic approach is important, because it is largely a reaction to sweeping romantic novels that cast the U.S. in an unrealistic or mythological light.

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

The Great American Novel is a **collaborative storytelling game**. All of the players, including the Novelist (who facilitates and arbitrates the game), determine the course of the story's characters. Together, through decisions and a bit of chance, they create a compelling narrative.

Storytelling games are a bit different than traditional roleplaying games like *Dungeons & Dragons*, although they share the same DNA. This game focuses far more on the story than it does game mechanics, and so doesn't deal with tactical or strategic play. All of the system's mechanisms are designed to tell an interesting story—not to win or lose as a character.

This particular game is built from the groundwork laid from many other games, but is heavily inspired by two frameworks. First, the *Apocalypse World* framework by D. Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker which spawned an entire movement of games collectively called **Powered by the Apocalypse**. In addition, this game draws from the *Fate Core* system designed by the good people at Evil Hat Productions, including Leonard Balsera, Brian Engard, Jeremy Keller, Ryan Macklin, Mike Olson. The story structure was inspired by Jason Morningstar's *Fiasco*. Inspiration also came from a personal favorite game of mine *Ten Candles* by Stephen Dewey—particularly the beautiful way that game builds Narrative Control into the game.

All of these games are innovations in their own right, and have inspired countless other games in their wake. For the purposes of *The Great American Novel*, specific game mechanics were brought together so players can easily create a story together.

In short, this game allows players to create their own story, and live out the stories of compelling literary characters as they confront conflicts in quintessential Americana settings.

SET-UP

There is no preparation for The Great American Novel. All of the players, including the Novelist, come to the table with only the intention of telling an memorable and authentic story. The game session, or series of game sessions, will result in a collaborative story that we'll call your Novel.

MEMORABLE

We all love raiding dungeons and investigating the Cthulhu Mythos, but *The Great American Novel* does not deliver those types of games. When a session ends, it should resonate with you in the same way a good book does. It should pull levers within yourself that invoke self-reflection, a sense of place, and an experience that leaves an imprint.

AUTHENTIC

The Great American Novel is not forced. It finds its way naturally through the course of the story and ebbs and flows with the decisions characters make. It is unnecessary to force an experience. Conflict will come all on its own, characters will behave without deliberation, and the story will evolve at its own pace.

If players at the table haven't played the game before, take a moment to discuss what everyone hopes to get out of this experience. You can't force a memorable session or authenticity (the game is supposed to do that for you), but it is good to recognize that this is the general approach to a session. Take a moment to discuss what that means for each of you.

YOU WILL NEED

- Pencils and Markers
- Index Cards
- Two six-sided dice (per person, or share)
- Tokens, Coins, or Game Chips

THE PHASES OF SET-UP

As a group, you'll work through these six steps below. Each step is explained in the sections that follow. If you are using Trappings, you'll skip the first step.

1. ESTABLISH YOUR NOVEL'S THEME

Decide what themes and experiences you want to explore during this session.

2. IDENTIFY YOUR LACUNAE

Tell each other what content should not be included in your Novel.

3. CREATE YOUR SETTING

Determine what time period and setting in which your Novel will take place.

4. DISCOVER YOUR CONFLICTS

The Novelist reveals what Setting Conflicts will be in play throughout your Novel.

5. CREATE YOUR NOVEL CHARACTERS

Create and flesh out the Novel Characters that you'll play in the Novel.

6. UNDERSTAND YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

You will tell each other what your character wants and then decide how you are connected to one another.

ESTABLISH YOUR NOVEL'S THEME

In its default setting, *The Great American Novel* has three specific criteria for every Novel to create an experience resembling some of the best American literature:

1. LITERARY

Character stories focused on their interactions and personal journeys more than plot.

2. REALISTIC

Honestly depicts the characters, events, and history; speculative and genre fiction is welcome, as long as these Themes are also depicted honestly and realistically.

3. AMERICANA

Situations and characters that are unique to the U.S., whether currently or historically, including all walks of American life, those that immigrated to America, and even those affected by Americans/U.S. that are not in the country.

Beyond these criteria, it is entirely up to the table to determine what Themes they would like to experience. Themes can be broadly-stroked ideas like "fall from grace," or specific experiences like "loss of a family member." They can also bring up a particular time period or genre "film noir" or "1960s counterculture." They could be places "Jamestown" or events "The Battle of Bunker Hill."

Whatever Themes you pick will become the backbone of your Novel.

Follow the six steps below on choosing Novel Themes to establish which you'll use in your game.

CHOOSE YOUR NOVEL'S THEMES

1. Distribute an index card to every player, including the Novelist.

2. Each player writes down one to three Themes they would like to experience in the Novel.

3. The Novelist displays all of the cards in the center of the play area.

4. Each player marks a checkmark next to any number of Themes that sound interesting to play.

5. The top two or three Themes will be selected.

6. The Novelist gives each of the decided Themes their own index card and places them on the table for the remainder of the game. Themes are there entirely as a signpost for players.

When generating Themes, each player should write down Themes that incite or intrigue them on index cards. Each player should initially keep these Themes to themselves. After everyone has written down their Themes, the table will vote on the Themes they want to explore.

If your Themes aren't chosen, open your mind to the possibilities the others present and when voting. Consider voting for others before you vote for yours.

THEME IDEAS

Following are a few Theme ideas to choose from, or roll for:

d6	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Good v. Evil	Suffering a Great Loss	Hope	Own Worst Enemy	Social Decay	Ambition at all Cost
2	Rebirth	Betrayal	Rise of Power	Fall of Humanity	Power of the People	Darkness and Light
3	Dystopia	Coming of Age	Chaos v. Order	Change v. Tradition	Conquering the World	Politics of Family
4	Horror of War	Reconciling	Fall from Grace	Beauty	Regret	Crime Doesn't Pay
5	Humanity v. Humanity	Political Unrest	Human Ingenuity	Mystery and Magic	Individual v. Society	Power of Love
6	Great Escape	Overcoming Great Odds	Humanity v. Nature	Circle of Life	Quest for Power	Downfall from Greed

IDENTIFY YOUR LACUNAE

Lacunae (singular: lacuna) is a literary term that describes gaps or omissions in a manuscript. In our case, lacunae refers to any topics that you want omitted from the story. This can be as mundane as "schmalz" or as triggering as "sexual violence."

This is your novel. Omit all content you don't want to deal with in your Novel using the steps below.

DEFINE YOUR TABLE'S LACUNAE

1. Everyone at the table writes down Themes that they want completely omitted from the game.

2. Everyone writes down Themes that can be in the game, but that don't need to be played out in parenthesis (e.g. love scenes that fade to black, gratuitous violence, etc.).

3. The Novelist compiles the Lacunae onto one index card and repeats the list out loud so that everyone is informed.

It is possible that you may think of other Lacunae during play. Don't hesitate to write them on the index card. If it happens mid-scene, the Novelist or player who introduced that content must immediately redo a story element, Move, outcome, or simply jump ahead to skip whatever triggered the Lacuna.

CREATE YOUR SETTING

Since you have already identified the Themes you do and don't want to explore, you may already be well on your way to determining your Novel's setting. Often the time period can lead naturally to what the setting is, however it can be a tough choice. It is very easy to get into "analysis paralysis" when choosing a setting; if so, the group can use the same process described for choosing Themes.

This time, each player (except the Novelist) should first write down up to three locations and time periods they would like to explore. They should then reveal their choices, allowing the table to vote on them as before. Here are some ideas:

Pre Columbian (Before 1492)   First Great Awakening (1775 - 1783)
Manifest Destiny (1812 - 1860)   Slaveocracy (1840 - 1875)
Reconstruction Era (1865 - 1877)   Progressive Era (1890s - 1920s)
Prohibition (1919 - 1933)   Dust Bowl (1930 - 1936)
Cold War (1947 - 1991)   Korean War (1950 - 1953
Energy Crisis (1973 - 1980)   Dot-Com Bubble (1995 - 2000)
Colonial (1500 - 1700)   American Revolution (1775 - 1783)
The War of 1812 (1812 - 1815)   California Gold Rush (1848 - 1855)
Gilded Age (1869 - 1896)   World War I (1914 - 1918)
Roaring 20s (1920s)   New Deal (1933 - 1938)
American Dream (1947 - 1963)   Counterculture (1960 - 1975)
Reagan Era (1980 - 2008)   Iraq War (2003 - 2011)
Plantation Era (1700 - 1860)   2nd Great Awakening (1800 - 1840)
Era of Good Feelings (1817 - 1825) American Civil War (1861 - 1865)
Jim Crow Era (1876 - 1965)   First Red Scare (1917 - 1920)
Great Depression (1929 - 1939)   World War II (1939 - 1945)
Civil Rights Era (1954 - 1968)   Vietnam War (1965 - 1973)
Gulf War (1990 - 1991)   War on Terror (2001 - 2012)

Some of your group may not be interested in using a different time period for your novel, and would rather keep it simple without having to know a lot of history. In this case, players can submit additional Lacunae to omit historical time periods.

You can also set the Novel in a recent time period that the group would be familiar with—such as the 1970s, 80s, or 90s. Setting it before the big information technology boom can very much help keep a story contained.

If the group chooses a different time period, you will inevitably come upon sensitive social and political topics. Make liberal use of the Lacunae to define your boundaries on what this particular story should explore. If you are dealing with 1840s American south, for instance, what are the limits of what is played out at the table? It is important to be careful about the experience you are trying to create. "Touring" the atrocities of slavery, for example, is different then creating an honest and authentic exploration of it.

Problematic Themes presented because of the setting should be discussed **before play**.

Now all of that said, one of the intentions of *The Great American Novel* is to confront and experience unique Americana. America isn't always pretty. This game can be a safe way to play out some of the moments in history that we are not proud of. We certainly do not want to act in a way that will trigger players or cause emotional harm, but we can act in effort to create an authentic drama that truly explores the inner workings of people at the time. Some of the best novels ever written confronted topics like racism and disenfranchised populations head on. If dealt with delicately, sensibly, and authentically, we can learn something about ourselves and our world.

EDITS

Things will come up that you did not anticipate. In those cases, use an **Edit Card**. Simply write "EDIT" on an index card and put it in the cnter of the table. If the story or content brings up any content that makes players uncomfortable, triggers them, ruins their fun, or breaks the desired tone of the game, they simply tap the card and it is struck from the fiction and added to the Lacunae list. Edits can and should be used freely throughout the game by both the Character Players and the Novelist.

DISCOVER YOUR CONFLICTS

Next, the Novelist establishes Setting Conflicts. These will be overarching Conflicts based on the chosen time period and location. Setting Conflicts persist throughout the game as a constant threat or problem.

These Conflicts are the ongoing, top-level setting issues that serve as a backdrop to your story. The characters will interact with these Conflicts, but they cannot ultimately do away with them. Character Players can therefore resolve the Setting Conflicts throughout the course of play, but the Setting Conflicts will always come back in the next Chapter.

Setting Conflicts can be things like war, prevalent sickness, societal custom, political situation, or a problem unique to a city or time. For *The Great Gatsby*, a setting conflict could be "Decadence" and *The Grapes of Wrath* one could be "The Great Depression."

These Conflicts are somewhat arbitrary and are entirely in the Novelist's hands. The Novelist can introduce as many as they see fit for the chosen setting. However, two is a good number to introduce at the beginning.

The Novelist should write each Setting Conflicts on an index card and place the cards on the table for everyone to see. For online play, the Conflicts can be written in a shared online document that everyone can reference.

As a default, the Novelist determines Setting Conflicts because it moves the players' thinking toward creating a character. However, the setting discussion may naturally point out certain Conflicts. Players can also provide thoughts on potential Setting Conflicts to help the Novelist identify them.

CREATE YOUR NOVEL CHARACTERS

The next step is to figure out each Novel Character's Archetype. Literary archetypes describe each character's general framework and their purpose in the story. Each Archetype is unique, so no group should have more than one of the same Archetype in a game.

Character Players should openly discuss and decide which Archetype they each want to play. This is a good time to formalize your character concepts in light of the Themes, Lacunae, time period, and settings that were established. The

open discussion can even touch on how the characters are connected, and ultimately the overall vision for the character based on the archetypes in play.

Complete these six steps using the following sections or the archetype sheets to create Novel Characters:

1. Choose an Archetype
2. Choose Your Stat Array
3. Choose Your Personality Traits
4. Discuss Your Character
5. Define Your Motivation
6. Determine Your Relationships and Character Conflicts

CHOOSE AN ARCHETYPE

Each Character Player selects an Archetype to play. Choosing archetypes is an open process, since your Novel shouldn't have more than one of the same archetype. Knowing the setting and themes, you can work together to fine-tune who the characters are and what they do. After each Character Player selects their Archetype, they should take a moment to read the archetype sheet without worrying too much about the game rules listed—we'll get to that part later.

CHOOSE YOUR STAT ARRAY

Your character has three stats: Instinct, Personality, and Morality. These stats add or subtract to the character's dice rolls when resolving Moves. Stats symbolize something different for each Archetype, even though they share the same stats.

INSTINCT

Your character's primal need, their natural and unfiltered response to conflict, "fight or flight."

PERSONALITY

Your character's sense of individuality, their intellect and understanding of the world.

MORALITY

Your character's connection with society and their sense of right and wrong.

Each Archetype presents three potential stat arrays to choose from, represented by a certain nickname or sub-archetype. The stat array uniquely defines your character within the Archetype. Simply choose which array best fits the vision you have for your character.

Players will notice that there is a bonus (when rising) and a deduction (when falling) for one or two stats on their archetype sheet. This modifier varies by Archetype, and some Archetypes have both modifiers on the same stat. A modified stat will add to or subtract from the stat roll if a character is rising or falling respectively.

Novel Characters begin "flat" (neither rising nor falling) with their core stat array at the start of the game. However, Character Players will find themselves adding to or subtracting from their character's stats as their character rises and falls. The modifiers represent what happens to a character as they change throughout the story.

Once a character begins to change by rising or falling, they will never again be flat. Characters in a novel *must* change. Arcs will fluctuate up and down throughout the story until you are ready to complete your character's story.

CHOOSE YOUR PERSONALITY TRAITS

Character Players will find a list of potential personality traits for their Archetype. Choose one from each category to help define how your character behaves. This is a guide to help you represent your character in the novel.

- Key Trait: Your character's basic personality when flat.
- When Rising: The core personality trait that emerges when your character is rising.
- When Falling: The core personality trait that you descend into when your character is falling.

BACKSTORY

Each Archetype has a series of questions about the Novel Character's individual story. They vary by Archetype and are hooks to help you fill out your character concept. However, these questions are just suggestions. Every Character Player is encouraged to create their own backstory and relationships.

DISCUSS YOUR CHARACTER

Character Players should now have a general understanding of their character. Take a moment to reflect upon your Archetype, the stat array, and personality.

Character Players should express their concept for the story and their character to the table. During this discussion, players should solidify their character's overall age, occupation, general background.

There is no process for this discussion beyond just figuring out your character with help from the table. At the end of the discussion, you should have a character in your mind, an idea of what they look like, what they do for a living, and their name.

DETERMINE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS AND CHARACTER CONFLICTS

The next step is to decide how Novel Characters are connected to each other, and whether or not there are any Conflicts at play.

Players will collaboratively decide how the characters know each other. The more you can establish upfront, the more of a stride your Novel will have. For all the unknowns, you'll play to find those things out. Character Players can ask each other the questions listed below to help form connections. You do not have to ask all of them, and it is not required for the other players to answer. Sometimes the answer can simply be "no."

Are any of you my...
- sibling, child, parent, or close relative?
- friend, childhood friend, or neighbor?
- distant relative or passing acquaintance?
- spouse, partner, or lover?
- student, employee, boss?
- rival, ex-spouse, ex-partner, or opposed ideologue?
- spiritual leader, spiritual student, or spiritual partner?
- business colleague, business partner, or investor?
- counselor, confidante, or representative?
- coach, mentor, or political leader?

After a question is answered, determine if there is a conflict between the Novel Characters. Only the players involved in the relationship decide if there is Character Conflict between them. Character Conflicts can be anything that gets in the way of relationships, such as trust issues and betrayal, conflicting personalities, having been wronged, etc. Then put out an index card with the characters' names and the conflict. Only those involved in the Conflict can confront it in play.

REVEAL YOUR MOTIVATIONS

The next step is seemingly simple, but highly critical point: each player must decide what their character wants. To start off, each Character Player needs to come up with at least one motivation for their character. A character's initial motivation should serve as another way to explain and introduce your character. It can be as general or as specific as you want—and

you may never accomplish it. The motivation is your signpost throughout the Chapter to help you make decisions when confronting Conflicts. Motivations are not permanent. Character Players will create new motivations for their Novel Character at the beginning of each Chapter.

You can have any number of motivations at any one time. You may find your motivation does not change from Chapter to Chapter based on what happens in the story, and that's okay.

If you are struggling to come up with a motivation, take a look at your Archetype. Each one lists the Archetype's core motivation, core desire, and core fear. Those qualities are always true, no matter the character's specific motivation.

EXAMPLES OF MOTIVATIONS

Be Brave	Become Trusted	Test Strength
Get a Necessity	Create Obstacles	Learn a Secret
Run	Destroy	Reveal a Secret
Express anger	Disconnect	Foil a Plan
Simplify	Cheat	Achieve Victory
Get Help	Be alone	Reconcile
Escape	Insult	Earn Trust
Find Something	Give Up	Forget
Lie	Attract Attention	Fulfill
Break Trust	Be Happy	Play
Condemn	Keep a secret	Pretend
Create an Ideal	Injure	Rescue
Protect an Ideal	Comply	Seek Help
Prevent a Crime	Confront a Fate	Seek Revenge
Seek Wrong-Doer	Hide a Mistake	Show Love
Pay a Debt	Cause Pain	Clear Confusion
Absolve Guilt	Rest	Find the Truth
Reveal Wisdom	Help	Cover Up Truth
Correct a Mistake	Hide	To Rebel
Change Opinion	Achieve	Move On
Regain Integrity	Cause Misfortune	Save Someone
Mentor Someone	Seek Retaliation	Keep a Secret
Help a Group	Steal Something	Protect Someone
Save Someone	Commit Violence	Help Someone
Bring Peace	Trick Someone	Serve Good
Bring Conflict	Solve a Problem	Conceal Identity
Convert Someone	Uncover a Mystery	Be Dishonorable

PLAYING YOUR NOVEL

"We were the people who were not in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of print. It gave us more freedom. We lived in the gaps between the stories."

—Margaret Atwood

The rules of this game don't describe what your character does, but *why* they do them. The game's engine is about figuring out what characters want, and the Conflicts that arise from the obstacles in their way. Any story that is truly about character motivation and character change will work with this game's framework—whether it is a Marvel movie or an exploration of the Dust Bowl.

This game is a **conversation** between the players. The Novelist is a player that controls the setting and all of the Setting Characters. The other players (Character Players) focus only on their particular Novel Character.

Together, the players will collaboratively play out a Novel. All players are in control of the overall Novel and are responsible for making the Novel engaging and dramatic. While the Novelist's role is different from the rest of the players, the Novelist does not control the Novel. The entire table contributes to the Novel.

THE NOVELIST

The Novelist facilitates the Novel's **structure**, adjudicates the Novel's **rules**, plays all of the **Setting Characters**, and creates **Conflicts**. As a default, the Novelist has **Narrative Control** and can introduce plot elements, Setting Characters, and Novel Conflicts at will. Additionally, the Novelist can award players with Plot Points to help them drive an interesting story.

CHARACTER PLAYERS

Character Players play out their Novel Character's behavior within the Novel, confront Conflicts by making moves, and create Character Conflicts.

Caracter Players take Narrative Control with successful Moves and with the use of Plot Points. Character Players drive the story forward by resolving Conflicts.

NOVEL CHARACTERS

Character Players play the Novel's main characters from their character's viewpoint. These main characters are called **Novel Characters** and are what most games would call "player characters." Character Players make decisions from their Novel Character's perspective, work to resolve their character's Conflicts, and accomplish their character's motivations.

Playing from a character's viewpoint does not necessarily mean players must act like their characters, although they certainly can! What it really means is putting one's self in the character's shoes. Thinking and behaving like the character. However as we are creating a collaborative story, one must step outside of the character's role as well, to make certain the character is doing what's best for the story.

There will be many times in *The Great American Novel* when the player will have to step out of the character's shoes and deal with the Novel as a whole. This is generally referred to as entering the "meta" of the game, as opposed to the "narrative."

Certain mechanics require Character Players to make decisions about the Novel itself as a player (not a character in the Novel). In particular, Character Players can accept a Plot Point from the Novelist to compel their Novel Character to do something that is not good for the character—but may be good for the story. In addition, the Character Player may introduce concepts about the setting or Setting Characters if the Character Player is awarded Narrative Control—setting details that may happen without the Novel Character's knowledge.

Players should remember that this game is not a competition. Your Novel Character is on a rising story arc and either does well in the story, or doesn't. In either case, there is no victory condition. There is only this: what happens to your character in the end, and why?

All players play until the end of the story, so you can remove any trepidation about bad things happening. Bad things should happen.

If only good things happened, what fun would that be?

BASIC GAME PLAY

Each Chapter begins when the Novelist sets the scene by describing the setting, explaining the Chapter goals, and revealing the Setting Conflicts.

The Novelist then asks the Character Players what their characters do, and reacts with further description or by playing an appropriate Setting Character.

Novelist: It is the spring of 1928 and the wet heat of New Orleans weighs down on the city. There have been discussions as of late about a new Mardis Gras krewe who is looking for members of any race or gender. They call themselves The Odd Philosophical Society and have left leaflets out throughout town. Many have heard that they are responsible for running a speakeasy on a riverboat. You are all in Cafe du Monde enjoying chicory and cream as a young boy comes by to pass out the krewe's leaflets. What do you do?

Theodore: I will inquire in my most gentlemanly voice what this child is doing working for such riff-raff. And ask him who put him up to this.

Shelly: Yes, dear. Whatever brings you to shuffle this garbage on the street?

The conversation can go on indefinitely without ever having to consult a game rule. The game can progress into different scenes, locations, and times as the story demands.

However, if something occurs during the conversation that has an uncertain outcome, or when there are two motivations in conflict, the Novelist will ask the Character Player to **confront a conflict**.

Confronting a conflict helps determine what happens through dice rolls—and the conversation subsequently continues.

CONFRONTING CONFLICTS

The Novelist will ask the Character Players to confront a conflict when one of the following occurs:

- Whenever a Novel Character(s) makes a choice or behaves in a way where the outcome is uncertain.
- When there are conflicting motivations with other Novel Characters or Setting Characters.

Character Players roll a **Move that best describes their character's intention** to confront a conflict. Moves cannot be rolled unless a Character Player is confronting a conflict.

TO CONFRONT A CONFLICT

1. The Character Player chooses a narratively appropriate conflict to confront.
2. The Novelist asks the Character Player to state their Novel Character's intent. The Novelist then picks an appropriate Move the Character Player must roll.
3. The Character Player rolls two six-sided dice. They add or deduct the Move's associated stat from the dice sum to get their dice result.
4. The Novelist and/or Character Player narrates the outcome.

Novelist:	The boy frowns at you and just dumps the entire pile of leaflets on the table, on top of your beignets. Powdered sugar spills all over the table.
Theodore:	I'm going to stand up and look very cross at him, and tell him at once that he apologize for this behavior.
Novelist:	The boy spits at you, refusing to apologize.
Theodore:	I will insist that he does at once, lest I report him to the authorities.
Novelist:	You have conflicting motivations, so you will need to confront a conflict to get him to apologize.

IDENTIFY THE CONFLICT

Character Players cannot make a move (that is, roll the dice to adjudicate an outcome) unless they are confronting a conflict. Conflicts are visually represented in the game simply by writing

them on index cards and placing them on the table. Conflicts are typically one or two words describing a problem or situation that obstruct character motivations. Before starting the Novel, the Novelist identified two **Setting Conflicts** which are always in play, but more Conflicts will be put out (or removed/resolved) as the game continues.

Sometimes it is clear which conflict must be resolved, but other times not so much. The matter can be discussed openly at the table before a move is made.

CHOOSE AN EXISTING CONFLICT

If there is an available conflict in play that fits the situation, the Character Player can confront the conflict by turning the index card sideways and making their move. **Note that Setting Conflicts can only be resolved once per Chapter.**

CREATE A NEW CONFLICT

A Character player can **spend a Plot Point** to create a new conflict if there is no available conflict in play (either because all of the appropriate Setting Conflicts were already confronted and resolved during this Chapter, or there are no appropriate Conflicts). The Character Player then **has Narrative Control** after rolling a move, no matter the move's outcome.

ACCEPT A CONFLICT

The Novelist may offer to create a conflict for a Character Player. However, these Conflicts are typically very negative for the Novel Character. If the Character Player accepts the offer, they **receive a Plot Point**. The Novelist then has Narrative Control after the Character Player rolls their Move, no matter the outcome.

CHARACTER MOVES

After the Character Player determines what Conflict to confront, the Novelist informs the Character Player which move to use. Character Moves are actions the Novel Character can take to determine an outcome in the story.

The Novelist should choose a Move that best represents the Novel Character's intent. Look at why the Novel Character is taking action, not at what they're doing.

- **Flat Moves:** For use at any point in the game, whether or not the Novel Character is rising or falling.
- **Rising Moves:** For use only when the Novel Character is rising.
- **Falling Moves:** For use only when the Novel Character is falling.

To make a move, the Character Player rolls two six-sided dice and adds or deducts the move's associated stat. Before the Character Player rolls, they should check the **Arc Effects** on their Novel Character's character sheet to see if they apply. Each character sheet details an addition to a stat when rising, and deduction from a stat when falling.

Theodore:	Okay, I'm going to confront the conflict "Mardis Gras."
Novelist:	Your Arc is currently flat, so you will need to roll navigate others, which uses Personality.
Theodore:	Okay, so my Personality is +1, and since I'm flat there's no other modifier.

Theodore rolls two six-sided dice and adds +1 to the result, getting a total of 11.

RISING MOVES

- **Protect (Roll +Instinct)**
  When you want to keep yourself or another safe, roll +Instinct.

- **Befriend (Roll +Personality)**
  When you want good will or to establish trust, roll +Personality.

- **Make a Moral Stand (Roll +Morality)**
  When you want to make a social/moral conviction, roll +Morality.

FLAT MOVES

- **Satiate (Roll +Instinct)**
  When you want to take care of a need, roll +Instinct.

- **Navigate Others (Roll +Personality)**
  When you want to guide others, roll +Personality.

- **Rally (Roll +Morality)**
  When you want to get others to help, roll +Morality.

FALLING MOVES

- **Lash Out (Roll +Instinct)**
  When you wish to resolve a conflict using violence, roll +Instinct.

- **Enforce Your Will (Roll +Personality)**
  When you want to force behavior from another, roll +Personality.

- **Condemn (Roll +Morality)**
  When you want to rally others against another, roll +Morality.

NARRATING THE OUTCOME

Total up the dice roll and relevant stat to determine the outcome.

If a Character Player rolls a 10 or higher on a move, they automatically have Narrative Control. The player can narrate the outcome, any Setting Characters involved with the move, and aspects of the setting affected by the move. They can introduce elements into the story that are true and that the Novelist must then integrate into the overall narrative.

If a Character Player rolls a 6 or lower, the Novelist automatically has Narrative Control. The Novelist can narrate the outcome, any Setting Characters involved with the move, and aspects of the setting affected by the move. They can introduce elements into the story that are true. However, the Novelist cannot take control of the Novel Character or make decisions on behalf of the Novel Character.

Below is a summary of how each dice result should play out:

Result of 7+
- The conflict is resolved and it is removed from the table (except for Setting Conflicts, which are always present, or Conflicts which are narratively certain to return).
- The Character Player gets a Plot Point for resolving the conflict.
- If rolling against a Novel Character, that Novel Character gets +1Arc for conceding.
- The Character Player receives +1Arc for Rising and Flat Moves or -1Arc for Falling Moves.
- The Novelist narrates the outcome and has full Narrative Control
- If the move and narrative represents a Chapter Move, the Novel moves into the next Chapter.

Result of 10+
- Apply the 7+ result outcomes
- The Character Player narrates the outcome and has full Narrative Control, with the ability to control the setting or Setting Characters. (Note: No player can control another Novel Character.)

Result of 6-
- The conflict is not resolved and is still in play.
- The Character Player receives -1Arc.
- If rolling against a Novel Character, that Novel Character gets +1Arc for not conceding.
- The Novelist narrates the outcome and has full Narrative Control

Novelist:	You get +1 to your Arc and a Plot Point. We've resolved the "Mardis Gras" conflict, but that's a Setting Conflict, so we'll just turn it sideways until the next Chapter. You also get Narrative Control.
Theodore:	The boy looks very sheepish and can't keep eye contact and says, "I am sorry, sir. I was paid a nickel to put these out sir, I need the money. I don't mean disrespect, sir. The Mayor gave me the money to do it. Told me not to tell no one."

ARCS

Arc is a scaled score representing a Novel Character's overall journey while rising and falling during the Novel. The score rises up to +5 and falls down to -5, leading toward either a heroic fate or a tragic end. While a character is rising, their Archetype receives a stat bonus. While falling, the Archetype receives a deduction to a stat. Novel Characters must always change; they may start flat, but they will not stay that way.

When Tom realizes Daisy is in love with Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*, he makes a **falling move** to confront Gatsby, resulting in the climactic conflict in the Plaza Hotel. When Celie vows to love Shug even though the love is not reciprocated in *The Color Purple*, she makes a **rising move** by confronting the conflict of unrequited love. Of course, both characters have their ups (rising) and downs (falling) during the story, but eventually they each come to their own **tragic end** (Tom) and **heroic fate** (Celie).

The Novel Character's Arc will determine what sorts of Character Moves they can use when confronting a conflict. They can use **flat moves** at any time, no matter the Arc score. But, they can generally only use **rising moves while rising and falling moves while falling**.

However, there may be a point in the story when you really want to use a move that is against your Arc. These moments can represent a time when your character suddenly falls to the situation, or finds inner strength to rise beyond it. To make a move that is against your Arc, you may switch your Arc **by spending a Plot Point**. When you switch Arcs, simply start at the first level of rising or falling, depending upon what was changed. For example, a Novel Character who switches with +3Arc changes to -1Arc. When an Arc is switched in this way it should be evident in the narrative--something must have compelled the character to change dramatically and either crash and fall, or suddenly rise up.

Your character begins at 0Arc, which means they are **flat**. Once the Arc changes, a Novel Character can never again be flat. A Novel Character can rise up to +5Arc or fall down to -5Arc. When a character reaches +5Arc or -5 Arc, they are now **locked into their fate**; they can no longer rise, fall, or switch Arcs. At this point, the Character Player may choose to **resolve their character**, or continue playing until the end.

RESOLVING NOVEL CHARACTERS

A Novel Character never leaves gameplay unless their Character Player **chooses to resolve them**. This means your character cannot die or leave the story unless you decide. However, there may be points along the way, where it makes narrative sense to do something drastic with your character that takes them out of play.

To resolve a Novel Character, the Character Player removes them from the story by narratively explaining what happens (whether they die, move to another town, go off to war, etc.). This can be done at any time, however, it is best done when a character is **locked into their fate**.

Their Arc drives how their narrative comes to an end. When any Novel Character reaches +5Arc, they will rise to a heroic fate. You can choose to do that immediately, or play it out until the last Chapter—but whatever you choose, the character's Arc will no longer change. Conversely, -5Arc means the character will fall to a tragic end, no matter what happens in the game. Again, you can play that out immediately or in the final Chapter.

If a Character Player resolves their character before the game ends, they'll still be involved in the story. If you choose to resolve your character before the final Chapter, you will be awarded 5 Plot Points—one for each of your Arcs. Use these Plot Points to take Narrative Control throughout the rest of the game and support the Novelist in resolving the story.

As with everything in *The Great American Novel*, this story is just as much yours as it is the other players. You ultimately control what happens to your character and how that fits in with the larger story. When played in this way, you'll find the collaborative storytelling process empowering; it will naturally want your character's resolution to occur in the best way for the novel (rather than for the character).

NARRATIVE CONTROL

Everyone at the table has a role to play in making this story great. The Novelist is largely in charge of presenting the setting and making decisions on behalf of the Setting Characters. However, that does not mean the Novelist is in control of the story.

Narrative Control helps everyone navigate the game through checks and balances. The Novelist cannot take the story too far away from the Character Players' desires, and the Character Players cannot steer the story too far away from the Novelist's desires. Narrative Control is a way for Character Players and Novelists to balance their contribution to the story. The game rules encourage others to contribute their own goals and make their story more significant.

Narrative Control gives a player the power to describe what is happening in the novel and establish truths about the story's world. If you have Narrative Control, you can narrate a move's outcome, how Setting Characters behave and act, and aspects of the setting. The only thing a player cannot control are other Novel Characters.

As a default, the Novelist has Narrative Control. Everything about the story, the Setting Characters, the outcomes of dice rolls, and the consequences of actions are up to them.

However, players have the option of taking Narrative Control. When a Character Player rolls 10 or more on a move or spends Plot Points, they temporarily become the Novelist. The Character Player can now narrate the move's outcome.

Plot Points are the fundamental currency of Narrative Control—the more you spend, the more control you will have. But like any currency, there is a limit; when you are out, you're out—until the next Chapter.

By shifting Narrative Control, different players will establish truths in the story. Whenever a player with Narrative Control explains something about the setting or introduces Conflicts, they are establishing truths in the story. Whether or not the characters know these truths or like them—they are facts and ultimately cannot be refuted.

It is important to note that no player can take Narrative Control over someone else's Novel Character at any point. The Novelist and Character Players cannot take actions or make decisions on behalf of another Novel Character.

USING PLOT POINTS

Plot Points are a resource Character Players can spend to affect or take control of the narrative. By default, the Novelist has Narrative Control over the story. However, Character Players have the option to affect the story without having a 10+ success.

Character Players can earn Plot Points during the game, as outlined below. Plot Points serve as a currency for managing the Novel's Narrative Control.

Character Players can spend Plot Points to change or add to the story. Plot Points can even give a Character Player full authority to create truths within the setting—essentially making them the Novelist for that moment.

Earn Plot Points
- Character Players get 1 Plot Point per Chapter.
- Character Players can accept a Conflict from the Novelist so their Novel Character can make a move. The Character Player receives 1 Plot Point in return.
- When a Character Player resolves a Conflict, they receive 1 Plot Point in return.

Spend Plot Points
- A Character Player can switch their Novel Character's Arc to make a move.
- A Character Player can create a conflict so they can make a move.
- A Character Player can take Narrative Control, introduce a story element, or an NPC.

Shelly: Please Theodore, must we invite him to sit? People will
              stare.

Theodore: So let them stare! Look at me young man, ain't no law
              says the mayor can't hire a boy to put out flyers.

Shelly: Out of character, I'd like that to be illegal actually.

Novelist: Okay, so do you want to spend a Plot Point?

Shelly: So Shelly clicks her tongue slowly and says, "Theodore
              dearest, it matters a great deal that Mr. Mayor is paying
              this young man to deliver flyers for a Mardis Gras
              Krewe. They are known to own a speakeasy and it is a
              federal crime to aid and abed criminals. What's worst, if
              he is paying with parish funds to promote a speakeasy,
              he could get charged by the federal government. And
              everyone who helped him. Including this young boy."
              And saying that scares the boy so much, he jumps up
              and runs away before anyone can stop him.

Novelist: I'll take your Plot Point, Shelly, well done! And now we
              have a new Conflict.

*The Novelist writes "Corrupt Mayor" on an index card and puts it
        on the table.*

Theodore: I roll my eyes. "Well now you've done it. I've always
              said you the gift of the gab."

Novelist: Are you trying to do something by antagonizing Shelly
              like that?

Theodore: Actually yes, I want to make a big scene so that she
              apologizes for being a smarty pants.

Novelist: Are you doing that because you think she's wrong, or
              because you are embarrassed?

Theodore: Oh, because I'm embarrassed.

Novelist: That best fits condemn, which is a falling move. Are you
              falling?

Theodore: No, I'm rising.

Novelist: You can spend a plot point and switch your Arc to
              falling and then make the move. Was that a substantial
              enough infraction to cause your character to decline?

Theodore: Nah, I think I'll stay rising.

CHAPTERS

The game experience is divided into Chapters. Each Chapter has a particular purpose in the story. The characters must accomplish that purpose to move onto the next Chapter. This structure helps players hit all of the elements that make up a Great American Novel.

- **Chapter One: The Ordinary World.** The characters begin together, establish motivations, and conduct everyday life—until an inciting moment propels a character to **move into an uncomfortable situation.**
- **Chapter Two: The Meeting.** The story's ordeal is presented. The characters seek advice and gather what is needed to confront it—until a character will **cross the threshold.**
- **Chapter Three: The Test.** The characters explore the situation, run into conflict, and make friends and enemies—until a character will **go into the cave.**
- **Chapter Four: The Ordeal.** The characters must now confront the greatest challenge in the story and rise to glory, or fall to tragedy—until a character will **take the road back.**
- **Chapter Five: The Final Chapter.** The characters return to their original state and determine their **tragic end** or **heroic fate.**

You'll note that each Chapter says "a character will" do the bolded text—these are called **Chapter Moves.** When a single character successfully confronts and resolves a conflict as the Chapter defines, the story can move into the next Chapter.

At the start of each Chapter, the following occurs:
- All Character Players receive an additional Plot Point.
- All Character Players define their Novel Character's new motivation for the upcoming Chapter.
- All Setting Conflicts that were turned sideways are turned back. They may now be confronted again in the upcoming Chapter.

Novelist: Since the kid ran off, you have a moment look closer at the leaflet. It is advertising a party for the Comte du Pradeaux, hosted by the Odd Philosophical Krewe on the S.S. Miracle—a steamboat kicking off from New Orleans tonight.

Maria: Do we know this count?

Novelist: Everyone's heard of the Comte du Pradeaux. He's a very wealthy and highly eccentric textiles baron. He is known for throwing elaborate parties.

Maria: Well, we can't have that. I shake my head and roll my eyes. "This garbage!"

Theodore: What do you mean? It sounds fun. I could probably meet some good contacts. You should go. Maybe you'll find all of the "bad" people there.

Maria: Don't insult me.

Shelly: No seriously, why don't you? We could all learn something from this Krewe.

Novelist: Are you trying to negotiate?

Shelly: Sure, yeah.

Novelist: Okay, so you'll roll your Personality. What conflict are you confronting?

Shelly: I think Prohibition, since that's what this is all about.

Novelist: Okay, so go ahead and roll.

Shelly: Okay, got it. So, here it goes…

Shelly rolls 7, plus her Personality makes it 8.

Novelist: Okay, so Maria you'll get a +1Arc if you agree to go.

Maria: Hmm, I really don't think she'd want to go.

Shelly: Wait! Can I confront another conflict? The Corrupt Mayor?

Novelist: Sure, just explain how convincing her to go will resolve the conflict of a corrupt mayor.

Shelly: I'm going to say, "The mayor could be there. There's no better time to catch the mayor deep in his shenanigans."

This time Shelly rolls a 7.

Shelly: Ah hell.

Novelist: You resolved both of these Conflicts, so get two Plot
               Points. But the mayor is still corrupt, and there is still
               Prohibition. This just means those things won't come
               up while Maria is there. So if Maria agrees to go, she'll
               get +1Arc. Actually +2Arc, because you played both of
               these Conflicts.

Maria: Okay, fine if it's that important to you, I'll go.

Novelist: Now that you are moving everyone into an
               uncomfortable situation, we'll move onto Chapter Two.

*Novelist writes "Steamboat Speakeasy" on an index card and places
               it on the table.*

ARCHETYPES

"If you're silent for a long time, people just arrive in your mind."

—Alice Walker

The Conflicted Right-Fighter
Rational, Ethical, Idealistic, Purposeful, Principled, Wants to Right Wrongs

The Courageous Youth
Trusting, Observant, Committed, Vigilant, Sincere, Wants to Prove Worth

The Cunning Rebel
Unpredictable, Charming, Scrappy, Energetic, Carefree, Wants to be Excited

The Honorable Guardian
Stable, Committed, Vigilant, Secure, Observant, Wants to Protect

The Loyal Lieutenant
Caring, Patient, Humorous, Supportive, Helpful, Wants to be Needed

The Mysterious Recluse
Sensitive, Unique, Quiet, Submissive, Creative, Wants to Express Self Worth

The Naive Outsider
Decisive, Independent, Confident, Curious, Strange, Wants to be Self-Reliant

The Oathsworn Champion
Powerful, Decisive, Hardworking, Risk-Taking, Wants to be Honorable

The Regretful Elder
Agreeable, Peaceful, Connected, Quiet, Uneasy, Wants to Maintain Harmony

The Inspired Innocent
Easy-Going, Agreeable, Peaceful, Friendly, Ethical, Wants to Create Hope

The Secret Devil
Ambitious, Talented, Motivated, Charismatic, Inspirational, Wants to be Admired

The Trapped Socialite
Spontaneous, Enthusiastic, Impulsive, Uninhibited, Emotional, Wants to be Happy

THE CONFLICTED RIGHT-FIGHTER

"I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do."
　　　　　　　—Atticus Finch, *To Kill A Mockingbird* by
　　　　　　　Harper Lee

The world may not owe us anything, but we owe the world everything. We have to do what we know is right—what our heart tells us deep within our core. You can argue ethics all day long, but every person on this planet—every single person—knows what's right and wrong. Doing the right thing isn't easy. Sometimes doing the right thing can mean destroying everything you love. Which side of right are you going to be on?

PLAYING THE CONFLICTED RIGHT-FIGHTER

Often the moral compass of the story, The Conflicted Right-Fighter does the right thing in the face of resistance, unseating cultural norms, or at high risk to their comfort, safety, and wellbeing. But their morality is not always the same as those around them.

- **Starting Out:** A healthy perspective on the moral undertaking. They will likely avoid dangerous or precarious situations.
- **When Rising:** Will work selflessly to remove the barriers for righting wrongs. They will become a voice of inspiration for those that follow them.
- **When Falling:** Obsessed with their morality. They will go to extreme and unnecessary means to make change, or to make their voice heard.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

The Conflicted Right Fighter wants to do the right thing. When crafting motivations for the Chapter, think about what tangible thing you can do to course-correct, or to bring things back to a moral center. Do you need to sacrifice something, help someone see the light, or right a wrong? The best motivations compel you to confront Conflicts and resolve them with your moral center.

- **Basic Motivation:** To right wrongs
- **Basic Desire:** To be good
- **Basic Fear:** To be corrupted

STATS

The Conflicted Right-Fighter is heavily rooted in Morality, so they favor that aspect of their worldview when confronting challenges or resolving Conflicts. However, they can be balanced in their overall approach. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Moral Beacon:
Instinct: 0, Personality: 0, Morality: 2

Charismatic Do-Gooder:
Instinct: -1, Personality: 1, Morality: 2

Zealot;
Instinct: 1, Personality: -1, Morality: 2

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.

- **Key Trait:** Rational, Ethical, Idealistic, Purposeful, Principled
- **When Rising:** Wise, Discerning, Conscientious, Fair, Inspiring
- **When Falling:** Dogmatic, Intolerant, Self-Righteous, Judgmental, Condemning

ARC EFFECTS

- If Rising, +1 to Morality.
- If Falling, -1 to Personality.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:

- **Occupation:** community leader, legal, political, faith leader, military, teacher, other
- **Source of your ethical compass:** religion, philosophy, political ideals, code of honor or ethics, other
- **Your place of self-reflection:** place of worship, place of work, home, place in nature, social place, other
- **How were you wronged:** betrayal, miscarriage of justice, violence, thievery, prejudice, other
- **Who do you fight for:** loved ones, disenfranchised people, anyone that is deserving, anyone, only one, other

THE COURAGEOUS YOUTH

"Look at everything always as though you were seeing it either for the first or last time: Thus is your time on earth filled with glory."
—Francie, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith

It doesn't matter how young I am, or how grown-up you think you are. I know things every bit as much as you do. And sometimes it would do well for you to listen. I love life, and I love the people in my life, but I'm not going to just let them make mistakes. And I'm not going to let anyone walk all over me. Just because I'm young doesn't mean I can't take care of myself. I know a lot more than you give me credit for, and I can do a hell of a lot more than that! Sure, things can be scary, and sometimes I'm sad, but none of that will ever stop my spirit. I'm going to change the world, with or without your help.

PLAYING THE COURAGEOUS YOUTH

Too many adults in stories get wrapped up in the minutia of their own drama, and sometimes The Courageous Youth is the only one that can snap them out of it. In times of tragedy, conflict, or uncertainty, the Youth can be a beacon of resilience, and can help other characters come to their senses. But often enough, they are ignored and left to handle things by themselves—sometimes that works out better anyway.

- **Starting Out:** A beloved companion for characters, a source for an embedded sense of duty and protection. The Youth will attach themselves to characters that are kind-hearted and helpful and will antagonize those that are not.
- **When Rising:** The Youth becomes a major source of awe and inspiration as they valiantly forge the way forward and show other (more capable) people the way.
- **When Falling:** They become immature, mischievous, and difficult to appease. They act out against those they used to trust and try to harm those they don't like.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

Ultimately, The Courageous Youth wants to be needed by those they care about so they can prove their worth. They find an issue to fight for and get right behind it. At the end of the day, they want to feel safe, supported, and comfortable. They achieve this by believing in their cause and demonstrating courage in fighting for that cause.

- **Basic Motivation:** To prove worth
- **Basic Desire:** To be accepted
- **Basic Fear:** To be ignored

STATS

The Courageous Youth is fairly balanced. However, they favor Instinct and Personality over Morality, working from a limited worldview and through the power of their charm or courage. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Rapscallion:
Instinct: 1, Personality: 2, Morality: -1

Lovely Child:
Instinct: 0, Personality: 2, Morality: 0

Trusty Kid:
Instinct: 1, Personality: 1, Morality: 0

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.
- **Key Trait:** Trusting, Observant, Committed, Vigilant, Sincere
- **When Rising:** Independent, Brave, Affectionate, Reliable, Inspirational
- **When Falling:** Volatile, Defenseless, Irrational, Fearful, Manipulative

ARC EFFECTS

- If Rising, +1 to Personality.
- If Falling, -1 to Morality.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:
- **Home life:** idyllic, troubled, moved out, under the care of others, caring for others, other
- **Type of youth:** child, teen, young adult, child at heart, mature child, other
- **Why adults need your help:** they are uninspired, they have no hope, they don't know what I do, they've forgotten, they are too busy, other
- **Your guardians:** two loving guardians, one loving guardian, indifferent guardians, no one, other
- **Why you persevere:** I don't know how to do anything else, other people need me, I need to prove my worth, I'm driven to do what is right, I'm driven to change things, other

THE CUNNING REBEL

"I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it."
　　　　　　　—Shug, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker

Life's short. There's no point in going through some sort of daily grind. There's adventure around every corner—if you know right where to look. All of those schlubs that waste year after year trying to do something with themselves? What a waste of life. I am the spark that creates drama, I start the fire that burns complacency. You can sit in the manure of your boredom, or you can seize the day and make life interesting. When you are with me, you really won't have a choice in the matter.

PLAYING THE CUNNING REBEL

Not necessarily a good character, but not really a bad one, The Cunning Rebel is out for their own personal freedom, come what may. They can be destructive and unpredictable, but equally loyal and endearing. Compared to most people, they don't have the same bonds with society, other people, or even within their own sense of self-preservation. The Rebel does things just to do them, and each challenge is more interesting than the last.

- **Starting Out:** A charming, reckless source of misadventure and theatrics. The Rebel will always look for something to make things more interesting, especially when bogged down with serious business.
- **When Rising:** Will break the mold of other characters and help them transcend beyond their own limitations or complacency.
- **When Falling:** A trickster who uses cunning to get what they want, no matter the consequences to the safety and wellbeing of themselves or the people they care about.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

Think about motivations in terms of what attachments hold them down, and what aspirations they have to make life interesting.

- **Basic Motivation:** To be excited
- **Base Desire:** To be free
- **Base Fear:** To be trapped

STATS

The Rebel is weighted more on Instinct than anything else, with little care for social Morality or the feelings and expectations of others. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Devil May Care;
Instinct: 2, Personality: 0, Morality: 0

Trickster:
Instinct: 1, Personality: 1, Morality: 0

Lovable Ruffian:
Instinct: 1, Personality: 2, Morality: -1

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.

- **Key Trait:** Unpredictable, Charming, Scrappy, Energetic, Carefree
- **When Rising:** Uplifting, Loyal, Endearing, Inspiring, Trusting
- **When Falling:** Reckless, Malicious, Hurtful, Disconnected, Maniacal

ARC EFFECTS

- If Rising, +1 to Personality.
- If Falling, -1 to Morality.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:
- **Your hideout:** rural, urban, wilderness, in a public place, is impossible to find, other
- **What freedom means:** living without society, no rules, my rules, opportunity, having no cares, other
- **Who's trying to stop you:** religious group, relatives, the authorities, friends, enemies, other
- **What is fun:** chaos, being on the road, surprising others, experiencing life, living in the moment, other
- **Who keeps you under control:** a relative, a partner or spouse, a friend, a mentor, an enemy, other

THE HONORABLE GUARDIAN

"The world is in this room. This here's all there is and all there needs to be."

—Sethe, *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison

There are people that get stepped on, pushed aside, and hurt. There are people who can't protect themselves or stand up for themselves. People that don't have the same amount of power or privilege as others. I see it as my duty to make sure they are safe. That they are looked after. That nothing comes along that they can't handle. I can be overbearing, defensive, and relentless. But at the end of the day? If you need help, who can you trust and rely on? I'm a rock. I'll always be here for those that need me, no matter what.

PLAYING THE HONORABLE GUARDIAN

Always compelled to do right by people, The Honorable Guardian is the trustworthy and reliable protector of other characters—even at the risk of the Guardian's own safety or comfort. They are helpful and resourceful, and can be very territorial about the people they want to protect. Those that cross them, or those they care about, will have to contend with anger, rage, or worse.

- **Starting Out:** The Guardian is a strong ally and reliable friend, but quick to temper against those they don't trust.
- **When Rising:** Takes the high road within their moral code. They will do what is necessary to protect the people they care about, but will not resort to the level of an aggressor.
- **When Falling:** Will ruthlessly enforce their code. They can resort to aggression and violence against those whom they believe are harming the people they care about.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

Think about what characters the Guardian will naturally want to protect and what specific goals they can achieve to do that. They are driven by making sure every person gets their due, and will tip the scales of balance to make sure that happens.

- **Basic Motivation:** To protect
- **Base Desire:** To have purpose
- **Base Fear:** To fail

STATS

The Guardian is heavily rooted in Morality, but can be balanced elsewhere as well. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Moral Champion:
Instinct: 1, Personality: -1, Morality: 2

Helpful Protector:
Instinct: 0, Personality: 1, Morality: 1

Stoic Knight:
Instinct: 1, Personality: 0, Morality: 1

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.

- **Key Trait:** Stable, Committed, Vigilant, Secure, Observant
- **When Rising:** Brave, Leading, Affectionate, Trusting, Honorable
- **When Falling:** Volatile, Divisive, Judgmental, Angry, Violent

ARC EFFECTS

- If Rising, +1 to Instinct.
- If Falling, -1 to Morality.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:

- **Occupation:** teacher, law enforcement, faith leader, military, political, activist, other
- **Who you protect:** a relative or friend, a partner or spouse, anyone that needs protection, a particular group, an ideal, other
- **What keeps you strong:** religion or spirituality, a loved one, a memory, an ideal or philosophy, training, other
- **Who is a threat:** anyone, a particular group of people, an individual, those against my ideal, those that seek to harm, other
- **What can break you:** nothing, one particular person, a breach in my ideal, the loss of hope, anything is possible, other

THE LOYAL LIEUTENANT

"My legs are full of trench-mortar fragments, old screws and bedsprings and things."

—Frederic Henry, *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway

There's nothing more important than taking care of the people who take care of you. Sure, I've got a mouth on me. But everyone knows my heart is in the right place, and I'm loyal to a fault. I'll never let my friends down, even if it means I take a hit or two. My big personality is infectious, and I always make my opinion heard. In the end, I'll do what needs to be done. I'm a partner and a friend, but mostly I'm a trustworthy right-hand.

PLAYING THE LOYAL LIEUTENANT

While the archetype may have a military flair, it is not necessarily limited to characters in service. The Lieutenant is any leader's trusted confidante and companion. While they can be cantankerous and belligerent when things don't go their way, they are always extremely loyal to those they trust. They will go out of their way to take care of the boss. When the people they serve can't muster on, they will often take the burden on themselves, and selflessly bring their companions to success.

- **Starting Out:** A bit of a loud-mouth, but loyal and helpful to allies. They are always willing to take a hit for those they admire.
- **When Rising:** Will shoulder the burdens that others must carry so that they can be led to their goals. They are selfless and can become martyrs.
- **When Falling:** Feels bitter and will lash out at those they have admired, not feeling acknowledged or useful.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

Think about what character you will want to serve, and how you can make that other character more successful and happy. You're not a servant, but your motivation is wrapped up in what the other character believes and represents. You take pride in bolstering that person and always being present to ensure that character's success.

- **Basic Motivation:** To be needed
- **Base Desire:** To be loved
- **Base Fear:** To be rejected

STATS

The Lieutenant is fairly balanced, but will often skew toward a strong personality. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Whacky Sidekick:
Instinct: 0, Personality: 2, Morality: 0

Beloved Partner:
Instinct: -1, Personality: 2, Morality: 1

Dutiful Right-Hand:
Instinct: -1, Personality: 1, Morality: 2

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.

- **Key Trait:** Caring, Patient, Humorous, Supportive, Helpful
- **When Rising:** Humble, Compassionate, Loving, Uplifting, Martyr
- **When Falling:** Manipulative, Clingy, Addictive, Resentful, Vindictive

ARC EFFECTS

- If Rising, +1 to Instinct.
- If Falling, -1 to Personality.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:

- **Occupation:** legal, corporate/professional, law enforcement, military, counselor/advisor, other
- **Who you are loyal to:** a loved one, relative or friend, an ideal or philosophy, an organization or group, whomever earns it, other
- **Reason for your loyalty:** religion, philosophy, political ideals, code of honor or ethics, other
- **What sways your loyalty:** spirituality or religion, nothing, money, love, self-preservation, other
- **You are driven by:** duty, honor, love, hope, an ideal, other

THE MYSTERIOUS RECLUSE

"But we are all human, I thought, wondering what I meant."
—The Narrator, *Invisible Man* by Ralph
Ellison

It's not that I'm hiding, exactly. It's just the world has nothing for me. I'm an observer above all, which gives me comfort. What I see and what I feel is kept very close to my heart, and only those I trust can see its secrets. I am considered mysterious, but truly people are the mystery. Why they harm each other, why they help each other. The decisions they make. The way they make each other feel. The way they need each other. From my quiet place, I can remain out of their clutches, unbothered and unharmed.

PLAYING THE MYSTERIOUS RECLUSE

The Recluse is withdrawn, quiet, and pensive. While this character is not social and is reclusive by name, they don't necessarily shun other characters or always hide somewhere. Perhaps they were hurt before, suffer from social anxiety, or have deep secrets to hide.

- **Starting Out:** Polite, pleasant, and a person of few words. When spoken, their words are well thought out and often carry a simple wisdom.
- **When Rising:** They become a beacon of wisdom. They are even-tempered, caring, careful, and nurturing.
- **When Falling:** They become introverted and sheltered. They withdraw physically or emotionally, lashing out when someone comes too near.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

Think about why the character is withdrawn. What makes them feel uncomfortable around others and society? The answer will be the driving force behind their decisions. Maybe they want to find a place of comfort, or perhaps to challenge their own discomfort to make an important change in their lives. Recluses may be out in society again to right a wrong, to find vindication, to retaliate, or to simply help others they care about. Those motivations should focus on why they are not at home in the dark, away from people and life. What drives them out into a place of discomfort?

- **Basic Motivation:** To express self-worth
- **Base Desire:** To be understood
- **Base Fear:** To be insignificant

STATS

The Recluse is weighted in Instinct and Morality. They balance the extremes of protecting one's self, while accomplishing something selflessly important. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Redeemed Reject:
Instinct: 2, Personality: -1, Morality: 1

Wise Hermit:
Instinct: 1, Personality: -1, Morality: 2

Antisocial:
Instinct: 2, Personality: 0, Morality: 0

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.

- **Key Trait:** Sensitive, Unique, Quiet, Submissive, Creative
- **When Rising:** Modest, Passionate, Ambitious, Selfless, Gracious
- **When Falling:** Jealous, Malicious, Obsessive, Narcissistic, Spiteful

ARC EFFECTS

- If Rising, +1 to Morality.
- If Falling, -1 to Morality.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:
- **You remain secluded because:** mental health, you've been wronged, you are wealthy or famous, you don't trust others, you are on the run, other
- **Your mystery is:** not that mysterious, an old crime, a shameful or horrible incident, a nefarious or secret purpose, an ideal or personal agenda, other
- **Your place of seclusion is:** an estate or manor/palace, nondescript home or apartment, a temple or church, a school, a library or museum, other
- **Your trust for people:** will never happen, can be earned, was broken and must be rebuilt, is strong with a particular person, is strong with a particular group, other
- **You will come out of seclusion for:** love, when you are healed, when you find purpose, when you find what you were looking for, when you find hope, other

THE NAIVE OUTSIDER

"Perhaps you do not feel the urgency which I do, the terrible compulsion to aid whatever poor souls wander restlessly here; perhaps you find me foolish in my sympathy for them, perhaps I am even ludicrous in your eyes because I can spare a tear for a lost abandoned soul, left without any helping hand; pure love."

—Mrs. Montague, *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson

I come from stability, sanity, and a place of hope and privilege. I may seem out of touch and perhaps my head is too in the clouds, but I am an earnest learner and a loyal companion. During those times when I am out of my depths, floundering in an environment I don't understand, I am learning and will become stronger for it. Many find me endearing, and many more find me frustrating. But as my story progresses, my outsider's perspective can be the one that saves us all from the Conflicts we create.

PLAYING THE NAIVE OUTSIDER

The Outsider is not cut from the same cloth as the others, or they moved from one community into a very different one. They have a different perspective than the others and perhaps wildly different motivations. But the story will bring the character closer to the world where they don't belong, and may even integrate them into that world.

- **Starting Out:** Helpless, curious, confused, and out of sync with others. They can become the moral center of the group or the source of chaos, depending upon the story's circumstances.
- **When Rising:** They use their outsider's perspective to bring people together, to resolve Conflicts, and to find common ground.
- **When Falling:** They become alienating, divisive, and can disrupt otherwise calm environments in a desperate attempt to make sense of things, or to change people to be more like them.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

Think about how the character is different from the others—are they from a different place, in a different class or culture, or simply outside of the immediate circle? Then work out why your character wants to enter this unfamiliar place, what they want from it, and what they hope to get out of it. Root the character's motivations in why they are an outsider.

- **Basic Motivation:** To be self-reliant
- **Base Desire:** To be welcomed
- **Base Fear:** To be out of control

STATS

The Outsider is driven by Personality and Morality, using their presence to better integrate within the new environment. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Country Bumpkin:
Instinct: -1, Personality: 2, Morality: 1

Wise Traveler:
Instinct: 0, Personality: 0, Morality: 2

Drifter:
Instinct: 1, Personality: 1, Morality: 0

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.

- **Key Trait**: Decisive, Independent, Confident, Curious, Strange
- **When Rising:** Brave, Influential, Change-Making, Mediator, Inspirational
- **When Falling:** Ruthless, Hard-Hearted, Immoral, Brutal, Divisive

ARC EFFECTS

If Rising, +1 to Instinct.
If Falling, -1 to Morality.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:
- **You left your home because:** you are a refugee or a criminal, you need work, you had to escape another life, you wronged someone, you were wronged, other
- **Your home is:** far away, full of enemies, full of regret, a distant memory, a place to come back to, other
- **You have with you:** nothing much, a fortune, enough to make do, just the bare necessities, a relative or friend, other
- **This place is:** very strange to me, frightening, more of the same, full of opportunity, full of enemies, other
- **You stand out because:** you have an accent, your style is different, you have different values, other

THE OATHSWORN CHAMPION

"What say ye, pagans! Will ye give me as much blood as will cover this barb?"

> —Captain Ahab, *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville

I hold my pride and integrity above all—even what a society or civilization may deem proper. My way transcends the code of the land. It runs so deeply I cannot be swayed from core principles like honor, loyalty, strength, and justice. We try to write laws to explain these things, but a true noble person knows in their heart what is right and what is wrong, and will never falter. No amount of money, power, or glory will sway me from doing the right thing.

PLAYING THE OATHSWORN CHAMPION

The Champion brings a strong sense of purpose and a black and white view of morality. There is no debating what the Champion's code of honor is, even if it flies in the face of society. They do not adhere to the same rules as everyone else and will not tolerate social constructs that get in the way of what must be done. They stick strictly to their code and can't understand a world wherein anyone would do anything else, or get in the way of what is right.

- **Starting Out:** Stoic,strong sense of honor, and impatient about things like decorum or arbitrary customs.
- **When Rising:** They transcend societal ethics altogether and can demonstrate through sheer example how the rest of society needs to catch up to their standards.
- **When Falling:** A vigilante, destroying the societal norms that get in the way of honor and truth.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

Think about the Champion's code of honor. Think about why they involve themselves with society—is it to make change or forge a way forward for a purpose? The Champion may be seeking someone out, trying to integrate into society, or simply trying to right a wrong. Think about what they want to get out of coming into an uncomfortable position with people that don't share their sensibilities.

- **Basic Motivation:** To be honorable
- **Base Desire:** To have order
- **Base Fear:** To lose control

STATS

The Oathsworn Champion is heavily influenced by Morality, but is balanced by Instinct. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Heroic Leader:
Instinct: 1, Personality: 0, Morality: 1

Barbaric Outsider:
Instinct: 2, Personality: -1, Morality: 1

Moral Rock:
Instinct: 1, Personality: -1, Morality: 2

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.

- **Key Trait:** Powerful, Decisive, Hardworking, Risk-Taking, Self-Confident
- **When Rising:** Selfless, Heroic, Change-Making Influential, Magnanimous
- **When Falling:** Ruthless, Hard-Hearted, Violent, Brutal, Vindictive

ARC EFFECTS

- If Rising, +1 to Morality.
- If Falling, -1 to Instinct.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:
- **What are you sworn to:** a person, a group, a cause or ideal, a code of honor, a promise or commitment, other
- **What will break your oath:** love, dishonor, violence, disenchantment, time, other
- **What drove you to your commitment:** force, desire, love, hope, an ideal, other
- **Why are you a champion:** a fighter, strong with words, knowledge of a culture or society, courage, fame, other
- **What happens when you fulfill your oath:** I'll continue the commitment, retire, feel useless, go into obscurity, find a new cause, other

THE REGRETFUL ELDER

"But after awhile you stand up, wipe the frost out of your ear, go someplace to get warm, bum a nickel for coffee, and then start walkin' toward somewheres else that ain't near no bridge."
   —Francis, *Ironweed* by William Kennedy

I've seen a lot, and everyone knows that, so I don't like to talk about it. The life I've lived is my own, and I keep them closed off in the deep recesses of my mind. Outwardly, I am strong, contained, and confident. But just beneath the surface there is an internal conflict that I fight to keep far beneath my consciousness. When the regret erupts, I lose my bearing, my will, and sometimes I lose what I care for.

PLAYING THE REGRETFUL ELDER

Some people that have lived long and hard lives, or that had to step out of society for extended periods of time may have difficulty with everyday life. They may lead healthy lives, but the hard years of living can also come to the surface. You suffer regret for memories from long ago that haunt you throughout the years. Anger, and a myriad of conflicted emotions about what you have experienced, and what you have done. In effort to protect the people you care about, you've buried these emotions—perhaps creating a ticking time bomb set to erupt, if you aren't careful.

- **Starting Out:** Withdrawn, quiet, and temperamental. They will try to avoid situations that lead to conflict, and work hard to protect others by being absent and closed off.
- **When Rising:** They have confronted some of their regret and emotions, and can begin the painful healing process. They are exposed, fragile, and extremely loving and loyal to those that care for them.
- **When Falling:** They have succumbed to their regret and are unable to contain it any longer. They seek to reconcile their anger in unhealthy and destructive ways.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

Think about what memories the Elder is confronting and must overcome, and what within the story will help them to achieve that. At their core, they want to find a way to reconcile the past. But they must obtain something in the present to achieve that goal. It could be anything from making amends, to finding help through a person or a religion. Whatever the case it is a motion toward recovery, even in the falling state.

- **Basic Motivation:** To maintain harmony
- **Base Desire:** To be emotionally stable
- **Base Fear:** To be ostracized

STATS

The Regretful Elder is overwhelmed by Instinct and must carefully balance that with Personality to get by in society. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Broken Elder:
Instinct: 2, Personality: 0, Morality: 0

Confident Survivor:
Instinct: 2, Personality: 1, Morality: -1

Functional Introvert:
Instinct: 1, Personality: 1, Morality: 0

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.

- **Key Trait:** Agreeable, Peaceful, Connected, Quiet, Uneasy
- **When Rising:** Fulfilled, Content, Self-Aware, Calming, Trustworthy
- **When Falling:** Obstinate, Disconnected, Abusive, Angry, Depressed

ARC EFFECTS

- If Rising, +1 to Instinct.
- If Falling, -1 to Instinct.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:
- **You are a:** military soldier or veteran, nurse, activist, politician, law enforcement, doctor, legal, other
- **You regret:** causing harm, an atrocity, a loss, a betrayal, a crime, other
- **You will be healed:** never, with love, with hope, with justice or judgment, with spirituality or religion, other
- **When judgment comes you will:** be relieved, not be there, be dead, fight, concede, other
- **You deal with your regret by:** numbing yourself, emotions, compartmentalization, creating positivity, other

THE INSPIRED INNOCENT

"Boys, I know who's drownded -- it's us!"
—Tom Sawyer, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain

The cruelty of this world does not phase me. It's not that I'm ignorant to the perils that surround me, it's just that I believe in better outcomes. I have faith in the human spirit and the power of the heart and, above all, I have hope. Some may say I cling to that hope, some say it is a sort of disease, but it is a beacon and a guide. It lights my way and shows me what potential truly is, what we are made of, and what we can become. But hope can be blinding, and it is hard to see beyond it. It is hard to see around it. But for hope to truly transcend our troubles, there must be a loss so great that others will embrace it. If that is my role, then I shall also embrace it.

PLAYING THE INSPIRED INNOCENT

The Inspired Innocent's unwavering belief in hope is one of their defining aspects. The character drives hope an inspiration to others in spite of adversity. When playing this character, accept the role that you must bring light to the darkness of others. This may require a dramatic rise in your arc that propels others forward.

- **Starting Out:** Does not engage in negative or destructive behavior, but does not necessarily judge or step in the way of said behavior. They are eager to please, but steadfast in their position of hopefulness and goodness.
- **When Rising:** They will actively spread hope and fight against darkness and malice. They can be inspirational warriors on this front, and a guiding light for the morally ambiguous.
- **When Falling:** They become judgmental, reckless, and emotional. In their desperation, they will need to prove goodness to others. In doing so, they lose concern for their own welfare and the welfare of others.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

Think about what the Innocent's hope is challenging. What causes the Innocent to demonstrate that goodness will persist in the story? What must the Innocent do to challenge the contrary worldview? What stakes must be set to create positive change?

- Basic Motivation: To create hope
- Base Desire: To be safe
- Base Fear: To be alone

STATS

The Inspired Innocent is heavily rooted in Morality and also uses Personality as a part of their core. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Eternal Optimist
Instinct: -1, Personality: 1, Morality: 2

Beacon of Hope
Instinct: 0, Personality: 0, Morality: 2

Endearing Companion
Instinct: 0, Personality: 1, Morality: 1

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.

- **Key Trait:** Easy-Going, Agreeable, Peaceful, Friendly, Ethical
- **When Rising:** Fulfilled, Hopeful, Calming, Self-Aware, Wise
- **When Falling:** Frustrated, Desperate, Disconnected, Neglectful, Reckless

ARC EFFECTS

- If Rising, +1 to Morality.
- If Falling, -1 to Instinct.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:

- **What drives you:** an ideal, a person, a group or organization, a cause, a dream, other
- **Why are you innocent:** clear conscious, young, ethical or moral, redeemed, naive, other
- **Who do you trust:** everyone, anyone deserving, only my closest, only myself, my ideal or philosophy, other
- **What would take your innocence:** love, death, betrayal, loss, harm or violence, other
- **Who needs you:** a friend, a relative, a stranger, no one, anyone who asks, other

THE SECRET DEVIL

"I mingle with my peers or no one, and since I have no peers, I mingle with no one."

> —Ignatius, *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy

You may have respected me, you may have even loved me, but you never saw past my face into the heart of my true intentions. I am not noble, I am not trustworthy, but I need you to think that I am. You are a tool for my own benefit, a means to my own end. I care not about your morals, life, wellbeing, or emotional sentiment. My goal is singular, and it is mine—with or without you. Come what may, I will get what I want at whatever the cost.

PLAYING THE SECRET DEVIL

Your character is one of ulterior motives, mostly likely selfish ones. All who enter the Devil's space will be used as a tool to accomplish their goals. The Devil may come off as magnanimous and even inspirational in their ambitions, but they are only out for their own good. They are painfully pragmatic, distant, and can even be sociopathic. The Devil wants what the Devil wants, and will do what is needed to get it.

- **Starting Out:** The Secret Devil is restless. They don't see enough forward momentum toward accomplishing their selfish goals. They will use their schemes to drive people into motion so that unexpected and advantageous situations develop.
- **When Rising:** Schemes are working in the Devil's favor. They navigate social interactions like a symphony, bringing people along to their desired ends.
- **When Falling:** The Devil is losing control. They cannot push forward the influence they need to accomplish their goals. They become vindictive, untrustworthy, and dangerous.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

Think about what the Devil wants out of this situation to achieve their end goal. What would most benefit them and their self-focused desires? Then consider what specific goals must they accomplish to reach that end state. Remember, they will do anything to get what they want, but it has to end with their best possible situation. Devils can be turned toward good, but there is always a cost in doing so.

- **Basic Motivation:** To be admired
- **Base Desire:** To be valuable
- **Base Fear:** To be worthless

STATS

The Secret Devil is rooted mostly in Personality, but will use their Instinct as well. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Silver Tongue:
Instinct: 0, Personality: 2, Morality: 0

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing:
Instinct: 1, Personality: 2, Morality: -1

Bad Seed:
Instinct: 1, Personality: 1, Morality: 0

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.

- **Key Trait:** Ambitious, Talented, Motivated, Charismatic, Inspirational
- **When Rising:** Energetic, Infectious, Leading, Powerful, Opportunistic
- **When Falling:** Jealous, Malicious, Narcissistic, Obsessive, Violent

ARC EFFECTS

- If Rising, +1 to Personality.
- If Falling, -1 to Morality.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:
- **What motivates you:** greed, revenge, psychosis, alienation, justice, other
- **What is your secret:** crime, violence, another identity, war, an agenda, other
- **What will redeem you:** love, hope, resolution, nothing, self-realization, other
- **Who have you harmed:** close friend or relative, a stranger, an enemy, a person of notoriety, a group or organization, other
- **How do you present yourself:** friendly, courageous, hopeful, trustworthy, distant, other

THE TRAPPED SOCIALITE

"The bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings."
—Edna, *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin

It may look like I have it all on the surface, and perhaps I do. But there's a lot going on underneath that nobody knows about. I try to keep it hidden, but in reality I stopped caring long ago. All that I care about is meaningless, and all that I love has no true value. I'm imprisoned with expectations and am searching for some sort of direction or purpose, and in my escape I become reckless and hurtful. Life has given me everything anyone can ask for, but I still don't have what I want most: to be who I truly am.

PLAYING THE TRAPPED SOCIALITE

Your character is expected to be and live a specific way and with a particular lifestyle and you may not be comfortable with what it has made you become. You sometimes hurt those that are close to you in effort to break free from a world in which you don't belong. Deep down you struggle to find purpose and meaning, even if they act like the carefree life of the party on the outside. You tend toward chaos to break your social bonds, and don't necessarily care about the collateral damage.

- **Starting Out:** Fun-loving with a flair for drama, but quick to temper. They are prone to emotional outbursts when things don't go their way.
- **When Rising:** The Socialite has begun to find meaning in their life. They will work hard to chase the source that brings them fulfillment.
- **When Falling:** The Socialite has succumbed to the downward spiral. They lash out at people around them and resign themselves to a miserable and unfulfilled state.

CREATING MOTIVATIONS

Think about the one thing the Socialite needs that they do not or cannot have. This thing is a sort of white rabbit that, even when captured, may not fulfill them. However, they consider it to be the Holy Grail of their happiness. That motivation should drive them throughout the story, for better or for worse.

- **Basic Motivation:** To be free
- **Base Desire:** To be satisfied
- **Base Fear:** To be in pain

STATS

The Wounded Socialite is driven mostly by the emotions of their Personality. Choose one of the following arrays for your character's stats:

Life of the Party:
Instinct: 0, Personality: 2, Morality: 0

Crass Companion:
Instinct: -1, Personality: 2, Morality: 1

Chaotic Trickster:
Instinct: 1, Personality: 1, Morality: 0

PERSONALITY

Choose a fundamental key personality trait, a prominent trait when rising, and a prominent trait when falling.

- **Key Trait:** Spontaneous, Enthusiastic, Impulsive, Uninhibited, Emotional
- **When Rising:** Grateful, Joyous, Vivacious, Resilient, Responsive
- **When Falling:** Anxious, Addictive, Abusive, Depressed, Erratic

ARC EFFECTS

- If Rising, +1 to Personality.
- If Falling, -1 to Personality.

BACKSTORY

Choose from the following characteristics to help flesh out your character:
- **Who trapped you:** myself, family, a stranger, society, a cause, a group or organization, other
- **What is your status:** wealthy, famous, leader, bankrupt, outcast, other
- **What drives you:** fame or fortune, reputation, hope, love, desperation, other
- **What will free you:** love, resolve and dedication, status, revenge, nothing, other

THE NOVELIST

"The real novelist, the perfectly simple human being, could go on, indefinitely imaging."

—Virginia Woolf

One can easily compare the Novelist to the Game Master of other games. The Novelist presents the game's setting, plays the Setting Characters, and creates the Setting Conflicts that the Character Players must confront. They are the game's primary arbitrator of the rules, the one guiding the story's narrative (most of the time), and the one who determines when dice need to be rolled.

However, there are a few key differences between the Novelist and a traditional Game Master. Firstly, the Novelist is not in charge of the story. While they do contribute to the story, they primarily allow the Character Players to create their collaborative story. Rather than dictating what happens, the Novelist reacts to what the Novel Characters do, and creates Conflicts for them to overcome.

The Novelist uses Novelist Moves to usher the story forward. These Moves are in-game moments, Conflicts, and occurrences that directly get between the Novel Characters and their motivations. While Novelist Moves usually oppose Novel Characters, they are not used against players. In other words, the moves create interesting Character Conflicts that propel the Novel's story forward—the moves aren't about "winning."

The Novelist keeps track of the gameplay. The players need to immerse themselves in the story's characters, so the Novelist keeps track of the moves, when dice are needed, how those dice rolls are interpreted, and how the rules are interpreted in general.

Finally, the Novelist must also track the pace and content of the emerging story. They ensure the Themes are introduced and addressed, and that the characters move onto the next Chapter when appropriate. They are the Novel's pacemaker, the film's director, and the story's gardener.

AGENDA

Your purpose is to foster, fuel, and facilitate.

FOSTER AN AUTHENTICITY

Create an environment where moments feel real, moving, and memorable.

FUEL HUMAN DRAMA

Draw out character emotions by feeding conflict, strife, and change.

FACILITATE THE EXPERIENCE

Apply structure so the story's literary beats play out to a climax before they resolve.

The Novelist should keep the Character Players on track, and keep story's Themes in focus. Players sometimes find it hard to rise above the experience of playing a Novel Character and tap into the Novel as a whole—their point of view is generally limited to the character.

A Novelist, however, has a broader point of view and watches the characters interact objectively. Their role is to compel, guide, and consult the Character Players so they follow the Chapter structure and work toward make an interesting story.

While the Novelist adjudicates the rules, they are less a judge and more of an advisor. They present options to the Character Players, provide possibilities, and keep the story on track. Most importantly, the Novelist is not an adversary. Yes, they create Conflicts and difficult situations for the Novel Characters; but they are not in opposition. This is the Novelist's story too.

PRINCIPLES

Principles are the Novelist's tools for making the session feel like *The Great American Novel*. Review your principles whenever you sense that the story has stalled, that Character Players don't know what to do, or that content has repeated itself.

COMPEL CHANGE

Characters must be dynamic and should never be comfortable. Look for ways to disrupt their comfort, create scenarios that will cause them to change their behavior, or offer avenues that will change their situation. Ask if Character Players are willing to force a change to better the story.

GET IN THE WAY OF MOTIVATIONS

Motivations drive the story forward by creating Conflicts that get in the way of what characters want. If a character gets what they want, the game's engine has stalled. That is not to say characters should never get what they want, but it should be a journey. There should be obstacles, trials, and pain.

ASK WHAT THE CHARACTER WANTS

Find out why the character is doing what they are doing—it's not enough to want to hit someone or to want to get someone's job back. It's the why. Find out that the character wants to hit someone because they want to hurt them for causing heartache, or they want to get someone's job back to reveal that they are in love.

STEER TOWARD THE CHAPTER

It is the Novelist's job to make sure the Character Players experience all five Chapters of play. When playing the game, it is easy to get wrapped up in the act of playing. At each Chapter's start, declare the Chapter's purpose. During the Chapter, ask questions that guide Character Players toward confronting Conflicts that will move the story into the next Chapter.

MOVE THE SPOTLIGHT

Every Character Player is a critical contributor to the story. Give every Novel Character the spotlight time they deserve. The Novelist needs to be conscious of how long a story has rested with a single character, or a group of them, and how many still need to show their story.

ASK BIG QUESTIONS

Use big questions to bring the Character Players outside their Novel Character's head into the head of the Novel. Ask Character Players what their character is thinking, what they want from a scene, and where they think their Arc is taking their character.

EXPLORE THE DETAILS

This is not a fast-paced blockbuster film—your story is one of heart, human decisions, motivations, and consequences. Slow down and explore the details of what is happening right now, who is there, what they look like. Express what people want through behavior. Explain their tone and tenor. Feel the authentic world around you in the story, notice each detail, and help the Character Players see them too.

CREATING CONFLICT

Create a conflict whenever there is someone or something that gets in the way of what a Novel Character wants. Conflicts can be as general as "Tyranny" or as specific as "Raging Winter Storm." All it takes is writing the conflict down and placing it on the table.

There are three types of Conflicts that a Novel uses: Setting, Chapter, and Character.

SETTING CONFLICTS

Established during Novel Creation, Setting Conflicts remain throughout the entire Novel. Novel Characters may confront and successfully overcome a Setting Conflict once per Chapter— but their threat persists until the end of the game. If overcome, they remain in play and cannot be confronted again until the next Chapter. When a Novel Character successfully confronts a Setting Conflict, simply turn the Setting Conflict card sideways. At the beginning of the next Chapter, turn all Setting Conflicts to their original position to indicate that they can be confronted again.

CHAPTER CONFLICTS

Chapter Conflicts are used during play as obstacles to a character's motivations. You can bring out a Chapter Conflict whenever you feel it is appropriate. If you create one because a Character Player needs to make a move, give that player a Plot Point (remember, you have Narrative Control over the outcome in this case). Chapter Conflicts created by the Novelist should be a very transformative, and should have a serious impact on the character's story. If the Character Player creates a conflict, they must pay a Plot Point (wherein they have Narrative Control).

CHARACTER CONFLICTS

When a Novel Character has a conflict with another character (either Novel Character or Setting Character), Conflicts are created as normal— except only the characters involved can confront or resolve the conflict.

CONFLICT PHASES

A Character Player can only make a move when confronting a conflict. However, the game will feel very passive if the Novelist simple waits for that to happen.

Every time someone creates a conflict, jot down four phases of that conflict: introduction, rise to conflict, climax, resolution. It will be your job to move the conflict through these phases until they are resolved. Not all Conflicts need this level of preparation, but the big ones do—particularly ones tied into the Novel's Themes.

These conflict phases represent what happens if the Novel Characters don't adequately interfere. If players prioritize themselves over the problem or ignore the problem, escalate the situation as appropriate into the next phase.

INTRODUCTION

The conflict should immediately get in the way of something a Novel Character wants (e.g. "You get ready to head to the meeting. But as you step outside, you see the winter storm has grown much worse.").

RISE TO CONFLICT

The conflict escalates as the character strives toward their motivation. This escalation can be harsh and direct if the Character Player rolls a 6 or lower when making a move. The escalation can also be a gentle reminder that they have yet to confront the conflict (e.g. the roads are closed because of the storm, or the car needs time to warm up and you have to scrape the ice).

CLIMAX

> The conflict reaches a tipping point where it must be resolved or it will create major problems for the characters. When it reaches this phase and a Character Player fails to resolve it, the narrative consequences should be dire. Additionally, if Character Players do not attempt to confront it, there should be serious narrative consequences (e.g. the storm creates a citywide power outage or the weight of the snow collapses the building's roof).

RESOLUTION

> Have a boon in mind for when the conflict is resolved. The character that resolves it should be in a better place, narratively (e.g. you arrive at the meeting early, you help your boss along the way, etc.)

THE POWER OF PLOT POINTS

The currency of Narrative Control makes your Novel truly a collaborative storytelling experience. While it is true that as the Novelist you generally drive the story, conceding your power willfully, deliberately, and graciously expands the horizons of the story.

Plot Points remove the barriers of a story's potential, activate multiple points of view, and level the playing field for all players. As a Novelist, encourage the other players to take narrative risks.

Character Players will likely not remember that they can take Narrative Control with Plot Points, or that they can make decisions to earn that power. As the Novelist, you need to remind them.

ANSWER QUESTIONS WITH AN OFFER

Whenever the Character Player wants something to be true about the setting or

situation, that is an opportunity to hand them Narrative Control. If someone asks, "Do we know anyone at the mayor's office?" Answer, "If you pay me a Plot Point, you can tell me."

OFFER TO CREATE A CONFLICT

When a Character Player needs to make a move and no Conflicts are immediately available or appropriate, offer to create a conflict: "You can spend a Plot Point to create a conflict. If you do, you have Narrative Control; or I can give you a Plot Point and I'll have complete control. What do you want to do?"

ARBITRATE MOVES

A Character Player will naturally look to the moves they have access to when confronting a conflict. But you can always ask more about their motivation. Maybe you learn it's appropriate for them to switch their Arc if they pay a Plot Point: "You are very angry about this. Are you sure you don't want to Condemn that person and begin falling?"

NOVELIST MOVES

Whenever the story needs a push, it's time to make a Novelist Move. These Moves create deliberate changes in the fiction that move the story forward, or compel Character Players to confront a Conflict.

Novelist Moves are a framework for being proactive—they are not part of the machine. It is easy, especially in a game that shares Narrative Control, to sit back and only react to the Character Players' actions. However, you must proactively affect the fiction to guide characters through the Chapters, create interesting dilemmas, and funnel the characters toward confronting Conflicts.

You can find the list of the Novelist Moves in the section below.

These Novelist Moves can be hard or soft.

HARD MOVES

Any move that puts a character into a worse position without providing them the opportunity to do something about it. Use Hard Moves when a Novel Character:

- Gets a 6 or less when confronting a conflict, **or**
- Needs to be compelled to confront a conflict that has reached its climax phase.

Any move should drive the fiction forward and create options for the Character Player to act. The move may or may not be violent and certainly can cause physical or psychological harm. But more than that, it must put them in a bad or dramatic situation.

SOFT MOVES

Any move that presents a difficult situation to the Character Player, but gives opportunities to react, nullify, or change course. Soft Moves are a great tool for:

- Handling 7-9 outcomes that require a caveat, **or**
- Guiding Novel Characters toward a conflict that is in the rising phase.

The move will most likely compel the Character Player to change course, but need not require it like a Hard Move would.

NOVELIST MOVES

PRESENT A DILEMMA

Force a situation in the narrative wherein the characters must make a hard choice—perhaps between what they want versus what they need,

or between two potentially bad outcomes.

ESCALATE A CONFLICT

Move a conflict into its next phase. Make sure its escalation is felt and directly impacts the characters.

OFFER AN ARC SWITCH

When a Character Player is about to make a move, present the opportunity to pay a Plot Point and switch Arcs to make the move.

INTERFERE WITH A MOTIVATION

When a Novel Character actively pursues a motivation, put a character or situation in front of them. Get in the way of the character exercising their motivation.

BREAK ALLIANCES

Set up a situation that compels a Novel Character to either move against an ally or support an enemy.

REVEAL A TRUTH

Introduce a new idea, character, setting, or situation that was previously unknown but potentially creates conflict or obstacles toward reaching motivations.

RAISE THE STAKES

Increase a conflict's sense of urgency by adding time constraints or escalated negative outcomes for delay.

TRIGGER A FEAR OR DESIRE

Introduce a new idea, character, setting or situation that compels behavior through a character's fears or desires.

TRAPPINGS

"We can experience nothing but the present moment, live in no other second of time, and to understand this is as close as we can get to eternal life."

—P.D. James

The core game provides a process for players to create their own setting in which to play *The Great American Novel*, which entails picking Themes, lacunae, and Conflicts. However, there may be groups looking for a particular experience that is already well represented in books, TV, film, or stage. The game does very well in nearly all settings and genres and so if there are already trappings for an experience then it can be quickly pulled off the shelf and play.

Trappings in this game refer to the set of Themes, conflicts, character types, and tropes that have to do with a particular setting and/or genre. These can be established from actual media, such as a particular movie or television show, or from a certain genre or sub-genre of books or franchise.

Trappings do not necessarily dictate the exact setting, genre, or characters the group will play, but will provide a common framework from which everyone can draw from. If the group understands the trappings, then everyone is already aligned on what to expect from the game and parameters are easily set. They work great for one-shots or conventions where you need to quickly set expectations and get directly to play.

The trappings in this section are design for groups that want to just pull something out of the book to play. They are defined by setting, timeframe, or genre and layout a plug-and-play framework so you can just get the game to the table.

THE FRENCH QUARTER RENAISSANCE
New Orleans, 1920s

"There are few who can visit her for the first time without delight; and few who can ever leave her without regret; and none who can forget her strange charm when they have once felt its influence."
—*Creole Sketches*, Lafcadio Hearn

It has been said that if New York City is the head of the United States, than New Orleans is the heart. The city's rich, vast, and sordid history goes far beyond the birth of the country and involves nations from all over the world. There are many decades that equally define the true nature of the Crescent City, but above them all the 1920s has a particular *je ne sais quoi*.

While the rest of the country was under the yoke of Prohibition, New Orleans simply didn't care. Bootleggers and politicians alike made a fortune trading in booze and when

gambling was added to the mix so much more the merrier.

Like other major cities at the time, New Orleans enjoyed a roaring economy. But like much of the city itself, New Orleans' prosperity was built on soft foundations. Until the 20th century, New Orleans had been a hub for trade and transit, and the country's largest port. However, as railway trade expanded throughout the region, it threatened the fortunes of many old money families.

It was an exciting time and ripe for many wonderful stories, touching on countless themes. But at the heart of it, a story about New Orleans is a story about the collision of the old world and the new, and the emulsification of so many different cultures and people that make up America.

THEMES

There are many themes to explore during this time. Some of the obvious of course is the birth of jazz, the decadent lifestyle, and the infusion of a huge variety of cultures. But deeper themes persist. Systemic segregation and racism, the powerful politics of Mardis Gras Krewes as the wealthy whites kept out everyone from people of color to non-Catholics. Then there is the great divide between the rich and the poor and the struggles of those outside the city.

BOHEMIAN LIFE

The world-famous French Quarter was in decay at this time and so the rundown shops and shotgun houses were readily affordable--this attracted writers, artists and actors including the famous William Faulkner--who produced the literary magazine "The Double Dealer" in the 20s. Artists and writers incubated the *Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre*.

Lacunae to Consider

This time period is highly racially charged, especially in New Orleans. Additionally the Bohemian culture was not a very safe place for women. Your novel can address these difficult themes as long as everyone is on board and is willing to work through them in an honest way. However, it may be appropriate to omit some of these themes in favor of keeping the novel focused on the overall post-war Bohemian feel and lifestyle.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these phases of the conflict represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

DOWN WITH THE RICH

A group of bohemians rally together to do a revolutionary act against the wealthy in the Garden District.

Introduction: Famous authors and artists gather in a coffee shop

Rise to Conflict: They rally to set fire to Garden District mansions

Climax: They march to the Garden District set fire to homes and pillage

Resolution: Violence escalates and they are arrested

RAUNCHY THEATRE

Actors decide to express their inner desires with a risque stag show at the *Le Petit Theatre du Vieu Carre*.

Introduction: Actors and writers get together to produce a risque performance

Rise to Conflict: They spread word of the performance, community pressure works to shut them down

Climax: They move forward

Resolution: The show is shut down by the authorities and the theatre closed

RENT

Writers and artists live together in a French Quarter house but their landlord's generosity is drying up.

Introduction: Authors and artists live together in a French Quarter mansion

Rise to Conflict: The landlord insists on raising the rent to drive them out
Climax: They protest for their rate to stay and produce their craft

Resolution: The landlord has them evicted

JAZZ

It is no secret that New Orleans was the birthplace of jazz. The unique melting pot of the city forged a union between African drums and European horns and nourished in the city's African-American community, before becoming America's most beloved music. By the 1920s jazz into a mainstream pastime and was churning out legends like King Oliver and Louis Armstrong before moving their genius to Chicago.

The 1920s represented an enormous wave of jazz culture pushing America with its magic before it became the undisputed popular music of the swing era later in the 1930s and 1940s. This decade saw the birth of the Charleston and Tin Roof Blues standards and the rise of the improvised solo.

There were many reasons for the explosion of jazz and its mainstreaming into national popularity during this time. It is certain that prohibition fueled it as jazz took off in juke joints and speakeasies, providing easy access to alcohol. It became as much of a cultural marker as a musical one. Jazz represented the birth of a new age and the sunsetting of the old conservative ways. While the 1920s was a great time for New Orleans jazz, it was a bad time for jazz in New Orleans. As racial tensions and violence persisted and the economy fluctuated, many of the jazz greats left for Chicago, New York, and Europe.

Lacunae to Consider

In many ways jazz and prohibition was the great equalizer in New Orleans, however the definite racial tension between the have and have-nots cannot be understated. Jazz was definitively African-American music and while there were other ethnicities that enjoyed and played, the specific cultural and ethnic roots inherent in 1920s jazz would be largely taken away as it became popular. It is difficult to tell a story of jazz without telling the story of race. It was a very dangerous time for people of color and the table should be clear how much will be revealed in the story and where the boundaries are.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these phases of the conflict represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

THE NEW KING

A performer is rising from the juke joints that people believe to be the next Louis Armstrong.

Introduction: Juke joint performance reveals a very talented performer that has a new jazz standard

Rise to Conflict: The bad elements of the city, such as poverty and institutional racism, begin bringing down the performer and their small band

Climax: They are removed from the schedule of a prominent white club that would turn their fate around

Resolution: The performer and band fall into ruin

THE JUKE JOINT

A beloved Juke Joint faces closure by political enemies.

Introduction: The hottest place in town is a secret juke joint in the French Quarter called "The Bayou"

Rise to Conflict: The owners get into a spat when an unruly wealthy man was ejected from the club

Climax: The menace gets prohibition officers to expose the juke joint
Resolution: The place is raided by the authorities and closed

BATTLE OF THE BANDS

Upstart jazz musicians enter a friendly contest to define the best band in New Orleans, but run into resistance from locals.

Introduction: Local clubs get together to promote a new battle of the bands, where all will compete for jazz supremacy

Rise to Conflict: The parish will not allow the battle of the bands to go on in the French Quarter because of fear for riots and crime

Climax: The battle of the bands continues, but New Orleans police come to disband it

Resolution: Many are arrested and violence erupts

MARDIS GRAS

It is impossible to think of New Orleans and not think about Mardis Gras. We may know the sensationalized version of Fat Tuesday rather well--gaudy parades, costumes, revelry, alcohol, beads, kings and queens--the list goes on. But there is far more to this tradition than meets the eye and the 1920s is the perfect decade to really dive into Mardis Gras, the parades, and the

krewes that run them.

On the surface, Mardis Gras is a Catholic celebration that basically allows people to "get it out of their system" before moving into Ash Wednesday. In Louisiana the tradition goes all the way back to the 18th century. It was effectively a French festival embraced by the region complete with processions, masks, costumes, and debauchery. In 1856 wealthy businessmen decided to formalize Mardis Gras into a parade, creating the first Mardis Gras Krewe: Mystick Krewe of Comus. This was done largely to keep affluent white people at the forefront of the event and to exclude people of other ethnicities and backgrounds. This started a trend and many krewes were formed over the years, including ones that were not exclusive, such as Zulu. It wouldn't be until 1991 until krewes had to stop discriminating over race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

The krewes were secret societies, requiring initiation and they held a tremendous amount of political power in the city. In the 1920s their parades were much like they are now, except that the inner circle and royal courts were truly royalty. The crème de la crèm participated in the balls and no one else was invited.

Lacunae to Consider

It seems the same difficult themes we've found with Jazz and Bohemians exist also with Mardis Gras. The very nature of most of the krewes was exclusionary. It is important to understand how this will play out at the table and to make sure the limits are clearly defined.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these phases of the conflict represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

THE ODD KREWE

A nefarious krewe is secretly planning to cause mayhem at Mardis Gras to better their position against another krewe.

Introduction: A very exclusive krewe is secretly formed and begins to make its presence known

Rise to Conflict: The krewe begins to anonymously threaten certain prominent members of the city with violence and worst

Climax: They expose the identities and secrets of the rival krewe and publicly shame them

Resolution: Those who are exposed are ruined

BIGOTRY

A highly exclusive krewe learns about the religion of one of its members and rejects them.

Introduction: A well-regarded and exclusive Krewe prepares for Fat Tuesday

Rise to Conflict: A political rival exposes that a non-Catholic member of the Krewe

Climax: The Krewe confronts the member

Resolution: They are rejected and cast out

BACK TO THE ROOTS

A group of working people want to form their own krewe but are blocked by the krewes.

Introduction: local workers and artists get together to form a krewe for the people

Rise to Conflict: The other krewes go to the parish to block their official formation

Climax: The new krewe fights in court

Resolution: The parish blocks the formation of their krewe

THE SKELETONS OF TINSELTOWN
Los Angeles, 1940s

"I never knew her in life. She exists for me through others, in evidence of the ways her death drove them."
—James Ellroy, *The Black Dahlia*

It's hard to remember that before the 1940s, Los Angeles (and by extension Hollywood) was a small, sleepy town. Its first boom came after film production moved from New York and brought out silent film studios and eventually television. By the 1940s, the film industry was in a golden age.

But something else brought a boom in the 1940s: World War II. Southern California became a massive military industrial center for the war. Not only that, the city expanded.

Its expansion annexed neighbors and brought stretching freeways with the streetcar between them all (which would

eventually go out of business as freeways and the automobile lobby took over).

The population boomed in the 1940s, ballooning past the population of almost 40 states—becoming home to one in every 40 U.S. citizens. With this boom came a dark underbelly. The government and police force were notoriously corrupt.

Many neighborhoods were built to be exclusively white, driving African Americans and Mexican Americans into their own neighborhoods—many of whom were lured into the city for jobs.

During this time, Los Angeles was also the epicenter of World War II xenophobia. The Federal Government forced 80,000 Japanese Americans out of their homes to internment camps for most of the decade.

Los Angeles in the 1940s can present any number of stories, ranging from WWII U.S., institutional racism, corruption, to Hollywood.

THEMES

Los Angeles presents several themes and genres. Games can center around the history of the place from several points of view, whether it is the war, Hollywood, municipal corruption, or institutional racism.

In addition, your story could embrace the noir genre— certainly a staple of the 1940s, and the perfect setting for a classic murder mystery or cynical exploration of crime and justice.

There is also room for recreating the classic films of the era, such as Casa Blanca, Double Indemnity, Citizen Kane, or The Maltese Falcon.

WARTIME U.S.A.

Los Angeles is perhaps a perfect diorama of America during World War II. The enormous war effort brought nearly every industry to the city and in so doing, populations with it.

The war affected all aspects of aspects of life, and the effort created much of what the city is known for today. But the byproduct was toxic, full of fear and racism—exploding into situations such as Japanese American internment, false air raid alarms, and public panic.

Lacunae to Consider

There is no doubt that this is an unpleasant time in U.S. history. One of the most heinous actions the U.S. government took on its own citizens occurred in this decade and city. Your group does not have to deal with the horrific internment of Japanese Americans and the city infrastructure that created decades of institutional racism in Los Angeles, however they can hardly be ignored. If your story is about these moments in our history, make sure the players are on board, and clearly define what content will be left in play and what will not. Choosing Wartime U.S.A. as a theme should challenge your storytelling. It can be an opportunity to explore difficult themes for a very troubled time.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066

Japanese American communities are evacuated and 80,000 people are put into internment camps in response to the war.

Introduction: In 1942, President Roosevelt issued the executive order in response to the attack on Pearl Harbor

Rise to Conflict: The Western Defense Command ordered Japanese Americans to present themselves for evacuation

Climax: The "evacuees" are taken to temporary assembly centers and then eventually into WRA camps

Resolution: The order is suspended in 1944. It takes an additional two years to transition everyone out of the camps. They must rebuild their lives they once had.

BATTLE OF LOS ANGELES

Following Pearl Harbor and an attack near Santa Barbara in early 1942. It leads to a false alarm that causes widespread panic in the city.

Introduction: The city is in a state of tension over the Santa Barbara attack

Rise to Conflict: Gunners on the hills of L.A. believe they see an enemy aircraft and open fire with anti-aircraft weapons

Climax: An air raid alert and gunner shells fire over the city, causing major damage in Santa Monica and Long Beach

Resolution: The raid turns out to be a false alarm

THE EFFORT

Those that are left behind struggle while their loved ones are serving abroad.

Introduction: Loved one are called into service

Rise to Conflict: A day-to-day struggle of getting work done and dealing with the absence of loved ones

Climax: Word of a major battle, loved ones are lost

Resolution: Work to reconcile what was lost as the war ends

L.A. NOIR

Detective fiction, noir, and pulp had been thriving long before the 1940s. However, they blossomed on the silver screen during this decade and created much of what would become the genre's standard.

The often L.A.-focused genre utilized innovations in film technology for its dark cinematography. It cast anti-heroes as a focus, and presented a cynical view of crime, justice, and society. The tropes came from this era include: venetian blinds, betrayal, femme fatales, the colorful voice over—what a wonderful toybox to draw from for your story.

Lacunae to Consider

The noir genre is often misogynistic, lacking representation, and will sometimes present issues around consent as well as violence against women. Playing true to the genre does not necessarily mean these themes need to be carried forward. Discuss with players what content is included and what content is omitted altogether. Where are the boundaries for casual misogony?

You may also want to explore Lacunae having to do with the genre itself—do you want to do it as is, or mix up the gender of the primary character archetypes? Bring in people of color? Or take it off the rails altogether and edge into parody (Who Framed Roger Rabbit?), or bring it into the future (Bladerunner)? Use Lacunae to set your expectations of what noir means in your story.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

BAD PARTNERSHIP

The head of a company is murdered. The several parties interested in their investments and those who are connected are all suspects.

Introduction: Prominent tycoon found dead

Rise to Conflict: The police investigate several suspects with either business or personal motives to kill them

Climax: The murderer is found out

Resolution: The murderer tries to take everyone down with them

TROUBLED PEOPLE

A group of friends or acquaintances are down on their luck. They go forward with a scheme.

Introduction: A group of friends or acquaintances (club, travel companions, etc.) realize they are all having money problems

Rise to Conflict: They organize a heist or theft

Climax: They are caught or go on the run, and their lives fall apart

Resolution: They must face the consequences

SWIP-SWAP

Strangers go into a murder plot together.

Introduction: Strangers meet in a common place (like a train)

Rise to Conflict: They discover they have serious reasons to murder someone they know

Climax: They decide to do each other's murder

Resolution: They must face the consequences as things fall apart

THE PICTURES

Tinseltown arguably came of age in the 1940s, when the movie industry exploded following the war. It brought the quintessential Hollywood starlet, the power directors, and career performers that are still considered household names decades later.

Studios were extremely powerful during this time, eliminating many independent studios so only a handful of creators were making films. They churned through these films too, putting stars into annual contracts. The rise of the war movie, musicals, the film noir, gangster movies, and even World War II propaganda all took flight during this time.

Amidst all of the success in Hollywood, there were troubles both external and internal. The corruption in the studio system pushed out anyone who did not kowtow to studio demands, and of course kept people of color out. Studios and celebrity directors pressured women into compromising themselves and worse.

Outside of Hollywood, the Red Scare began taking its toll in the late 1940s. Congress investigated Hollywood looking for liberal stars, producers, or directors that were communists. The situation escalated, and many were jailed, starting a wave of anti-communist and anti-Hollywood rhetoric that lasted for over two decades.

Lacunae to Consider

Apart from obvious conversations around the lack of people of color in Hollywood and rampant misogyny, the table should discuss the nature of their story overall. Should the focus be on the industry and working in it, or on the industry's social and political challenges?

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

THE GREAT WAR PICTURE

The Office of War Information (OWI) works to change the creative input of a particular production to promote propaganda.

Introduction: Studio green lights a war movie designed to be more realistic and gritty

Rise to Conflict: The OWI insists on major changes that degrade the film's integrity and

quality to promote propaganda

Climax: The filmmakers refuse to make the changes

Resolution: The film is shut down, and the filmmakers are fired

RISING STAR

A studio hires unknown actors for their next feature.

Introduction: Actors audition for the new picture

Rise to Conflict: They get the role. However, they must deal with all of the pressures, personal conflicts, and internal politics of films

Climax: The film is made and received well

Resolution: They become stars

DEATH OF THE INDEPENDENTS

An independent studio struggles to stay alive in the studio system.

Introduction: An independent studio is trying to fund a new movie with people of color

Rise to Conflict: The studios fight against the production and use nefarious tactics to sabotage the film

Climax: The studio pushes through to make and distribute the film

Resolution: Pressures from the studio system mean the independent studio closes after its first production

MATERIAL WORLD IN THE WINDY CITY
Chicago, 1980s

"Our Lady of Blessed Acceleration, don't fail me now."
—Elwood Blues, *The Blues Brothers*

Chicago in the 1980s may not stand out as much as its other decades—particularly when one considers Prohibition, or the turn of the century, and the Chicago fire. However, for the precepts of *The Great American Novel*, it's important to find a good place for a "slice of life." While Chicago in the 1980s was not without its problems, it can be viewed as quintessential America during this time. There was a strong urban cosmopolitan center beholden to the fast-paced devil-may-care economics of the decade, there was a vast suburbia embodying a sort of everyday Americana, there was the cultural scene embodied by Chicago Blues, and the comedy scene that fed the careers of legends. There is a zeitgeist of pop

culture heavily in sync with the period, and there is the dramatic disparity between the haves and the have-nots when exploring the Gold Coast versus the projects of South Chicago, like Caprini Green.

1980s Chicago is the perfect setting to play out almost any 1980s-focused scenario, whether it be the soap operas of high school, or the struggles of urban families in a forsaken and crime-ridden neighborhood. This setting can also work for the "kids on bikes" genre—especially if one breaks out of the suburbs into rural Northern Illinois, focusing on a community that surrounds a government facility, or a farming community struck by a series of unusual events.

THEMES

Themes for Chicago 1980s range from highly fictional to extremely poignant, and many places in between. To that end, we will focus on three very different experiences to demonstrate how themes can be brought out when there are plenty of trappings to draw from.

HIGHSCHOOL DRAMA

One of the more defining characteristics of Chicago in the 1980s were the slew of "brat pack" movies and their kin. The standard John Hughes formula set in a suburban high school works well in *The Great American Novel*, where one experiences the trials and drama of fitting in. You could also go the other way, and focus on an exceedingly brilliant life at high school that creates its own form of drama.

Lacunae to Consider

Many films in this genre did not age well. They share countless tropes involving sexism, homophobia, racism, transphobia, and rape culture, amongst others. Playing out a particular genre does not mean you need to bring forward these problematic tropes—not for the sake of the genre.

However, if you want to honestly explore or challenge those tropes with a constructive lens. In this case, use Lacunae to clearly establish lines and identify what is acceptable content for your game—especially in a genre that makes light of serious situations like trauma or assault. Make sure everyone is on the same page.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

DETENTION

A group of students from different cliques must attend an all-day detention on a Saturday.

Introduction: Students from different cliques are brought into the library for detention

Rise to Conflict: They begin to explore their differences and come to odds with each other

Climax: The students dodge serious trouble with the principal by bonding and working together

Resolution: The students leave detention without cliques

COMING OF AGE

High school students must navigate personal trouble as they prepare for prom.

Introduction: Prom is announced along with very strict rules that students must follow, or they can't go

Rise to Conflict: Students encounter personal dramas as the prom approaches. They avoid trouble with the school while finding their true selves among the school cliques

Climax: A serious infraction occurs. Students must rally around each other to make sure everyone gets to prom

Resolution: Students get what they want and celebrate friendship and young love

PLAYING HOOKIE

Popular students play sick and explore Chicago.

Introduction: High school seniors play sick and stay home

Rise to Conflict: They have a grand day out, while avoiding parents and the principal

Climax: They are almost caught as they try to get home in time

Resolution: They relish the good time they have before adulthood must begin

BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE SECOND CITY

During the 1980s, Chicago was the second largest city in the country and was in many ways the symbol of American life. Boasting the world's tallest building, an incredible cultural scene, and the financial epicenter of the midwest, it became the focus of Hollywood, literature, and television—especially for those tired of hearing about Old New York, but wanted some of the same stories.

During this time period, we can explore many themes that were pertinent to America as a whole in the 1980s, but localize them here. Some of these themes are difficult to handle. But they can create transformative stories with the power to teach us a great deal about our society.

In this theme, we'll look closer at some major issues that impacted America at the time, localized in Chicago. Specifically, the AIDS crisis, the disparity between affluent Whites and African Americans, and the blue collar crash from automobile and steel.

Lacunae to Consider

The themes in this section are an intentionally hard-hitting exploration of 1980s American society. One can easily get lost in the movies and TV shows that presented Chicago in the 1980s and forget about what was occurring beneath the surface. These are challenging stories that explore some dark parts of our society and the many disenfranchised people that struggled through it.

There are issues of race, poverty, the social attitudes around LGBTQ+ communities, corruption, violence, and crime. Before playing, come to an agreement about where the lines are, and how you will keep the storytelling authentic and honest with the time.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

AIDS CRISIS

Beginning in the early 1980s, the AIDS epidemic spread quickly and ruthlessly, hitting Chicago's LGBTQ+ community.

Introduction: The community is devastated by the AIDS epidemic

Rise to Conflict: The community strives together through demonstrations and marches to force the city into action

Climax: The situation escalates, and Ronald Reagan finally speaks on the epidemic in 1985

Resolution: After thousands dead, the community creates the PRIDE movement to change the political tide

SOUTH CHICAGO WAR

Following the massive layoffs in the 1970s, gangs take hold in South Chicago.

Introduction: A huge influx of Mexican American populations move into South Chicago following the neighborhood's economic collapse

Rise to Conflict: African American gangs and Mexican American gangs fight for territory

Climax: South Chicago becomes a war zone between the gangs

Resolution: The situation escalates in the following decade as devastation continues

THE RECESSION

The 1980s Recession destroys jobs in Chicago.

Introduction: Tens of thousands are laid off from auto and steel

Rise to Conflict: Families try to make ends meet, fall into poverty, or turn to crime

Climax: Neighborhoods are abandoned as people move away

Resolution: The poorer parts of the city live in the shadow of wealth along the coast

GETTING THE BAND BACK TOGETHER

It's hard to talk about 1980s Chicago and not think about the incredible blues revival that followed *The Blues Brothers*—a blockbuster hit and classic Chicago-defining film. The cast of talent that rocked the screen in 1980 would help define a new era of interest in a declining artform. While it may be presumptuous to say any of the legends that appeared in that movie maintained popular success, it is easy enough to say that they enjoyed a

renewed interest.

Chicago blues came to the city following the Great Migration, when African Americans moved to the north after the Reconstruction. Chicago embraced blues, famous for playing in the open-air market on Maxwell Street in the 1930s and 1940s. Blues was largely played in clubs on the South Side in predominately African American neighborhoods.

The unique sound was defined by electric guitars, horns, and the harmonica. The roots of it would live long in rock and roll, and launched legends like Muddy Waters, B.B. King, and Buddy Guy. Chicago blues became massively popular and defined generations of music.

In this theme, the best musicians are brought out of their comfortable lives to hit the clubs once again for a good cause. A nod to The Blues Brothers, yes, but a story unto itself.

Lacunae to Consider

It is important to recognize the purpose of this particular story. Race, poverty, and the degradation of neighborhoods can come into the story, of course. But this story's spirit honors and recognizes a true American artform—celebrating the music and the musical legends behind it. Make sure everyone understands what story you're telling and its limits when creating Lacunae.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

MISSION FROM GOD

The only way to save the closure of a beloved Catholic school is to perform the fundraising concert of the century.

Introduction: A Catholic school in South Chicago is going to be closed

Rise to Conflict: The band needs to get all of the members back together to perform a fundraising concert

Climax: The band has trouble getting the performance off without a hitch—possibly legal trouble (and car chases)

Resolution: The concert is a success and the school is saved

SELLING OUT

A record label wants the band to compromise their music by making it more commercial.

Introduction: A band is brought back together to record a new album for a major record company

Rise to Conflict: The band is asked to compromise their art, change lyrics, or change the sound to make it more mainstream

Climax: The band produces what they believe is an authentic sound

Resolution: The record sees major success in spite of the company's misgivings

BATTLE OF THE BANDS

The band forms late in their career to participate in a battle of the bands

Introduction: A long-split band gets back together to participate in a huge battle of the bands event

Rise to Conflict: They must reconcile past problems, come together against the odds, and work as a group

Climax: The big event comes, and they perform

Resolution: They win the event, or if not, find what is truly important to them

SILVER STATE BOOM
Colorado, 1870s

"Go west, young man, and grow up with the country."
　—Horace Greeley

Colorado during the 1870s is one of the few time periods that exemplifies a taming of the Wild West into the civilized world of industry. Still a territory for half of the decade, Colorado became a state during its famous silver rush. Mining took hold of the region, and the close of the Civil War brought prospectors in by the hundreds of thousands.

Much of what we consider the "Old West" was alive and well in Colorado during this time. Legendary gunfighters like Buffalo Bill and Doc Holliday made the territory their home. Quintessential mining towns spotted the landscapes, each with their saloons and gambling halls. Silverton, Leadville, Cripple Creek, Durango, and countless others grew with silver, gold, and

lead rushes.

But with the westward expansion came trouble. The territory, like much of the west, was trying to formalize into statehood. Terrible wars broke out with the Native Americans—first with the Colorado War that ended in the 1860s with the relocation of several Native American tribes (including the Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho, and Cheyenne) into the Oklahoma following the Sand Creek Massacre tragedy. But the trouble didn't end there. Wars erupted with the Utes throughout the 70s, ending with a massacre in White River with an Indian agent. The massacre resulted in U.S. government intervention, the displacement of the Utes, and a national call for Native Americans to forsake their heritage.

Colorado can give us everything from the Native American experience to the Spaghetti Western. The setting is ripe for a variety of experiences and stories.

THEMES

Colorado has a rich history during this time period that can generate any number of stories. The themes outlined below provide a broad set of choices. Firstly, the urban center of the west provides stories of cities finding their own and pivoting themselves to be the center of newly-born states. Your game can also explore the frontier and what would be called the "Wild West" prevalent throughout the territory. You could also delve into the wars between settlers and the Native Americans who lost their treaties and were violently pushed out of their lands. While the themes are broad, the stories bring forward an intimate, quintessential snapshot of Americana during the transition from wilderness to civilization.

BOOM TOWN

Until the 1870s, what would become the capital of Colorado, Denver, was considered a frontier town. While rather large and the center of commerce for the territory, it was not the cosmopolitan city of a Chicago or San Francisco. However, the silver rush changed all of that.

Business boomed, and when the decade was up, it was considered every bit as cosmopolitan as San Francisco or Chicago. In the following decade, it would get an opera house and a railroad—and the rest would be history. The city grew

from 5,000 people to more than 100,000 during this decade, and the only city larger in the west was San Francisco.

Lacunae to Consider

Denver was, in many ways, on the forefront of culture having worked so hard to become a cosmopolitan center. Women's suffrage came early here (1893). Museums, theatres, and cultural institutions were built and praised. Potential Lacunae include general considerations for cultural issues, racism, and misogyny. However, the Lacunae for this theme may focus more on what aspects of 19th century urban life the table wants to explore.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

BUILDING A LANDMARK

Businesspeople and investors descend upon Denver to create a landmark worth of a cosmopolitan metropolis.

Introduction: A group gets together to build a cultural institution, such as a museum, train station, or theatre

Rise to Conflict: They struggle to raise money and public support

Climax: They work to secure enough deals to get it done

Resolution: The institution is built and becomes a landmark

NEW LIFE

A family moves to the city to start a new life.

Introduction: A family arrives and takes a lay of the land

Rise to Conflict: They try to find employment and their place in the community

Climax: They struggle to make ends meet and to keep the dream alive

Resolution: They stay or they don't depending upon what happens

MILE-HIGH SPIRITUALISTS

A community of spiritualists are taking hold of the urban center.

Introduction: Wealthy spiritualists get together to practice

Rise to Conflict: They build a business and following, but are scrutinized by the public

Climax: They are accused of fraud and defamed

Resolution: The spiritualists fade into obscurity, or they rebuild trust depending upon what happens

WILD WEST

We are quite familiar with the fictionalized Wild West from a long tradition of movies and television shows, whether it be the old John Wayne movies, Clint Eastwood's *The Good the Bad and the Ugly*, the relatively historical *Tombstone*, the less so *Young Guns* and *Young Guns II,* and more recently *Deadwood* and *Westworld*. The tropes are easy to capture, and Colorado in the 1870s embodies them well.

While the bank robbery craze of Butch Cassidy didn't hit until the 1880s, there was plenty of the "Wild West" to go around. Gun legends like Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, and Buffalo Bill were regulars in the territory. While in the late 70s Billy the

Kid and his Regulators were largely in New Mexico, they did make their way to southwest Colorado often enough.

There are plenty of themes to uncover here—whether it be a feud over land rights, the struggles of building a business in a lawless town, the vindication of wrong doings, the challenge of keeping the peace, simple robbery, or the gunslingers and their ilk embody this time and place.

Lacunae to Consider

There are several ways your story can go, so Lacunae should be used for two purposes. Firstly, establish the limits on historical issues, such as racism against Chinese American populations, the wars and brutality served upon Native Americans (during this decade, this would largely relate to the Utes), violence against women, prostitution, and others. Secondly, Lacunae should also define the tone and tropes.

Does your table want to play a heavily romanticized version of the Old West, like the sweeping ballads of the 1960s, or the action-packed sumari style of spaghetti western? Or will it be gritty and realistic like *Deadwood* or *Tombstone*—or perhaps a mix? Use Lacunae to define the exact experience everyone wants.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

LAWLESS TOWN

Prospectors move into a town (such as Silverton or Cripple Creek) to seek their fortune, but the town is overrun by criminal gangs.

Introduction: The town is booming from silver, gold, or lead. However, a notorious gang of gunslingers are running the law

Rise to Conflict: Prospectors and other gunslingers band together to create law so their businesses can thrive

Climax: There is a final confrontation and gunfight where the good guys take on the bad guys

Resolution: Law remains, and the town can thrive

GREAT ROBBERY

A gang of outlaws sweep through Colorado, stealing from banks.

Introduction: A gang is formed from people down on their luck or who want revenge against the mining towns

Rise to Conflict: The gang goes on a crime spree, hitting many towns throughout Colorado

Climax: The law pursues them into the wilderness

Resolution: They are put down and put away, their reign of terror over

PROSPECTING

Prospectors come to a new boom town.

Introduction: Prospectors arrive in a brand new boom town (silver or gold)

Rise to Conflict: There is intense competition to secure land and to keep and protect claims

Climax: Several prospectors fall into conflict, perhaps violently

Resolution: Claims are resolved. Either the boom busts, or they make a legacy in the town

UTE WARS

Tensions between white settlers and the Native Americans in Colorado went all the way back to before the 1860s when the extremely bloody Colorado Wars took place, including the infamous Sand Creek Massacre. There, the U.S. Army slaughtered a village of Cheyenne and Arapaho people, killing and mutilating as many as 500 Native Americans, many of whom were women and children.

The Utes' troubles continued after the other tribes were forced into Oklahoma. While Ute land was protected by treaties, few of the settlers respected that. Several high profile chiefs, such as Ouray, were working hard on Washington for rights, and within the tribes for integration—but that effort was met with a lot of hostility from both Native Americans and whites.

The conflict escalated when Meeker was appointed as an Indian agent. He tried to force the Utes out of their hunter/gatherer ways and into farming, while at the same time indoctrinating them with religion.

After a particularly harsh altercation with Meeker, the Utes massacred the agency office and also a U.S. Army post. The retaliation was ruthless, and the Utes were eventually driven out of Colorado. The lands subsequently opened up to prospectors for the new state's largest land grab in history.

Lacunae to Consider

There is a lot to unpack here, and none of it is pretty. The events in Colorado replayed events Native Americans suffered throughout their history, whether they were the Iroquois, Cherokee, or Apache. In many ways, Colorado was the closing Chapter of Manifest Destiny.

How far does your story want to go, and where are your limits? If you are playing Native Americans, are you prepared to leave the stereotypes and harmful tropes behind? If you play the settlers, are you prepared to do so without playing out the atrocities they committed?

Use Lacunae to set clear, respectful boundaries around the Native American legacy, while at the same time avoiding the settlers' dangerous points of view. Tackle this story as reformers, not as perpetrators. And while you are doing so, be sure not to fall into a "white knight" narrative, wherein white settlers "save" the Native Americans.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

CIVILIZING THE SAVAGES

Indian Agency works to change the Ute way with the goal of integrating Utes into white society.

Introduction: Indian Agency introduces new regulations for the Utes, including schooling, church, and agricultural training

Rise to Conflict: There is a division amongst the tribe about whether they should integrate. The 1859ers also encroach on lands protected by the treaty

Climax: Tensions explode into violence

Resolution: The Utes lose their treaties and are driven out

TREATIES

Ute political leaders work for and against each other to manage the Indian Agency and the ongoing treaty violations.

Introduction: Ute chiefs and leaders gather to figure out how to handle the ongoing tensions

Rise to Conflict: There is a divide about keeping the Ute ways or integrating into white society

Climax: Certain members are cast out, but try to broker peace

Resolution: The Utes lose their treaties and are driven out

59ERS

Prospectors work with and against the Utes over land claims.

Introduction: Prospectors seek out their claims and violate land treaties

Rise to Conflict: There is conflict between the Utes and settlers

Climax: Skirmishes and violence erupts

Resolution: The Utes lose their treaties and are driven out

DEVIL IN THE COLONIES
New England, 1692

"Until an hour before the Devil fell, God thought him beautiful in Heaven."

—Arthur Miller, The Crucible

The Puritan colonies of New England were already well established by the time the Salem Witch Trials permanently scarred America's history. Unlike their pilgrim predecessors, the Puritan colonies created a strong network of trade with England, and even elected officials that worked locally with royal governors.

The colonies were very independent of one another—it would take a revolution to unify them three-quarters of a century later. In the 1690s, every colony was left to govern themselves as they saw fit.

The Puritans of New England, particularly in Massachusetts, ruled by the laws of Calvinism, which were deeply entrenched in a strict and reverent Protestant faith. They came to the New World to build a Christian Utopia, far from the perils of Catholic Europe.

Amidst all of the drama inherit in the land feuds, religious zealotry, and political ideology, this setting focuses on the Salem Witch Trials. Few times in America history have we encountered such a phenomena; so memorable, it remains in the American zeitgeist to this day.

While there was an undercurrent of local politics, the real core of the scenario was the collapse of the "city on a hill" ideology where government and religion were inexorably mixed, heated tensions with a new charter that demanded English law, and constant warfare in the nearby frontier as the colonies continued to brutally encroach upon Native American lands. Above this confluence of uncertainty and fear, the Massachusetts colonists as well most of the civilized world believed in witches and feared that the devil would tear down their community of God as it was an affront to him.

This fear was rooted in superstition, but also targeted women in particular, because of the Puritan belief that women were inherently sinful and so would succumb to temptation and the powers of witchcraft before men. This tragedy unfolded as an overt and targeted attack on women in these Puritan societies, especially those without children or that were unmarried. Property was seized and as accusations escalated no one was safe from the noose, including godly women and some men of the church, and even a minister.

By the time the ordeal was stopped by Governor Phipps in 1693, twenty people were hung, mostly women, and five died in jail.

The events that led to the trials provide more than enough to write many novels—the relentless prosecutions, the motivations behind them, and the marks the trials left on society. This author highly suggests listening to Season 1 of Aaron Mahnke's podcast "Unobscured," where he dives deeply into the trials, the context for how and why they happened, and a realistic perspective of what it would have been like. Taking that journey will make your game far more in depth and powerful.

THEMES

This particular section focuses on the Salem Witch Trials themselves. Those that know the trials (even a little) will know about the historical individuals involved. If your table contains experts, that's fine. But it's best to take the setting in the abstract, and make your own characters with their own motivations and experiences.

SALEM VILLAGE VERSUS TOWN

The urban port of Salem held a lot of influence over the colony and were the beneficiaries of land deals and prosperity. Salem Town's success caused conflict with Salem Village. Salem Village had to make-do with what they considered to be the "scraps" of the town, lacking the political power, money, or even the luxury of time to pull influence.

The Town was more affluent, politically powerful, and considered more reverent, as they had ready access to the church and its community. As a result, the Town took the brunt of the trials. They found themselves on the wrong end of the accusations, trying desperately to save their reputation, property, and lives against a riled-up village eager to get their due.

Lacunae to Consider

A story about Salem Town will focus not only on wealth and privilege, but on the subjection of women who underwent heinous violence and causeless hangings. 80% of the trials targeted women and was a state-sanctioned attack on them. In addition, slaves were considered "other" and if not agents of the Devil, susceptible to him.

The Putnam slave Tituba was one of the very first accused and to save herself she accused many others of witchcraft and in many ways became ground zero for what was toc come. Additionally, native americans were especially considered agents of the Devil and to an almost equal extent Catholics and Quakers.

Beyond the normal Lacunae you'd consider, the table should identify what parts of the trial they'd like to explore, and what they'd rather avoid. How will violence against women be handled? The racism against people of color and Native Americans? The xenophobia of non-Puritans?

At what point do you fade to back while still honoring the reality of how men justified their actions with religion and political station? Is the focus on the actual trials, what led up to the trials, the devastation the trials had on the families, women, and people of the town, or the political grandstanding? Use Lacunae to limit what you want to explore to keep the story focused and cohesive.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

POLITICAL RIVALRY

An affluent family is accused of witchcraft out of retaliation.

Introduction: The accusations begin

Rise to Conflict: A family is accused of witchcraft by rivals in the village who lost a property dispute with them years ago

Climax: The family is brought to trial

Resolution: They are hung for witchcraft

EXONERATION

A well-beloved woman is accused of witchcraft.

Introduction: A beloved and reverent woman is accused

Rise to Conflict: The town works together to get her exonerated

Climax: She makes it to trial, and it's up to the town's people to get the accusations thrown out. Unfortunately, theatrics are brought into the courtroom

Resolution: The town isn't able to refute the court

APPEAL TO SANITY

Town leaders try to escalate the situation to higher magistrates.

Introduction: The trials begin

Rise to Conflict: Well-regarded members of the town try to get the governor to interfere

Climax: The governor refuses to interfere with local law

Resolution: The governor's wife is accused, so the governor comes to shut down the trials

THE AFFLICTED

The Salem Witch Trials sparked from accusations by a group of young teenage girls—who the people involved in the trials called the Afflicted. It started as a single accusation, then spread to be hundreds, sweeping through the entire region. While it is unclear what set it off, there are many theories—many of which are political and not only religious, but in any case were justified by the currents of fear, prejudice, racism, and the subjection of women.

The girls at the centerpiece of the trials testified in unison against the people of Salem. They spoke of being bewitched, and of the horrible things they witnessed, such as spectral forms of the witches provoking them and visions of the Devil imploring them to sign his book.

Some of the girls were likely taking direction from their parents, as is believed with some of the prominent families of Salem Village, if not to fight what they thought was the attack of the Devil on their sanctuary, then to settle age-old quarrels with other families. Some were simply caught up in the hysteria and theatrics of it all.

Others perhaps were celebrating a newfound power to move the mountains of their community by appealing to the superstitions of the day.

Playing your Novel from the Afflicteds' viewpoint is a unique way to explore the history of the trials. It would be a powerful story to dive deep into the accusers' motivations, what enabled them, and how they managed to allow things to get so far.

Lacunae to Consider

A great deal of Lacunae should be discussed if the table is going to play teenage girls, first of which—what limits will you place on violence, sex, or abuse? Secondly, does the group have triggers around playing teenagers when these themes are in play? What are the boundaries on playing out the innate and violent misogyny as a product of religious views? It is important to realize that playing out these scenarios is a way to understand the realities of them, however, the table should ultimately be clear about the boundaries of their storytelling and to be sure the darkness is played out for the right reasons.

Additionally, as the trials unfolded and powerful players were involved, particularly politically or religiously charged ones, the girls were gaslighted into perpetuating the accusations. Even one of the Afflicted in later years, Mary Warren, would admit to as much as and expressed her regret for being a victim of it. This type of gaslighting can be triggering for certain players, so be sure to discuss it during your lacunae process as well.

On a different and more minor scale, also discuss Lacunae on whether you'll play historical figures from the trials, or create new characters with stories that complement history without sticking to the script.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

REVENGE

The Afflicted are encouraged and set up by their parents to destroy their political enemies.

Introduction: One night of hysteria leads the parents of a family

Rise to Conflict: The teenagers are primed and cajoled into making accusations

Climax: They are brought to trial and must testify

Resolution: Their testimonies cause hangings

THE TRIALS

A single incident triggers the trials.

Introduction: Something odd, violent, or unusual happens that triggers stories of witchcraft

Rise to Conflict: The teenagers get wrapped up in the stories and believe them and are encouraged to perpetuate it.

Climax: The accusations spread and is fed by the community leading to the trials

Resolution: They believe, or behave as if they believe, they were bewitched

REGRET

The teenagers accuse as a game, but their accusation is taken seriously.

Introduction: The teenagers pull off an elaborate trick/prank with their households to accuse someone of witchcraft

Rise to Conflict: The community takes their accusations seriously
Climax: They have to abide by the accusations or suffer retaliation

Resolution: They live with what was done

THE AFTERMATH

What happens after the Salem Witch Trials? They were over in less than two years and women were unjustly abused, tortured, beaten, intimidated and killed. God-fearing respected women were hung. Elders grew sick and died in the jails from wretched conditions. Women were shackled, men were tortured--one tortured to death. Property was relentlessly seized and for unmarried women and widows, completely revoked. Families were in tatters. Those that resisted the accusations to support the accused taken to task. Even for the time, those outside of Puritan communities saw the tragedy for what it was. The justice system was re-evaluated, and laws were forever changed.

There are several angles you could take when playing out this story, whether it be the family recovering from losing loved ones to the trials, or other families that benefited from the accusations after settling old quarrels. It could also be taken from the point of view of the Afflicted, and how they lived in remorse or went into hiding. You could also explore the courts, the internal struggle to re-evaluate their system as the new charter forced them to align with English law, and the beginning of an era without spectral evidence coupled with a more judicious approach to accusations. The fallout from the trials was far reaching. It pressed upon the integrity of the very institutions in place to protect the community, whether they be religious or political.

Lacunae to Consider

Use Lacunae to fine-tune the particular experience you are after. Is it a game about retribution, change, or loss? Pinpoint the driving emotion for the story, and limit your choices to create a powerful experience.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

THE COURTS

Magistrates and the governor make changes.

Introduction: Colony officials take toll

Rise to Conflict: They struggle to implement unpopular legal change

Climax: They work to remove spectral evidence

Resolution: The system is locked to prevent another situation

GRIEF

A family reconciles their losses from the trial.

Introduction: A family loses one or more loved ones to the trial

Rise to Conflict: They work to rebuild their place in the community

Climax: They struggle to achieve normalcy

Resolution: They fall apart from the tragedy

FLIGHT

The accusers fall into turmoil.

Introduction: As the trials conclude, attention moves to the accusers

Rise to Conflict: They try to save face and rebuild their lives

Climax: Fear, uncertainty, and pressure causes them to buckle

Resolution: They seek out a new life

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE
New York, 1920s and 1930s

"Harlem
What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore--
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over--
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?"

—Langston Hughes

The northern neighborhood of Manhattan was home to an enormously significant literature, art, and cultural movement in the 1920s. New York—and Harlem specifically—saw a transformational influx of African Americans as a result of the Great Migration, when millions of African Americans moved to northern cities as a reaction to institutional racism and the Jim Crow laws.

Harlem became an African American community in the early 1900s when various African American realtors and church groups bought a large block in the neighborhood. Following the Reconstruction and during the First World War, hundreds of thousands of African Americans moved into the city, attracted by what had become a cultural center for people of color.

The Harlem Renaissance itself was born out of several concurrent cultural events, including the premiere of Thee Plays for a Negro Theatre by Ridgley Torrence, who conveyed a realistic portrait of African Americans that rejected the traditional racist black face troops. And in 1919 Claude McKay published "If We Must Die," which defied racism and lynching. "The New Negro Movement," as it was called, was captured by the Liberty League's The Voice, which emphasized politics and the arts.

By 1920, a full literary and art movement was in motion; it saw popularization of intellectual discourse on religion, politics, and African American identity, as well as novels, blues, jazz, fashion, and art. The movement broke down precepts about race, worked to transform white views on African Americans, and popularized African American art, literature, and music. The cultural changes as a result of the Harlem Renaissance laid the foundation for major sociological shifts which can still be felt today.

Lacunae to Consider

This setting is an exploration of racial identity that can make a gaming group uncomfortable. However, the story of the Harlem Renaissance is about the creation of an African American identity for the first time since slavery, and a rejection of Jim Crow and institutional racism.

It is about Americans defining themselves and their place in history through celebrating art, intellectual freedom, poetry, and music. It is about African Americans making themselves equal, and building the stage that would ultimately change the entire country. For those with privilege, this is a difficult story to tell. Use Lacunae to set the boundaries.

But I think there is someone who can explain this concern better. Chris Spivey, creator of ENnie Award Winning RPG Harlem Unbound has this to say in his game's introduction:

"You are trying something new, and you're probably going to wonder if you're doing it right. If you screw up, it's okay. Acknowledge it, and do better next time. We are talking about race, sexuality, and untangling history, and missteps will happen. This is serious stuff within what people consider "light" escapism, but gaming can be that and so much more. Dust yourself off, pick up your dice, and get back to playing. Harlem is waiting."

I strongly recommend you buy *Harlem Unbound*. Chris Spivey did far more for the Harlem Renaissance than this small trappings section can accomplish. The themes and approach in that game work just as well without the Cthulhu motif. If you are not a person of color and have difficulty with this setting, his game can help on that front too. As he said in the game, "And no, white people can never really understand the impact of insidious racism. But we're gamers. We embrace the idea of living different lives through play—and each time we do, we learn something new. If we're lucky, we reach a better understanding of people different from ourselves, and learn to empathize with the 'other.'"

Use this opportunity to define other Lacunae based upon your table's comfort level. Violence against African Americans was and still is very real and prevalent throughout the U.S. And while there was a shift in how some Whites interacted with Blacks in Harlem, violence didn't stop there either. Discuss everyone's limits and make sure everyone is aligned.

THEMES

The majority of themes coming from the Harlem Renaissance will involve art, music, literature, and culture to provoke immediate change. The movement is spiritual, political, and cultural. The themes should reflect that.

LAFAYETTE THEATRE

A cultural touchstone, the Lafayette Theatre became a de facto location for social movement. The New Negro Movement started on street corners as eloquent speakers stood on soap boxes rallying the community against systemic racism, violence against blacks, rent gouging, and the need for human rights.

From gatherings and rallies like these, the people of Harlem found their footing and organized for political and social change. Community organizers and groups such as The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) fueled the movement in Harlem. Some of the community groups would clash with one another over their approach, methods, or message. The discourse was heated, highly political, and rooted strongly in rhetoric, performance, music, and poetry.

This theme involves the community's organizational challenges, the pressures of the white community to keep the movement contained, and the political movement that fanned the flame of activism and culture.

Lacunae to Consider

As all of the Harlem-focused Lacunae are still in place, exploring this theme also brings up religion and politics. Determine how the table will interact with these topics, and establish if any other boundaries are needed.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

INTERNAL CLASH

Two groups within the movement go up against each other.

Introduction: Two rallying groups at the theatre are in conflict about their methods

Rise to Conflict: The groups get increasingly hostile with one another

Climax: The hostility becomes personal and causes rifts in the community

Resolution: The group leaders come together

THE NEW PLAY

The theatre puts on a highly political production.

Introduction: Activists in the theatre prepare for a very political production

Rise to Conflict: Pressure from politicians outside of Harlem rally to shut down the production

Climax: The production commences

Resolution: The theatre becomes a landmark for the movement

POWER OF WORDS

A poetry group forms.

Introduction: A group of poets decide to organize at the theatre

Rise to Conflict: They publish poetry that challenges the system

Climax: Their poetry incites violence by outsiders who come into Harlem

Resolution: The outsiders are driven out

UNDERWORLD BLUES

The smoky liquor-fueled blues havens throughout the city, embodied in cabarets, speakeasies, and clubs, were host to some of the most stylish, cool, and talented people in New York.

In these places, people could be who they were, do what they wanted to do, and fuel a life with spirits and music that the rest of the world couldn't access.

Harlem's blues scene was unlike anything else. Legends were born there, it was a musical phenomenon that defined a generation, and it became the roots of popular mainstream music.

Amidst the cultural explosion in the clubs was a renaissance of a different type of identity. Empowered young women rejected their predecessors' fashions, cut their hair, revealed their skin, and embraced their personal identities even if those identities were previously taboo.

Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessy Smith, and Gladys Bentley were some of many blues performers that openly presented their sexuality, while ushering in a popularity and love for music that transcended the boundaries of Harlem and spilled out all over the world. The blues and jazz scene boasted some legendary talents including Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong. And many of them played at the Whites-only Cotton Club, where they could perform, but could not patronize.

Lacunae to Consider

> The clubs and speakeasies of Harlem embraced promiscuity. There are many sexual themes, so the table should discuss those boundaries. In addition, while the subcurrent of Harlem culture accepted LGBTQ+ culture and identities, the African American upper class, Methodists, and Catholic populations definitely did not--and neither did the police and courts.
> The table should discuss boundaries regarding bigotry, and oppressing sexuality in women and queer populations.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases of the conflict represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

ALL THAT JAZZ

A thriving club comes under attack for their larger than life performers.

Introduction: A club with LGBTQ+ performers becomes popular

Rise to Conflict: Conservative populations work to shut it down

Climax: The performers are beloved by Harlem, and through the support of the community fight to stay open

Resolution: Their music becomes the stuff of legends

THE COTTON CLUB

Performers work to get into the Cotton Club.

Introduction: The Cotton Club is a whites only club featuring African American performers

Rise to Conflict: White audiences come to the club and go into Harlem's nightlife

Climax: Local cabarets struggle to compete

Resolution: Local cabarets and clubs cannot stay open

PROHIBITION

A club is under fire from feds.

Introduction: A popular speakeasy club

Rise to Conflict: The club is closed by the feds for serving liquor

Climax: They have to find a way to rebuild
Resolution: They open it up for business in the face of adversity

NUMBERS

The illegal gambling operation, Numbers, thrived in Harlem during the 1920s. There were major organized criminal operations raking in an incredible amount of cash.

The numbers racket was essentially an illegal lottery where several different Policy Banks collected bets on what the daily numbers would be (usually determined by the last three digits of the amount bet at the daily race). The system would actually evolve into legal state lottery programs.

In Harlem, Numbers was run by African American organized crime groups. These groups facilitated large banks, each large enough to handle twenty city blocks of participants. The practice survived despite police crackdowns, as it was very lucrative.

By the 1920s Numbers (or also called Policy) became the biggest black-owned business in the world. During the 1920s, the racket was largely controlled by Casper Holstein and the Madam Queen of Policy, Stephanie St. Clair, who kept the police paid off. During the 1920s, the racket stayed largely with Harlem residents and gangsters, keeping it out of the Mafia's hands.

Lacunae to Consider

Beyond the already expressed Harlem Lacunae, a story about Numbers could explore levels of criminal violence. Gambling also brings to light themes about betrayal, the collapse of families, addiction, etc. There may be a lot of Lacunae to unpack if you go down certain paths. Use this as an opportunity to set everyone's boundaries on these themes and topics.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

CORRUPT POLICY

A numbers racket is rigged.

Introduction: It comes to light that a particular Policy Bank is rigging the numbers

Rise to Conflict: A group forms to take on the corruption

Climax: The confrontation ends in violence

Resolution: The Policy Bank is disbanded or absorbed into another

MAFIA

The Mafia tries to get into the Numbers racket.

Introduction: Members of the Mafia try to infiltrate Numbers

Rise to Conflict: The Policy Banks work together to keep the Mafia out

Climax: The Mafia confronts the leaders of the racket

Resolution: They manage to keep Mafia interest out

NYPD

The racket is under investigation by the police department.

Introduction: Big Policy Banks are under investigation

Rise to Conflict: The banks try to get out of prosecution

Climax: They are arrested and brought to trial

Resolution: They pay off the courts and police to make the problem go away

OTHER TRAPPINGS

"Life, although it may only be an accumulation of anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it."

—Mary Shelley

The default setting for *The Great American Novel* is as mentioned in earlier sections: realistic stories that are uniquely Americana. However, the framework behind this tabletop RPG can be used in any setting where character motivation and conflcit is emphasized more than plot. During the development of this game, we have seen it work well in everything from *The Godfather* to *The Avengers*. Any story that is character-driven.

The following section of trappings explores beyond only Americana. Some of them look at other places and periods of history, and some are entirely fantastical. Each of them make full use of the framework, however, and will operate just as it did with America-focused stories.

As a Novelist, you can set up any trappings that you want and get buy-in from your table. Sometimes, simply calling up a popular pop cultural reference will help align everyone with the same expectations. If you dig into film, theatre, and fiction you'll find many trappings that may appear like an action/plot-focused experience, but that are really about characters.

In this section, there are trappings that were decided upon by the crowdfunders of the project in 2019 (in addition to the Harlem Rennaissance trappings in the prior section). The competition for material was fierce, but the following trappings won out, and provide a broad breadth of experience from which to draw.

SEELIE COURT OF THE FAY
Mythology

"Faerie is a perilous land, and in it are pitfalls for the unwary, and dungeons for the overbold."

—J.R.R. Tolkien

Tales from Faerie are nearly as old as Western civilization, and the name "faerie" equally so. Faerie is a traditional realm, what certain modern roleplaying games may call the Feywild. Its inhabitants are faeries, which Modern English derived into fairy (singular) or fay (plural)—as opposed to "fey," which is a type of fairy. For this game, we'll stick with fay and fairy from the Faerie realm.

The Seelie Court came out of Scottish mythology—which introduces two types of fay, those considered generally well-intentioned (seelie) and those that are not (unseely). The fay that you think of in folklore are most likely part of the Seelie Court. Later authors, namely W.B. Yeats, actually applied a sort of nobility to them.

Whatever the different fay traditions, the Seelie Court consists of beautiful and helpful folk who cause mischief for their own pleasure, but who will protect people, give them warnings, and guide them through dangerous lands.

However, should one fall prey to their shenanigans, life can be very difficult. They may not realize the impact their magic or mischief has on people. And as loving as they are to those who are worthy, they are ruthless to those who are not. As humans encroach upon their lands, they may resort to terrible things before being driven back into Faerie. And for those unfortunate human folk that end up in Faerie—well, that's a novel in and of itself.

THEMES

This setting explores the interactions between humans and the friendly fay. The many stories to explore include: what happens when fay are betrayed, or if their livelihood is in trouble? How do the fay guide others to safety and why? What would happen to a human who ended up in Faerie? These themes and more should provide a sometimes whimsical, sometimes dark tale right out of the old world.

FAY SHENANIGANS

Seelie Fay are naturally prone to fun and pleasure. Because they have unnaturally long lives, their interpretation of "fun" and "pleasurable" may differ from a mortals. They can be tricksters, but not necessarily malicious ones. They may use their magic to trick people, coerce them into certain behavior, or take advantage of their mortality. Being magical creatures, they may not have a complete understanding of how their fun will impact mortals.

Fay trickery comes straight out of fairy tales, and can lead to a variety of stories ranging from the humorous to the horrific. Telling the story either from a fay or mortal point of view can dramatically change the nature of the story as well.

Lacunae to Consider

Fairy fiction often involves the benevolent trickery of a whimsical but powerful creature, and the inadvertent harm caused to mortals. These stories can manifest in a loss of control or consent for the mortal character—such as being forced to dance or even darker concepts. Clearly define where the limits and boundaries are on consent with your players. Additionally, as fay are described as pleasure-focused, consider adding Lacunae around sexual content and intimacy.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

LUCK OF THE FAY

A rural family that practices the old ways seeks help from the fay in their lives.

Introduction: A family makes offerings for the forest creatures every night

Rise to Conflict: Misfortune strikes the family as they contend with poverty, illness, and strife with neighbors

Climax: They seek the fay's help to set things straight. The fay cause good-natured mayhem throughout their village

Resolution: The family is ostracized as practitioners of dark magic

INTO THE WOODS

Young people go into the forest and meet the fay.

Introduction: Young people leave their village

and go into the forest to explore

Rise to Conflict: They encounter a fay circle and search for fay, who play pranks on them

Climax: The fay cause them to dance and play in the circle, but they cannot stop

Resolution: Their curse of unstoppable dancing spreads to the village, harming many before it is dispelled

KIN OF THE FAY

A fay child is left to be reared by a village.

Introduction: Fay parade into the village to present a fay and human child

Rise to Conflict: The village adopts the child and tries to raise them as a human

Climax: The child's powers blossom and causes strife in the village

Resolution: The child is rejected by the village and returned to the fay

THE FAY EXODUS

As a product of the natural world whilst existing on the horizon of reality, the fay keep their distance from humans. They place a veil over the Realm of Faerie, but live and play in the forests and wild parts of the world.

After humanity embraced civilization and industrialization, the places available to the fay began to dwindle. The last bastions of fay would eventually leave the world for Faerie, taking their magic with them. This story is told throughout literature and various forms, such as the Elves of Middle-Earth leaving to the west, or tales of fay losing their wings if they aren't believed, the Lost Boys staying as children in Neverland, and even in modern day Santa Claus stories where the power of the elves, St. Nick,

and the reindeer come from belief.

These stories are an allegory for losing the old world in favor for an industrial one, rooted in practical science. The fay have no place in a world without mystery. These stories can explore the loss of the old and making way for the new. You can easily set them at the dawn of the industrial revolution as villages fall beholden to factories, as the old way of life transforms into one of regimented productivity, machines, and pragmatism.

Lacunae to Consider

In addition to regular Lacunae discussions (sexism, racism, and other cultural issues), take this moment to think about the topics you want to exclude. Players wanting to focus the Novel on the point of view of children playing on the outskirts of a factory town would add adults as Lacunae. Conversely, maybe the adults must say goodbye to the old world before shutting down the veil to Faerie for the last time. Perhaps the Novel is entirely from the fay's point of view as they increasingly become inert, sickened, or saddened, having to leave a world that has no place for them anymore.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

THE FACTORY

As factories and roads begin to industrialize a remote village, the village loses touch with fay.

Introduction: A factory is built in a once remote village

Rise to Conflict: The villagers lose touch with the fay, with whom they relied upon for generations

Climax: Roads are built through the fay domain

Resolution: The last of the fay are forced to leave

THE THINNING VEIL

The last remnants of the Faerie Realm are protected by children.

Introduction: In a highly industrialized area, children find a crossing to the Faerie Realm

Rise to Conflict: They make contact with the fay. They learn about the fay and the old ways

Climax: The town makes plans to bulldoze the area for a new development

Resolution: The children protect it from destruction and save the crossing

THE FAY FIGHT BACK

A troop of fay defend their home.

Introduction: A city builds a suburb and uncovers a fay dwelling

Rise to Conflict: The fay fight back against development using trickery and other types of magic

Climax: The developers try to find out what is happening so they can stop the cause

Resolution: The fay make things so difficult the developers have no choice but to stop

REALM OF FAERIE

What happens when humans cross over the veil to Faerie? There are countless tales that explore this idea, whether it be Peter Pan, The Chronicles of Narnia, or even Gulliver's Travels. The Faerie Realm is often portrayed as a fantastical and magical world full of dangers and splendors.

The fay themselves may be represented in the traditional sense, or as the elves of Tolkien, the goblins and brownies of fairy tales, or even the holiday creatures of the North Pole. They

may even have civilizations in Faerie, with their own mythical creatures and awe-inspiring landscapes.

Whatever the setting, the stories are always about a human's unprepared, innocent, and curious crossing of the veil into a fantastic realm where they must find their true purpose or understand their true selves. A story of this kind is indeed about the fay and their realm. But it is also about the humans that crossover, and how they change by finding the old world.

Once they have crossed, the story can be about their adventures there, or it could be about them trying to find their way back. Perhaps there is something that must be found in order to save the real world, or something in the real world that must be found to save the Faerie. There are many different themes to draw on as you construct this unique experience.

Lacunae to Consider

Use Lacunae to identify the experience your table wants. Begin by limiting what tropes and settings you don't want. The Realm of Faerie can be a vast and broad setting to wrestle with, leaving options open for anything from *Dungeons & Dragons* to *Pan's Labyrinth*. Use Lacunae to omit the settings you don't want to explore. This process should help narrow down and identify what particular experience the table is after.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

THE VERY STEEP HILL

Young people fall down a hill and end up in Faerie with no way to return home.

Introduction: Normal, everyday teenagers stumble into Faerie by accident

Rise to Conflict: They struggle to find their way
Climax: They must undergo a series of tests to prove their worth to the fay

Resolution: The fay end up guiding them home

THE NOTHING

Faerie is being destroyed, and the real world must save it.

Introduction: Humans that believe in fay learn that it is being consumed by darkness

Rise to Conflict: They must revive belief in the fay to rebuild what was lost

Climax: They struggle through Faerie to connect it back to the real world

Resolution: They save a kernel of Faerie so it can be rebuilt

MISSING CHILD

A child goes missing and is found in the Faerie Realm.

Introduction: A child goes missing, and the town looks for them

Rise to Conflict: Clues lead them to a Faerie Crossing

Climax: Loved ones must rescue the child from the fay who don't want them to leave

Resolution: They make a bargain with the fay to let the child go

THE MISTS OF LONDON
Victorian Gothic, 1850s-1910

"Behind every exquisite thing that existed, there was something tragic."

—Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

A quintessential literary genre, the Victorian Gothic emerged from traditional Gothic fiction and Gothic horror, both of which focused on horror, death, and romance. Traditional Gothic generally uses a sweeping romantic approach to confront horror and terror. It was made popular as early as the 1760s with the definitive work *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole.

Victorian Gothic was something a bit different—an evolution of the traditional Gothic genre. The genre transposed traditional Gothic-romance, horror, violence, and the supernatural to

somewhere familiar. In this case, urban England in the "modern" Victorian day. The trend began in the early 1830s with "penny dreadful" literature—pulp serialized magazines with short horror fiction that give us timeless characters like Sweeney Todd and Varney the Vampire.

Victorian Gothic's rise in popularity sparked an innovation in literature and lead to legendary works like *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and, of course, Bram Stroker's *Dracula*. Edgar Allan Poe was truly the pinnacle of Victorian Gothic, focusing on the psychological terror of everyman when confronted with horror. Charles Dickens also heavily wrapped his tales in the cloak of the dark and bleak urban fog.

But still, history overlooks the influential women who authored genre-defining Gothic works, like Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, and Charlotte Bronte. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* defined Victorian Gothic in ways no one else did and even redefined the horror genre in general. She introduced the idea of an internal struggle against monsters of one's own creation. Much later, Shirley Jackson, an American, kicked off a catalog of books in the U.S. with elements of Victorian Gothic that would go on to inspire Neil Gaiman, Stephen King, and other household horror names.

But what is Victorian Gothic exactly? It's a feel. A mood. An expression of the darkness within everyday people and their internal horrors. It would fuel the noir movement, inspire the Lovecraft movement, and ultimately become the staple signature of horror for generations. It is the castle on the hill, the supernatural villain, and the personal trials against madness as one fights their own personal demons.

THEMES

Victorian Gothic represents very specific themes and although few, they offer a host of stories that explore countless experiences. The story is usually set in a bleak urban environment around a large architectural center, such as a castle, monastery, or religious dwelling. The primary difference between Victorian Gothic and other versions of Gothic is its roots in the city, and the trials and horrors of urban living. Of course, there are exceptions, as some authors explore villages, remote locations, or distant lands—although the idea of a foggy London is fairly quintessential.

Additionally, the Victorian Gothic tends to use tropes such as young virtuous women put in peril, a hero that challenges a tyrant or villain, a weak or villainous clergy, and the wiles of bandits and ruffians. Victorian Gothic tends to focus on horror both by introducing the supernatural to everyday environments, and also the capacity for everyday people to become monsters. Stories often explore descents into madness, and subversly present social themes such as the oppression of women, and the doomed class structure of the haves and have-nots.

THE GOTHIC VAMPIRE

The most quintessential Victorian Gothic story is Dracula. That story was rooted in the penny dreadfuls of the day, perhaps derived from Varney the Vampire, which presented many of the tropes we associate with Bram Stoker—including the "sympathetic vampire," the curse of vampirism, fangs and the puncture wounds of the necks of victims, focusing on sleeping women as prey, hypnotic powers, and superhuman strength.

At its core, the Gothic vampire is a story of a sympathetic monster, damned for sins, and their internal conflict as they wrestle with the curse, struggle to regain humanity, and ultimately succumb to the beast within. These tropes remain largely unchanged after Bram Stoker pursued them to the point of legend.

Lacunae to Consider

Most of us are familiar with the Gothic vampire trappings, and as we all well know, there are entire RPG franchises that deal heavily with these themes. However, for the purposes of a narrative-driven game, one should consider the realities of the story. Specifically, vampirism is truly about the revocation of consent, whether it be the unwilling individual cursed with vampirism, or through the seduction and rape of a vampire's victims. These are difficult themes to combat when telling a literary story. You should consciously choose to embrace these themes with the appropriate boundaries defined, or agree on what other themes will be the focus.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

EVIL DESCENDS UPON LONDON

A vampire of noble blood has moved into London and is looking to establish a place.

Introduction: A noble moves from the countryside into London

Rise to Conflict: Tales of missing persons begin to escalate

Climax: Investigations reveal the true nature of the evil

Resolution: The vampire makes a permanent home there

THE CURSE

A tragic character is cursed with vampirism.

Introduction: A person loses everything

Rise to Conflict: A vampire takes pity on them and transforms them

Climax: The person has to live now with a curse and rejects all that are around them

Resolution: They begin an eternal struggle for redemption

THE COUNT

A mysterious noble takes in a new heir.

Introduction: A mysterious noble far in the countryside has summoned visitors

Rise to Conflict: They travel far into the woods and find the castle where supernatural occurrences take them by storm

Climax: They confront the vampire when he is revealed

Resolution: They become cursed as well and join the vampire in his world

FEMININE GOTHIC

Feminine Gothic emerged from Victorian Gothic and was defined by authors like Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, and Charlotte Bronte—and then later Shirley Jackson. These stories, often involving ghosts and hauntings, demonstrated how women were trapped in their lives. This expression inverted traditional Gothic stories, which typically followed a hero combating evil to protect a young innocent woman. The genre also tends to attack patriarchal society by expressing women's fear and entrapment in their traditional roles.

The Feminine Gothic often centers around hauntings or some supernatural terror that eventually turns out to be mundane. The heroine will find the horrors of the real world supercede the supernatural horrors.

This genre really subverts the expectations of horror, reveals the truly horrifying in the world, and resets the reader's expectations on what fiction should do. The stories focus on women who are persecuted and must flee their fate, such as with a villainous father or tyrannical church, and then search for an absent mother or a place of sanctuary. The genre tends to embrace ghost stories because there are only so many times you can draw from bad families and terrible marriages before they become overused.

Ultimately the fiction is metaphorical, but highly realistic. It was a way for women confined by society to express its inherent problems using the literary devices of horror to demonstrate the plight. So, while there is horror, and sometimes the supernatural, the real story focuses on a woman's struggle in her society. She either overcomes the societal barriers in her world, or succumbs to them.

Lacunae to Consider

There are always challenges when dealing with socio-political movements in literature. Some groups simply may want a *Haunting of Hill House* scenario—or *Frankenstein*. Those stories can be told without the undercurrent of the messages Feminine Gothic authors used. However, doing so is a disservice to the genre. Use Lacunae to set boundaries on these themes for sure, as well as tone.

Discuss your game's tone and how you can honor the source material before taking on this particular theme. To explore Feminine Gothic is to explore the challenges of a patriarchal society, but in a subversive way. Instead of relying on tropes, work to subvert them together—explore the depth of this theme.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

THE HAUNTING

A group visits a notoriously haunted house for research.

Introduction: Researchers commit to staying at a haunted house

Rise to Conflict: The spirits of the house reveal personal horrors

Climax: The researchers confront their past and the past of the spirits

Resolution: The spirits drive them out

OPERA GHOST

A spirit haunts the Opera House and forces its will upon the cast and crew.

Introduction: New management comes into the opera house and learn of the ghost

Rise to Conflict: The ghost insists a chorus castmember be put in the lead as it has been tutoring her voice

Climax: The management refuses and the ghost causes havoc and devastation

Resolution: The ghost turns out to be a disfigured and talented person in love with the castmember

DEVIL SPAWN

A family is tricked into caring for a demon.

Introduction: A family is taken in by a secret cult

Rise to Conflict: The cult insists that they care for a child that is secretly a demon

Climax: They confront the dangers of the child, but are gaslighted into accepting it

Resolution: They become corrupted by the cult as the child is raised

PSYCHOLOGICAL GOTHIC

Ranging from Edgar Allan Poe's exploration of how the supernatural leads to madness or Robert Louis Stevenson's exploration of the dichotomy of man, psychological horror has its roots in Victorian Gothic. This theme focuses on doom, death, and madness—often triggered by personal demons, but not always. Sometimes the supernatural is enough to push a person over.

The psychological brand of Gothic focuses on a character's journey as they navigate an increasingly terrifying world, just as their own world begins to fall apart. But like other gothic stories,

it is a romantic exploration, a sweeping series of tragedies and horrific moments that brings the characters to their brink.

> **Lacunae to Consider**
>
> When dealing with any story that focuses on mental illness, one must be careful about how it is portrayed. Lacunae should address the boundaries of how mental disabilities and disorders are handled, and the care that must be taken with them. Avoid using this theme to belittle mental disorder or to make a caricature of it.

MURDERER

London is beset by an elusive serial killer.

Introduction: Several murders turn up in London over a brief period

Rise to Conflict: The murderer seeks out victims

Climax: The villain is confronted

Resolution: The villain is dispatched, but at a terrible cost

HORROR OF REGRET

A group must deal with the revenge of a wronged soul.

Introduction: A group expeirenced a terrible atrocity that ended with the death of innocents

Rise to Conflict: The spirits of the innocents antagonize them through supernatural events

Climax: They are confronted with their remorse

Resolution: They must atone for what they did

THE SECRET SOCIETY

A mysterious high society club takes in victims.

Introduction: Unlikely working class people are invited into a high society club

Rise to Conflict: The members try terrible social experiments on them

Climax: They confront their worst fears as they are captured by the society

Resolution: They must escape or succumb to madness

ERA OF THE SHOGUN
Feudal Japan, 1185 CE - 1868 CE

"Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of the wise. Seek what they sought."

—Matsuo Basho

For over 700 years of Japanese history, the samurai ran the empire. Military leaders of the land, the shogun, ruled their territories and fought with one another over many civil wars for supremacy during these centuries. This legacy founded a military tradition unlike anything the world had seen—and with it, a subsequent romanticism of its culture. The samurai, the cult of honor, and the bushido code.

Feudal Japan covers an extensive time period, but there are hallmarks within the era to help circumnavigate your story— such as the Edo period. The Edo period 1603 and 1868 are

perhaps the most well-known and quintessential years within feudal Japan. Japan was under the leadership of the Tokugawa shogunate with 300 regional daimyo. This period was perhaps when the bushido way of life was the most strict, and when the country was the most stable—however, it was also the epicenter of traditional courtly politics.

The Edo period focused on an elaborate social structure where nobles, shogun, daimyo, and feudal lords spent lifetimes fighting political and social wars, instead of real ones. During this time, the samurai were forced to leave their lands and serve the shogun in Edo—the glorious wars were over, and so began their new lot to be vassals and statespeople.

A story before the Edo period would explore the wars between shogun, the rise and supremacy of samurai as warriors, and the mastery of the daimyo who led regions by force, strong-arming the emperor to do as they please.

Bushido, the common thread throughout all of this, is the "way of the warriors"—a strict code that defined the samurai way of life. Born with the teachings of Confucius, bushido was the hallmark of the Edo period. It rose late in the feudal era, and waned with the collapse of the samurai during the Boshin Wars at the end of the feudal era.

When playing with the themes surrounding feudal Japan, we are really addressing one of two realities. First, the gritty and war-infested centuries of strife and conflict; or secondly, the mythological and epic stories that came long after those times.

You can play in-between, however decide if your story is a realistic take on the shogunate, their societies, and the life of their soldiers, or a romantic take following the drama of honor and the surrounding courtly politics.

THEMES

While there are almost a thousand years to cover, a group can settle on specific overarching themes that may or may not correspond to a particular era. You can explore the persistent strict class structure of feudal Japan at any point in the era.

Additionally, decide if the story is a gritty and realistic approach to what happened in this era, or a romanticized one. As is true with this era of history all over the world, the two are definitely not the same. The desire to play a sweeping epic around the samurai is quite different from playing their reality.

Both are captivating and important stories to tell. However, it is critical that all players follow the same approach so they know whether or not to lean into the appropriate tropes and themes.

THE NEW SAMURAI

After the Tokugawa shogunate took total control over the empire, the role of the samurai fundamentally shifted. Once unbridled professional warriors, they were now forced to serve the daimyo exclusively as vassals of the state. For the samurai, a life of war transformed into a life of court. This was also the time the bushido code was established.

Bushido, the way of the warriors, is a collection of codes of honor that define a samurai's way of life, something akin to the European concept of Chivalry. It was the product of hundreds of years of value traditions for ideas like bravery, pride, selflessness. By this time, Bushido represented eight virtues that define how samurai were to live their lives: Righteousness, Heroic Courage, Benevolence and Compassion, Respect, Honesty, Honor, Duty and Loyalty, and Self-Control.

The time where Japan transitioned from the wars of the shogun into the Edo period's strict social structure and hermetic isolationism is a fertile climate to explore character drama. Are there samurai who still long for the glory of war? Have some rejected the call to Edo and now wander the land penniless, filled with the venom of vengeance? How has bushido redefined their lives? What will come of the class as a whole? Will they rise to political supremacy? Or collapse into the bottom rungs of society?

Lacunae to Consider

Beyond the normal considerations of historical time periods, the very nature of Edo is class structure. Everyone is in their place and must fight to raise their status—but few do. While women once had a place in the samurai world, and some were even samurai, the women of Edo were highly restricted and had few rights. They were expected to manage the home. They could not travel. They had no role in governance or court. It was, in many ways, a revocation of rights they once had. Determine as a group how to navigate these themes and to what extent you play them out.

THEME-RELATED CONFLICT IDEAS

As a reminder, these conflict phases represent what happens with Setting Characters if the Novel Characters don't interfere.

THE OLD SAMURAI

Aged samurai wanting to return to the old ways roam the landscape looking to defend the common people.

Introduction: Outcast samurai have rejected Edo to protect commoners

Rise to Conflict: They are pursued by the daimyo

Climax: There is a confrontation of right versus duty

Resolution: Sacrifices are made to stay on the side of right

NEW WORLD

Samurai warriors find their new identity within Edo.

Introduction: Warriors come to Edo to serve the daimyo

Rise to Conflict: Court politics and the bushido code cause major conflicts

Climax: The samurai balance conflicts with bushido

Resolution: They adjust to the new normal

THE WAY OF BUSHIDO

Samurai serving Edo must confront internal struggles.

Introduction: Samurai are brought in to handle feuds among lords

Rise to Conflict: The lords try to turn the samurai against each other and the daimyo

Climax: The samurai confront the lords

Resolution: The feuds are eventually resolved

THE SHOGUNATE WARS

There's plenty to explore during the wars between the shogun. The regions battled with each other for countless reasons, chiefly to increase the size of their region. But wars were fought of honor, family feuds, or personal vendettas. With the emperor powerless to control the shogun, they and their daimyos ruled.

Lacunae to Consider

The horror of war brings up many Lacunae. Beyond gratuitous violence, the table should discuss how far they want to go with certain topics of war, especially rape and torture. While these atrocities happened, they are not unique to this era and need not be thrown in simply for "realism." Alternatively, if your table wants to focus on those issues as a prime point of the story, make sure you explore them safely. Be sure to bring these issues up before playing.

END THE TERROR

A ruthless shogun is destroying rivals.

Introduction: A shogun has invaded a region and is destroying and looting the villages

Rise to Conflict: The daimyo organizes samurai to fight the invasion

Climax: There is a major defining battle

Resolution: The community is saved from the invasion

LOST SAMURAI

A beloved samurai has gone missing.

Introduction: A samurai goes to broker peace with a rival shogunate

Rise to Conflict: The samurai goes missing, so the daimyo sends a search party
Climax: The samurai is being held as prisoner as a negotiation tactic

Resolution: The samurai is rescued and brought back home

CORRUPTION AT THE TOP

A powerful Shogun manipulates the emperor.

Introduction: A corrupted and ruthless shogun raises in the ranks to have the ear of the emperor

Rise to Conflict: The shogun manipulates the emperor into giving away other territories

Climax: The shogun is confronted by several daimyo

Resolution: The shogun is overthrown

BAKUMATSU

All things must come to an end and so did the shogunate, the samurai, and the Edo period. The final years of the Edo period saw the collapse of the shogunate and Japan's isolation from the western world. As the rest of the world encroached on Japan through the early 1800s, the shogunate began to modernize to defend themselves. The conflict between bushido and modernizing caused many internal conflicts.

The triggering moment that threw the shogunate into turmoil was when Commodore Matthew C. Perry entered Edo Bay with

four ships to negotiate with Japan and force the shogunate to open the borders for trade. While the standoff ended with nothing, the conflict between the west and Japan continued until a treaty allowed trade with foreigners.

The shogunate fell into political crisis and economic instability. The emperor responded by defying the shogunate's treaty and attacking foreign ships. The West spent years attacking Japanese forces to reinstate the treaties. The conflict escalated at the Bombardment of Shimonoseki in 1864 with western allied forces.

As tensions continued, anti-shogun forces wreaked havoc in Edo in what would be called the Boshin War. The Imperial Court acted to eliminate the shogunate, and the empire's court was seized by local leaders and courtiers.

A military confrontation between Tokugawa and allies against anti-shogun forces finally ended the shogunate. Rebels persisted for some time after; but in the end, Japan left its 700 years of feudalism at the close of the war.

This was the Bakumatsu, the end of the military rulership. Bakumatsu—where the foreign forces battered the shogunate out of isolation in the name of modernizing, and created decades of civil war.

Ultimately, it led to the collapse of not only an entire government system and a centuries-old tradition, but also a shogunate that had been in control for over 250 years. Seeds of this conflict continued long into the 20th century and culminated in the second world war. It was the complete elimination of tradition in favor of industrialization. Ultimately, Japan would lose.

There is a lot of historical context here and countless scenarios can emerge from these time periods. It is less important to get the specifics of the events and factions involved correct, then it is to deal with the overall theme of the colonial West destroying a social-structure and creating civil-war and social collapse.

Lacunae to Consider

For this author, the Bakumatsu is a tragedy. It is the soul-crushing reality of a global society forcing their way into a world they don't know or understand in the name of progress.

While Japan benefited long-term by modernizing and becoming one of the world's most powerful economic powers, one has to consider the cost. The "altruistic" reasons for the West wanting Japan to modernize are quickly cast aside when one realizes it was economically motivated. The West's persistent bombardment and military intervention ultimately collapsed a civilization and brought decades of warfare and bloodshed. One Lacunae to consider is the vilification of the shogunate and the cultural supremacy of the West. Modernizing is not always a "good" thing. One cannot ignore the wars and horrors that were triggered from this effort.

THE STANDOFF

Four U.S. warships enter Edo Bay.

Introduction: The arrival of Commodore Perry causes internal havoc in Edo

Rise to Conflict: There is a military stand-off

Climax: Shots are fired and threats made

Resolution: The ships leave, but the incident causes internal strife and questions about modernizing

REVOLUTION

Rival daimyo overthrow the emperor.

Introduction: As the West continues to bombard Japan, revolutions erupt in the capitol

Rise to Conflict: Revolutionaries seize control of the emperor's administration in Edo

Climax: Pro-shogunate forces fight the rebels

Resolution: The emperor is restored

FINAL BLOWS

A final battle between pro-shogunate forces and imperial rebels ends the shogunate.

Introduction: A decisive battle occurs between the empire and the rebel

Rise to Conflict: The shogunate are forced into hiding

Climax: The empire is forced to write an edict dismantling the shogunate

Resolution: The shogunate dissolves

CYBERPUNK NOIR
Dystopian Los Angeles, 2019

"It's too bad she won't live. But then again, who does?"
—Gaff, Blade Runner

The 1982 film *Blade Runner* and the 1968 book it was derived from, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Phillip K. Dick, defined an entire genre of fiction. Categorically a cyperbunk story, *Blade Runner* was one of the first to really explore noir as a backdrop for science fiction. It also created many of the tropes that we now associate with cyberpunk.

Like noir, "neo-noir" blurs the lines between good and bad and right and wrong. It focuses on revenge, paranoia, alienation, and uses tropes such as dark shadows, femme fatales, and antiheroes with questionable morality. It differentiates itself by

elevating human drama into broader societal drama. Stories set in a dystopian near-future reveal difficult truths about our current modern world and the nature of humanity, as well as the truths of a tragic and dysfunctional character.

Following the Blade Runner motif, we can explore questions around humanity and ethics using a setting in an alternate timeline—where Los Angeles is overrun by an extraordinarily powerful and tyrannical corporation; where the police presence is constant and relentless, and the moral implications of technology are many.

While we can play out Blade Runner's story—using the same plot elements around resigning replicants and the drama of what it means to be human—consider creating your own stories using the themes Blade Runner introduced. Explore the idea of using genetic engineering to perfect humanity, the consequential ethics and morality behind doing so, and what it means to be human, alive, and sentient. At what point is artificial life truly life? The film also explores the idea of hubris in a classic Greek drama sense—where power plays are constantly in motion and the struggle of humanity is in opposition with morality.

You can also explore other socio-political themes outside of Blade Runner. What happens when corporations are the political and moral centers of a society? How does this affect the environment, the cities, and the well-being of the people?

Neo-noir in this setting is about playing to find out the extremes of society, but bringing it down to an emotionally intimate level. Focus on the microcosm to reveal the challenges of the macrocosm. And of course, add some stark contrast, venetian blinds, and dramatic camera angles.

THEMES

We can take a look at several themes within this particular setting. There is the obvious exploration around the ethics of "killing" androids, and the dubious reasons for doing so. Additionally, we can explore what a corporate technocracy means for society. Additionally, what becomes of the people trying to leave or change this society? The microscope can zoom in pretty tightly to explore these themes that are otherwise vast in scope.

REPLICANTS

The unstoppable and ever-present corporation uses biotechnology to create human-like androids that appear just like humans, but are physically superior. They were engineered for many reasons, including labor, war, and worse. But they caused too much harm and continued to revolt offworld, so became illegal on Earth.

Lacunae to Consider

The replicant theme is really about identifying the true nature of humanity, and in some ways, the true nature of life. Exploring this theme will often come down to how androids are treated. Discuss the boundaries around treatment of androids—especially with regards to sexual violence, consent, slavery, and mind control.

FUGITIVES

Replicants escape offworld and return to Earth in hiding.

Introduction: Fugitives are on the run

Rise to Conflict: Bounty hunters are sent to "retire" them

Climax: The hunters are conflicted about their humanity and the ethics of destroying them

Resolution: The replicants are retired

ESCAPE

Replicants are made illegal. They struggle to survive in the face of oppression. .

Introduction: Replicants become illegal

Rise to Conflict: They try to escape the corporation, police, and bounty hunters

Climax: They are cornered by oppressive forces
Resolution: They are destroyed

NEW MODELS

The corporation is working on new replicants.

Introduction: The old replicants are retired

Rise to Conflict: The corporation engineers new replicants and tests them in the city

Climax: They undergo severe malfunctions
Resolution: They are "retired"

TECHNOCRACY

A small handful of corporations have taken over the country, and whatever government remains is in service to them. A dystopian future, perhaps not too far removed from our own, represents several avenues to explore. How does a corporate-run society affect socio-economics? The environment? What is the class structure? Amidst the glittering billboards, enormous buildings, and advanced technology, there is an undercurrent of poverty, crime, and oppression.

Los Angeles 2019 is under tight surveillance. Law enforcement knows everything that is going on, and are corrupt to the bone. Beyond them is the ever-present corporation, churning out dubious technology and sacrificing lives for the bottom line. We can imagine this world on the top level, but our stories should go to a personal one. We should explore characters in their everyday life as they live in a world that has forsaken morality, health, the environment, and humanity.

Lacunae to Consider

It is perhaps easy to hinge these themes to our real world, especially since this game is published in the year 2019. However, the primary Lacunae to consider here is tone. Separate this setting from the real world as much as possible, because pairing it with our 2019 will separate it from the nuances of the setting. Be sure the table sets boundaries on what "real world" material should or should not be included.

ON THE STREETS

Living in poverty, people struggle

Introduction: The corporation has made the city too expensive to live in

Rise to Conflict: Impoverished families must struggle to survive

Climax: They are on the run from abusive police for petty crimes

Resolution: They are brutally dealt with

CORPORATE ESPIONAGE

Activists work to discredit a corporation.

Introduction: Activists rally against a powerful corporation

Rise to Conflict: They infiltrate the corporation to uncover a scandal

Climax: They barely escape from the heist

Resolution: The scandal is revealed, but ignored

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

The city suddenly loses its food supply.

Introduction: A perfect storm of environmental calamity causes a food crisis

Rise to Conflict: The city falls into chaos

Climax: People try to flee the city

Resolution: They make it out, but the crisis is global

CORRUPTION

With the corporate control of law enforcement and the government, corporate corruption is an easy theme to pick up. But since this neo-noir, it's better to deal with personal corruption. Corruption of the spirit, loss of faith, a fall from morality. Noir is about the internal struggle of a relentlessly cynical world. At some point, everyone cracks and folds to the pressure.

Stories with this theme should be highly personal. They can revolve around the corporation, the cops, or the replicants, but they should focus on the events that break the characters. Be self-reflective with the characters, and use the story's pressure against their weaknesses.

Lacunae to Consider

As a genre, noir is necessarily cynical. The characters are not heroes and are often in a downward spiral that doesn't end well. There is no comfortable resolution for them. The genre brings up things like addiction, depression, disorder, and a multitude of difficult subjects. Discuss as a group what subject matter should or should not be included. Sometimes it's best to keep certain topics present under the "veil" or parenthesis of Lacunae rather than dwelling on them. Remember, difficult themes can bleed over into the players' real life.

THE PERFECT CRIME

A group attempts to pull off a heist.

Introduction: Dregs of society organize to rob the corporation

Rise to Conflict: They plan the perfect heist

Climax: Through their own shortfalls and misgivings, they confront betrayals and strife

Resolution: They are caught, and it's their end

FREE THE REPLICANTS

Activists work to release imprisoned replicants.

Introduction: Activists hear that the corporation is engineering and keeping replicants

Rise to Conflict: Their internal conflicts drive them to do drastic things
Climax: The corporation finds them out

Resolution: They are imprisoned or killed

THE WRONG GUY

Police frame a replicant for a murder.

Introduction: A high-profile murder is committed

Rise to Conflict: The victim was an enemy of the police, so they frame a replicant

Climax: People try absolve the replicant

Resolution: They get wrapped up in the conspiracy and are put away

INDEX

The Happiest Apocalypse on Earth

Set in a fictional theme park called Mouse Park. Its special blend of satire and horror takes collaborative storytelling to the brink, where players can take on the role of guests or staff in a theme park that barely masks a terrible horror lurking beneath. Nominated for 2018 ENnie Productof the year.

THE GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL

---❧---

A ROLEPLAYING GAME

CHRISTOPHER GREY

ARC

−5 −4 −3 −2 −1 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5

FALLING   RISING

PERSONALITY

Key Trait
Choose One

○ Rational
○ Ethical
○ Idealistic
○ Purposeful
○ Principled

When Rising
Choose One

○ Wise
○ Discerning
○ Conscientious
○ Fair
○ Inspiring

When Falling
Choose One

○ Dogmatic
○ Intolerant
○ Self-Righteous
○ Judgmental
○ Condemning

BACKSTORY

- **Occupation:** community leader, legal, political, faith leader, military, teacher, other
- **Source of your ethical compass:** religion, philosophy, political ideals, code of honor or ethics, other
- **Your place of self-reflection:** place of worship, place of work, home, place in nature, social place, other
- **How were you wronged:** betrayal, miscarriage of justice, violence, thievery, prejudice, other
- **Who do you fight for:** loved ones, disenfranchised people, anyone that is deserving, anyone, only one, other

RELATIONSHIPS

THE CONFLICTED RIGHT-FIGHTER

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:

Moral Beacon: Instinct 0, Personality 0, Morality 2
Charismatic Do-Gooder: Instinct -1, Personality 1, Morality 2
Zealot: Instinct 1, Personality -1, Morality 2

INSTINCT	PERSONALITY	MORALITY
	−1 *When Falling*	**+1** *When Rising*

ARC

-4 -3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5

FALLING   RISING

-5

PERSONALITY

When Rising
Choose One

○ Independent
○ Brave
○ Affectionate
○ Reliable
○ Inspirational

Key Trait
Choose One

○ Trusting
○ Observant
○ Committed
○ Vigilant
○ Sincere

When Falling
Choose One

○ Volatile
○ Defenseless
○ Irrational
○ Fearful
○ Manipulative

BACKSTORY

- **Home life:** idyllic, troubled, moved out, under the care of others, caring for others, other
- **Why adults need your help:** they are uninspired, they have no hope, they don't know what I do, they've forgotten, they are too busy, other
- **Your guardians:** two loving guardians, one loving guardian, indifferent guardians, no one, other
- **Why you persevere:** I don't know how to do anything else, other people need me, I need to prove my worth, I'm driven to do what is right, I'm driven to change things, other

RELATIONSHIPS

THE COURAGEOUS YOUTH

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:

Rapscallion: Instinct 1, Personality 2, Morality -1
Lovely Child: Instinct 0, Personality 2, Morality 0
Trusty Sidekick: Instinct 1, Personality 1, Morality 0

INSTINCT

PERSONALITY

+1
When Rising

MORALITY

-1
When Falling

ARC

-5 FALLING -4 -3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5 RISING

PERSONALITY

Key Trait
Choose One
○ Unpredictable
○ Charming
○ Scrappy
○ Energetic
○ Care-Free

When Rising
Choose One
○ Uplifting
○ Loyal
○ Endearing
○ Inspiring
○ Trusting

When Falling
Choose One
○ Reckless
○ Malicious
○ Hurtful
○ Disconnected
○ Maniacal

BACKSTORY

- **Your hideout:** rural, urban, wilderness, in a public place, is impossible to find, other
- **What freedom means:** living without society, no rules, my rules, opportunity, having no cares, other
- **Who's trying to stop you:** religious group, relatives, the authorities, friends, enemies, other
- **What is fun:** chaos, being on the road, surprising others, experiencing life, living in the moment, other
- **Who keeps you under control:** a relative, a partner or spouse, a friend, a mentor, an enemy, other

RELATIONSHIPS

THE CUNNING RASCAL

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:
Devil May Care: Instinct 2, Personality 0, Morality 0
Trickster: Instinct 1, Personality 1, Morality 0
Loveable Ruffian: Instinct 1, Personality 2, Morality -1

INSTINCT	PERSONALITY	MORALITY
	+1 *When Rising*	-1 *When Falling*

ARC

RISING

FALLING

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5

PERSONALITY

When Rising
Choose One
- ◌ Brave
- ◌ Leading
- ◌ Affectionate
- ◌ Trusting
- ◌ Honorable

When Falling
Choose One
- ◌ Volatile
- ◌ Divisive
- ◌ Judgmental
- ◌ Angry
- ◌ Violent

Key Trait
Choose One
- ◌ Stable
- ◌ Committed
- ◌ Vigilant
- ◌ Secure
- ◌ Observant

BACKSTORY

- **Occupation:** teacher, law enforcement, faith leader, military, political, activist, other
- **Who you protect:** a relative or friend, a partner or spouse, anyone that needs protection, a particular group, an ideal, other
- **What keeps you strong:** religion or spirituality, a loved one, a memory, an ideal or philosophy, training, other
- **Who is a threat:** anyone, a particular group of people, an individual, those against my ideal, those that seek to harm, other

RELATIONSHIPS

THE HONORABLE GUARDIAN

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:
Moral Champion: Instinct 1, Personality -1, Morality 2
Helpful Protector: Instinct 0, Personality 1, Morality 1
Stoic Knight: Instinct 1, Personality 0, Morality 1

INSTINCT	PERSONALITY	MORALITY
+1 *When Rising*		-1 *When Falling*

ARC

-5 | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | +1 | +2 | +3 | +4 | +5

FALLING

PERSONALITY

Key Trait
Choose One

○ Caring
○ Patient
○ Humorous
○ Supportive
○ Helpful

When Rising
Choose One

○ Humble
○ Compassionate
○ Loving
○ Uplifting
○ Martyr

When Falling
Choose One

○ Manipulative
○ Clingy
○ Addictive
○ Resentful
○ Vindictive

BACKSTORY

- **Occupation:** legal, corporate/professional, law enforcement, military, counselor/advisor, other
- **Who you are loyal to:** a loved one, relative or friend, an ideal or philosophy, an organization or group, whomever earns it, other
- **Reason for your loyalty:** religion, philosophy, political ideals, code of honor or ethics, other
- **What sways your loyalty:** spirituality or religion, nothing, money, love, self-preservation, other
- **You are driven by:** duty, honor, love, hope, an ideal, other

RELATIONSHIPS

THE LOYAL LIEUTENANT

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:

Whacky Sidekick: Instinct 0, Personality 2, Morality 0
Beloved Partner: Instinct -1, Personality 2, Morality 1
Dutiful Right-Hand: Instinct -1, Personality 1, Morality 2

INSTINCT	PERSONALITY	MORALITY
+1 *When Rising*	-1 *When Falling*	

THE MYSTERIOUS RECLUSE

ARC

FALLING
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5
RISING

PERSONALITY

Key Trait
Choose One

○ Sensitive
○ Unique
○ Quiet
○ Submissive
○ Creative

When Rising
Choose One

○ Modest
○ Passionate
○ Ambitious
○ Selfless
○ Gracious

When Falling
Choose One

○ Jealous
○ Malicious
○ Obsessive
○ Narcissistic
○ Spiteful

BACKSTORY

- **You remain secluded because:** mental health, you've been wronged, you are wealthy, you are on the run, other
- **Your place of seclusion is:** an estate or manor/palace, nondescript home or apartment, a temple or church, a school, a library or museum, other
- **Your trust for people:** will never happen, can be earned, was broken and must be rebuilt, is strong with a particular person, is strong with a particular group, other
- **You will come out of seclusion for:** love, when you are healed, when you find purpose, when you find hope, other

RELATIONSHIPS

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:

Redeemed Reject: Instinct 2, Personality -1, Morality 1
Wise Hermit: Instinct 1, Personality -1, Morality 2
Antisocial: Instinct 2, Personality 0, Morality 0

INSTINCT

PERSONALITY

MORALITY
-1 +1
When   When
Falling Rising

THE NAIVE OUTSIDER

ARC

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5

FALLING   RISING

PERSONALITY

Key Trait
Choose One
- ○ Decisive
- ○ Independent
- ○ Confident
- ○ Curious
- ○ Strange

When Rising
Choose One
- ○ Brave
- ○ Influential
- ○ Change-Making
- ○ Mediator
- ○ Inspirational

When Falling
Choose One
- ○ Ruthless
- ○ Hard-Hearted
- ○ Immoral
- ○ Brutal
- ○ Divisive

BACKSTORY

- **You left your home because:** you are a refugee or a criminal, you need work, you had to escape another life, you wronged someone, you were wronged, other
- **Your home is:** far away, full of enemies, full of regret, a distant memory, a place to come back to, other
- **You have with you:** nothing much, a fortune, enough to make do, just the bare necessities, a relative or friend, other
- **You stand out because:** you have an accent, your style is different, you have different values, other

RELATIONSHIPS

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:

Country Bumpkin: Instinct -1, Personality 2, Morality 1
Wise Traveler: Instinct 0, Personality 0, Morality 2
Drifter: Instinct 1, Personality 1, Morality 0

INSTINCT	PERSONALITY	MORALITY
+1 *When Rising*		-1 *When Falling*

ARC

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5

FALLING

THE OATHSWORN CHAMPION

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:
Heroic Leader: Instinct 1, Personality 0, Morality 1
Barbaric Outsider: Instinct 2, Personality -1, Morality 1
Moral Rock: Instinct 1, Personality -1, Morality 2

INSTINCT	PERSONALITY	MORALITY
-1 *When Falling*		+1 *When Rising*

PERSONALITY

Key Trait
Choose One
○ Powerful
○ Decisive
○ Hardworking
○ Risk-Taking
○ Self-Confident

When Rising
Choose One
○ Selfless
○ Heroic
○ Change-Making
○ Influential
○ Magnanimous

When Falling
Choose One
○ Ruthless
○ Hard-Hearted
○ Violent
○ Brutal
○ Vindictive

BACKSTORY

- **What are you sworn to:** a person, a group, a cause or ideal, a code of honor, a promise or commitment, other
- **What drove you to your commitment:** force, desire, love, hope, an ideal, other
- **Why are you a champion:** a fighter, strong with words, knowledge of a culture or society, courage, fame, other
- **What happens when you fulfill your oath:** I'll continue the commitment, retire, feel useless, go into obscurity, find a new cause, other

RELATIONSHIPS

ARC

FALLING

-4 -3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3 +4

-5 ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ +5

RISING

THE REGRETFUL ELDER

PERSONALITY

Key Trait
Choose One
- ◯ Agreeable
- ◯ Peaceful
- ◯ Connected
- ◯ Quiet
- ◯ Uneasy

When Rising
Choose One
- ◯ Fulfilled
- ◯ Content
- ◯ Self-Aware
- ◯ Calming
- ◯ Trustworthy

When Falling
Choose One
- ◯ Obstinate
- ◯ Disconnected
- ◯ Abusive
- ◯ Angry
- ◯ Depressed

BACKSTORY

- **You are a:** military soldier or veteran, nurse, activist, politician, law enforcement, doctor, legal, other
- **You regret:** causing harm, an atrocity, a loss, a betrayal, a crime, other
- **You will be healed:** never, with love, with hope, with justice or judgment, with spirituality or religion, other
- **When judgment comes you will:** be relieved, not be there, be dead, fight, concede, other

RELATIONSHIPS

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:
Broken Warrior: Instinct 2, Personality 0, Morality 0
Confident Survivor: Instinct 2, Personality 1, Morality -1
Functional Introvert: Instinct 1, Personality 1, Morality 0

INSTINCT	PERSONALITY	MORALITY
-1 +1		

-1   +1
When   *When*
Falling *Rising*

THE INSPIRED INNOCENT

ARC

FALLING -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5 RISING

PERSONALITY

Key Trait
Choose One
○ Easy-Going
○ Agreeable
○ Peaceful
○ Friendly
○ Ethical

When Rising
Choose One
○ Fulfilled
○ Hopeful
○ Calming
○ Self-Aware
○ Wise

When Falling
Choose One
○ Frustrated
○ Desperate
○ Disconnected
○ Neglectful
○ Reckless

BACKSTORY

- **What drives you:** an ideal, a person, a group or organization, a cause, a dream, other
- **Why are you innocent:** clear conscious, young, ethical or moral, redeemed, naive, other
- **Who do you trust:** everyone, anyone deserving, only my closest, only myself, my ideal or philosophy, other
- **What would take your innocence:** love, death, betrayal, loss, harm or violence, other
- **Who needs you:** a friend, a relative, a stranger, no one, anyone who asks, other

RELATIONSHIPS

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:
Eternal Optimist: Instinct -1, Personality 1, Morality 2
Icon of Hope: Instinct 0, Personality 0, Morality 2
Endearing Companion: Instinct 0, Personality 1, Morality 1

INSTINCT	PERSONALITY	MORALITY
-1 *When Falling*		+1 *When Rising*

THE SECRET DEVIL

ARC

FALLING

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5

RISING

PERSONALITY

Key Trait
Choose One
- ○ Ambitious
- ○ Talented
- ○ Motivated
- ○ Charismatic
- ○ Inspirational

When Rising
Choose One
- ○ Energetic
- ○ Infectious
- ○ Leading
- ○ Powerful
- ○ Opportunistic

When Falling
Choose One
- ○ Jealous
- ○ Malicious
- ○ Narcissistic
- ○ Obsessive
- ○ Violent

BACKSTORY

- **What Motivates You:** greed, revenge, psychosis, alienation, justice, other
- **What is Your Secret:** crime, violence, another identity, war, an agenda, other
- **What Will Redeem You:** love, hope, resolution, nothing, self-realization, other
- **Who Have You Harmed:** close friend or relative, a stranger, an enemy, a person of notoriety, a group/organization, other
- **How do you Present Yourself:** friendly, courageous, hopeful, trustworthy, distant, other

RELATIONSHIPS

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:

Silver Tongue: Instinct 0, Personality 2, Morality 0
Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Instinct 1, Personality 2, Morality -1
Bad Seed: Instinct 1, Personality 1, Morality 0

INSTINCT	PERSONALITY	MORALITY
	+1 *When Rising*	-1 *When Falling*

ARC

PERSONALITY

Key Trait
Choose One
- Spontaneous
- Enthusiastic
- Impulsive
- Uninhibited
- Emotional

When Rising
Choose One
- Grateful
- Joyous
- Vivacious
- Resilient
- Responsive

When Falling
Choose One
- Anxious
- Addictive
- Abusive
- Depressed
- Erratic

BACKSTORY

- **Who trapped you:** myself, family, a stranger, society, a cause, a group or organization, other
- **What is your status:** wealthy, famous, leader, bankrupt, outcast, other
- **What drives you:** fame or fortune, reputation, hope, love, desperation, other
- **What will free you:** love, hate, resolve and dedication, status, revenge, nothing, other

RELATIONSHIPS

THE TRAPPED SOCIALITE

NAME

Choose an Array for your stats below:
Life of the Party: Instinct 0, Personality 2, Morality 0
Crass Companion: Instinct -1, Personality 2, Morality 1
Emotional Rollercoaster: Instinct 1, Personality 1, Morality 0

INSTINCT	PERSONALITY	MORALITY
	+1 -1	
	When Rising *When Falling*	