

THE **YELLOW**
④ **KING**
ROLEPLAYING GAME

PARIS

QUICKSHOCK
GUMSHOE

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Pelgrane Press



BOOK ONE

PARIS

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SHATTERED REALITIES, EXPLODED SELVES

In *The Yellow King Roleplaying Game*, players take on the roles of young artists studying abroad in Paris in 1895. When the publication of a play called *The King in Yellow* begins to overwrite the city with the supernatural reality of an alien world called Carcosa, they plunge into weird mystery.

And they play European soldiers fighting in the murky Continental War of 1947. They come to realize that their endless, inexplicable struggle occurs at the behest of Carcosa's Yellow King, and plunge into weird mystery.

And they play former resistance fighters in the present day, after the overthrow of the tyrannical Castaigne regime, which has held America in its icy grip since the 1920s. They want to rebuild their nation, but that requires—you're seeing a pattern now—a plunge into weird mystery.

And finally they also play contemporary people in the world as we mostly know it—but what is that strange masked creature lurking behind that dumpster over there? Could it be a harbinger of... weird mystery?

Something links these characters across time and alternate realities—a grim destiny that may enable them to unravel the king's ultimate scheme.

The Yellow King Roleplaying Game (or *YKRPG* when only an acronym will do) can be played using this overarching,

interwoven structure, or in a simpler, episodic mode featuring shorter incidents of subjective reality horror in any one of its four settings.

To play the game, you need this book, which includes both the rules and the central Belle Époque Paris setting.

Each of the other settings appears in its own volume: *The Wars*, featuring Europe's 1947 War of Reclamation; *Aftermath*, the contemporary post-Castaigne world; and *This Is Normal Now*, our world with supernatural corruption seeping in from the corners.

Roleplaying Basics

This is a tabletop roleplaying game, or RPG.

When playing an RPG, a group of participants gather to talk their way through a story they spontaneously create together, adjudicated by a set of game rules.

Unlike other types of games with multiple participants, you don't win or lose a roleplaying game. Often you play many times, building a story featuring the same characters and situations. You come to follow them as you would the episodes of your favorite serialized television adventure show.

All but one of the participants takes on the role of a particular fictional character. These participants are called

the **players**. The characters are **player characters**, or PCs for short. Your rules set may give you other synonyms for the PCs, for example, investigators, heroes, conspirators, or the team.

As a player, you prepare for the first session of play by inventing details about your character, following a character creation process laid out by the rules set.

Typically one participant serves as the **Game Moderator**—GM for short.

The GM guides you through the events of the game:

- populating an imagined world with compelling places, people, and things for the main characters to interact with
- portraying those secondary figures, called GMCs (Game Moderator Characters)
- describing the setting's places and things when your characters encounter them
- deciding how the rules apply, should confusion about them arise
- refocusing your attention when the group gets distracted or bored

The action in a roleplaying session happens in each participant's imagination. Just as your experience reading a compelling book doesn't provide an observer with rich visual cues, playing a roleplaying game remains a low-key affair.

It used to be hard for absolute newcomers to initially figure out what the heck goes on in a roleplaying game. These days, lots of folks point video cameras at their tables, playing online in real time for others to watch. Roleplaying streamers, as they are called, then archive the results on sites like YouTube. If RPGs still seem

mysterious to you, check out an example game and you'll soon see how it all comes together.

Mysteries of Paris

Mysteries the group investigates go something like this:

- Grit and rock dust found in the strange wounds of victims murdered near the morgue suggest that the gargoyles of the nearby Notre Dame Cathedral have come to life.
- Added by reading *The King in Yellow*, a beloved art instructor changes by night into a murderous brute—and the trail of victims grows ever closer to the heroes.
- The delightful but overbearing mother of an investigator arrives in town to visit—and then seems to have shed thirty years. She's determined to spread the miracle cure to aging to America, but when the group goes to find the man who treated her, they find only a murder scene—and clues pointing to a conspiracy of Rosicrucian occultists about to transform themselves into Nietzschean übermenschen.
- Once word gets out that the group knows its way around the occult, a foreign agent tries to use them to contact the King in Yellow, to enlist his aid in a colonial war.
- A mysterious but munificent client pays the group's portrait specialist to create a weird, full-body painting depicting him suffering from all manner of wounds, from stab to gunshot. The client then goes on a murder spree, proving immune to all of the harms shown

in the painting. To stop him, the group must locate and destroy the painting, which by the addition of the Yellow Sign has become a protective charm of unholy power.

- In a sequel to Chambers' story "The Mask," residents and household staff in the wealthy Faubourg Saint-Germain district are found in fancy homes, transformed into marble statues. Their jewelry cabinets gape open, robbed by thieves. Though at first presumed dead, the victims recover—temporarily altered by a serum first developed by a sculptor named Boris Yvain. It works because the appearance of *The King in Yellow* has bent the rules of physics in Paris. To find the thieves, the investigators must learn who knew Yvain, now dead from suicide, well enough to gain access to the formula.

This Game

TKRPG uses Pelgrane Press' GUMSHOE system, a set of roleplaying rules focused on gathering information and solving mysteries. GUMSHOE says that failing to get information is never interesting. When your character uses a relevant ability in a situation where the scenario says there are clues to be found, you always get them. This simple premise allows us to present rich, layered mysteries in which the object is not to randomly stumble across a few key bits of information, but to piece together the truth hidden within a larger web of clues.

As with all of our GUMSHOE games, the rules have been specifically tuned to a particular setting and style of play—in

this case, the subjective reality horror of Robert W. Chambers' *King in Yellow* mythos.

Rules Basics

When characters seek information where it might be available, they always gain it, provided they have an **Investigative ability** that fits the situation.

In situations when interesting story possibilities arise from either success or failure, characters make a **test**. They spend a number of points associated with a relevant **General ability**, roll a single six-sided die, and add both numbers to get a result.

This is then compared with a **Difficulty number**. If the result meets or beats the Difficulty, the character succeeds. Sometimes the **margin** between result and Difficulty matters.

Each General ability has a numerical **rating**. This number tells you how many points you can spend on that ability over the course of a scenario.

The number of points you currently have available to spend is called your **pool**. If you've spent all your points, your pool equals 0.

At the start of a new scenario, your pool returns to its maximum value, the rating.

In special circumstances you may be able to return your pool to its rating during a scenario. This is called a **refresh**.

Unless directed to refresh only a certain number of points, you refresh to your rating.

When you refresh or otherwise gain a particular number of points, you never receive more points than your rating allows.

When battling, chasing, or running away from adversaries, characters simultaneously test their Fighting abilities, combining their results to compare against a Difficulty number reflecting the toughness of the enemy and the challenge of their tactical goal.

When characters suffer physical harm, they take **Injury cards**. **Shock cards** represent various sorts of mental and emotional strain. Text on these cards describes their game effects and tells you how to discard (get rid of) them. Where not otherwise specified in the card text, you discard all Shock and Injury cards at the end of every mystery. When you accumulate a certain number of Injury cards, the character dies. The same number of Shock cards means that the recipient has suffered a mental breakdown so severe that they can no longer continue to investigate and battle the occult forces of Carcosa.

When they succeed against a foe in a fight, characters pay a **Toll**, a number of points drawn in any combination from their Athletics, Fighting, and Health pools, to avoid taking a Minor Injury card.

Rules Departures

This version of GUMSHOE departs from previous ones in a few key respects:

- Combat is faster, with each player making a single Fighting test.
- Combat is player-facing; the GM never makes tests for enemies. (In fact, the GM never rolls dice at all.)
- Combat is more heavily abstracted, emphasizing what the characters want to achieve in the story.
- Health is no longer a resource determining how

close you are to dying.

- Characters who are hurt in combat or when encountering physical obstacles take Injury cards, which exert various effects tuned to the type of harm they've suffered.
- Stability is no longer a resource measuring how close you are to leaving play due to emotional breakdown.
- Characters who fail Composure tests to resist enduring emotional harm take Shock cards, which exert various effects tuned to the situation.
- Characters die when they accumulate too many Injury cards, or leave play due to permanent mental strain when they accumulate too many Shock cards.

Together these changes make this a new iteration of the core rules, which we call QuickShock GUMSHOE.

To avoid confusion with standard GUMSHOE, we sometimes highlight an **unrule**, a reminder that a rule you may have grown accustomed to does not apply in the QuickShock version.





A HOWLING FROM CARCOSA

Four short stories by American author Robert W. Chambers (1895–1933) serve as central inspiration for this game. Published in the collection *The King in Yellow*, they are, in addition to the title story: “The Mask,” “In the Court of the Dragon”, and “The Repairer of Reputations.”

Ambrose Bierce also writes of a place called Carcosa, in his short story “An Inhabitant of Carcosa.” Chambers clearly mined it for references, but in that tale Carcosa is an ancient city, and Hali the name of a philosopher the narrator contemplates. It also mentions Aldebaran and the Hyades, as stars the narrator sees overhead after leaping forward in time to an era long after his city’s reduction to ruins. These too become touchstones, in a different context, in the *King in Yellow* mythos.

Modes

TRPG can be played in one of two modes. Choose which one you prefer before character generation:

- **Horror** mode is the tougher of the two, likely yielding a higher character death rate.
- **Occult Adventure** is a shade more forgiving, though still no Sunday promenade down to the café district.

Characters

In the *Paris* portion of your series, the players portray students of various arts learning their craft and soaking in the sights and delights of the City of Lights. They begin play blissfully unaware of the alien and supernatural dangers they are about to encounter. Inchoate in each of them is a personality trait

BEYOND THE CYCLE

Chambers wrote other horror stories and some pulpy supernatural adventures. Aside from a handful of ghost stories that turn on the same simple ironies as those of his contemporary and inspiration, Ambrose Bierce, his voluminous other works are corny and dated even before you reckon with their lurches into breezy period racism.

References to a few of Chambers’ other tales appear sprinkled throughout the game’s four sequences. These appear as Easter eggs as a belated reward to those who have made the mistake of spending their time reading those tedious stories. If you haven’t, don’t let this game trick you into it. They truly are terrible.

that will drive them further toward occult danger.

In the early episodes of your series, they become aware of the recent covert publication of a disturbing closet drama, *The King in Yellow*. Over time they realize that its reality-bending ripple effect lies beneath all the bizarre events they’ve been investigating.

The default version of the series assumes that the characters are all, or at least primarily, Americans from wealthy families now living the artificially and temporarily impoverished lives of students abroad. This follows the pattern established by Chambers in his story “The Mask.” It makes the characters outsiders who have acquired some familiarity with Paris and its ways—a convenient conceit allowing you to easily present information to the players.

Although it doesn’t evoke the Chambers stories as closely, you could equally well have the characters hail from elsewhere. The players might better relate to characters from England, Canada, Australia, or elsewhere on the Continent.

One or two players may ask to play Parisians. This choice works particularly well in the case of the Muse character (see below) who becomes an insider and their guide to the city.

If you are your players are all French, you may find it odd to play Americans and prefer to recast the art students as locals. Maybe they’re provincials living in the great city for the first time.

Kits

Characters are created by combining one item apiece from two sets of **kits**.

Investigative Kits

The first kit, the **Investigative kit**, determines the characters’ fields of study and their Investigative abilities, which they use to gather information.

The kits are:

Architecture Student

- Architecture
- Art History
- Officialdom
- Technology

Belle-Lettrist

- Belle-Lettres
- History
- Reassurance
- Research

Landscape Painter

- Art History
- Natural History
- Negotiation
- Painting

Muse

- Bonhomie
- Culture
- Inspiration
- Miscellany

Poet

- Demimonde
- Intuition
- Occultism
- Poetry

Portrait Painter

Assess Honesty
Fashion
Painting
Photography
Society

Sculptor

Art History
Military History
Sculpture
Steel

The fields of study are all more or less self-explanatory, except perhaps for Belle-Lettrist and Muse. Explain that the first term refers to a writer for journals, magazines, and newspapers specializing in essays, editorials, the occasional bit of fact-finding reporting, and perhaps the odd didactic fictional vignette. In today's terms, the Belle-Lettrist is a journalist who primarily writes think pieces.

A muse is a member of the arts scene who does not personally create anything, but rather provides inspiration, impetus, and maybe organizational work to either a single creator, or the members of an entire artistic scene. Though we most often think of a muse as a woman, either romantically linked to one or more artists, or their object of unrequited infatuation, that isn't the only way to play the character. A male muse could be a man who functions as an impresario or critical ringleader. A woman could do the same, maintaining an utterly chaste and entirely respectable relationship with the male characters. And a man could have, or be the object of, romantic feelings for another member of the

group—reciprocated or not.

Investigative abilities listed in *italics* are *Interpersonal abilities*. These allow characters to get information out of people. They are called out because some card effects trigger on the use of an Interpersonal Push—a Push using an Interpersonal Investigative ability.

Allow the players to agree between them who takes which kit. In the unlikely event of more than one player vying without relent for the same kit, have them roll dice, rerolling any ties. The player rolling the highest total gets the preferred kit.

Should you have more than seven players (an already unwieldy number for an investigative game), the additional players are gadabouts. The gadabout may pretend to be studying something, especially in letters back home cadging money from dear old dad. In reality he is frittering away the family money while pursuing a life of aimless adventure in Paris.

The gadabout takes 4 Investigative abilities also held by other characters. Except for Art History, he can't choose more than 1 ability from any one identity kit.

Does your group consist of fewer than seven players? Invite the players to fairly distribute the abilities from the unused kit between the group, using whatever method makes sense to them.

General Kits

Players then select a General kit. It reflects the most notable qualities allowing them to take actions in the game world aside from information gathering.

Athlete

A master of many sports and an impressive physical specimen.

Athletics	8
Composure	6
Fighting	6
First Aid	3
Health	4
Mechanics	0
Riding	2
Sense Trouble	1
Sneaking	3
Preparedness	0

Former Cadet

Recipient of military training, either informally, or as part of reserve officer education.

Athletics	6
Composure	6
Fighting	7
First Aid	2
Health	3
Mechanics	0
Riding	3
Sense Trouble	2
Sneaking	2
Preparedness	2

Cool Customer

A confident character, hard to shake.

Athletics	4
Composure	6
Fighting	6
First Aid	0
Health	3
Mechanics	2
Riding	2
Sense Trouble	4
Sneaking	2
Preparedness	4

Scrounger

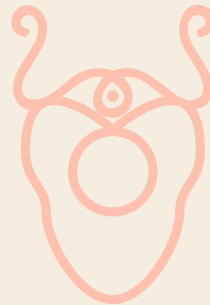
Your knack for always having the item you and your friends need may occasionally require you to skirt traditional notions of property rights.

Athletics	3
Composure	7
Fighting	6
First Aid	0
Health	3
Mechanics	0
Riding	1
Sense Trouble	3
Sneaking	5
Preparedness	5

Former Med Student

Either formally or by watching and learning from a family member, you know how to bandage wounds and even sew up a puncture wound.

Athletics	3
Composure	7
Fighting	5
First Aid	6
Health	3
Mechanics	0
Riding	2
Sense Trouble	2
Sneaking	3
Preparedness	1



Tinkerer

You know a thing or two about devices, newfangled and otherwise.

Athletics	3
Composure	6
Fighting	5
First Aid	0
Health	3
Mechanics	6
Riding	1
Sense Trouble	2
Sneaking	2
Preparedness	5

Raised on a Farm

As owner or peasant, you grew up in the healthy air of a rural area.

Athletics	5
Composure	8
Fighting	6
First Aid	3
Health	5
Mechanics	0
Riding	4
Sense Trouble	0
Sneaking	0
Preparedness	1

Raised on the Streets

Through lowly birth or unfortunate circumstances that were later reversed, you spent your formative years fending for yourself in a big city.

Athletics	5
Composure	6
Fighting	7
First Aid	0
Health	4
Mechanics	0
Riding	0
Sense Trouble	3
Sneaking	3
Preparedness	4

Spent Time in a Factory

As owner or worker, you spent your youth amid the thundering engines of industry.

Athletics	5
Composure	6
Fighting	5
First Aid	1
Health	2
Mechanics	6
Riding	0
Sense Trouble	2
Sneaking	3
Preparedness	2

Any player preferring to build a General ability list from scratch may do so, allocating 32 points between the 10 General abilities. A group of experienced GUMSHOE hands almost undoubtedly prefers to skip the kits entirely and move right on to scratch building.

Players may also modify their kits, moving around any number of points, so long as the total remains 32. Warn them that they might regret it if the whole group lacks a crucial ability, like First Aid or Preparedness.

Survival can depend on Composure and Fighting. Going below 6 in either can shorten a character's lifespan.

Point out to players of previous GUMSHOE games that Health isn't as vital to survival, and doesn't come up as often as they might be used to.

Gadabouts can either custom build their ability lists from 32 points, unless another player decides to go that route, leaving a general kit left over for the gadabout to pick up.

The above numbers apply to **Horror** mode.

When playing in **Occult Adventure** mode, increase the Composure and Fighting ratings of each kit by 1 apiece, and add 1 to the two highest-rated abilities other than Composure and Fighting. Set the custom build General point total at 36.

Gender and Background

Players can choose any gender, sexual orientation, heritage, and background for their characters.

As the world tumbles into the 20th century, rapidly industrializing and with colonialism at its apex, it has never been a better time to be rich, male, Christian, and white. It is not just

accepted but considered right and moral that everyone else knows their place in the social pyramid and acts accordingly.

You can handle the impact of this in play in one of two ways, by:

1. illuminating these attitudes by depicting them as they really were, even if it occasionally reduces freedom of choice for characters who would not enjoy full agency in this world
2. adopting a more aspirational portrayal, where racism, sexism, bigotry, and intolerance might exist somewhere in the background but never come to the fore to confront players who don't want to deal with them in this context

Offer your players these two choices.

X-CARD PROTOCOL

The horror genre offers us an opportunity to process the dark side of the human experience in what ought to be a safe and vicarious manner. However, everyone draws a different line between fun horror and material that provokes genuine distress.

This horror game allows player input into the narrative, with elements like the Drive and Deuced Peculiar Business. You may suddenly find either yourself or a player introducing a story element that stressfully crosses another participant's limits.

Unless everyone in the group actively agrees that is unnecessary, we recommend that you ward off this possibility by using an X-Card protocol. If your group chooses to forgo the X-Card and later brings in a new member, revisit the issue.

Each player receives an index card with an X on it. When someone introduces subject matter that a player finds truly, personally fun-ruining, the player holds up the card. The player can either suggest that the troubling element be dialed back, or dropped entirely.

You and the other players, as the fine and considerate people you are, accede to the request without pushback, adjusting the narration as desired.

Used at some game conventions, exact X-Card practices can vary from one organization to the next. Search online for the approach that works for you.

If even one player prefers 2, go with 2. You might argue that 2 either sweeps historical injustice under the rug, or breaks suspension of disbelief. But neither of these factors justifies a setup where some members of the group are called upon to sacrifice their gaming fun to the aesthetic or political preferences of the others.

Name

Players next choose names for their characters.

Sample names for upper-crust American characters appear in the appendices, starting on p. 229. For those playing locals, a list of appropriate French names can be found on p. 230.

Drive

Ask each player in turn, starting with the one sitting in the right-most position and moving around the room from right to left, to define why their characters act like protagonists in a tale of horror and investigation. What is it that draws them toward danger when ordinary people would turn and run? What leads them to trust only themselves to solve problems, when the typical citizen would seek the aid of authorities?

Work with the players to turn their answers into brief, memorable phrases. This becomes the character's **Drive**. During play you will use this to remind players that their characters are the leads in the story you're creating together, and must make decisions that keep them at the center of the proceedings, taking action to move it forward.

You might find that a player creates the perfect Drive that has never been used before. Typically, though, they'll invent motivations that can be encapsulated more or less like one of the following bullet points. Use this list as a prompt for those in need of inspiration.

Adventure: "By gum, this is like a story by Verne or Doyle—and my chance to be Phileas Fogg or Sherlock Holmes! What devilish fun!"

Arrogance: "An ordinary person would let others solve this. I am far from ordinary."

Can-Do Attitude: "If you simply apply yourself, you can do anything. No need to bring the police into it."

Comradeship: "I have no idea why my friends are risking their hides like this. But if they're charging in, so will I."

Curiosity: "When I smell a mystery, I must solve it. No one must get between me and the truth."

Dread Premonition: "I have always known that my life would be cut short by some implacable fate. This seems to be it, and there is no point in running."

Ennui: "Life bored me stiff—until now. With something truly exciting finally happening to me, I intend to plunge into it headlong." *Players selecting Ennui as a Drive can forget that it's supposed to be a motivating factor and make the mistake of playing their characters as bored by everything that happens to them—including the horrific mystery at hand. Remind them whenever they veer toward this trap.*

Family Curse: "This weird situation reminds me of some strange hints my grandfather once dropped, before his unexplained disappearance. This is finally my opportunity to comprehend our so-called ancestral doom!"

Gothic Sensibility: “Since I first read Poe, death and decay have been my constant friends. This dilemma seems ghoulish indeed—how could I spurn it?”

Inspiration: “My art has been stale and flavorless, but now I see my great subject matter. I will find in it the impetus for greatness. Whatever this portends, I must experience it fully and directly.”

Rationalism: “The strangeness of these events gnaws at my sense of mental order. I must prove that a rational, scientifically solid explanation lies behind all this seeming madness.”

Seeker: “To understand life, I must experience all of it, including its extremes.”

Showboat: “No one eclipses me. If I let others shoulder me aside, and hog all the danger for themselves, what then my bragging rights?”

Yen for Discovery: “Civilization depends on the accumulation and mastery of knowledge. As a trained artist, I understand this sort of thing better than those stuff-heads in the academy. I’ll prove it by making discoveries they are too timid to uncover for themselves!”

That Deuced Peculiar Business

Now ask each player, starting with the one who arrived first to your game session and moving around the room from left to right, to describe a Deuced Peculiar Business—a recent event so eerie, so inexplicable, that the character has yet to mention it to anyone else, including members of the main cast.

Provide stumped players with

examples, such as:

- a dream or hallucination of bone-white sky punctuated by ebony stars
- a glimpse of a preternaturally compelling figure on the street, who, once pursued, apparently vanished
- a loved one who has disappeared and no one now remembers
- a painting whose central image changes over time
- a sketch or drawing radically different from the one the artist thought she was making—a dread landscape or horrific face
- a street, town, or strangely proportioned building, which the character cannot find, no matter how often they try to retrace their steps
- apparently animated statues or gargoyles
- a soiree that devolved into a perverse ceremony
- mysterious annotations in their diary, in some other crabbed hand, even though it is kept under lock and key
- multiple sudden deaths, shortly after becoming subjects of the character’s work
- unearthly music without an apparent source, or an instrument that played by itself

Descriptions

Now that the players know their characters’ fields of study, general backgrounds, Drives, and Deuced Peculiar Business, ask each in turn to describe themselves to the rest of the group. These quick descriptions might include physical appearance, family history, and reasons for coming to Paris. But let the players define how they do this.

MUSÉE DES HORREURS



Relationships

Pick any player who hasn't yet been chosen to speak first. Starting with that player, and moving around the seating order from left to right, ask each to pick the other character in the group they most rely on, and to explain why. As they answer, fill in the "Relies On" column with the name of the selected character and, in parentheses, a quick encapsulation of the reason for this attitude.

Subsequent players must name characters who have not yet been chosen.

This means that the last player in the speaking order must choose the last remaining character and supply a reason for the **Relationship**.

Starting with that last player, and going around the room in reverse order (right to left), now have each pick another member of the group their character feels protective toward, again with a quick explanation of why this would be.

The resulting chart will look something like this:

This exercise creates group cohesion

Player	Character	Relies On	Protects
Tsing	<i>Jack Fallowby</i>	<i>Theo</i> (helps finish stuff)	<i>Stefan</i> (will fall in with scenesters)
Ana	<i>Barron Wisden</i>	<i>Stefan</i> (reminds him of Dad's infantry acquaintance)	<i>Theo</i> (naïve)
Gianni	<i>Stefan LeClerc</i>	<i>Ella</i> (pragmatic)	<i>Odile</i> (demimonde is dangerous)
Noelle	<i>Ella Wharton</i>	Barron (correspondent who suggested she come here)	<i>Jack</i> (wants Paris to solve his boredom)
Saif	<i>Theo Harren</i>	<i>Odile</i> (seems to understand Paris)	<i>Barron</i> (too cautious)
Carrie	<i>Odile Germon</i>	<i>Jack</i> (good source of commissions)	<i>Ella</i> (silly American will get herself killed)

and sketches out their history together before the action begins. It may be all you need to foster the sense of a gang of friends who naturally support one another when weirdness raises its spectral head. On occasion, as seen on p. 84, the GM may find cause to invoke Relationships in play.

If you can't convene a full group for your first session, try to arrange an online meetup, via video or text chat, to establish the collaborative elements, including Relationships, at a time when everyone is available.

Failing that, you'll wind up leaving some sections of the chart blank, giving latecomers less choice than they'd otherwise enjoy.

For a group that never shows up in the same configuration twice, you might consider abandoning this step entirely. Instead, kick off each new scenario by asking each player to specify what the character admires about each member of the group, referring only to those present.

Once a sense of group cohesion can be taken for granted, drop this preamble.

Investigative Abilities

Investigative abilities allow the characters to gain information, leading them to the solution to a mystery.

If you typically use the ability by simply remembering a fact you've already learned, it's an **Academic** ability.

If you use it to get someone else to tell you something, it's an **Interpersonal** ability.

Technical abilities often require you to take physical action of some sort as you inspect a piece of evidence.

Investigative Ability Master List

Architecture (Academic)
 Art History (Academic)
 Assess Honesty (Interpersonal)
 Belle-Lettres (Academic)
 Bonhomie (Interpersonal)
 Culture (Academic)
 Demimonde (Interpersonal)
 Fashion (Academic)
 History (Academic)
 Inspiration (Interpersonal)
 Intuition (Interpersonal)
 Military History (Academic)
 Miscellany (Academic)
 Natural History (Academic)
 Negotiation (Interpersonal)
 Occultism (Academic)
 Officialdom (Interpersonal)
 Painting (Technical)
 Photography (Technical)
 Poetry (Academic)
 Reassurance (Interpersonal)
 Research (Academic)
 Sculpture (Technical)
 Society (Interpersonal)
 Steel (Interpersonal)
 Technology (Technical)



Pushes

Characters can spend Pushes to gain benefits tied to their Investigative abilities. They never have to spend Pushes to get information, especially not information vital to moving forward through the story to solve its main mystery.

For example, you could spend an Art History Push to:

- acquire a painting you covet at a bargain price
- establish a friendly prior relationship with a famous artist appearing in the current scenario
- deflate a bullying sculptor by exposing the technical flaws in his work
- impress a snob with your fine taste, winning her confidence
- You never use Pushes on General abilities.

Some Shock and Injury cards can be discarded by spending a Push.

On occasion the GM may allow players to gain benefits not connected to any ability in the game, in exchange for a Push. For example, a player might ask if a flammable haystack happens to be situated conveniently close to a farmhouse she wants to burn down. That isn't under the character's control in any way, but for the cost of a Push can be put within the player's.

Unrule: Pushes replace investigative spends as you may know them from standard GUMSHOE. You no longer allocate separate pool points to your various Investigative abilities.

Gaining Pushes

Your character starts each scenario with 2 Pushes.

Unspent Pushes do not roll over from one scenario to the next.

Investigative Ability Descriptions

This section details the sorts of clues each Investigative ability typically garners. Lists of sample actions are indicative, not exclusive. The GM rewards creativity in applying abilities to tasks, so long as attempts players describe seem plausible within the confines of a reality-bending horror game.

Architecture (Academic)

You know how buildings are designed and constructed. You can:

- guess what lies around the corner while exploring an unknown structure
- judge the relative strength of building materials
- identify a building's age, architectural style, original use, and history of modifications
- deduce the existence of hidden rooms, priest holes, incursions of Carcosan reality, and other anomalies
- construct stable makeshift structures
- point out elements vital to a building's structural integrity

Art History (Academic)

Schooled in the progression of Western art from ancient times to the present day, you can:

- distinguish real works from fakes
- tell when something has been retouched or altered
- identify the age of an object by style and materials
- accurately estimate the price of an *objet d'art*
- call to mind historical details on artists and those around them

Assess Honesty (Interpersonal)

You can tell when people are lying to you, overtly or by omission, on a matter sufficiently important to them that they feel at least a modicum of shame, guilt, or anxiety. This emotional distress reveals itself in one or more verbal tics or gestural tells.

Assess Honesty does not let you read minds and does not tell you what truth the subject conceals. Sometimes a Push provides a hint.

Inexperienced or casually motivated liars may yield information you seek if you accuse them of dishonesty. Others will transparently redouble their efforts to deceive.

Extremely skilled or conscienceless dissemblers may not strike you as dishonest. This exception covers practiced liars, sociopaths, psychopaths, and individuals with mental landscapes corrupted after reading *The King in Yellow*.

Belle-Lettres (Academic)

As an essayist and journalist, you know how to:

- identify rich, powerful, and influential Parisians
- recall their past exploits and associations, including those too scandalous to print
- name their allies and enemies
- understand their political and philosophical leanings
- argue in a witty and tendentious style, in person or on the page
- navigate the city's profusion of newspapers and journals, from the size of their readership to the quirks of their editors
- recall the gist of articles from local publications, no matter how obscure

You can also treat this as an Interpersonal ability, prying information from otherwise reluctant witnesses by either promising them favorable coverage, or agreeing not to print what you know about them.

Bonhomie (Interpersonal)

Your sparkling personality delights people, making them want to please and impress you. Their desire to take you into their confidence may lead to indiscretions. Even if they later come to regret sharing secrets with you, they can't help feeling that it was worth it. You were just too witty, beautiful, and magnetic to resist.

People both aware of, and hostile to, your aims, can disregard your charm enough to withhold the information you seek. Even they won't be able to stop themselves from liking you, which may soften their behavior toward you—especially if you make a Push.

Culture (Academic)

As a general follower of the arts, your knowledge fills in the gaps between other characters' more form-specific awareness of the city's cultural scene. You know the people, trends, and venues of such art forms as:

- dance
- music
- drama
- opera
- music hall
- ceramics
- calligraphy
- stage magic
- clowning, mime, and circus performance
- and, as of just this year, that

most surprising of novelties,
the motion pictures screened
by the Lumière brothers

Demimonde (Interpersonal)

You know the sinister and decadent side of Paris, from its criminals to its vices. This allows you to locate and safely converse with pickpockets, con artists, muggers, burglars, pimps, prostitutes, and drug addicts. You know which gendarmes are honest, which are cruel, and which are bent. You can:

- deploy criminal etiquette to avert fights and conflicts
- identify unsafe locations and dangerous people
- price illegal goods such as drugs, stolen items, or weapons
- tell when practiced criminals and con artists are lying, as with
Assess Honesty
- gather underworld rumors

Demimonde also serves as an instrument of sleazy persuasion. It is what you use to gain cooperation from someone by threatening to reveal a secret about them.

Fashion (Academic)

Being conversant with the extravagant output of the Parisian fashion industry, you can:

- evaluate a garment's workmanship
- use technical terms of the clothing trade
- identify the designer of a particular high-end garment
- read clothing labels, no matter how obscure, tracing items to their makers
- tell from its style how old a garment is
- spot the differences between an

- authentic piece from a noted couturier and an imitation
- identify the source and type of toiletry items
- combine clothing items for maximum effect
- apply makeup and style hair
- elicit information from workers in the fashion industry, from top designers to harried seamstresses

History (Academic)

You're an expert in recorded human history, with an emphasis on its political, military, and economic and technological developments. You can:

- recognize obscure historical allusions
- recall capsule biographies of famous historical figures
- tell where and when an object made in a past era was fashioned
- identify the period of an article of dress or costume

Inspiration (Interpersonal)

Win cooperation from reluctant witnesses by appealing to their best selves. You hearten the disillusioned, remind the jaded of their former ideals, and instill new resolve in the demoralized. This typically takes the form of a stirring speech.

Overtly villainous people who regard themselves as entirely self-interested will likely resist even your most impassioned speeches.

On a Push, you can inspire the disheartened, discouraged, or regretful to hopeful action.

Intuition (Technical)

Your acute attention to inexpressible details in your environment allows

you to make instinctive leaps of logic you can't entirely explain. You can sense when a person or place has been touched by the alien influence of Carcosa. Early in the series, when you have yet to fully piece together the nature of the threat, you may simply understand this as a feeling of wrongness or a touch of the eerie.

On first meeting, you can sense strangers' motivations and guess at the dramatic events that drive them. This happens only when you know nothing about them beforehand.

Occasionally you spot, unbidden, a surprising and enlightening connection between two apparently disconnected elements of a place you're seeing for the first time. For example:

- when entering a château, you might suddenly and correctly guess that an item is hidden amid the ashes of its fireplace
- in an asylum, you might realize that a withdrawn patient is having an affair with the chief administrator
- in a roadside tavern, you might intuit that the smell of meat simmering from the kitchen comes from human flesh

When you first read this description, you may worry that it's too powerful. There's a catch, though! Intuition is a most capricious quality: it works only when it suits the GM's purposes in moving the story forward. Otherwise, you and the rest of the group have to rely on practical abilities, not hunches.

Military History (Academic)

Having studied wars and warfare, you can:

- inspect weapons, identifying their

approximate age, condition, country of origin, and manufacturer, specifying whether they were made for civilian or military use

- identify battlefields, reconstructing the engagements fought there
- recall famous battles and the tactics that determined their victors
- tell the rank and specialty of a soldier, past or present, from their uniform

Miscellany (Academic)

No matter what the dinner party conversation, you are always able to lob in a fascinating fact of little consequence—the obscurer the field, the better. You may not understand Etruscan pottery, the internal machinations of the Ottoman Empire, or the latest advances in phrenology. But you can certainly seem like an expert, for the next sixty to ninety seconds.

During an investigation, you can draw on this ability to:

- recall relevant facts from fields of knowledge not covered by any other ability in the game
- use any Academic ability held by player characters who are not present in the current scene

Natural History (Academic)

Like any well-rounded individual of the *fin de siècle*, you display an enthusiasm for the science of the natural world. From the principles of ethology (animal behavior) to the behavior of protozoans, you do your best to remain informed. During an investigation, you can:

- tell when an animal is behaving strangely
- ascertain whether an animal or plant is native to a given area

- identify an animal from samples of its hair, blood, bones, or other tissue
- identify a plant from a small sample
- isolate or detect natural poisons or venoms
- analyze rocks, soil samples, crystals, and minerals
- determine the age of a rock stratum
- date and identify fossils

Negotiation (Interpersonal)

Your gift for gab and eye for the value of a nickel serve you well when making deals with others. The secret? Convincing them that the best arrangement for you is also the best for them. During investigations, you gain information from others by promising them something in return, whether that be an offer of aid, or an old-fashioned bribe.

With a Push, you may aid your situation by gaining non-informational favors, haggling for goods and services, or buying your way out of a thrashing.

Occultism (Academic)

The mid-century revival of occult traditions has left its mark on both American and European culture. Whether you believe in its efficacy or consider it charming nonsense, you stay *au courant* with the organizations, literature, key figures, and controversies of the occult scene. You can:

- identify the cultural traditions informing a ritual from examining its physical aftermath
 - supply historical facts concerning various occult traditions
 - guess the intended effect of a ritual from its physical aftermath
 - repeat the latest gossip arising from the constant infighting between Parisian occultists
- impress occult writers by demonstrating a familiarity with their published works

Officialdom (Interpersonal)

Nowhere have bureaucrats achieved greater height of officiousness than Paris. Your unerring instinct for procedure and bafflegab allows you to navigate the most labyrinthine structures of French administration. You can:

- convince officials to provide sensitive information
- gain credentials on false pretenses
- find the person who really knows what's going on
- locate offices and files
- borrow equipment or supplies

No official, particularly a French one, will assist you in gathering general information you could more easily acquire by other means. Mistake them for librarians at your peril!

Painting (Technical)

Initial study in America and your current studies at Paris' École des Beaux-Arts have honed your skills as a fine art painter. You can:

- make quick sketches to retain the key details of a scene
 - remember and distinguish faces and postures of individuals you see in person, no matter how briefly
 - detect unnatural elements in a landscape, for example, a real-life error of perspective suggesting its corruption by alien physics
 - tell forgeries from genuine works
 - determine whether two pictures were produced by the same hand
- Making a noteworthy painting requires a Push.

Photography (Technical)

You understand the photographic process, from the daguerreotypes first introduced in the 1830s, to the operation of the radically simpler Kodak box camera, now seven years old. You can:

- take useful photographs of crime scenes and other places of disturbance
- when confronted by a seeming ghost image or other anomaly, distinguish common photographic artifacts from truly inexplicable manifestations
- spot retouching and other signs of fakery

To take a photograph the ages will remember, make a Push.

Poetry (Academic)

You study poetry, and write your own. You can recall a variety of historical facts about any culture or era that gave birth to poetry of any kind, from the Sumerians to today. You know Paris' poets, understanding their rivalries and alliances, and can successfully pass yourself off as an aficionado of any school. You can rattle off the requirements of any form, from the quatrain to the sonnet.

An improvised poem may induce cooperation from anyone who appreciates the form. This costs you nothing when you seek information. Other favors require a Push.

To write a memorable poem, make a Push.

Reassurance (Interpersonal)

Your soothing presence calms others. You allay the terrified and mollify the furious. By showing that you are trustworthy, and that no ill consequences will befall them, you

convince reluctant witnesses to provide information they would otherwise be reluctant to share.

Make a Reassurance Push to impel a frightened supporting character to provide non-informational aid.

Research (Academic)

A devoted haunter of libraries, you know how to find factual information from books, records, and official sources. You can match any number in the Dewey Decimal System (introduced two decades back) to its subject matter and vice versa. The staff of the Bibliothèque Nationale, aka The Imperial National Library, regard you with respect and affection.

Sculpture (Technical)

As a student of sculpture at the École des Beaux-Arts, you know the history and practice of the form. You can:

- identify the era and culture of archaeological sculptures and objects
- look at a work and name its maker, if he is a known figure, no matter how obscure
- tell a fake from the genuine item
- discourse on metallurgy
- distinguish various sorts of clay from one another
- calculate how much weight a floor can support

To make a memorable work, spend a Push.

Society (Interpersonal)

Accustomed to traveling in polite society, you understand the etiquette and mores of the ruling class and *haute bourgeoisie*. You gain cooperation and information from persons of good

standing by winning their trust, as one who knows how to behave and exercise discretion. You know where these people live and how to gain entrance to their parlors to talk to them without arousing suspicion. Regular study of the society pages keeps you up to date on all of the latest betrothals, marriages, births, and business arrangements. On a Push, you can gain non-informational favors from society types.

Steel (Interpersonal)

The smoldering look in your eyes and implacable surety of your posture command the obedience of the weak-minded. You need not stoop to the implied threat of physical violence to strike fear into the hearts of your inferiors. Instead it is the very strength of your personality that they find intimidating. As they babble out the secrets they were meant to keep, they understand what it is to stand in the presence of a born leader.

People who regard you as their equal, or an inferior, might be impressed by your confidence but won't be unnerved enough to make destructive revelations.

Make a Push to gain a non-informational favor from a person you have cowed.

Technology (Technical)

Perhaps because of the family business back home, you keep up on machines, devices, and all manner of industrial achievements. You can:

- tell whether a machine has broken down due to mechanical wear, poor design, or sabotage
- look at a piece of unknown machinery and deduce its purpose

- examine a part and tell what kind of device it belongs to
- read plans for a device and tell whether it is likely to work, what it does, and how expensive and difficult it will be to manufacture
- glance at a factory worker and tell what sort of machinery they operate

General Abilities

General abilities apply to situations where, unlike information-gathering, failure can be as interesting as success. Though perhaps not congenial.

Each General ability has a numerical **rating** associated with it.

When a player uses a General ability during play, they have the option of spending a number of points to add to the die roll, in a procedure called a **test**. That result is then compared with a **Difficulty** number; if it meets or beats the Difficulty, the attempt to use the ability succeeds.

Players start each scenario with a number of points to spend equal to their ratings in each General ability. When they spend points, they deduct them to get a new total. The number of points the player has available to spend from each ability is called a **pool**. Certain rules require you to keep in mind the difference between the rating (the starting number) and the pool (the current number, which might or might not be the same as the rating).

Rules for using General abilities start on p. 38, with the section "Tests."

General Ability Descriptions

General abilities break down into three categories:

- **Physical**, drawing on bodily strength.
- **Presence**, drawing on emotional and mental strength.
- **Focus**, fusing mental concentration with dexterity of movement.

The categories come into play in the context of certain Injury and Shock cards. One Injury might penalize only the Physical abilities; another, the sufferer's Focus abilities.

Athletics (Physical)

Athletics allows you to perform general acts of physical derring-do, from running to jumping to dodging falling or oncoming objects. Any physical action not covered by another ability probably falls under the rubric of Athletics.

You will have to pay a Toll, even when otherwise victorious, to avoid taking a Minor Injury. You can use Athletics points (along with Fighting and Health) to pay Tolls.

Composure (Presence)

Composure measures your ability to remain calm, cool, and controlled under emotional pressure. It allows you to impose mental discipline on unruly urges and unconscious impulses.

When you encounter a terrifying supernatural manifestation, you test Composure to see if the experience shatters your sense of self and rationality.

Fighting (Physical)

Used when you enter into physical struggle with adversaries, including not only combat but also fleeing and pursuit.

You will have to pay a Toll, even when otherwise victorious, to avoid taking a Minor Injury. You can use Fighting points (along with Health and Athletics) to pay Tolls.

First Aid (Focus)

You can give emergency medical attention to the sick or injured.

Many Injury cards specify a First Aid Difficulty number. If you meet or beat that target, the character who has taken on the card can either discard it, or trade it for a lesser one.

Health (Physical)

Test this ability to resist toxins, poisons, diseases, and other assaults on the body.

You will have to pay a Toll, even when otherwise victorious, to avoid taking a Minor Injury. You can use Health points (along with Fighting and Athletics) to pay Tolls.

Mechanics (Focus)

Hands-on experience with machines, gadgets, and industrial devices allows you to build, repair, and disable items ranging from gas lamps to steam engines. Given the right components, you can create jury-rigged devices from odd bits of scrap.

Riding (Physical)

You can ride a horse or drive a carriage under challenging or chancy conditions. This allows you to:

- engage in chases and pursuits on horseback
- leap obstacles
- care for, groom, shoe, and stable mounts
- take care of, prepare, and use riding gear such as saddles and bridles
- calm a nervous mount
- drive a horse-drawn wagon or cart
- wield a weapon while riding

Sense Trouble (Presence)

Keen perceptions allow you to spot signs of potential danger to yourself and others. Information gained from this ability might save your skins but doesn't directly advance the central mystery.

You might use it to:

- hear someone sneak up on you
- see an obscured or hidden figure
- smell a gas leak
- have a bad feeling about this

Players never know the Difficulty numbers for Sense Trouble before deciding how many points to spend, even in games where GMs generously inform the players of other Difficulty numbers. Players must blindly choose how much to spend.

When more than one player is able to make a Sense Trouble test, the group decides which of them makes the attempt. Only one attempt per source of trouble occurs, conducted by the chosen PC.

Sneaking (Focus)

You're good at placing yourself inside places you have no right to be. More

importantly, you can get back out again just as stealthily. You can:

- pick locks
- move silently
- filch portable items
- pick pockets
- find suitable places for forced entry and use them

Preparedness (Presence)

You expertly anticipate the needs of any mission by packing a kit efficiently arranged with necessary gear. Assuming you have immediate access to your kit, you can produce whatever object the team needs to overcome an obstacle. On a success, you have the item you want. You needn't do this in advance of the adventure, but can dig into your kit bag (provided you're able to get to it) as the need arises.

Although Preparedness assumes the use of a test, on occasion the GM may decide to simply charge you a set spend to have a particular item on hand.

Items of obvious utility to student investigators in Paris do not require a test. These include but are not limited to: sketch pads, paint, brushes, turpentine, pencils, bottles of wine, baguettes, foie gras, cheese, and cutlery.

Other abilities imply the possession of basic gear suitable to their core tasks. Characters with First Aid have their own first aid kits; the Photography ability implies ownership of an 1888 Kodak box camera, and so on. Preparedness instead covers general-purpose investigative equipment, plus oddball items that suddenly come in handy in the course of the story.

The sorts of items you can produce at a moment's notice depend not on

A CAUL MASK FOR LIFE



your rating or pool, but on narrative credibility. If the GM determines that your possession of an item would seem ludicrous and/or out of genre, you don't get to test for it. You simply don't have it. Any item eliciting a laugh from the group when suggested is probably out of bounds.

Character sheets describe what the investigators can do. This rules chapter shows how they do it.

GENERAL ABILITY
QUICK REFERENCE

Ability	Type
Athletics	<i>Physical</i>
Composure	<i>Presence</i>
First Aid	<i>Focus</i>
Health	<i>Physical</i>
Mechanics	<i>Focus</i>
Riding	<i>Physical</i>
Sense Trouble	<i>Presence</i>
Sneaking	<i>Focus</i>
Preparedness	<i>Presence</i>



GAME RULES

Getting Clues

A GUMSHOE scenario poses a central question to the PCs. That question might be:

- Who committed this murder?
- Where does the ravening monster keep its lair?
- How do we enact the ritual to banish this creature back to Carcosa?
- How do we rescue the kidnapped parliamentarian?
- Why did I see my own ghost along the banks of the Seine?
- What are those masked aristocrats up to?
- Who wrote the play that shatters reality?

To get from their first question to the climactic answer, the characters gather the clues allowing them to drive their way, scene by scene, toward a solution. The GM or scenario writer builds in various possible routes between scenes. Some scenes may or may not occur, depending on player choices. In other cases, players choose between possible directions forward, determining the order in which scenes happen. The GM adjusts or improvises scenes to fit surprise choices that nonetheless drive the story onward.

Acquiring clues is simple. All you have to do is: get yourself into a scene where relevant information can be gathered, have the right ability to

discover the clue, and tell the GM that you're using it. As long as you do these three things, you will never fail to gain a piece of necessary information. It is never dependent on a die roll. If you ask for it, you will get it.

You can specify exactly what you intend to achieve: "I use Bonhomie to charm the general into telling me who found the papers that triggered the scandal."

Or you can engage in a more general informational fishing expedition: "I use Natural History to see if there's anything weird about these rock formations."

If your suggested action corresponds to a clue in the scenario notes, the GM provides you the information arising from the clue.

The characters investigate the disappearance of Pierre, their favorite tavern-keeper. They break into a shed outside the city, where they find a broken chair, a length of rope, and a pipe much like the one perpetually perched between his teeth.

GM: "Hanging on a peg in the shed is a ceremonial dagger."

Player: "That receives my attention. I draw on my knowledge of Occultism to see if I can tell anything about it from its style of decoration."

GM: "The filigrees on the hilt

remind you of mystical diagrams drawn by the defrocked Abbé Boulan.”

Some clues would be obvious to a trained investigator immediately upon entering a scene. These passive clues are provided by the GM without prompting.

GM: *“You spot spatters of blood leading from the shed.”*

Player: *“How much blood?”*

GM: *“Mere droplets. In a widely separated pattern suggesting that whoever was bleeding was moving quickly away from here.”*

On a night when you’re chugging along readily through the mystery, the GM will sit back and let you prompt her clues. When you’re bogging down, she may volunteer information.

Early in the series, or on a night when everyone’s experiencing a collective caffeine crash, the GM might instead run the shack clue, above, like this:

GM: *“You spot a ceremonial dagger. Who has Occultism?”*

You: *“I do.”*

GM: *“The filigrees on the hilt remind you of mystical diagrams drawn by the defrocked Abbé Boulan.”*

For groups preferring to hide the game terms, the GM can rely on an Investigative Ability Worksheet (see Appendix, p. 238). Knowing from the sheet which characters have which abilities, the GM supplies clues without stopping to ask who’s looking for what where. Given a choice between multiple PCs who have the same ability, the GM picks either a character who hasn’t had a chance to shine lately, or the one likely to have the most entertaining reaction to the discovery. The GM might stick

with one approach, or switch between them as the moment seems to demand.

GM: *“You spot a ceremonial dagger.” [Checks the worksheet, sees that it’s Ana who has Occultism.] Addressing her, she says: “The filigrees on the hilt remind you of mystical diagrams drawn by the defrocked Abbé Boulan.”*

The exact give-and-take surrounding the provision of clues will vary seamlessly based on the situation. Typically the GM will sit back and invite players to take the lead, subtly taking up the slack as needed.

For each pivotal scene, the GM designates a **core clue**. This is the clue you absolutely need to move to the next scene, and thus to complete the entire investigation. GMs will avoid making core clues available only with the use of obscure Investigative abilities. (For that matter, the character creation system is set up so that the group as a whole will have access to all, or nearly all, of these abilities.)

Scenes that don’t include core clues are called alternate scenes, because you don’t need to complete them to solve the mystery or bring the scenario to its conclusion.

Information Gathering with General Abilities

Sometimes a General ability is an apter way to gain a particular nugget of information than an Investigative one. The GM allows this whenever it seems plausible, and does not do the job of an already existing Investigative ability. Finding clues necessary to answering the scenario’s core mystery never requires a test or the expenditure of ability points.

Situations where this could apply include:

- Riding to tell if a horse has been properly handled.
- Sneaking to guess whether an intruder could have been in the character's studio while she was attending that champagne tasting.

Not all General abilities lend themselves to this: Mechanics yields no information, because Technology, an Investigative ability, does that already.

Simple Searches

Many clues can be found without any ability whatsoever. If an ordinary person could credibly find a clue simply by looking in a specified place, the clue discovery occurs automatically. You, the reader, wouldn't need to be a trained detective to find a bloody footprint on the carpet in your living room or notice an envelope taped to the underside of a table at the local bistro. By that same logic, characters don't require specific abilities to find them, either. When players specify that they're searching an area for clues, they're performing what we call a **simple search**.



Vary the way you run simple searches according to pacing needs and the preferences of your group. Some players like to feel that their characters are interacting with the imaginary environment. To suit them, use a call-and-response format, describing the scene in a way that suggests places to look. The player prompts back by zeroing in on a detail, at which point you reveal the clue:

You: *Beside the window stands a roll-top desk.*

Player: *I look inside!*

You: *You find a collection of daguerreotypes.*

At other times, or for players less interested in these small moments of discovery, you might cut straight to the chase:

You: *You find an album full of daguerreotypes in the roll-top desk.*

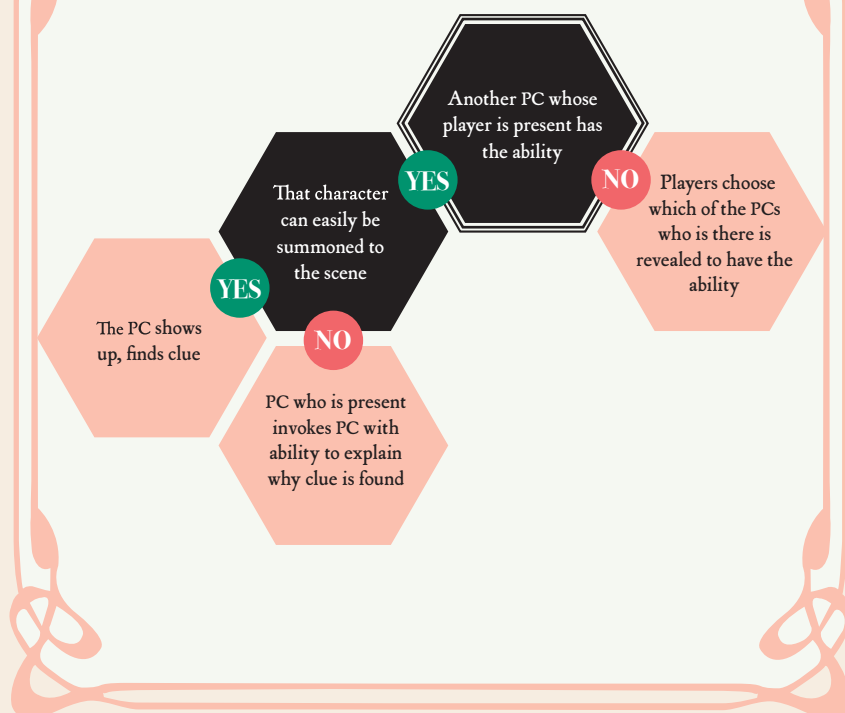
In the first case, the player who first voices interest in the detail finds the clue. In the second, at your discretion, it goes to:

- the character to whom the clue seems most thematically suited (for example, if you've established as a running motif that Jack always stumbles on the disgusting clues, and this clue is disgusting, tell his player that he's once again stepped in it)
- the player most due for a win or spotlight time

When No One Has a Needed Ability

When none of the characters present in a scene has the ability needed to earn a core clue, the GM uses this decision tree to decide what to do.

WHEN NO ONE HAS A NEEDED INVESTIGATIVE ABILITY



To unpack that a bit:

If the character's player is present at the current session and the character can travel to the scene of the clue with a minimum of annoying logistical description, that player does so, gaining the clue.

If the character's player is present but getting the character to the clue requires either an unbelievable event or a lot of less-than-interesting plot machinations, one of the characters who is present finds the clue, crediting it to the expertise of the absent character.

If the character's player is absent, one of the characters who is present finds the clue, crediting it to the expertise of the absent character.

If no character, present or absent, has the ability, the players collectively decide which of the characters taking part in the scene is now revealed to have had the ability all along, gaining the clue. The player adds the ability to the character sheet. This happens immediately and costs 0 Improvement points (p. 69).

Examples of crediting an ability use to an absent character:

- “Hey, this is by that artist Ella is always rattling on about!”
- “If Jack was here he’d look the fellow right in the face and not budge till he gave in.”
- “Barron once explained to me that this is what happens when you expose the negative too much.”

Sample explanations of an ability we haven’t seen the character use before:

- “I don’t like to talk about this, but I dabbled in painting for a while before I realized architecture was my true calling.”
- “I’m sorry that you have to see me engage in impoliteness. It is the family trait I am least proud of.”
- “I never mentioned this, but it just so happens that I do know my way around a camera.”

Leveraged and Prerequisite Clues

A staple element of mystery writing is the crucial fact which, when presented to a previously resistant witness or suspect, causes him to break down and suddenly supply the information or confession the detectives seek. This is represented in GUMSHOE by the **leveraged** clue. This is a piece of information which only makes sense when combined with a previous clue. The previous clue in that pair is called the **prerequisite** clue. Often the two clues appear in different scenes.

While nosing around at the theater, Odile uses Bonhomie to coax an admission from actress Isabelle Lafont: she had a brief fling with playwright Alexandre Dubuffet. Later, having come to suspect that

Dubuffet knows where a copy of the dreaded book can be found, she sends Barron to wring the truth out of him. Barron uses Demimonde to imply that Dubuffet had best cooperate, lest word of his dalliance with Isabelle reach the ears of his wife, whose family wealth his lavish habits depend upon. Here the affair is the prerequisite clue; Dubuffet’s revelation that he briefly owned the book but then passed it along to hotelier Gaston Auribeau is the leveraged clue.

Pipe Clues

A clue which is important to the solution of the mystery, but which becomes significant much later in the scenario, is called a **pipe** clue. The name refers to screenwriting jargon, where the insertion of exposition that becomes relevant later in the narrative is referred to as “laying pipe.” The term likens the careful arrangement of narrative information to the work performed by a plumber in building a house.

Early in the session, Ella searches the apartment of Cornelius van der Zuyden, an alleged dealer in forbidden books. She doesn’t find a copy of the play, but does, using the Fashion ability, see that his new tuxedo was made by Brussels tailor Dirk Delvaux, famed for his agoraphobia. In a later scene, she hears van der Zuyden proclaim that he has never set foot in Belgium. This apparent contradiction leads the group to wonder why he would lie about such a thing. That leads them to the library, and to the unsolved murder of a bookseller in Brussels half a year ago.

Pipe clues create a sense of structural variety in a scenario, lessening the sense that the PCs are being led in a strictly linear manner from Scene A to Scene B to Scene C. When they work well, they give players a “eureka” moment, as they suddenly piece together disparate pieces of the puzzle. A potential risk with pipe clues lies in the possible weakness of player memories, especially over the course of a scenario broken into several sessions. The GM may occasionally have to prompt players to remember the first piece of a pipe clue when they encounter a later component.

As a Seasoned Investigator...

Sometimes players, who are probably not professional mystery-solvers, make obvious errors of omission when looking for information. Rather than allowing this to bring the story to a halt, the GM steps in and reminds them of what their characters would do as a matter of course.

The players are so interested in the gory details of a murder their sculptor's latest statue may have committed that they fail to search the rest of the victim's manor. Before they perform a simple search that would yield a core clue, they describe themselves leaving.

GM: *Before you do that, do you look elsewhere in the house?*

Ana: *Oh, right! We should do that!*

GM: *On Mouton's desk, you find papers implicating him in the Panama Scandal.*

You may also use this device to remind them of previously uncovered leads they've forgotten. Players have worse memories than their characters, who experience all the events of the

story directly, instead of picturing them in their heads while rolling dice and dipping into the snack bowl.

Tests

A test occurs when the outcome of an ability use is in doubt. Tests apply to General abilities only. Unlike the seeking of clues, tests carry a fairly high chance of failure. They may portend dire consequences if you lose, provide advantages if you win, or both.

Even in the case of General abilities, the GM should call for tests only at dramatically important points in the story, and for tasks of exceptional difficulty. When used in unremarkable circumstances, abilities succeed automatically.

The GM determines how hard any given action is by assigning it a Difficulty number ranging from 2 to 8 (occasionally even higher), where 2 offers only a slim chance of failure, 4 is the norm, and 8 verges on the impossible. The player rolls a single die; if the result is equal to or higher than the Difficulty number, the character succeeds. Before rolling the die, the player may choose to spend any number of points from the relevant ability pool, adding these to the final die result. Players who forget to specify the number of points they want to spend before rolling are stuck with the unmodified result.

An anarchist maddened by visions of black stars hurls a bomb into the group's favorite café. Theo (played by Saif) tries to grab the device and toss it back out onto the street before it explodes. The GM decides that this is a

harder than usual action and secretly assigns it a Difficulty of 6. Theo has 8 points in his Athletics pool. Realizing that no new haunt could possibly extend credit as favorably as this one does, Theo resolves to go all out. Saif spends half of his pool, 4 points, on the attempt. He rolls a 5, to which he adds the 4 spent Athletics points, for a final result of 9. That's well over the Difficulty. "You succeed with aplomb!" the GM exclaims. Saif takes up the narration: "The bomb explodes in the middle of the street, sending a shower of cobblestones up into the air. This will surely attract the attention of the gendarmes, but at least my glass of kirsch royale remains unharmed."

The GM never directly reveals Difficulty numbers. She may, in response to player questions, give rough verbal indications of how hard a task seems to the naked eye:

- "You've got plenty of time—unless you slip."
- "The last time you leapt a chasm that wide, you made it. The time before that was a different story."
- "If you make it through, it'll be a miracle."

Retrying Failed Tests

The test represents the character's best chance to succeed. Once characters fail, they've shot their wad and cannot retry absent some other supporting action that would credibly increase the odds of success. Players permitted to do this must spend more pool points than they used on the previous attempt. Those who can't afford it, can't retry.

Ella attempts to sneak into the parish priest's quarters in the old

church of Auvers-sur-Oise. Her player, Noelle, spends 1 Sneaking and rolls a 2—not enough to overcome the Difficulty of 4.

The GM describes the outcome: "Clearly suspicious of you, the townsfolk mill about outside the tavern, robbing you of the privacy you need to skulk in secretly."

The group really wants to get in there.

"What if we wait until it gets dark?" asks Tsing.

The GM avers that this will change the situation enough to allow a retry.

"We hire rooms above the tavern, have a meal, and kill time until nightfall," Noelle says. "Then I try again."

This time Noelle spends less parsimoniously, using up her remaining 3 Sneaking points. She rolls a 1, for a result of 4: enough to succeed.

"This time you do creep into the church, confident that no one observes you."

Modifiers

Difficulty numbers for tests assume neutral conditions. In some cases, for example when characters have been hurt or emotionally rattled, modifiers add to or subtract from a test's final result. We call a positive modifier a **bonus** and a negative one a **penalty**.

Success... at a Price

Failure to overcome certain external obstacles can stall the plot just as much as failure to gain information. When an obstacle seems to call for a test, but

the GM can see that failure will result in a dull or frustrating dead end in the storyline, she adjusts so that the test determines not whether the group will overcome, but whether they'll pay a heavy price for doing so.

Odile trails the scythe-wielding peasant, hoping he'll lead her to site of the ceremony. Finding this blasphemous grove will keep the story moving, so the GM decides that she will, whether her Sneaking test succeeds or not. What the test decides is whether she finds it safely, or finds it and then falls into the clutches of the crazed farmers.

In a well-conceived test, something good happens on a success and something bad happens on a failure. In an unsatisfying test, something good happens on a success and nothing happens on a failure.

When Your Pool is 0

If you have a rating in a General ability, you can always make tests with it, even when your pool is 0. Your result is the unmodified die roll, which must meet or beat the Difficulty on its own.

When Your Rating is 0

You can always test any ability, even when you didn't acquire any points in it during character generation.

When it breaks story credibility for you to show even rudimentary competence in an ability, your GM may ask you to justify how you could do whatever it is you are doing. When in doubt, suggest that a PC who does have the ability gave you pointers, either directly or through observation.

Unrule: This departs from the

standard GUMSHOE, which forbids tests of abilities you have not invested in. QuickShock GUMSHOE demands more tests from the players than the baseline game; this more generous interpretation saves us from adding, and you from having to remember and implement, a bunch of special case rules.

Margins

In some special tests or contests, the difference between difficulty and result is used to determine the degree of failure or success. This number is called the **margin**.

Piggybacking

When a group of characters acts in concert to perform a task together, they designate one to take the lead. That character makes a test, spending any number of their own pool points toward the task, as usual. All other characters pay 1 point from their relevant pools in order to gain the benefits of the leader's action. These points are not added to the leader's die result. For every character who is unable to pay this piggybacking cost, either because they lack pool points or do not have the ability at all, the Difficulty number of the attempt increases by 2.

Ella, Theo, Jack, and Barron try to sneak up to the blasphemous grove to rescue Odile from the clutches of the scythe cult. Ella, with a Sneaking of 8, takes the lead. Theo, Jack, and Barron have 0, 2, and 4 points in their Sneaking pools, respectively. Jack and Barron pay 1 point apiece; their pools go down to 1 and 3. Because Theo has no points to spend, the Difficulty number of the Sneaking increases from



Has he a mind as we



4 to 6. (If the group left him behind, it would be easier to sneak in, but he's the one with mechanical expertise to disarm the cult's death traps.) Ella spends 3 points on the attempt and rolls a 3—meeting the required Difficulty.

In many instances a group cannot logically act in concert. Only one character can try to palm a single object at any one time. Two characters with Preparedness check their individual kits in sequence, rather than checking a single kit at the same time.

Cooperation

When two characters cooperate toward a single goal, their players agree which of them is undertaking the task directly, and which is assisting. The leader may spend any number of points from her pool, adding them to the die roll. The assistant may pay any number of points from his pool. All but one of these is applied to the die roll.

The group rescues Odile only to find that she is dying from a mysterious poison. The Injury card representing the poisoning (see p. 63) says it can be removed on a Difficulty 9 First Aid test. It's late in the scenario, so the investigators have already spent most of their First Aid points. Stefan (played by Gianni) has 3 left; Theo (played by Saif) has 2. They agree that Stefan is the leader and Theo the assistant. Stefan spends all 3 of his First Aid points. Theo spends 2 of his points, but only one of these is applied to the total. That's 4 points to add to the die roll. Gianni rolls a 5, getting the 9 needed to bring Odile back from the brink of death, allowing her player to discard the Injury card.

Spends

Occasionally you'll want to create a task where, absent a weird and blundering choice on the part of the players, the characters certainly succeed. In this instance, you simply charge the character(s) a number of points from relevant General ability pools, called a spend. Spends can be paid by one character, or multiple players might chip in.

As GM, you want the group to feel the cost of trekking across a haunted plain on Carcosa, even though true failure would lead nowhere interesting. You require the group to spend 2 points of Riding. Gianni and Saif each pay 1 point of Riding, reducing their pools, respectively, from 2 to 1 and from 3 to 2.

Competitive Tests

Very occasionally PCs compete to see who best performs a task. Each makes a test; the character with the highest result wins. If results tie, the character with the higher pool, then the higher rating, wins. If all of those factors come out even, the characters tie, no matter how odd that might be.

To see which of them gets to keep a sketch of a suspect the sculptor Rodin has made for them, Odile and Noelle try to drink each other under the table. The GM sets the Difficulty of this Health test at 2. As Rodin settles in to enjoy the show, they tuck into the absinthe.

Noelle spends 2 Health and rolls a 2, for a total of 4.

Odile spends 3 Health and rolls a 4, for a total of 7. She wins.

Noelle sinks beneath the table as

Odile slugs back another glass of booze. Looks like it's Odile's descendants who will inherit an art history treasure.

In a case where it is possible for everyone to fail, competitors must also beat a Difficulty set by the GM.

When Noelle and Odile compete to see which of them can climb the rigging of a sailing vessel first, you might set an Athletics Difficulty of 3. If both of them fail, neither makes it to the top, tapping out or even falling off as they make the attempt.

Salience

The GM never calls for tests that don't advance the story. Some Injury and Shock cards allow you to discard the card, or gain some other benefit, on a successful test. These assume a test relevant to the storyline. Benefits are not available if the player initiates a test unrelated to the current action in a clearly gratuitous attempt to trigger them.

Time Increments

Certain GUMSHOE rules refer to various increments of time.

Intervals

A new interval begins each time the group acquires a new core clue. When more than one core clue can be gained during a single scene, only the first clue counts as starting a new interval. When a rule says, for example, that something happens after two intervals pass, it means that the group must gather two core clues in separate scenes.

Barron's Intuition leads him to suspect that something is amiss with a new arrival in Parisian high society,

Contessa Emilia Carobocci. The GM's notes list this realization as a core clue. One interval has just passed. When Odile attempts to befriend the Contessa to gain access to her exclusive baccarat evenings, she suddenly collapses, black foam issuing from her mouth. The scenario marks this discovery as a core clue (it will lead to a quack doctor, who in turn will lead them to another copy of the book). Two intervals have now passed.

Sessions

A session is the time spent playing one sitting of the game, whatever that happens to be.

If your sessions wildly differ from a baseline of three to four hours, you may find yourself adjusting the timing of effects keyed to sessions.

Scenarios

An effect that lasts until the end of a scenario concludes when the main answer to a mystery occurs, plus a perhaps a brief coda in which the team ties up loose ends, breaks terrible news to grieving relatives, make patrons aware of debts incurred or discharged, and so on.

Depending on how quickly the players crack the case at hand, a scenario might encompass multiple sessions, or last for one session only.

I try to time my scenarios to coincide with the ends of sessions, but sometimes the pacing gods mess with that desire, requiring me to start a new scenario in the middle of a session.

World Time

An hour, you will be shocked to learn, means an hour's worth of time.

But wait!

An hour of **world time** refers to time as it unfolds for the characters. As in a piece of fiction, world time almost never elapses at the same rate for the characters as for the players and GM. A day might pass in a single sentence from the GM: "A day later, you find yourself at the inn." Or you could spend minutes describing an action that in world time takes only a second or two.

Game Time

An hour of **game time** refers to the real-world time you, the GM and players, spend at the gaming table (or lounging around in chairs in the den or whatever).

The distinction between world and game time mostly matters when measuring the duration of Shock and Injury cards.

Refreshing Points and Pushes

When points or pushes return to their starting values, we call that a **refresh**.

Pushes refresh to 2 per player at the start of each session.

General ability pools return to the value of their ratings at the start of each scenario.

This assumes a scenario that takes one or two sessions to complete.

GMs may wish to build moments into longer scenarios, or ones in which significant leaps of time occur, which allow General ability points to refresh.

The group heads back to America after learning, midway through a

scenario, of a Carcosan outbreak in Manhattan. Their uneventful time crossing the Atlantic on the SS Umbra seems to the GM like an appropriate time for a General ability refresh.

When a rule, card text, or scenario refers simply to a refresh, read that to mean a full refresh—the character's pool returns to its full value.

Partial Refreshes

In some cases partial refreshes occur, in which the character regains a set number of points. These are marked with the number of points regained: so in a 2-point refresh, characters can top up their pools by 2 points.

Partial refreshes never allow characters to increase their pools above their ratings.

Jack has a Composure rating of 7 and 6 points in his pool. The characters receive a 2-point refresh. He can only use one of those points, increasing his pool from 6 to 7, the value of his rating.

Odile receives the same refresh, but she has a Composure rating of 8 and only 4 points in her pool. She increases her pool from 4 to 6.

Whew

One type of partial refresh is the **whew**. It emulates the moment of relief in a narrative when the trepidation surrounding a daunting circumstance turns out to be nothing. *Whew!*

A **whew** provides a 2-point refresh.

The **whew** most often applies to Composure. Award one when players clearly dread an upcoming story turn which instead proves completely innocuous:

- A tantalizing cooking aroma wafts

from the apartment where the investigators expect to find the rest of a murder victim, horribly charred. Nope—he just had a pork shoulder slow cooking in the oven. *Whew!*

- A thumping emanates from the attic above. The group steels itself to confront the scythe-wielding cannibal they’ve been hunting. But no, it’s just the cat. *Whew!*
- Cassilda left the group a flask of absinthe she claimed will heal any wound. The students won’t get Ella out of the cavern with her leg broken like that. She’s halfway sure the potion will kill her on the spot or eradicate what’s left of her free will. But when she swigs it down her leg heals, as promised, to no further ill effect. *Whew!*

To maintain the emotional power of the whew, use it sparingly and only when it fits. Often the players will set up a whew for you, by showing genuine terror of an upcoming moment you never intended to play as anything other than innocuous.

Look particularly for situations where the group sends in only some of its members to confront the imagined awfulness. That way the brave get the reward and the cautious lose out.

Whews that refresh other General abilities don’t come easily to mind but if one that makes sense presents itself during play, rule it in.

Fighting

Though the characters spend most of their time solving mysteries, sometimes the answers they seek lead them into violent conflict. Fight scenes in *TRPG* unfold in the following stages.

Define Objectives

Define the objective of each side.

The GM chooses for the opposition.

Players confer to choose their collective objective. If they fail to agree, and any player chooses kill, that’s the objective.

Common objectives are:

Kill: Keep fighting until everyone on the other side of the fight is dead.

Render Helpless: Keep fighting until everyone on the other side of the fight is too hurt to continue. Helpless opponents remain on the scene. You may take them prisoner or depart as they roll around on the ground in pain. Killing helpless people, or intelligent creatures, generally requires Composure tests (baseline Difficulty of 6) to avoid Shock—**Minor:** A Crossed Line;

Major: Out of Control.

Gain Surrender: Keep fighting until everyone on the other side agrees to be taken into custody, in exchange for a promise of fair treatment. Not all combatants will willingly surrender. When they don’t, the GM treats the situation as if the players have chosen the Render Helpless objective.

Beat Up: Thrash your opponents and walk away, leaving them badly hurt but not dead.

Block: Stop your opponents from moving past you.

Drive Away: Keep fighting until everyone on the other side retreats. If they were attacking you, they flee back to wherever they came from. If they were defending a position, they flee in random directions or back toward the nearest position of safety. Use when you want to defeat your enemy without killing or capturing them.

Escape: Flee to a position of safety the enemy is not attempting to hold or protect.

Escape with a Captive: Grab a member of the opposing force, then flee with your new captive to a position of safety the enemy is not attempting to hold or protect. Where the enemy group includes combatants of varied ability, you take its weakest or most vulnerable member.

Gain an Item: Grab a portable, easily seized item held by a member of the opposing force, then flee with it to a position of safety the enemy is not attempting to hold or protect. Suitable items include books, weapons, amulets, purses, satchels, and documents.

Overrun: You forcibly move through a group of opponents attempting to block you from going somewhere.

Topple: You knock the target off its feet—which is only worth doing when your enemy stands on a cliffside, on the brink of a raging river, in a precarious rowboat, or in some like situation where a fall will cause a more-than-momentary setback.

A group of off-duty night watch, all members of the same extended family, have gathered in an alleyway to drink and gamble with dice. Unfortunately, one of the dice is a cursed item the group lost and must now recover. The die wants to stay with the night watch, having found their minds more malleable than those of the investigators.

When negotiations fail, the players reluctantly decide they'll only be able to get the die by force. They agree that they don't want to hurt these civilians, who have come under their enemy's

sway due to Jack's carelessness. Their goal is to Gain an Item.

Determine Difficulty

The GM (or scenario) defines a Difficulty reflecting the overall strength of the entire opposition, including any tactical advantages or disadvantages they may have in this particular situation. Difficulties for foes described in this book come with assigned Difficulties, but you can always bounce them up and down to fit the logic of your story. Describe situational modifiers to make shifts feel consistent to players.

That ghoul queen may have been tough the last time the group fought her, but now the setting sun is shining in her eyes.

Opt-Out Penalties

Foe Difficulties assume that the foe has to fight an entire party of PCs. When player characters elect to skip a fight, those who do take part in the battle suffer a -1 Fighting penalty per absent PC. The foe's Toll increases by 1 for each absent PC.

For further explanation of, and exceptions to, this rule, see "Fighting at Less Than Full Strength," p. 59.



Relative Challenge Table

Relative Challenge	Difficulty (Escape)	Difficulty (Other)	Difficulty (Kill)	Toll
Weak	2	3	3	0
Tough but Outmatched	2	2	4	0
Evenly Matched	3	4	5	1
Superior	3	4	6	1
Vastly Superior	3	6	7	2
Overwhelming	4	7	8	3
Too Awful to Contemplate	5	8	10	4

Tolls

The other key game statistic for a foe, listed above, is its Toll.

Even a protagonist who wins a fight sometimes gets banged up along the way. Tolls represent the negligible bumps, scrapes, jars, and jolts investigators sustain as they dish out worse to their enemies.

Players pay Tolls from any combination of Athletics, Fighting, and Health. Characters who can't or won't pay the Toll instead take foe's Minor Injury card.

As you can see from the above table, only the more formidable foes, who will knock you around a bit before you put them down, impose Tolls.

In standard GUMSHOE, the equivalent of a Toll is a Health point loss that leaves you above 0 Health.

You might also compare them to the small hit point losses common to other roleplaying games, like *D&D* and *13th Age*.

Fight Tracker

To aid you in running the fight, ready a copy of the handy blank table we call the Fight Tracker. A page of Fight Trackers appears in this book's Appendix, p. 241. Or find one formatted for your standard printer paper size at Pelgrane's Yellow King resource page, which you can locate from pelgranepress.com.

Player						
Spend						
Margin						
Total						

Write the names of the players attending the current session in the row marked “Player.” You probably want to use their seating order from left to right but any order will do.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana
Spend						
Margin						
Total						

Declare Spends

Ask each player in turn how many Fighting points they’re spending on the coming test. Enter this number in the “Spend” row.

Noelle, Gianni, and Tsing all say they’re spending 3 points.
Carrie tells you she’s spending 4. Saif goes for 2. Ana only has 1 to spend.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1
Margin						
Total						

Determine Order of Action

Players are about to take turns, in the following order:

1. High spends go first. Players spending 0 points go last.
2. When two or more players are making the same spend, the ones seated on the left (from your point of view) go before those seated on the right.

Carrie is spending more than anyone, at 4 points. She goes first.

Then come the players spending 3, from left to right: Noelle, Gianni, and Tsing.

Next, Saif, spending 2.

Finally, comes Ana, spending 1.

In an online game without an apparent seating order, break ties in the order of action in whatever manner you find most intuitive. Alphabetical by player or character name probably works best. Does the platform you're using create a virtual seating order? Use that.

Alternate Rule: Some groups prefer to reverse the order of action, going from lowest to highest spends. This choice values narrative clarity over suspense. It allows players of the characters delivering what are likely to be the finishing blows to describe the definitive actions they take to beat the foe. If they win, that is.

Players Take Their Turns

Players take individual turns, in which they:

1. Describe what they're hoping to physically accomplish in the fight.
2. Make Fighting tests.
3. Compare Fighting test results against the foe's Difficulty number, including applicable modifiers

(a) Players who meet or beat the number:

- i. Describe themselves successfully doing what they set out to do in step 1.
- ii. Must either pay the foe's Toll (if any) or take its Minor Injury card. (A few foes instead deal out Shocks.) The Toll, listed in the foe's profile, can be paid from any combination of Fighting, Athletics, or Health. If they take the Injury, you narrate how they suffer it, based on the card's title and text.

(b) If they do not meet or beat the number:

- i. You describe their chosen opponent defeating their attempt.
- ii. On a margin of 0 or 1, they take the foe's Minor Injury card.
- iii. On a higher margin, they take the foe's Major Injury card.

4. You mark the player's margin, which may be positive, negative, or zero, under their column in the margin row of the fight tracker. If the margin exceeds 3, it truncates, becoming a 3. Players whose margins are



- truncated get a special reward at the end, so mark this by underlining any truncated margin.
5. If other players have already acted, add the player's margin to the running combined total of all previous margins. Cross out the margin for the last player who acted. Call out the new running margin to the players.
 - (a) If it is positive or zero, describe how they are collectively triumphing over their adversaries. Zero indicates that they're winning by the slimmest of hairs.
 - (b) If it is negative, describe their enemies taking the upper hand in the fight.
 - (c) As necessary, throw in bits of narration to keep the sense of threat alive.
 6. If other players have yet to take their turn, return to step 1 with the next player in the order of action.
 7. If this player was the last in the turn order, move to the next stage, "Name the Victors," below.

As previously determined, Carrie goes first. "Odile rushes in and tries to distract them by waving her parasol about, as if unhinged."

"Do you use the sword cane part of the parasol?" you ask, knowing Odile's ways.

"No, we don't want to hurt them."

Carrie has chosen to spend 4 and rolls a 3, for an outcome of 7. Given the Difficulty of 4, that succeeds, with a margin of 3. The watchmen, as relatively underpowered opponents, have Tolls of 0. Carrie avoids a Minor Injury without having to pay additional points from her Athletics, Fighting, or Health pools.

You tell Carrie that she succeeds, so she narrates the result: "Taken aback by my bizarre capering, they press themselves up against the alley walls, leaving the die on the ground."

You note her positive margin on the Fight Tracker:

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1
Margin		3				
Total		3				

Next comes Noelle: “I rush up and stoop down to scoop up the die.”
 Having spent 3, she rolls a 1. She succeeds, but with a margin of 0. Still, that means she can pay the watchmen’s Toll of 0 to avoid Injury, which she does.
 “You succeed,” you say, “but by the skin of your teeth.”
 “I duck a blow from one of the watchmen, who I guess wanted to protect the magic die?”
 “Exactly right,” you say, encouraging Noelle in her description not just of what her character is doing, but the overall action.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1
Margin	0	3				
Total	3	7				

“Stefan leaps in,” says Gianni, “to shoulder this aggressive fellow aside.”
 Gianni also rolls a 1, succeeding with a margin of 0. The foes’ Toll of 0 means that he needn’t pay additional pool points to avoid a Minor Injury card.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1
Margin	0	3	0			
Total	3	7	3			

The scuffle so far has become a mite static, so you throw in a bit of narration that keeps the suspense going without depicting the heroes as suddenly losing: “The other watchmen unfreeze and come barreling toward the lot of you.”
 Now Tsing goes: “Jack redeems himself by putting his sculptor’s muscles to use dishing out the honest punches of a stout-hearted Yankee!”
 He spent 3 and rolls a 5, for a result of 8. Like the others he pays a Toll of 0 to avoid Minor Injury. His margin is 4, but that truncates to the maximum single margin of 3 when you note it on the tracker. You underline it to note that it has been truncated.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1
Margin	0	3	0	<u>3</u>		
Total	3	3	3	6		

“You really have the upper hand now,” you say. “Narrate those punches.”
Miming a series of wild blows, Tsing acts them out with sound effects and a cry of: “That’ll teach you to say no to an art student!”
Victory seems assured, but its magnitude remains up for grabs.
You call on Saif to act next.
“Each time Jack sends a watchman flying, I grab his collar to speed him on his way out of the alley.”
Saif rolls a 5, adding his spend of 2 for an outcome of 7 and a margin of 3.
The investigators have this matter well under control.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1
Margin	0	3	0	<u>3</u>	3	
Total	3	3	3	6	9	

“They go left and right. I am a matador, and they are capes I discard!” exclaims Saif. He also pays the Toll of 0.
Finally Ana describes what she’s doing. “I hold out my hands for Ella to toss me the die,” she says.
She rolls a 2. With her spend of only 1, that leaves her with a 3, below the Difficulty. That gives her a margin of -1, bringing down the group total. Her margin is less than 2, so she takes only a Minor Injury. You give her the Cracked Skull card.

Player	Noelle	Carrie	Gianni	Tsing	Saif	Ana
Spend	3	4	3	3	2	1
Margin	0	3	0	<u>3</u>	3	-1
Total	3	3	3	6	9	8

“They go left and right. I am a matador, and they are capes I discard!” exclaims Saif. He also pays the Toll of 0.

Finally Ana describes what she’s doing. “I hold out my hands for Ella to toss me the die,” she says.

She rolls a 2. With her spend of only 1, that leaves her with a 3, below the Difficulty. That gives her a margin of -1, bringing down the group total. Her margin is less than 2, so she takes only a Minor Injury. You give her the Cracked Skull card.

Name the Victors

When the last player has acted, their entry in the “Total” row becomes the final group margin.

If it meets or beats 0, the group scores a victory and achieves its declared goal. Invite players with margins higher than 0 to describe the actions they perform to definitively achieve it. Go from highest to lowest margin, breaking ties from low to high spend, then seating order.

Did everyone get a 0? Then everyone narrates.

Carrie, Tsing, and Saif have margins higher than 0, so you invite them to narrate. Carrie has the same margin but a higher spend, so she goes last. Tsing and Saif both have the same

spend and margin, so follow her in seating order.

“I grab the bouncing die and put it safely in my pocket!” Carrie cries.

“I complete the remaining thrashings,” Tsing narrates.

“And I get in a few kicks as I guide the rest of my friends to a safe helter-skelter dash through Montparnasse!” adds Saif.

If not, the GM describes how the opposition thwarts them as they suffer a defeat. Their enemies can’t hurt them any further, but they can put them in an otherwise worse situation. Of course, the character who took a third Injury card has been killed by that last Injury.

(Had the group failed in our ongoing example, the watchmen would have gotten away with the die.)

Characters scoring a margin greater than 3 get a Fight Benefit. They may either:

- gain a Push
- refresh a General ability other than Fighting, Health, or Athletics

Checking the Fight Tracker, you see that Saif’s margin is underlined, meaning that you truncated it to 3. He chooses to refresh Sense Trouble.

FIGHTING QUICK REFERENCE

1. Players define objectives.
2. GM determines Difficulty.
3. GM prepares the Fight Tracker.
4. Players declare spends.
5. GM determines order of action.
6. Participating characters take -1 Fighting and +1 to Tolls for each non-participating character (see p. 59 for exceptions).
7. Next player in order:
 - (a) Describes what the character is trying to do.
 - (b) Makes a Fighting test.
 - (c) On a success, the player:
 - i. Narrates a successful action.
 - ii. Either:
 - A. Pays the foes' Toll.
 - B. Takes a Minor Injury, which the GM narrates.
 - (d) On a failure:
 - i. The GM narrates the foe's successful action.
 - ii. On a margin of 0 or 1: the character takes a Minor Injury, which the GM narrates.
 - iii. On a higher margin, the character takes a Major Injury, which the GM narrates.
 - (e) The GM notes the player's margin, truncating margins of 4 or more to 3, and underlining them.
 - (f) The GM incorporates the player's margin into the group's running total and announces it.
 - i. If it is greater than 0, the players narrate a situation in which they have the upper hand.
 - ii. Otherwise, the GM narrates a situation in which the foes have the upper hand.
8. When all players have acted, consult the final margin.
 - (a) If more than 0:
 - i. Players whose characters scored margins of 0 or more describe the group achieving its chosen objective.
 - ii. Players whose margins were truncated choose to:
 - A. Gain a Push.
 - B. Refresh a General ability other than Fighting.
 - (b) If less than 0, the GM describes their failure to achieve the objective, possibly including the circumstances preventing the victorious foe from killing the surviving PCs.

Fighting as Quick Test

On occasion you might rule that a character can achieve an objective by scoring a Fighting success outside of the combat system. The PC might be, for example:

- restraining or knocking out a physically unprepossessing person
- wrenching a pistol from someone intent on self-harm
- hunting a game animal

Treat this as you would any other General test.

Shocks and Injuries

When characters are physically harmed or undergo mental shocks, they gain cards reflecting the harm they suffer.

Depending on what you all find convenient, your GM may choose to give you:

- physical cards, in the form of slips of paper printed out from PDF and handed to you
- virtual cards; check pelgranepress.com for our most up-to-date tools for digital card dealing

Whatever the form factor, the game uses the language of playing cards to describe how you handle them. When you gain an Injury or Shock, you add it to your hand. When you get rid of it, you discard it. You sometimes trade one card for another—most often a really bad Shock or Injury for a less bad one.

Text on the cards is exceptions-based, meaning that when the card text contradicts another game rule, it takes precedence over the general rules.

Discard all cards at the end of each scenario, with the exception of cards

marked **Continuity**. Any card without this tag, and without an explicit discard condition, is discarded at the end of a scenario.

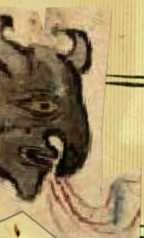
Most cards tell you what you have to do to get rid of them during a session. They may simply indicate that you have to pay a price or overcome an obstacle, leaving the details of that up to you to weave into the story, and the GM to approve. If it feels like something that would credibly get rid of the problem in a story or TV show, the GM approves it.

When an Injury card lists a First Aid Difficulty, another character with that ability can get rid of the card for you by successfully making that test.

Some cards allow you to fulfill conditions, like spending General points or Pushes, to discard the card. In certain cases you can do this only after a specified time has elapsed. Where no time is specified, you can get rid of the card immediately, suffering no ill effect other than the expenditure.

Some cards refer to abilities that appear in only some of the game's sequences. In such cases the Use In: notation appears below the card text, followed by abbreviations specifying the sequences the card can be used in. P for *Paris*, W for *The Wars*, A for *Aftermath*, and N for *This Is Normal Now*. (The core books don't include any cards specific to the first or last sequences, but maybe we'll think of some and publish them in later books.)

You may be tempted to make cards gained during the final scene of a scenario Continuity cards, on the grounds that their cool effects will otherwise never come into play. Though that makes some sense on a theoretical



level, in practice you'll find this option too punitive. It can push hit points at characters in a death spiral right from the start of a new mystery. Instead, accept that cards given out in what turns out to be a concluding scene only matter if they become Final cards.

Death and Incapacity

A character dies and leaves play for good after receiving too many Injury cards.

A character suffers irreparable mental strain and leaves play (played by the GM if the character appears again at all) after receiving too many Shock cards.

In **Horror** mode, too many = 3. The third card in either category you take is called your Final card.

In **Occult Adventure** mode, too many = 4. The fourth card in either category you take is called your Final card.

On a Final Injury card, the GM invites you to describe a suitable death, given the circumstances that led to your gaining that fatal third card. You might:

- take inspiration from the situation currently being narrated
- describe an even worse version of the harm implied by the title and effects of the Final card
- describe a fatal worsening of a condition suggested by a previous Injury card already in hand

Likewise, as soon as you have 3 Shock cards in hand, your character loses all grip on reality.

You might:

- take inspiration from the situation currently being narrated
- describe an even worse version of the emotional or perceptual break implied by the title and effects of the Final card

- describe a condition suggested by a previous Shock card already in hand shattering the character's psyche
This could be followed up with a suggestion of the character's eventual fate: commitment to a sanitarium, becoming a shut-in kept in the family attic back in Westchester, loping off into the woods to live as a hermit, or the like. Depending on where the characters are when you take the Final card, you might describe this right away, or after an appropriate break in the action. In some instances the GM may wish to reserve the right to treat the now-unbalanced character as an antagonist, ongoing or otherwise.

After the narration ensuing from a Final card, the player creates a new character, using the guidelines on p. 70.

If you hear a player conclude that their characters only have three (or four) hit points, they're setting themselves up for confusion and annoyance, as that's not how this ruleset thinks. Head off that conceptual stumbling block by providing the explanation on p. 63.

Unrule: Unlike standard GUMSHOE, your Composure and Health pools never directly determine whether you remain in play. You never drop below 0 in those pools.

Final Injury Narration Example

Sarita's character, Yseult, fights gargoyles on a boat. She already has the Injury cards Woozy and Abrasion. This game is played in Horror mode, meaning that a third Injury will be her Final card. In the story, she's hardly on the brink of death—but she's off

her game in a way that could turn an otherwise survivable wound into a fatal one.

In the fight, she takes the Injury card Gargoyle Strike. In her description of her character's demise, Sarita goes for the gusto: "Still woozy from the seasickness, Yseult can't keep her footing when the gargoyle comes at her. Its stone wing catches her in the throat, decapitating her. Her head bounces into a lifeboat. Tough old salts watching this go weak at the knees. One faints in sheer terror."

Final Shock Narration Example

Meade's character, Abraham, is having a tough time on the shores of Hali. Meade holds the Shock cards Bit of a Sticky Wicket and Agitated. When the fishy dwellers in Hali rise from the lake to demand tribute in blood, Meade fails a Composure test. This game is played in Horror mode, so the Shock he receives, Rationality's Cruel Veil, becomes Abraham's Final card. "I am back home in my bed, having a dream," says Meade, speaking in character as Abraham. "Nothing that appears to be happening is actually taking place." Meade plays his character's utter denial of his true circumstances until the rest of the group returns him to Paris. Then he describes himself happily waving goodbye to them as he is escorted to the finest sanatorium in Faubourg Saint-Germain. "What an odd dream I am having," Meade says, then reaches for a blank character sheet.

Card Terms

As a shorthand certain cards use standard terms, defined here.

+x to Tolls: The character holding the card treats foes as if their Tolls are a specified number of points higher. Tolls for characters not holding such cards do not increase.

Discard: Unless otherwise specified, the instruction "discard" applies to the card the text appears on.

GMC: A character run by the Game Moderator.

A night's sleep: The character must gain a solid night's sleep in circumstances not much less safe and comfortable than she would be used to during her ordinary, non-mystery investigating life. (Requiring a good night's sleep from the player, as opposed to the character, would be weird even for this game.)

Nonlethal: Cannot be your Final card. If received when you are one short of the Final card in its category, you take the card and undergo its effects, if any, but your character does not leave play.

You have 2 Injury cards in hand, in a game played in Horror mode. You receive the Topsy Injury card, which is Nonlethal. Your character does not die.

However, a nonlethal card **does** count toward your total when you have it in hand already and another incoming card becomes your Final card.

Later, after discarding one of your other Injury cards, you have 2 remaining: Breaking Point and Topsy. You then get a third card, Ravaged by the Elements. In this instance Topsy does count toward your total, and your character dies.

You shouldn't have gone out into that blizzard half-tanked on brandy!

Pay a price: When you suffer a significant negative consequence to bring about a situation that allows you to discard a card. GM decides what “significant” means.

Recipient: When one character performs a test or spends to benefit another, the character receiving the benefit is the recipient. When a card says you must be the recipient of a success or spend to discard a card, your character may not perform the action; any other PC can.

Take a risk: You perform an action that stands a decent chance of getting you into real trouble, as judged by the GM.

When card text tells you that you lose a number of points, your pool drops by that number. If you have fewer pool points than the card specifies, your pool drops to 0.

You might receive a card that costs you a number of points you don't have and therefore can't pay. In that case, count yourself lucky: you're off the hook! The GM does not swap your card for a different one to ensure that you suffer some other disadvantage. Having a Shock or Injury card is bad news all by itself, even if you can shrug off its specific ill effect.



Combat Special Cases, Exceptions, and Explanations

To make the basic combat rules easier to learn and refer to, we saved a subsection for the following entries.

Fighting at Less than Full Strength

The Relative Challenge of foes is calculated assuming that they're taking on a full group of PCs.

Weaker members of a group may be tempted to sit out a battle and let those with higher Fighting pools take all the risk.

This is not a smart move: it gives the enemy a numbers advantage.

Even a single foe capable of taking on many heroes will have an easier time against three investigators than it would against four, and easier still against only two adversaries.

This is how fights work in any roleplaying game: a dragon has an easier time against a fighter and a cleric than she would against a fighter, a cleric, a wizard, and a rogue.

When player characters elect to skip a fight, those who do take part in the battle receive a -1 Fighting penalty per absent comrade. The foe's Toll increases by 1 for each absent PC. This reflects the added challenge and costs of fighting while short-handed.

GMs may choose to ignore the penalty for fighting at less than full strength when it seems punitive or contrary to story logic. Apt times to waive the penalty include:

- When the party is at less than full strength due to circumstances contrived by the GM. If the group splits up and half of them get in a tussle with drunken rival students, or

attacked by yeth-hounds, describe only enough adversaries to threaten half the group, and ignore the penalty. (In group vs. group melees, the number of foes you describe is a matter of atmosphere and description. It can be higher or greater than the size of the PC group without impacting the game mechanics.)

- When players (as opposed to their characters) are absent.
- When a character is not just unwilling but unable to fight due to the effects of a completely debilitating Shock or Injury card.

The GM need never waive the penalty when players bend the story out of shape to justify fighting at less than full strength.

When you waive the penalty, and another fight against the same enemy occurs later, you may need to describe countervailing changes in the situation to explain why she seems just as effective against a larger force of PCs. More likely, with die results and spends adding variance to the outcome, no one will notice or care.

(In bookkeeping terms, it's simpler to increase the foe's Difficulty number by the number of missing combatants than to ask players to calculate penalties. A few players find this confusing on a conceptual level, though. It feels to them that it's the foes who are becoming more or less powerful, as opposed to the PCs' force becoming relatively weaker as its numbers diminish. If your players don't have a problem with it, use this simpler option instead.)

Support Actions

When players ask if they can do things in combat other than make

Fighting tests, answer by revealing these rules. This delayed introduction simplifies the combat system's learning curve. Support actions give players more choices, at the cost of additional complexity and rules consultation.

Characters can elect to take a **support action**, contributing to others' success in combat instead of taking on the enemy directly.

Players taking support actions can hold their actions, inserting themselves into the Fighting order when their help appears to be needed. They test the ability they're substituting for Fighting against the foe's Difficulty.

On a failure, the character taking the support action:

- takes a Minor Injury (if margin is 0 or 1) or a Major Injury (if margin is 2 or more)
- pays the foe's Toll
- subtracts the margin from the group's combat total

On a success, the character gains the benefit corresponding to the chosen type of support action:

- **First Aid:** When any one other character is assigned an Injury card, you may choose for it to be discarded before it is received (in the case of a Minor Injury card) or (in the case of a Major Injury) downgraded to a Minor Injury.
- **Athletics:** Draw fire to yourself and away from a comrade. When another character is assigned an Injury card, you may choose to take that card instead. Restricted to one beneficiary per combat.
- **Composure** (if the goal is Gain Surrender): Grant a bonus to any one comrade's Fighting test. +1 if your

margin is 1 or less; +2 if your margin is 2 or more. As with any bonus, this applies before the test is made.

- **Morale:** When any one other character is assigned a Shock card, cause it to be discarded before it is received (in the case of a Minor Shock card) or (in the case of a Major Shock) downgraded to a Minor Shock. (Applies only to foes that dish out Shock cards in combat instead of Injury cards. The Morale ability appears in *The Wars* and *Aftermath*.)
- **Traps and Bombs/Insurgency:** Soften up the foe with a grenade or other small explosive device. Allows one character of your choice making a Fighting test to roll two dice, picking the best one and ignoring the other. If you fail your test, you do not take an Injury card. Instead, your exploding device hurts someone on your own side. Choose another PC taking part in the fight to receive an Injury—Light Shrapnel if your margin is 1 or less; Shrapnel if the margin is 2 or more. (Traps and Bombs appears in *The Wars*, as do the Light Shrapnel and Shrapnel cards; Insurgency appears in *Aftermath*.)
- **Artillery:** Hem in the foe with a heavy arms barrage; requires access to such a weapon. Make this test before any other support actions or Fighting tests. Foe Difficulty decreases by 1 if your margin was 1 or less, by 2 if your margin was 2 or more. If you fail your test, you do not take an Injury card. Instead, Tolls paid by other characters increase by your margin + 1, and any other characters taking Minor Injuries instead take the Major Injury card Shrapnel.

The GM may allow support actions using abilities not listed above, if they make sense in the current situation.

Apply one of the above-listed benefits of success, using the +1 or +2 bonus to another's Fighting test as default.

A Mechanics test might apply when the objective is Escape or Escape with a Captive, if there's a vehicle in need of repairing or hotwiring.

Characters taking support actions count as present for the fight. They do not trigger penalties for fighting at less than full strength.

Reinforcements

When they want to solve a problem by fighting a challenging opponent, player characters often look for other people to suffer and die in their place.

This rarely works for characters in horror stories—or in more heroic genres, for that matter. Expect it to be just as hard to pull off in *The Yellow King Roleplaying Game*.

When the GM does reckon that your attempt to recruit cannon fodder makes sense within the story, those additional fighters don't count as full combatants the way player characters do.

Instead, the GM reduces the Difficulty of your Fighting tests, reflecting the assistance of reinforcements.

Or she may decide that the presence of reinforcements discourages your enemies, preventing a fight altogether.

Imagining Combat

YKRP combat differs from what your players might be used to in standard GUMSHOE, and from other roleplaying games. Help your players

adjust to this more abstract approach with the following As to likely Qs.

What are the limits on what I can describe when narrating my character's Fighting success?

If you succeeded, have fun inventing imaginative and vivid visual descriptions of your contribution to the fight. You could calibrate your description to your margin, with 0 or 1 representing a small contribution; 2, something impressive but just short of decisive; and 3, an over-the-top example of thrilling triumph. Or just say what comes to mind and fits your character and the situation. Other than that, feel free to use maximum creative license. In the very unlikely event that your description contradicts a fact about the mystery or world that the GM understands as crucial to the rest of the story, she'll suggest an amended version of your proposed narration that preserves that essential plot point.

Why do we have to act in descending spend order?

This introduces suspense, keeping open the question of whether the group will succeed to the maximum extent possible. We know the high-spenders are likely to succeed, but what about those relying mostly on the luck of the die?

What if we go in ascending spend order?

This makes no mechanical difference, so if that makes better sense to your group, you can change that up without unpleasant surprises.

What happens when investigators join a fight in waves?

The GM alters the order of action so that you make Fighting tests in the order in which you join the fight. Assuming you had no time to

collectively decide on a group goal beforehand, late joiners have to go along with the goal chosen by the first character(s) to enter the fight.

Can we switch our goal if the situation changes in mid-fight?

This will happen less often than you might think, but sure. If the entire group agrees, you can switch to a new goal when you describe your final victory, provided it carries an equal or less costly Difficulty number than the originally chosen goal.

We spend too much time deciding on our group goal.

That's less a question than a statement, but we'll allow it. If this remains an issue for your group, expect your GM to remedy it by suggesting the most obvious choice and guiding the discussion to a quick resolution.

We don't want to pick a goal; we want our characters charge in at cross-purposes and describe what our characters are doing tactically. Strategy is for suckers, man!

Groups devoted to this style of play will have a better experience by reverting from QuickShock to standard GUMSHOE. Notes on how to do this may be available on the Pelgrane website by the time you read this.

I have 2 Injury cards, both describing pretty minor conditions. How can that put my character on the brink of death?

You're not on the brink of death at all. You're ever so slightly off your game—in a way that might tip the balance between survival and funeral arrangements the next time you face a dangerous situation. Think of the last time you had a really bad cold or flu,

or when you last pulled a back muscle or hurt yourself in some other painful but minor way. Then imagine yourself in that state when you need to steer your car clear of a pile-up or jump out of the way of a collapsing store display. That extra drag on your awareness and ability to react is what your cards in hand represent—nothing if you stay out of trouble, but potentially disastrous if you don't.

Also remember that when you receive a Final Injury card, you describe a demise that best fits the situation, whether it matches the card concept or not.

Players steeped in classic roleplaying games like *D&D* and *Call of Cthulhu* may want to describe QuickShock GUMSHOE characters as having three hit points apiece. This conceptualization will confuse more than it clarifies, so shoot it down if someone brings it up. Injuries are status effects. You're not one-third or one-quarter dead on a single Injury, two-thirds or half dead on another, and then dead.

Think of it as "off your game," "vulnerable," and then dead (**Horror** mode) or "off your game," "vulnerable," "really shouldn't be fighting now," and dead (**Occult Adventure** mode).

Tolls are the closest thing QuickShock GUMSHOE has to hit points, but even there the analogy doesn't entirely track.

What does the GM do if the foe's goal is something other than kill, and its Injury card seems out of place for that less aggressive objective?

In most cases the foe still has to rough you up somewhat to get what it wants. The GM may choose to substitute other Injuries more fitting to the circumstances. In a pinch, the Minor/

Major pairing of "You Should See the Other Fellow" and "Concussed" fit most non-lethal foe objectives.

Hazards

Dangers faced outside of combat are called hazards. Hazards can be physical or mental.

Physical Hazards

Physical hazards can be avoided, or their effects minimized, by making Athletics or Health tests.

Athletics tests apply when harm can be avoided with a quick dodge or other overt, intentional defensive action.

Examples include:

- falling from a great height
- ducking flying debris
- leaping out of the way of a plummeting object
- swimming in a dangerous current
- leaping over a chasm or between buildings
- rushing from a flaming building without getting burned

Health tests happen in passive situations where you are exposed to a physical danger and the question that remains is how badly it affects you. This applies to instances of:

- poisoning
- sickness
- exposure

The GM may also call for Health tests when the character has had no chance to actively evade a danger that would otherwise call for an Athletics test. For example, if doused in kerosene and set alight while helpless, a Health test might determine whether the character suffers severe burns, or merely loses some

hair and perhaps an eyebrow or two.

Each physical hazard threatens a Minor or a Major Injury, depending on the test result. Characters who succeed are unaffected. On a failure by a margin of 2 or more, they take Major Injury cards. On a failure with a margin of 0 or 1, they take Minor Injury cards.

COMMON MISREADING WARNING! For some deep cognitive reason possibly indicating past exposure to a vast, inky alien lake, your brain may want you to remember the above, incorrectly, as

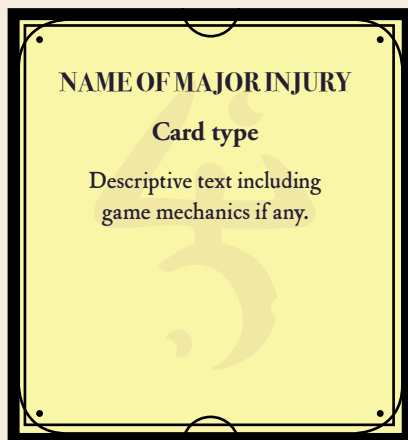
success = Minor Injury, failure = Major Injury. That error will death-spiral your characters right quick.

To repeat, the correct rule is:

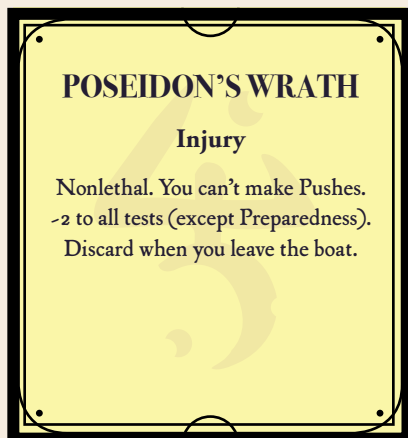
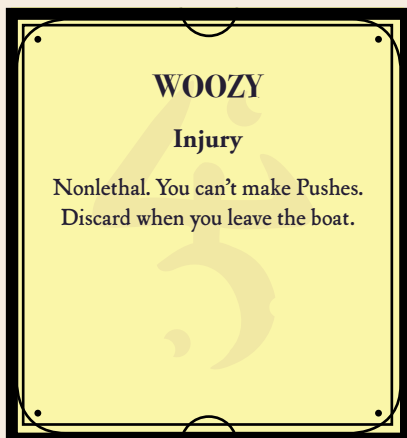
Success = no Injury; Failure (margin 0–1) = Minor Injury; Failure (margin 2+) = Major Injury

GMs can use the following physical hazards as a basis for others. The hazard format is as follows. The “Card Type” line can also note that the card is a Continuity card.

Here is the card format:



Here are sample cards, for cases of sea sickness:



The rest of the Injury cards for hazards appear in the back of the book.
Basic hazards, some specific to *Paris* but most usable in any sequence, are:

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Injury	Major Injury
Cobra Strike	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Snakebit	Deadly Venom
Drinking (Moderate)*	4	<i>Health</i>	Tipsy	Intoxicated
Drowning	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Cough, Choke, Sputter	Lungful of Water
Escape Burning Building	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Singed	Burned
Exploding Bomb	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Thrown Free of the Explosion	In the Blast Radius
Flying Debris	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Something in Your Eye	Puncture Wound
Food Poisoning	4	<i>Health</i>	Stay by the Water Closet	Ructious Innards
Leap From Second Story Window	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Hard Landing	Turned Ankle
Roughed Up While Helpless	4	<i>Health</i>	It Looks Worse Than It Is	Broken Fingers
Sea Sickness	4	<i>Health</i>	Woozy	Poseidon's Wrath
Sniper Fire	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Grazed	Shot
Thrown Rock	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Abrasion	Concussed
Toxin	4	<i>Health</i>	Mostly Resistant	Find the Antidote
Crushing Hazard	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Contused	Crushed
Angry Mob Sets Upon You	5	<i>Athletics</i>	Black and Blue	Badly Beaten
Falling Chandelier	5	<i>Athletics</i>	Glass Shards	Direct Chandelier Hit
Severe Exposure	5	<i>Health</i>	Warm Blanket Needed	Ravaged by the Elements
Smoke Inhalation	5	<i>Health</i>	Lingering Cough	Scarred Lungs

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Injury	Major Injury
Tortured	5	<i>Health</i>	Through the Ringer	Breaking Point
Leap Between Rooftops	6	<i>Athletics</i>	Hard Landing	Fall to Street Level
Cyanide Poisoning	7	<i>Health</i>	Whiff of Cyanide	Snootful of Cyanide
Fall From Great Height	7	<i>Athletics</i>	It's a Miracle You're Alive	Massive Injuries
Drinking (Heavy)**	8	<i>Health</i>	Tipsy	Intoxicated

*Moderate, by today's standards

**Unrestrained binge drinking, as is the norm among Bohemians of Belle Époque Paris

Certain Injury cards gained from fights or hazards can be traded, under conditions specified in their text entries, for less punitive secondary cards. These secondary Injury cards appear in the back of the book, after the main hazard cards. For reference, they are:

Still Hurting
On the Mend
Permanent Injury
Dazed
Jarred
Precarious Recovery
Badly Hurt
Draggy

Mental Hazards

Mental hazards require characters to make Composure tests.

On a **success**, the character **does not take a Shock card**.

On a **failure** with a margin of **0 or 1**, the character takes the Minor Shock card.

On a **failure** with a margin of **2 or more**, the character takes the Major Shock card.

AGAIN, DON'T LISTEN TO YOUR BRAIN if it tells you to dole out a Minor card on a success and a Major on a failure.

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Shock	Major Shock
You Badger a Vulnerable Witness	3	<i>Composure</i>	Overstepped Bounds	Wracked by Remorse
You Find Yourself Hemmed In	3	<i>Composure</i>	Oh Dear	Bit of a Sticky Wicket
You Hear a Disquieting Sound	3	<i>Composure</i>	Unnerved	Agitated
You Make a Public Spectacle of Yourself	3	<i>Composure</i>	Embarrassed	Humiliated

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Shock	Major Shock
Your Senses Deceive You (or Do They?)	3	<i>Composure</i>	Uncertainty	Questioning Your Senses
A Malign Spirit Tries to Direct Your Actions	4	<i>Composure</i>	Influence	Violent Impulse
A Psychic Sending Floods Your Mind	4	<i>Composure</i>	Alarming Vision	Ghastly Vision
A Supernatural Being Kills or Maims a Bystander	4	<i>Composure</i>	A Beastly Sight	If Only You Could Forget
A Worker of Dread Magic Curses You	4	<i>Composure</i>	The Curse is Thinking About Being Cursed	Cursed
After a Violent Demise, You Come Upon the Corpse	4	<i>Composure</i>	The Shudders	Shaken
An Alluring Entity Tugs at Your Heartstrings	4	<i>Composure</i>	Enthralled	Alien Passion
Carcosan Wildlife Dines on Your Soul	4	<i>Composure</i>	Fed Upon	Thought Drain
Evidence Suggests That You Helped Publish <i>The King in Yellow</i>	4	<i>Composure</i>	The Will Erodes	The Mind Reels
For the First Time in Your Life, Someone Just Tried to Kill You	4	<i>Composure</i>	Racing Pulse	Rampant Distrust
Glimpsing Carcosa	4	<i>Composure</i>	The Tremors	Hackles Raised
Music Foreshadows a Coming Foe	4	<i>Composure</i>	Music of the Night	Point of No Return
Someone You Care About Is in Severe Distress	4	<i>Composure</i>	Pity	Sick with Worry
Something's Just Not Right Here	4	<i>Composure</i>	Unease	Dread
That Person You Just Spoke to Was a Ghost All Along	4	<i>Composure</i>	More Things in Heaven and Earth	Anyone Could Be Secretly Dead
Things Go from Bad to Worse	4	<i>Composure</i>	Cause for Concern	Time to Panic
You Court Bad Luck	4	<i>Composure</i>	Jinx	Ill-Omened
You Enter an Eerie or Haunted Place	4	<i>Composure</i>	Snakebit	Deadly Venom

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Shock	Major Shock
You Gaze Willingly at the Yellow Sign	4	<i>Composure</i>	Whisper of the Sign	Song of the Sign
You Revisit a Past Source of Distress	4	<i>Composure</i>	Butterflies	Collywobbles
You See a Monster Up Close but Do Not Further Interact With It	4	<i>Composure</i>	Haunted	Rationality's Cruel Veil
You See, But Do Not Interact With, a Ghost	4	<i>Composure</i>	Rattled	A Diverting Indiscretion Will Put This in Perspective
You Suspect That Reality is Being Rewritten	4	<i>Composure</i>	Skewed Reality	Reality Horror
You Tempt Fate	4	<i>Composure</i>	Superstition	Magical Thinking
Your Snooping Led to a Witness' Murder	4	<i>Composure</i>	Rueful	Self-Reproachful
A Friend or Loved One Has Been Violently Killed	5	<i>Composure</i>	Stunned and Saddened	Waves of Grief
An Apparent Mask Is Really a Monstrous, Living Face	5	<i>Composure</i>	A Trick of the Light, Surely	No Mask! No Mask!
You Enter an Area Where Carcosa Overlaps with Our Own World	5	<i>Composure</i>	Must Have Been a Hallucination	Reality Collapse
You Just Killed a Person	5	<i>Composure</i>	A Touch of the Shakes	An Image Seared in the Mind
You Look at the Frontispiece Illustration of <i>The King in Yellow</i>	5	<i>Composure</i>	A Gnawing at the Back of the Mind	The Will Erodes
You See Many Corpses or a Large Battle	5	<i>Composure</i>	Witness to Carnage	Existence is a Meat-Grinder
You Witness Man's Inhumanity to Man	5	<i>Composure</i>	Humans are the True Monsters	Shattered Illusions
You Witness Torture	5	<i>Composure</i>	Appalled	A Dish Served Cold
Your Failure Brings About a Tragic Resolution	6	<i>Athletics</i>	The Price of Failure	A Morbid Scene
You Kill in Cold Blood or Commit Torture	6	<i>Athletics</i>	A Crossed Line	Out of Control

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Shock	Major Shock
You Learn for Certain That You Helped Publish the Play	6	<i>Athletics</i>	The Mind Reels	The Self Crumbles
You Just Read the Play	7	<i>Athletics</i>	The Self Crumbles	Moral Vertigo
You Leave This World to Explore Carcosa	7	<i>Athletics</i>	Alien Shores	Unearthly Journey
You Meet the Yellow King	8	<i>Athletics</i>	No Mask! No Mask!	When You Look in the Mirror, the King Stares Back

Secondary Shock cards appear in the book after the above. For reference, they are:

They Broke You
Avenger
Distracted
Visibly Distraught
Do Not Go Forth into the Agora
Weird Insight

Regaining Pushes and Pool Points

Spent points from various pools are restored at different rates, depending on their narrative purpose.

Characters reset to 2 Pushes at the beginning of each new scenario. Most groups finish scenarios over one to three sessions. Players may revise their sense of how carefully to manage point spending as they see how quickly their group typically disposes of its cases.

General ability pools restore at the end of each scenario, or when a long break of world time uneventfully zips by in the course of a scenario. For example, if the group takes a cruise to America in the middle of a case, the time spent

playing whist and chatting up fellow scions of the moneyed class while on board allows for a full refresh of all pools. However if they spend all their time on the ship ducking anarchists and discovering the dark secrets of the ship's crew, they continue to tick away.

Improving Abilities

At the conclusion of each scenario, each character gets 1 Improvement point.

Players can spend Improvement points right away, or save them and spend them at any time.

To gain a new Investigative ability, a player spends 2 Improvement points and requests the approval of the player (if any) who received it as part of a starting kit. As GM you may waive this requirement if the latter player is frequently unable to attend game sessions.

Players may add points to a General ability, including those rated at 0, gaining 1 rating point for each Improvement point spent.

WHAT DO POOL POINTS REPRESENT?

Pool points are a literary abstraction, representing the way that characters get their own time in the spotlight in the course of an ensemble drama. When you do something remarkable, you expend a little bit of your spotlight time. More active players will spend their points sooner than less demonstrative ones, unless they carefully pick and choose their moments to shine.

Even when pools are empty, you still have a reasonable chance to succeed at a test, and you'll always get the information you need to move forward in the case.

Pool points do not represent a resource, tangible or otherwise, in the game world. Players are aware of them, but characters are not. The team members' ignorance of them is analogous to TV characters' obliviousness to commercial breaks, the unwritten rules of scene construction, and the tendency of events to heat up during sweeps.

The characters do not literally get worse at doing things as the players expend points.

Instead, the players have used up their share of big spotlight moments they tied to their key abilities.

You may choose to depict this with narration—describing characters as drawn and exhausted when their Athletics pools ebb.

But the system works just as well if you don't worry about matching literal description to abstract resource.

Custom Interpersonal Abilities

Players can add custom Interpersonal abilities to the game as part of improvement. The player must explain how the ability helps the character gain cooperation from others, and give it a name that memorably sums it up.

Noelle, whose character, Ella, has Assess Honesty, wants a second, more active means of getting people to do as she asks. She proposes that she shares the persuasive style of her mother, who recently appeared as a Game Moderator Character—a cheerful,

bossy refusal to take no for an answer. After a while you come up with a one-word ability name that describes this: Indefatigable.

Character Replacement

When you lose a character due to physical death or psychic breakdown, create a new one using the standard steps given for the sequence you're playing.

When choosing your Investigative kit, pick any kit no other player is using. That could be the same one

your previous character had, or one nobody picked. If you want, swap out any of those Investigative abilities for any other one available in the current sequence. Don't swap in more than one ability already possessed by another player's character.

Horror mode: Spend the starting amount of build points on General abilities.

Occult Adventure mode: Spend the number of build points your departed character had, including both initial build points and Improvement points accumulated in play.

RUNNING THE GAME

This section presents tips and tricks for the Game Moderator running the *Paris* sequence of a *TKRPG* game.

It includes some general GUMSHOE guidance. Those of you who have already seen these bits will recognize them and can safely skip ahead.

Advanced tips appear in *This Is Normal Now*'s GM Masterclass section.

To Arc or Not to Arc?

In its entirety, a *TKRPG* game consists of four sections or settings: *Paris*, *The Wars*, *Aftermath*, and *This Is Normal Now*.

You might choose to run only one of these settings for the same group of players, all of them, or some. When you run the same group of players through more than one setting, drawing relationships between them, we refer to your series as having an arc. The play that takes place in any one of these settings is a **sequence**.

When you use just one of the settings, that becomes your entire self-contained **series**, which does not have an arc.

So if you're playing *Paris* on its own over multiple episodes, that's a series; otherwise it's a sequence within your series.

Playing an arc gives your players a multi-layered experience, in which events from each prior sequence flavor those that follow it. This requires a time commitment and is best suited to groups who like to develop big narratives over many sessions. It assumes a group open to different shadings of horror game, willing to follow the series over various twists, turns, and stylistic shifts.

A series using only one setting requires a shorter commitment of time, collective memory, and record-keeping. This might be the choice for you if you have your group's attention for a fixed period, or if you tend to quickly hop between different RPGs. You might also see that certain of your key players would prefer one of the settings over the others.

Building Your Arc

Any *TKRPG* arc springboards from the idea that the characters who appear in each sequence are in some way reflections

or echoes of one another over time.

Choices made by the players in upcoming sequences determine what exactly this means. The PCs in one sequence might be descendants of previous ones, past lives, or people connected by bonds of chance and circumstance that transcend eras and realities.

In the Climax of your final sequence, the main cast deals with—for good or ill—story elements introduced and developed in the prior ones.

My favorite arc, which I recommend trying if the players haven't been spoiled on it (or even if they know what's coming but don't feel a need to be surprised), is Creation and Destruction. During the *Paris* sequence, the cast tracks down those responsible for writing and publishing the play called *The King in Yellow*. Over its course they rediscover something they did and have mysteriously forgotten: that the people they're searching for are themselves. They somehow brought it into being. In the intervening sequences they deal with the reality shifts caused by their actions. Then, over the course of the final sequence, they gain the ability to go back in time and confront their counterparts, perhaps destroying them and preventing the book from ever coming into being. Most players ready to take on the theme of reality-destabilizing horror will enjoy the feeling of doomed revelation that comes as their characters gradually piece their role together. Dramatic irony adds to the fun, as the players will figure it out before their characters do. However, you may know that one or more of your players digs heels in at any hint that they're not in charge of their characters'

free will at all times. When you suspect that they'll balk at this arc's central conceit, you'll want to make a different choice.

Other arcs could revolve around a recurring antagonist, who might be the King himself, one of his daughters, a powerful literary vampire like Carmilla or Addhema, or an ongoing villain of your creation. Each time the group gets one step closer to engineering the villain's ultimate defeat before being defeated or destroyed themselves. In the final sequence, making use of partial victories from prior sequences, they gain the ability to end the threat once and for all. This is the Menace Across Reality arc.

You may prefer the creative challenge of developing your own unifying thread to tie the four sequences together.

In the spirit of improvisation, you could always see what arises during play, deciding whether to use one of these arcs or a spontaneous creation as your group directs the action.

Interwoven vs. Serial

Not long into your introductory sequence you'll need to decide how to combine your settings.

You can run them in serial order, playing one then moving on to the other, until reaching the end. This permits you to end each on a conclusive note, creating discrete chunks of story that then also fold up into a bigger narrative. It lets the players sink their teeth into each set of characters as they appear and makes the progress of the series less confusing for players who attend irregularly.

Alternately, you can get each

sequence rolling, then move unpredictably back and forth between them. This choice lets you build a sense of events rippling together over time and reality. The villain the team dispatches in an *Aftermath* session could pop up again unharmed but in a new guise in *This Is Normal Now*, as the two take place at the same time but in alternate realities.

Or you could square the circle by running four longish sequences, and then pop back into an earlier one for an unexpected reprise. For example, in the run-up to the Climax of a Creation and Destruction series, you might slip in a *Paris* scenario to emotionally reinvest the players with that set of characters and lay in a hint or two of foreshadowing.

Scenarios

A *Paris* scenario follows a basic structure that gains dimension and uncertainty as soon as the players get involved, speculating, making choices, and pursuing avenues you must improvise to keep up with.

The **Hook** gives them a reason to start investigating. The Hook establishes a cause of disorder the character must work to rectify, and a question or choice of questions they need to answer in order to do so.

The **Development** leads them through multiple scenes that answer these questions and pose new ones, giving the story movement and depth.

Meanwhile, **Antagonist Reactions** occur when foes, who have already committed sinister acts and need to keep them secret, lash out against

investigators as they draw closer to the truth.

Eventually the Development scenes coalesce and reveal an **Alien Truth**, an initially unexpected state of affairs that is both consistent with the Hook, but adds a new and surprising explanation for it. The Alien Truth introduces a fresh, practical question that may require additional investigation or simply the formulation of a plan:

Now that we know what's going on, how do we stop it?

The scene in which the characters confront, and hopefully end, the disorder, is the **Climax**.

The story might end there, or with a Denouement, in which the characters wrap up loose ends and likely return to their lives as art students in Paris.

Until the next Hook comes along, that is.

Self-Motivated or On Call?

Before starting, ask yourself which environment lends itself to the most satisfying play for your group.

Do they prefer to take action themselves, find their own plotlines, and avoid taking orders from anyone?

Or do they feel more comfortable receiving a clear assignment, and more secure knowing that they can rely on forces in the background to help them out from time to time?

In the first case, run *Paris* in **Self-Motivated** mode. This assumes that they will take aggressive action, impelled forward by their Drives, when they encounter signs of supernatural disorder. They figure out on their own that the existence of mind-corrupting

books in the city constitutes a big problem and develop their own protocol for finding and disposing of them.

In the second case, the first episode puts them in contact with a person or group who also understands the dangers inherent in the book. They meet a patron character who, when necessary, gets the story moving by informing them of the Hook. This leaves them **On Call**, ready to be assigned to the latest case. In mid-scenario, the patron acts as a sounding board when required, giving them hints and breaking mental blocks without ever taking over as protagonist. The organization provides the sort of minor logistical support that moves the story forward, relieving the group of the need to solve uninteresting problems instead of the fun supernatural ones at the heart of the scenario. During the Denouement, the patron helps find a bolthole for captured evildoers and gets rid of copies of the book.

First Episode

Your first episode sets up the rest of the series with a mystery that introduces *The King in Yellow* and its reality-warping supernatural effects. The Hook creates a source of disorder the main cast has a good reason to investigate, considering their protectiveness toward one another and their Drives. To find your opening Hook, look at the Deuced Peculiar Business of each character. Look for the one that first suggests an avenue of investigation—something the characters can start doing to find out what's going on, thus launching them into a story. That gets you to your Development scenes.

The Alien Truth reveals the existence of the book itself, and also an effect of the book that the group must then take steps to neutralize or put to rest. This might mean directly taking on the problem posed by the Deuced Peculiar Business you have chosen to spotlight. Or could be a surprise turn that nonetheless connects to the events so far.

If no immediate menace springs to mind, use the following old reliable: the book has caused one of the sculptor's statues to animate itself.

In the Climax, they confront the threat established in the Alien Truth, but also see that they will have to solve similar problems in the near future.

If you have decided to place the heroes **On Call**, one or more of the Development scenes leads them to a patron. You could even build in the option to meet more than one possible Patron (as seen in the various listings in the "People" chapter), allowing you to settle on the one they gravitate toward.

GMs comfortable with improvising can discover the Deuced Peculiar Businesses of the various characters during the first session and jump right in to an on-the-fly opening episode. Those who require some advance thinking time will want to have these revealed ahead of time, via email or some other online platform.

First Episode Example

Your players provide you with a fine crop of the Deuced Peculiar:

Jack (played by Tsing): "That organ didn't look like it was designed to play by itself—and I didn't see anyone entering or leaving the organist's booth."

Barron (Ana): "I beheld a strange



shoreline, staring up at a bone-white sky with ebony stars.”

Stefan (Gianni): “I thought I was sketching a cathedral, but when I looked at my drawing I had made an image of a stone circle atop a hill with a human sacrifice being performed by something that is not quite human.”

Ella (Noelle): “I followed a tall dark-haired woman, to a place without time.”

Theo (Saif): “This sounds crazy but I think I’m being followed by a winking lion-faced gargyle.”

Odile (Carrie): “Odile’s lover has vanished—so has his house! And no one remembers him!”

This gives you a rich trove to work with over the course of your series. Ana’s shows that she’s done her homework on the Chambers stories. Gianni’s introduces the theme of altered perception, setting up the idea that the characters are sometimes acting without conscious volition—this will make it easier for you to bring in the idea that they were involved with the publication of the book. Saif’s gargyle will let you drop in a moment of menace whenever the tension ebbs, which you can then turn into a full scenario Hook later on. Tsing’s gives you a wide-open Hook that could lead to just about anything, so long as it carries a clerical motif of some kind. Noelle’s dark-haired woman could easily serve as an introductory mystery—all you’d have to do is have her show up, and lead the character, Ella, into trouble that requires her to call on her friends for help. But of all the choices laid out before you, one already calls for immediate action—the missing lover. You can then frame a scene in which the character, Odile,

meets the others at their regular wine shop, already searching for them. She can then desperately tell them about him—inventing details about him as she goes—and they can play along by failing to remember him, then agreeing to help her figure out what’s going on.

The natural next step sends Odile and the group back to the house that used to belong to her lover, Henri Cheval. You decide that she’ll find a reality-altered counterpart—a German diplomat named Heinrich Ritter. By talking to him they learn of Ritter’s son Ingo and come to suspect his involvement, as someone interested in both the occult and their Bohemian world. This core clue sends them off in search of Ingo—who they find and drunkenly befriend. When Ingo crashes at sculptor Jack Fallowby’s place, you can see the spirits of narrative pulling you toward the old reliable introductory menace. Jack wakes up the next morning to find Ingo beheaded, and a trickle of blood dribbling down from his life-sized bronze of Salome. Now confronted with this Alien Truth, they return to the elder Ritter for answers.

You need to start establishing the book, and so decide that Heinrich Ritter should be their patron. He asks them if they’ve been experiencing anything strange lately and tells them of the book’s existence. When they say that they have, he recruits them into a Prussian effort to round up and destroy all known copies. Ritter’s group hopes to contain the disorder before it radiates out from Paris to envelop the rest of Europe.

This prompts the characters to a two-fold effort: to find out more about the book (and start to discover hints that Henri Cheval, and they themselves,

had something to do with it) and to get rid of Jack's man-eating Salome bronze before it decapitates anyone else.

This first episode lays down the premise for the rest of the *Paris* sequence, and leaves some unanswered questions for later, should the players decide to probe them. For example, if the book rewrote reality, why did it turn Cheval, who helped publish it, into Ritter, determined to stamp it out? Does Ritter represent a counter-force, pushing back against the King's efforts to change Earth? Or did he manifest at the behest of one of the King's daughters-slash-rivals, who wants to redirect the book's reality warping power to her own benefit?

That feels like a thread to pick up later, after you've established a rhythm. So you decide that the follow-up scenario will pick up with the second most actionable of the peculiar things, Ella's mystery woman...

Taking the Premise as Read

When you run a one-shot, or start a *Paris* game for a group who have previously played it, you almost certainly want to jump past the introductory episode that establishes the premise.

In a one-shot, start by describing to the players the turn of events that inspired them to their hunt for copies of the book. Or to fight back against the forces of Carcosa, if your scenario isn't about tracking down a copy. Then jump right to the Hook that kicks off your episode.

For a Self-Motivated series, when you get to the Drive-defining stage of character generation, ask the player

sitting to your left to explain how the group dedicated itself to fighting Carcosa and/or tracking down copies of the book. Then have her describe the Drive that gives her a particular, personal stake in that. Continue by having each other player in turn relate their Drive to the ongoing mission.

For an On Call series, after Drives have been defined, have the player sitting to your left identify who acts as the group's patron, and supply one fact about this person. Help the player with the name, if need be. Then continue around the room, asking each player to supply one additional fact about that character or the organization they're working for.

Further Mysteries

After playing (or skipping past) the pilot episode that establishes your premise, you can move on to create scenarios from several starting points. Varying the way you build them out helps the scenarios feel different when played.

Starting with Deuced Peculiar Business

To build a scenario around a Deuced Peculiar Business, first start with a player who has not recently taken the central role in a scenario.

Track this, if memory alone does not serve, by using the Spotlight Tracker table at the end of this section.

Some DPBs lend themselves immediately to Hooks. These are the ones that imply an action the players will take the next time they crop up.

- The next time Ella sees the captivating dark-haired woman, the group will surely shadow her.

- Albert gets an invitation from the host of that perverse soiree he can't stop thinking about.
- When Janine hears the strains of that maddening melody, she must pursue its source.

In that case, use the guidance in "Starting with a Hook," below.

Alternately, you might see a terrible explanation behind the Deuced Peculiar Business. That revelation likely features in the Alien Truth—consult the relevant section below.

- Barron occasionally experiences visions of a white sky hung with black pulsating stars. In a case featuring a macabre experimenter, the Alien Truth is that the scientist injected Barron with a serum he formulated after reading *The King in Yellow*.
- Odile assumes that her lover, Henri Cheval, has been written out of existence by a Carcosan reality shift. In the Alien Truth of a serial murder case, the group finds him, without memories and under another name, hacking up the corpse of his latest victim.
- Olivier's portrait of his father keeps changing, becoming more grotesque over time. While looking into a rash of incidents in which rivals' paintings are defaced by occult symbols, the group discovers the vandal is the figure from the painting, now given flesh.

Using a Deuced Peculiar Business once does not preclude you from creating further follow-ups, provided that other players have already had their fair share of focus time. Look for threads left unresolved from previous installments and envision ways to bring

them into a new scenario. For a simple beginning, incorporate them into the Hook. For a surprise, start off with a seemingly unrelated Hook, then make the Deuced Peculiar Business an element of the Alien Truth.

As with any scenario built around a particular player, you'll want to keep a backup idea in pocket in case that person suddenly can't make it to game that night.

Spotlight Tracker Table

To use this table, first list your players and the names of their characters in the first and second columns, respectively.

Separately maintain a list of scenarios you play out, assigning a number to each. At the end of each scenario, jot down the scenario number in the row corresponding to the players who took a particularly notable role in the case, particularly during its first and final scenes.

When choosing a character to spotlight, consult this table to remind yourself of who has not had much focus time lately.

A few players prefer to remain on the sidelines, and shrink from being placed in a lead position. They might come out of their shells eventually, but if you see that they dislike the spotlight, omit them from this process.



Player	Character	Last Key Episode

Starting with a Hook

- A Hook can be any situation that inspires the characters to look for information, usually with a sense of obvious disorder or jeopardy attached.
- Someone has gone missing.
 - Someone has been found murdered.
 - A valuable or important item has been stolen.
 - An act of vandalism has taken place.
 - A witness or contact reports a terrifying and inexplicable encounter.

In the *Paris* sequence, you have a reliable fallback when all else fails:

- The group suspects that someone has a copy of the book.

Having fleshed out your Hook with specific details, go on to envision an Alien Truth that brings in the Carcosan supernatural, and which offers some sort of surprise or escalation of the Hook. An investigation into a murder leads to something weirder and of greater consequence than an ordinary slaying. Or the weird motivation for murder the PCs initially discover turns out to be completely wrong—the real situation is even weirder. It reveals a problem that the PCs have to overcome in order to consider the matter laid to rest.

Now give some thought to the connective tissue between these

narrative markers. Consider Development scenes that will allow the players to move from the motivation of the Hook to the revelation of the Alien Truth, giving them choices of direction along the way. You may also present the players with a choice of scenes that lead from Alien Truth to Climax.

Starting with an Alien Truth

Often it is easiest to see the big threat the players will find and then work your way back to a way to introduce it from a side angle, and ahead to a likely climactic scene to thwart it.

If the Alien Truth is that ambient Carcosan influence has conjured up the spirits of the dead from the days of the Commune, that suggests a confrontation with Pétroleuses (p. 162). That gives you an obvious Climax: the cast must find a way to banish these particular ghosts, or stop more from appearing. That likely requires some additional investigation after they learn what they’re up against. Working backwards to the Hook, the instigating incident has to be a series of fires, in keeping with these ghosts’ firebug inclinations. The heroes might start by locating a copy of *The King in Yellow* in a bibliophile’s collection in the

safe bourgeois neighborhood of Passy. That night, a mysterious fire burns the place down, killing the occupant. The next night, another nearby house gets it. Development scenes then allow the characters to piece together the fact that these homes were all firebombed by female rebels in 1870.

Another Alien Truth might have a botanist who has read the book growing ambulatory, vegetable simulacra to replace and discredit the enemies of Carcosa. As that surely includes the investigators, the Hook might have one of them arrested for breaking into the home of the scientist's rival. The man's butler clearly identifies a spotlight character as the culprit. Investigation gradually leads to the botanist and the problem of fighting off the group's photosynthesizing counterparts.

A third Alien Truth: a fortune teller, formerly a mere charlatan, has read the book, gained power, and lost any semblance of conscience. She embezzles her clients blind and erases their memories. As a side effect, her victims rapidly age. A wealthy socialite stripped of money and visibly altered suggests a Hook to bring in one of the artist characters: the PC goes to drop off a commissioned work, which the patron no longer remembers purchasing and cannot afford. The fact that she now looks eighty years old, when she was clearly in her forties a week ago, alerts the group to a supernatural mystery. You can then make notes toward the Development scenes that lead to the tarot reader, and the problem of apprehending an antagonist without winding up in an old folks' home.

Bringing in a Personal Stake

Although each player has a Drive that keeps them engaged with Carcosa on an abstract basis, it never hurts to emulate time-honored devices of episodic TV, giving a character a personal stake in a case. Do that by featuring a supporting character important to that cast member in your Hook.

- You need a reason for the group to get involved with a rejuvenation scheme, which will, in the Alien Truth, unveil a cult of Rosicrucians using Carcosa energy to grant themselves inhuman powers. Knowing Ella (Noelle's character) to be a no-nonsense modern woman, you decide that the person caught up in the scheme as an avid potential investor is her mother. Unlike Ella in every way, yet also paradoxically very much like her, this overbearing flibbertigibbet will supply Noelle with ample opportunity for comic exasperation, one of her roleplaying fortes.
- Your Hook revolves around an enigmatic place card set out at an important dinner meeting. You ask the players to describe their parents. Gianni says that his father is a shipping magnate proud of his ancestors' buccaneering activities. That perfectly casts him as the parent who will send a telegram to his son urging him to attend a conclave of shady money men.
- You have a Hook (Paris party girls are disappearing) and an Alien Truth (they're joining a heretical nunnery run by a sinister mesmerist). Carrie's character Odile is a Paris party girl, so naturally

she would be the one to notice that her friends are going missing.

Having established a supporting player with an ongoing relationship to a PC, a follow-up might unexpectedly rope her into an Alien Truth scene. Maybe one of Odile's friends will later reappear, now running a cult of her own, dedicated to Cassilda and Camilla.

Conversely, you might start with the realization that a player needs more spotlight time and ask them to describe several people outside the main cast who matter to them and might visit, if not live in, Paris. See which of these inspires a Hook and build out from there.

Starting with a Classic

TKRPG gives your players a chance to retell familiar horror stories in the context of the Chambers mythos. To adapt an existing classic to 1895 Paris, look at its component parts, and think of how they might intersect with *The King in Yellow*. Though usually you'll find it fruitful to start with the Alien Truth and work back to the Hook and ahead to the Climax, as above, you might find that the inspiration flows in a different order.

19th century works fit the vibe most easily, and are less likely to jar when the source material becomes evident. But some players love crazy mash-ups, so maybe that Belle Époque Predator tribute you've been mulling will hit your group's collective sweet spot.

Let's say you want to do a Carcosan Jekyll and Hyde story. The translation writes itself: the good doctor thinks his serum has stimulated an evil other self, but really it's his reading of *The King in Yellow*. That gives you your

Alien Truth—a good man turned into a monster. Now you have to find a Hook. The brutish Monsieur Lecuir could be gathering up the youth of the poor, outlying neighborhoods and turning them into heedless killers. That then leads to your Hook: a fellow art student was thrashed within an inch of his life by an ape-like new king of the underworld. Development leads from accounts of Lecuir's criminality to Dr. Jacquot's laboratory. Your Climax would then have the players bringing about Lecuir's death or capture.

A Carcosan *The Turn of the Screw* lends itself to an easy Hook: someone comes to the group for help on behalf of a young governess, driven mad by ghostly events at the château of her employers. The two children she cared for have read their father's copy of the book, gaining the power to conjure ghostly effects. And unless the heroes intervene, they're about to widen their circle of victims...

Setting Up Aftermath

One classic to consider is Chambers' "The Repairer of Reputations." Perhaps in a subplot in another mystery, the investigators encounter 18-year-old Hildred Castaigne. Like the scion of a wealthy American family, this perfectly affable and adventurous young man unwittingly intersects with one of their occult inquiries. Try to engineer events so that the PCs inadvertently expose Castaigne to *The King in Yellow*. They might even witness a riding accident, resulting in a head injury that leads his family to return him to the safe and leafy bosom of New York state. Thus they participate in, or better yet become

partially complicit in, the events that lead to the alternate reality seen in *Aftermath*.

Antagonist Reactions

Stories don't move by the choices of the protagonists alone. Foes who have already committed sinister acts and need to keep them secret lash out against investigators as they draw closer to the truth. Those with active schemes continue to push on with them. We call scenes in which an enemy or adversary comes at or tries to thwart the heroes

Antagonist Reactions.

Bad guys in the *Paris* sequence might be:

- knowing agents of the King in Yellow, acting on instructions
- people who have read the book and enact his mad schemes on their own initiative, conscious or otherwise
- direct or indirect surrogates of one or both Carcosan princesses, Cassilda and Camilla
- humans seeking to harness the supernatural power of Carcosa to their own selfish ends
- humans who have suddenly gained power from Carcosa without understanding its source, and are using it in a dangerous, violent, or harmful way
- supernatural beings of this world, spawned, restored, or strengthened by energies from Carcosa bleeding through into this one
- minor Carcosan entities who have crossed into this world to wreak havoc, unguided by the King or his court
- ordinary criminals, spies, anarchists, or officials pursuing mundane

but sinister ends which happen to intersect with the spreading influence of the Yellow Sign

For an extra level of complexity, involve multiple adversaries in a single scenario. They may work at cross-purposes or completely separately from one another.

Classic Antagonist Reactions include:

- attacks on the investigators, direct or through henchmen or intermediaries
- attacks on witnesses
- attempts to destroy evidence
- diversionary violence
- taking the next step in an ongoing sinister plan: theft, murder, kidnapping
- in the case of creatures and entities, finding someone new to eat

When running a written scenario, play out an Antagonist Reaction when:

- the story has slowed down and could use a jolt of excitement
- story logic dictates that a foe would strike back against the investigators, who it now considers a threat

When an Antagonist Reaction would complicate a story that already has enough going on in it, or interrupt something fun that's currently happening, skip it. These are tools to use when you need them, not tick boxes you have to check to tell yourself that you ran the scenario as intended.

To help you quickly find the best Antagonist Reaction when you need one, published scenarios include a Triggering Condition entry. These indicate what has to have happened already in the story for the given Reaction to work.

Subplots and Side Notes

Some of the most memorable moments from an ongoing series arise not from the main mystery of any evening's play, but from interludes and interactions that provide opportunities for characterization and discovery.

You might plan to introduce a secondary plot line in advance. In roleplaying though, sub-plots most often occur spontaneously, as you and the players riff a minor encounter into something bigger.

Equalizing Face Time

Subplots let you engage players who have been temporarily sidelined by the main action. When in doubt, give a character at temporary loose ends an interaction with her Deuced Peculiar Business or another personal subplot. Describe a situation that encourages the player to make a choice, investigate further, or attempt a test.

Theo can't go along with the rest of the group to ask questions of the dissolute aristocrat because he has already been caught breaking into the man's château. The interview scene goes on for a while. After it wraps up, you check your reference sheet to see that Theo every so often sees Paris' gargoyles moving around. You tell his player, Saif, that Theo, cooling his heels at a café, sees blood spattering down its window. When he chooses to investigate, he finds the remains of a pigeon carcass and sees a stony figure scrabbling on all fours into an alleyway.

Reviving Underused Threads

Player decisions may cause a story thread you hoped would develop into something to just lie there, undeveloped. Though bad form in a TV show, the players in a game session probably won't notice. They remember the interesting stuff that did happen and let dropped threads fade away. When dropped threads do feel like a problem, you can pay off a neglected past set-up in your present session.

You introduce the intimidating reporter Georges Grison (p. 135) as an antagonistic witness in one scenario, figuring that he will become an important obstacle to the investigation. Although he makes a strong impression in his early scene, the story heads in another direction. You decide to bring him back as a dogged adversary figure in a subplot in the following adventure. If that doesn't pay off this week, it will eventually.

Maintaining Genre

Any game relies on the players to maintain genre by behaving like characters in the kind of story you're all creating. For a scenario to feel like any kind of adventure story, characters must take risks and responsibility: the risk of danger, physical and mental, and the responsibility to solve problems personally, instead of leaving them up to others.

As ordinary people who do not go around fighting statues or clambering down into haunted crypts, players often forget that and try to do the sensible, self-protecting thing instead. Drives and Relationships act as tools to remind

them that they have reasons to act like the key figures in a horror tale.

Invoking Drives

When players reflexively describe their characters acting too cautiously for horror protagonists, remind them of their Drives. Put the note in the form of a question:

- The group finds a mutilated corpse floating down the Seine. Noelle says, “Let’s call the cops!” You say: “How does Ella’s **taste for danger** lead her to reconsider that?”
- Ana says, “Why is it our business that a giant wolf is hunting street vendors?” You say: “What in your **weird family history** suggests that it has to be Barron’s business?”
- Gianni says, “Can’t we hire street thugs to clear out the den of snake people?” You say: “Even in the direst danger Stefan is driven by a **thirst for inspiration**. What makes him want to do this directly?”

It’s perfectly okay for a character to consider calling the police or shutting the crypt door and walking away. We see horror characters in other formats do that all the time. But we then have to see them overcoming that impulse and taking risk and responsibility. Failing that, the horrors keep the story going by chasing the protagonists—something that happens in genre sources all the time.

Invoking Relationships

Relationships mostly exist to provide a mutual backstory for the characters, showing that they already know and care about one another. They may establish this point during your session and then recede naturally into

the background.

You may occasionally invoke them when players take conflicts between their characters so far that the premise of the series—acting as a team to solve Carcosan mysteries and put an end to the dangers associated with them—threatens to break down.

When a player describes a character having a snit and absenting himself from taking an active part in the story, invoke the protective or reliant Relationship that seems most appropriate to the situation:

- “Why would your reliance on Theo keep you here, in Cassilda’s presence, instead of stomping away?”
- “Why would your concern for Barron lead you to rejoin the rest of the group for breakfast?”
- “Why would your desire to keep Odile out of danger cause you to soften your objections to the plan?”

Conflict between characters adds to your series when it spurs characters to action. It goes awry when it leads players to announce that they’re not acting.

When no Relationship seems to apply to such a situation, you might instead ask, “What actively interesting thing does that lead you to do, instead of nothing?”

Tone

Expect the Bohemian ambiance of Belle Époque Paris to naturally pull the players toward a romping, supernatural adventure style. A darker tone will come soon enough, in the game’s later sequences.

You can certainly achieve a more serious tone, with the emphasis on

gothic horror. For a depiction of late 19th century Paris as an appalling charnel house, see Louise Michel's still-disturbing novel *The Human Microbes*. Talk to the players ahead of time about the desired tone, making sure they desire it as much as you do. Be sure to then keep your side of the tonal

agreement by avoiding jokes and schtick and keeping descriptions focused on the gritty underside of Parisian life. When players get punchy and propose actions more suited to an over-the-top game, ask them to adjust their choices to fit the tone.

BELLE ÉPOQUE PARIS

“None will ever be a true Parisian who has not learned to wear a mask of gaiety over his sorrows and one of sadness, boredom, or indifference over his inward joy.”

—Gaston Leroux, *The Phantom of the Opera*

The first section of a full *TKRPG* series unfolds in 1895 Paris. Its art student heroes from rich American families have been established here for a year or so. They have somewhat familiarized themselves with their temporary home and know the basics of the setting, as conveyed in this chapter. If you are using another approach—using an all-French main cast, for example—you’ll want to adjust the perspective given here.

City of Lights

In 1895 Paris beckons as Europe’s foremost center of arts, learning, technology, and luxury. The world’s biggest star, the actress Sarah Bernhardt, treads its stages. The architectural wonder called the Eiffel Tower went up just six years ago.

The Impressionists, still controversial here but increasingly embraced in America, work and exhibit in Paris. Though opposed to their new way of painting, the École des Beaux-Arts remains the world’s most prestigious school of art and architecture.

The novelist Émile Zola stands atop the city’s literary heap, despite the

scandalous realism of his works. A fresh generation rebels against his focus on the social and the tangible by dealing with fantastic, dark, and outré subject matter. Some consider themselves Symbolists; others, Decadents.

Their influence extends past literature to infuse painting and music with an interest in the weird and mythic.

The monumental operas of Jules Massenet elicit gasps with their spectacular staging, as young composers Debussy and Ravel pursue subtler, stranger harmonies.

While the intelligentsia may fuss and argue over the progress of the arts, most visitors crave its brilliant and seductive amenities. In Paris, the pursuit of excitement is an around-the-clock affair. The moneyed treat themselves to the storied cuisine of pioneering chef Auguste Escoffier, wear the clothing of fashion titan Charles Frederick Worth, and meet out-of-towners at the Grand Hotel, managed by the felicitously named André Million.

When the sun shines, the cream of Paris dons its finery and flocks to its cafés. They strut and socialize down its main boulevards, flirting, gossiping, and, above all, being seen. When the

characters seek a witness or contact immersed in the social whirl, they need merely prowl its fashionable districts until they run into the person they seek, or a friend who knows where to point them.

At night attention shifts to clubs and cabarets, from the avant-garde Le Chat Noir to the circus-like, libertineish Moulin Rouge.

The Green Fairy

Absinthe, popularized at mid-century when a blight wreaked havoc on French vineyards, remains the totemic drink of Parisian excess. Of the herbs used in this anise-flavored spirit, the flowers and leaves of the wormwood plant take the blame for its fabled hallucinogenic properties. Parisians personify its mind-blurring effect as “the green fairy.” In fact, the real danger of absinthe comes from its devastatingly high alcohol content, paired with the tendency of drinkers to slug it back as quickly as they would wine. And they slug back their wine as they would their beer.

A beguiling ritual attends absinthe consumption. Bitter on its own, it is sweetened during presentation by a sugar cube placed on an ornate slotted spoon, which is then melted by water, dripping into the green spirit. The herbal elements in the drink interact with the water, turning the clear green liquid cloudy. Experienced and/or pretentious drinkers call this the *louche*. Disappointingly, we do not call creepy or disreputable people *louche* because of this phenomenon.

You will see no flaming sugar cubes in a Belle Époque café. They’re anachronistic in this time period.

Your characters may invite turn-of-the-century well-actuallying by calling absinthe a liqueur. At this point some impertinent pedant will surely interject that one properly classes it as a spirit, because its sugar is added after the fact.

Absinthe drinkers described in this book include Proust (p. 122), and Verlaine (p. 124), whose avid consumption will hasten his death a few months from now.

Already a hazard to mind and body, the green fairy must surely accelerate the mental dissolution caused by exposure to *The King in Yellow*.

Americans in Paris

Americans see the Continent in general as a place of dangerous sophistication. No place embodies that more than Paris.

As seen in the novels of Mark Twain and Henry James, Americans, including the rich ones, regard themselves as innocents and Europe and the French as wily debauchees and seducers. Naturally this conception both attracts and repels the wary, naifish American traveler.

The characters presumably feel the allure more than the fear. Their families likely regard their decision to come to Paris as either enhancing their social cachet or endangering their morality and good sense. Should this come up during a storyline, invite the player to specify which. A character’s family might be divided on the subject, of course.

A realistically drawn rich American family would never dream of sending a young adult daughter to live in Paris

alone. They may fear that she might become, like the American artist Mary Cassatt, who resides here, an embodiment of the “New Woman.” Address this only if the player of such a character wants to. One player might enjoy running around the city eluding her stuffy chaperone, while another would consider any strictures annoying in the extreme.

Used to living in a city that attracts the wealthy, ambitious, and creatively interesting from all around the world, Parisians see Americans as quaintly charming and refreshingly direct. Upper-class Parisians allow rich, intelligent, or charming Americans leeway in minor breaches of decorum or etiquette they’d never extend to their own young relatives. The bourgeoisie may fear the temptations handsome, fickle Americans might place in the path of their respectable daughters. Tradesmen find New World visitors agreeable if they pay their bills, resenting them otherwise. American students soon find that a round of drinks goes a long way with the poor, including artists and writers eking out their daily bread as they work on their yet-to-be-heralded masterpieces.

In other words, casting the player characters as outsiders to Paris lets them fraternize with all levels of society—sometimes in the same day. This provides them an investigative edge over locals—official ones most of all.

American expatriates the cast may gravitate to include Cassatt (p. 116), Loie Fuller (p. 118), and James McNeill Whistler (p. 124).

How You Act is Who You Are

Americans may think of all Parisians as wild and licentious, but that’s what happens down at the Moulin Rouge. In reality, inherited social class determines the bounds of acceptable behavior. How people may act without suffering ostracism depends on birth.

In a not unfamiliar pattern, aristocrats can do what they want, the bourgeoisie cleaves tightly to propriety, and the poor have nothing to lose and no further to fall.

Americans who think that the French Revolution wiped out the upper classes over a century ago may be surprised to find a thriving aristocracy still in place. Hereditary nobles got their titles back in 1852. These are, in descending order: duc, prince, marquis, comte, vicomte, and baron. Though an ultra-traditionalist faction seeks to return them to power, the monarchy is gone.

Title confers social prestige, which can be leveraged into political power. Many titled folk have fallen on hard times and have been reduced to incrementally pawning the family jewels. Hereditary rank can’t be lost, whatever the scandal. In general, the aristocracy hews to the conservative faction that seeks to revive the temporal power of the church. Members of this group avoid scandal not out of social pressure but from preference and conviction. That still leaves enough aristocratic men and women to pursue lives of pleasure—including affairs, if conducted with a modicum of discretion. Wives suffer greater opprobrium for indiscretions than husbands but still, love is love.

The term “déclassé,” which in English today we use as an antonym to “classy,” here means a person of high social rank who behaves disgracefully, perhaps because he has run out of money. By circumstances or choice, he has been stripped of his class—de-classed, as it were.

As elsewhere in the industrializing world, new financial opportunities suddenly elevate entrepreneurs, inventors, and financiers. Some can grease their way into the ruling class by arranging marriages into aristocratic families in need of a cash infusion.

Those who have only money can be drubbed from polite company and so have the most to lose if they disgrace themselves in business or through the pursuit of vice. Unsurprisingly, a double standard prevails: a young man can be forgiven a peccadillo or two, but his sister can be ruined by much less, bringing shame upon the entire family. A married middle-class woman caught in an affair brings unthinkable dishonor. A man in the same predicament can expect a good tut-tutting over his damn fool conduct.

Any man with sufficient social pretensions to care about his honor and reputation may challenge another he regards as having besmirched him to a duel. This interaction takes place perhaps with swords but more likely with pistols. Participants face prosecution for this technically illegal act only if the rules are broken or the match ends in death. A popular idiom describes men electing to duel as “giving themselves to the meadow,” a reference to the field where these fights take place.

Established sorts sniff at those who

attempt to better themselves, mostly educated young men of modest means from the provinces. In Paris, anyone from anywhere else in France counts as a provincial. Such is the upper-crust disdain for social climbers that Parisian doctors literally consider ambition a mental illness. Fortunately, it can be cured, with a regimen of long walks, outdoor activities, and a course of warm baths.

Hellish poverty isn’t as prevalent in Paris as it was before the city was radically refurbished in the 1850s, but that’s a relative statement. The refurbishment didn’t enrich the underclass—it just drove it from the center of town to the outskirts.

The Century So Far

Before coming here, the characters may have been told that the French care more about their past than Americans.

When they arrived, they discovered a city with its eyes only on the whirling present.

Maybe they went along with that, following the usual American disinterest in the past, especially the complicated histories of other lands. They absorbed all the art history they could take in, perhaps.

They might just as well have sensed that something was up and made an effort to peer past the façade of gaiety, to a century of upheaval and blood the city wants urgently to forget. This attempt may have taught the dangers of talking politics here. An offhand comment or question from an ignorant American can result in anything ranging from a deft yet sudden changing of the topic to a bitter harangue.

As they need to, however, the characters can piece together the full history of their temporary home. This is the quick and dirty summary they might glean from an educated layman.

80 years ago (1815): The Napoléonic era ends. The great general's opponents, chiefly England and Prussia, defeat him and send him into exile. (He briefly returns a year later, only to be exiled to a worse island.) In France alone, his wars have left two million dead, including four out of ten conscriptable men.

The Bourbon monarchy displaced by the revolution regains power, in the person of Louis XVIII. He rules cautiously, appointing moderate ministers and seeking middle ground between liberals and ultra-conservatives.

70 years ago (1825): Louis XVIII dies; his ultra-royalist brother Charles X takes over. His bumpy, repressive reign lasts for five years.

65 years ago (1830): The July Revolution overthrows him in favor of his cousin, Louis-Philippe I. For a while Louis-Philippe enjoys popular support, but over time his reputation shifts from that of a middle-class "Citizen King" to a typically autocratic monarch.

47 years ago (1848): A financial crisis, and Louis-Philippe's attempts to suppress Republican dissent, triggers the 1848 Revolutions. Napoléon's nephew, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, a Romantic idealist and modernizer with a history of participation in failed coups against the previous regime, wins a landslide election as President of France.

44 years ago (1851): Unwilling to submit to the single term as President

the new Constitution allows him, Louis-Napoléon stages a coup and becomes Emperor Napoléon III. The period known as the Second Empire, a time of ostentatious glamour and prosperity, begins.

42 years ago (1853): Napoléon III engages high-handed official Georges-Eugène Haussmann to convert Paris from a labyrinthine medieval city into a showplace of modern planning. Haussmann obliterates entire neighborhoods, replacing them with broad boulevards and displacing their mostly impoverished residents.

The War and the Commune

25 years ago (1870): In a bid to forestall the coming unification of Germany, France foolishly declares war against Prussia—to the delight of Napoléon's ascendant foes, King Wilhelm and his brilliant, unyielding Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. Invading Prussian forces humiliatingly capture the Emperor in battle and march on to Paris, placing it under siege as of September 19th. Military discipline breaks down inside the city. Radical National Guard units operate as independent paramilitaries.

What people remember from the time of the Siege, but are reluctant to discuss, is the starvation. The poor and middle-class suffered terribly. The rich got by, at the cost of a dietary qualm or two. The zoo at the Jardin des Plantes sacrificed its exhibits to nourish the well-connected. If the characters befriend César Ritz (p. 110), he may tell them of his time when, as young chef of the Restaurant Voisin, his menu items included spaniel and elephant

trunk with sauce chasseur. When Paris ate its way through the city's stock of cats and dogs, they turned to rats, with those caught near the brewery fetching a premium over the common sewer variety.

24 years ago (1871): On January 6th, using heretofore unseen artillery weapons, the Prussians shell the city. Though terrifying at first, the bombardment does not have the effect Bismarck desires. It produces relatively few casualties: 97 dead and 278 wounded. Thanks to their solid stone construction, the city's buildings largely absorb direct hits from shells, losing a stone block or two but remaining intact. If anything, this wave of the attack bolsters Parisian morale.

But that's inside the city. Outside it, new French President Jules Favre signs an armistice with the Prussians. To the general outrage of Parisians, its terms allow a Prussian victory parade through their city, which occurs on February 17th.

Government forces struggle to disarm recalcitrant National Guard units. A month after the Prussian parade, an attempt to remove a gun emplacement in Montmartre sparks a bloody firefight in which two generals are killed.

Radicals inside the city seize political autonomy from the national government, declaring a Commune.¹ For seven weeks the Communards enact various revolutionary methods, from the destruction of conservative monuments to the abolition of pawn

shops and night hours for bakers. They arrest and then murder the Archbishop of Paris, a political opponent they accuse of smuggling church valuables out of the city.

National troops, granted passage by the Prussians still occupying the surrounding area, enter and retake the city. The death toll of the urban battle and an ensuing massacre of prisoners reaches 25,000. That's four times as many killed as during the French Revolution.

The ultra-conservative Third Republic takes control. To forestall future uprisings, the government abolishes the post of mayor, splitting rule of Paris between two prefects.

The Third Republic

A battered city rebuilds itself through arts, gaiety, pushing the slaughter of May 1871 into a dark well of willed forgetfulness.

21 years ago (1874): Paris again becomes the seat of French government. The first Impressionist group show occurs.

20 years ago (1875): After 14 years of construction and a stint as a Commune fortress during the uprising, the Palais Garnier opera house opens.

Bizet's *Carmen* debuts at the Opéra-Comique.

For the first time France experiences a major wave of immigration, mostly headed to Paris. The new arrivals consist primarily of Italians and Belgians, along with Jews fleeing

1 The term refers to a municipal government, not the nascent Communist movement, not that that will stop anyone from confusing the two. The actual Communists within the rebel group are known instead as Internationalists, and they number among its soberer voices.

Eastern European persecution.

16 years ago (1879): Telephone system installation begins.

15 years ago (1880): The government issues amnesties for those imprisoned or exiled for taking part in the Commune.

13 years ago (1882): The stock market collapses, crashing a major bank, the Union Générale.

8 years ago (1887): A gruesome scandal called “the skin affair” embroils the police and forensic experts working for the medical academy, when it is revealed that top police officers including Marie-François Goron (p. 135) own cardholders made from the flesh of Henri Franzini, a ladies man executed for allegedly murdering a courtesan. The full extent of souvenir-taking from the bodies of guillotined prisoners is never revealed, but naturally at least one such item is a book bound in human skin.

6 years ago (1889): A right-wing populist movement, afoot for several years, grows in power. Centered around ex-general turned politician Georges Ernest Boulanger, it raises fears of a military coup. The government charges him with conspiracy and treason, prompting him to decamp for London, via Brussels.

Thirty-seven million visitors attend the Exposition Universelle, featuring such technological wonders as gas cooking, Edison’s phonograph, and the Eiffel Tower.

Street lamp electrification commences with the Champs-Élysées and Place de la Concorde.

The Gouffé case, a spectacular tale of murder and alleged hypnosis, grips

the city. A trunk containing the body of a civil servant leads to violent con man Michel Eyraud and his young girlfriend Gabrielle Bompard. After a stint as fugitives in North America they are separately arrested and put on trial. Bompard’s lawyer defends her by claiming Eyraud hypnotized her, sparing her the death penalty.

3 years ago (1892): A massive bribery affair, the Panama Scandal, embroils the government.

2 years ago (1893): In early July, student riots convulse the city after three models, including the famed Sarah Brown (p. 116) are arrested for their scanty attire at the annual art student’s parade.

A December explosion in the National Assembly kicks off a wave of high-profile anarchist bombings, which continue into the following year. The attack inspires the passage of press restrictions, characterized by critics as the *lois scélérates* (villainous laws).

Fearing the growing strength of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary) France signs a military pact with Russia.

Politics

Regarding personal demeanor while visiting France, Bradshaw’s *Illustrated Travellers’ Hand-Book to France*, advises the visitor: “Above all do not trouble your head about French politics.”

Before their encounters with Carcosan mystery, the free-spirited player characters likely followed this warning—out of disinterest if not caution. Now, some cases may require them to learn more than they would



otherwise desire about the complexities of power and ideology in Paris.

Even so, I have my own similar words of advice for GMs: “Above all describe French politics only when players ask, and then with as little detail as you can get away with.” This is a game about horror investigation, not political maneuvering².

Civics Basics

The head of state is the President, who gets little of the power and most of the blame. He is chosen by an Electoral Congress made up of members of the National Assembly and Senate. The President chooses the Prime Minister and cabinet, generally from a single faction or party, hoping they will carry out policies he likes. Cabinets often fail; when they do, the President replaces them, often with a group representing a different faction.

Parties are weakly organized and ever-shifting. As in other parliamentary systems the upper chamber holds the lesser measure of day-to-day influence, acting as a backstop on the more active lower house. A member of the first is called a Senator; of the second, a Deputy.

Parties and Factions

This is the city that invented the terms right and left. Many will insist that they refer to the people who live on either side of the Seine, the river that bisects Paris. In fact, they derive

from the seating arrangements at the National Assembly during the French Revolution.

1895 finds tensions between the two sides once more on the rise, with factions inside each wing. As old ideological boundaries blur, individuals harden their positions.

Until very recently, the main conflict took place between Royalists, who yearn to restore various configurations of monarchy, and the Republicans, who want power to flow from the ballot box.

Monarchists still exist, but only on the fringes. The Republicans have split up into various sub-groups, running a gamut from left to right. They have official party names, and sometimes enjoyable nicknames, for example, “Opportunist Republicans” for the Moderates. But for the purpose of this game we’ll refer to them the way people on the street do—with ideological tags reflecting the general orientation of each faction. Even so, these do not quite map to the 21st century terminology players may be familiar with.

- **Moderates** are the new establishment faction, oriented toward the recent moneyed class, the military, and the church. In 1895 the President and Prime Minister both align with the Moderates.
- The **Radicals** support such center-left measures as progressive income tax, economic equality, and the creation of a League of Nations.
- To their left stand a newer group, the

² A series truly focused on politics in this period would better use Skulduggery or Hillfolk, both of which Pelgrane Press will also happily sell to you.

Socialists, who support progressive taxation but also nationalization of property and state-run monopolies in key industries.

- **Clericals** aim to restore the Church to its former influence over public affairs.
- **Legitimists** aka **Monarchists**, now a rump faction, want the successor to the Orleanist royal line back as head of state, perhaps as an absolute ruler in the Charles X mode.
- **Bonapartists** resemble the Legitimists, except that they want to put the successor of Napoléon

III in charge of an authoritarian government. Their day as a force in the Assembly is done.

White-haired, mustachioed Félix Faure became President in January. His immediate predecessor, Jean Casimir-Perier, resigned in frustration after six months in office. The prior Presidency of Marie François Sadi Carnot ended in assassination, when an Italian anarchist stabbed him to death at a banquet.

Fear of anarchist attacks permeates the political system, just as terrorism does in our time.

CLAIMANTS

In our history the Orleanist and Bonapartist successors remain historical footnotes. But in your game, someone maddened by the book could well plot to restore one of them to the throne.

Just last year, with the death of his father, Prince Philippe d'Orléans took over as royal claimant to the French throne. An 1888 law prevents him from entering France. He resides in England, the country of his birth. An explorer and hunter, he serves in the Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars.

Severe-looking if one discounts the gravity-defying absurdity of his enormous mustache, 33-year-old Victor, Prince Napoléon, spent his youth distancing himself from Bonapartist ambitions. Now, from the comfort of his Brussels exile, he hankers ever so discreetly for a restoration of the Empire. In history as we know it, his stillborn grab for power occurs a few years from now, in 1899, when President Faure's death appears to create the necessary atmosphere of exploitable confusion.

The Dreyfus Affair Begins

In 1895 a scandal that will eventually divide the entire French political system has yet to fully unfold. Captain Alfred Dreyfus, an army officer of Alsatian Jewish extraction, has been court-martialed and convicted on espionage charges. False reports of a confession lead most to believe in his guilt. Only a few, most notably the writers Émile Zola and Edmond de Goncourt, suspect the truth—he's been framed by incompetent military investigators.

Dreyfus' journey to the prison colony Devil's Island in French Guiana begins on February 22nd; he arrives three weeks later. In history as we know it, the scandal lies dormant until the fall of 1896, when Zola publishes a declaration defending Dreyfus. In your game it might be the players whose investigations turn up heretofore hidden facts spurring Zola to action. If so, he will naturally leave out any reference to the supernatural or machinations of the King in Yellow.

Robert W. Chambers fictionalizes the Dreyfus scandal in a New York-set ghost story, "A Pleasant Evening." Its newspaperman protagonist meets a hobo nicknamed Soger Charlie, who turns out to be a Captain d'Ynoil, one of two French officers who fled the firing squad after selling secrets to the Dutch government. If the idea of tight adherence to the Chambers continuity appeals to you, you could swap out the details of the real Dreyfus for your version of the d'Ynoil Affair.

A campaign of vilification by anti-Semitic newspapers helped seal Dreyfus' conviction. Anti-Jewish agitation has been on the upswing since

the 1882 collapse of the Union Générale, a Catholic-controlled bank, for which conspiracy theorists blamed those perennial scapegoats, the Rothschilds. Some figures in the more recent Panama Scandal were Jewish, giving anti-Semites fresh impetus.

The Press

Paris produces more written words than any other city on Earth. (Indicate to your Belle-Lettrist player that this might be a thing the character always says.)

With two million subscribers, *Le Petit Journal* boasts the biggest circulation not only in Paris but on the planet. Ideologically conservative, it takes the anti-Dreyfus line in the coming scandal (above), heavily featuring the story on the color covers of its Sunday supplement. It boosts its circulation by sponsoring and covering races—running, cycling, and, last year, the world's first motor race. Like any proper right-wing rag, it seizes on sensational crime stories whenever they appear.

Le Petit Parisien favors the fashionable, frothy, and sensational over the political, maintaining neutrality on the Dreyfus matter. Its back pages may contain the weird stories the characters seek out for hints of Yellow Sign activity.

A more serious paper noted for its star writers, *Le Matin* eventually voices skepticism about the official version of the Dreyfus story.

Le Figaro embodies the center-right tendencies of its upper middle-class readership. Its saucy crime reporting reinforces their fear of the lower orders.

Political parties all have their own papers, which are taxed, a cost other

publications don't have to bear.

American characters almost certainly start, and perhaps end, their newspaper consumption with *The Paris Herald*, an international edition of the New York tabloid of the same name. Its monopoly on the Anglophone market allows it to tone down the swashbuckling sensationalism of its parent paper, if only by a notch.

Countless small presses turn out specialized journals, with interests ranging from arts and literature to the occult. The Belle-Lettrist writes for one or more of these. A scathing journal article can set off a firestorm among a publication's specialized audience, manifesting in vitriolic return salvos printed by rival publications.

Freelance journalists known as *passants* roam the boulevards looking for hot gossip and crime stories they can sell to a paper. They make an excellent source of clues, if the art students have a printable tidbit to offer in return.

Evocative Details

Drop in small details of Paris life as the heroes go about their investigations. Use them during transitional sequences, or to conjure up a mental image at the top of a new scene. Keep them offstage when characters are busy making choices and doing things.

Outdoor Life

English observers always remark on how much time Parisians spend outside,

whether in parks, on café patios, or simply rambling the streets. Even the Americans may be startled to see that the seating for sidewalk cafés, in confident contravention of unenforced laws, usually takes up the entire sidewalk. Locals take this in stride, willing to step out into the street to skirt them, because they'll want to sit at one of those tables later and *mon dieu, nous ne sommes pas des animaux ici*.

Sewers

Unlike the English, Parisians keep their windows sealed tight at night, due to the smell emitted by the city's ancient cesspools. That's all about to change, as construction crews prepare a massive project install a completely modern sewage system.

The Metro

...will commence construction three years from now. Sorry, transit fans.

The City of Not Many Lights

Characters may also be surprised to discover that great swathes of the city, even heavily trafficked ones, remain dark at night. A few key boulevards were electrified a few years back, but electricity costs much more here than in other major cities. Even the gaslight system, which earned Paris its famous nickname³, has been stingily deployed.

You might want to save this reveal for a moment when the characters are being pursued through the streets by something sinister and night-shrouded.

3 Some instead say it refers to Paris as seat of the Enlightenment. A local may shrug and condescendingly explain this when a player character complains of the poor illumination.

Roving Youth

You wouldn't know it from the scandal sheets, but Paris in 1895 is relatively well-policed and has a lower crime rate than, say, London. Trouble brews, though.

When Baron Haussmann renovated the city two generations ago, he drove the poor out of the city center to its fringes. There they remain, in outlying but urbanized areas that are now referred to by a new term: *banlieues*. Their restless, unemployed youths roam through the city, sometimes running wild through crowds, knives out, slashing throats. Disorganized for now, in half a decade they will metamorphose into the so-called Apaches: hyper-violent, heavily armed street gangs of both men and women who affect outrageously dandified attire.

The Octroi

Local authorities can still control passage into and out of Paris proper. To get in or out you have to pass through gates in the city walls, submitting to customs inspection. Customs stations are also located at the railway stations and river entrances. Goods entering the city are subject to a tax called an octroi. In a delicious example of Gallic bureaucracy, a different local authority controls each entrance and levies the fee on its own distinct list of goods. All of them charge levies on alcohol, though. To avoid having to pay taxes on large shipments in significant lump sums prior to sale, brewers, vintners, and distillers maintain warehouses outside the gates. Government inspectors regularly check for smuggling and adulteration.

Locations

In 1860, as part of the great rebuilding, officials established a new system of *arrondissements* (administrative districts). They divided the city map into 20 such districts, in a clockwise spiral fanning out from the center.

When giving a precise address, Parisians will list the *arrondissement*. As in any large city, though, people more often speak of neighborhoods with their own unique qualities.

- The player characters live in the **Latin Quarter** (5th and 6th *arrondissements*): A student neighborhood on the left bank of the Seine. Named for the language spoken by university attendees in the Medieval period. Neighborhoods where the artists-turned-detectives will most often prowl for clues are:
 - **Batignolles** (17th *arrondissement*): Borders Montmartre. Stomping grounds for Manet and his Impressionist circle.
 - **Belleville** (10th and 18th *arrondissements*): A working class neighborhood arranged around a large hill. A bastion of radical sentiment where much blood was spilled during the last violent days of the Commune.
 - **Faubourg Saint-Germain** (7th *arrondissement*): Historic home of the aristocracy, now fading as the landed rich give way to the rising industrialist class.
 - **Île de la Cité** (1st *arrondissement*): A large island in the Seine, central to the city, home to such key landmarks as Notre Dame Cathedral, the Palais de Justice, police headquarters, and

- the Hôtel-Dieu de Paris hospital.
- **Marais** (3rd and 4th arrondissements): The medieval heart of the old city. When chasing a gargoyle, look here first.
 - **Montmartre** (18th arrondissement): Named after the hill that towers over it, this is the currently fashionable playground for painters, poets, and quaffers of absinthe.
 - **Montparnasse** (14th and 15th arrondissements): An unremarkable area known for a railway terminus and Rodin's studio. If you're looking for the legendary arts district, you're a generation too early.
 - **Passy** (16th arrondissement): Home to the well-heeled bourgeoisie.
 - **Pigalle** (9th and 18th arrondissements): Next to, and a touch seedier than, Montmartre. Home to Toulouse-Lautrec's studio and the Moulin Rouge.
 - **Saint-Germain-des-Prés** (6th arrondissement): Home to the École des Beaux-Arts, where many of the PCs attend school. Known for affordable cafés and well-stocked bookshops.
- Specific locations the characters might find clues in appear below. An (F) after the establishment's name indicates that it is fictional. Anything not so designated actually existed, though some exact dates may have shifted during flight.

Eating, Drinking, and Entertainment

The characters' local drinking establishment as your series opens is **Le Veau Gras** (F) at 17 Rue Bonaparte, in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, very near the École des Beaux-Arts. Its florid-faced, cleft-nosed proprietor, known to all

USING ABSINTHE IN CARCOSA

For heightened period flavor, provide a copy of the *TKRPG* Paris guide, *Absinthe in Carcosa*, for your players to paw through. Presented as a found object from the world, *Absinthe* is a scrapbook assembled by an unnamed fellow art student turned occult investigator. Comprised mostly of excerpts from period books on Paris, its scrawled marginal notes include the claim that it was sent back from the near future to warn the group against danger.

The scrapbook contains the sorts of information on such PC-relevant Parisian details as the Catacombs, police, and prison system, along with marvelously evocative descriptions of key night spots. Use it to gain deeper knowledge of Belle Époque Paris to convey to your players. Or hand the book to them, tell them that the scrapbook arrived mysteriously under their noses, and invite them to probe the various hints inscribed in it by its crazed collator. Improvise Carcosan mysteries inspired by those hints, and the trouble they get into pursuing them.

simply as Pierre, provides shockingly cheap wine and spirits and simple food to a clientele composed half of art students, half of custodial and menial staff at the school. Behind the bar he keeps a bottle of vodka containing a cluster of tea leaves curled up in the shape of a monkey's paw. When first asked about it, he will say only that the time is not yet right to reveal its secret.

Aspiring subjects of the Yellow King will surely congregate at the **Cabaret du Néant**, or Cabaret of Nothingness, in Montmartre, a few steps from the Moulin Rouge. They sit at coffin tables in its Salle de Intoxication, where servers clad as monks and morticians theatrically intone a message of welcoming doom. While sipping cocktails named after diseases from skull-shaped cups, they gaze admiringly at the gargoyles, skeletons, and guillotines decorating the walls. Try the consumption germ: it's crème de menthe.

A few doors down waits the demonic open mouth of the **Cabaret de l'Enfer** (Cabaret of Hell). Revelers drink around a cauldron. The band wears devil costumes and the servers dress as imps.

Also in Montmartre, and of more direct interest to aspiring artists, one finds the famed cabaret **Le Chat Noir**. Run by impresario Rodolphe Salis, it offers a mix of music, poetry, shadow puppetry, and what we would call stand-up comedy. The characters might come here to talk with Satie, Toulouse-Lautrec, or various poets of occult inclination, or to place an article in its in-house literary journal. What Salis does not know is that he, and his cabaret, have only a year to live.

The café **Les Deux Magots** in Saint-Germain-des-Prés takes its name from wooden figures of two Chinese mandarins that perch above its drinkers. Or are they magicians-slash-alchemists? Come here to find Mallarmé (p. 120) or his fellow Symbolist poets.

The **Folies Bergère**, a cabaret in the 9th arrondissement, features revues always revolving around female performers such as the American dancer Loie Fuller (p. 118). Although racy by 1890s standards, the nudity players may associate with the name Folies Bergère won't become a feature here until the 1920s.

Manet and his group, dubbed the Batignolles, used to meet at the **Café Guerbois** in Batignolles every Thursday and Sunday. They're older now and visit less regularly but might be coaxed back for old time's sake. Former regulars include Cézanne, Degas, Renoir, and Zola.

Van Gogh decorated the **Café du Tambourin**, down the street from the Moulin Rouge. Gauguin may stop here before his permanent departure to Tahiti in June, as it was favorite spot in happier days.

Some still call the **Lapin Agile**, in Montmartre, by its former name, the Cabaret of Assassins. The new more salubrious name comes from its painted sign, depicting a rabbit escaping from a frying pan. The artistes will one day take over entirely, but for the moment they have to share the space with pimps and anarchists. This is where characters come to establish their underworld contacts.

Renoir's favorite restaurant, the



Maison Fournaise, lies outside town in Chatou, on an island in the middle of the Seine. Its bright and airy atmosphere contrasts with the dank, smoky cafés of Montmartre.

The Montmartre cabaret **Le Mirliton** showcases the performances of owner Aristide Bruant (p. 116), aimed at slumming interlopers from abroad or the richer precincts of the city. Its décor reflects the irreverence of his performances, with chamber pots everywhere and a Louis XIII chair suspended from the ceiling.

Your players can already picture the windmill architecture of the notorious **Moulin Rouge**, in Montmartre, famed for its lavish revue featuring the scandalous dance, the can-can. Owner Joseph Oller and manager Charles Zidler supply an outlandish playpen where every strata of society mixes it up in pursuit of pleasure. If the players can't find Toulouse-Lautrec at any of the other haunts already mentioned, this is surely the last stop on their hunt.

Degas holds court at the **Nouvelle Athènes** (New Athens) in the Pigalle. He painted his famous "L'Absinthe" here. Gustave Moreau might take a meal here after a hard day of teaching.

Churches

The 18th century Rococo **Church of St. Barnabé** (F) on the Rue St. Honoré (1st arrondissement) takes pride in its music, taking special care in recruiting better-than-usual organ players. In the Chambers story "In the Court of the Dragon," the narrator experiences a vision of a Yellow King avatar there. The story fictionalizes the Church of Saint-Roch, where Diderot

is entombed, de Sade was married, and Chopin played the organ.

Visitors with a taste for the Gothic think of one place of worship when they think of Paris: **Notre-Dame de Paris**, on the Île de la Cité, visible from the Palais de Justice and the city morgue. Begun in 1163, completed in 1345, damaged by rioting in 1548, heavily vandalized in the 1790s, and restored in 1845, the cathedral remains an ever-changing constant in Parisian life. The Yellow King might take an animating interest in its gargoyles and long-beaked chimeras. Its reliquary contains items traditionally held to be the Crown of Thorns, a piece of the True Cross, and one of the Holy Nails used in the crucifixion.

Also on the Île de la Cité stands the **Sainte-Chapelle**, originally the chapel of the late medieval royal palace. Noted for its high vaults and exquisite stained glass, it received a widely lauded restoration forty years ago.

The unfinished basilica **Sacré-Cœur** remains a locus for enmity between left and right. Built on the summit of Montmartre in the years following the Commune, it was meant to rebuke and erase the rebels who were massacred there. Begun in 1874, it will not be complete for another nine years.

France's equivalent to Westminster Abbey, the **Basilica of St. Denis**, can be found in the Paris suburb of the same name. Bodies buried there date back to the Roman empire and include all but three French monarchs from the 10th to the 18th century, plus many earlier ones for good measure, starting with Clovis I. For this reason, the investigators may also hear it referred to as the Royal

Necropolis. Like others of the city's great landmarks it has been built and rebuilt many times over the centuries. The core of the main structure seen today went up in the 11th century, establishing the Gothic style.

St.-Sulpice, in the 6th arrondissement, is nearly as big as Notre Dame Cathedral, making it the city's second largest building. Construction started in 1646, replacing an earlier Romanesque church. Investigators of a musical bent may be attracted to its great organ, rebuilt in 1862 by the era's top builder of such instruments, Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. (He's now 84, if the PCs have any questions for him.) The organist at St.-Sulpice is always a master of the instrument; the composer and professor Charles-Marie Widor currently occupies the post, as he will for many years.

Have the whims of Carcosa conjured entities posing as the Graeco-Roman gods? The PCs might find answers at **La Madeleine**, 8th arrondissement, which boasts the oddest history of any major Paris church. This neoclassical edifice looks more like the Parthenon than a cathedral. Napoléon ordered it erected in 1806 as a temple in tribute to the glory of his army. After the Restoration, Louis XVIII commanded that it should be consecrated to a church, in keeping with pre-Napoléonic plans for the site.

Anglo visitors may prefer to worship at the city's Protestant Churches. Though the art student PCs probably didn't come to Paris for its prayer opportunities, tourists and visitors mixed up with the Yellow King might come to one of these seeking peace of mind. The British Embassy maintains

an Anglican Chapel, or Church of England as its staff would say, as part of their structure in Faubourg St. Honoré. Another English Chapel is in Passy. Those who prefer their Anglicanism Americanized will head to the Episcopal Church at 17 Rue Bayard (8th arrondissement). Wesleyans worship at 4 Rue Roquépine; Congregationalists at 23 Rue Royale, also both in the 8th arrondissement. Baptists gather at a church in the 7th arrondissement, 48 Rue de Lille.

Cemeteries

For an old city Paris has few cemeteries. During Haussmann's redesign of the mid-century, the residents of pesky boneyards were dug up and shifted to the Catacombs (p. 111).

Père-Lachaise

On sunny weekend days, many stroll the grounds of the largest and most picturesque Parisian graveyard, the Père-Lachaise, in the 20th arrondissement. Built on a hill, it grants a fine vantage on the city.

Though established in 1804, many much older famous Parisians were moved here when their original places of rest were uprooted by Haussmann's diggers. A mere smattering of its notables include Molière, Chopin, Balzac, Delacroix, and the heart of Jacques-Louis David. (The monarchy, who had exiled Napoléon's court painter after their restoration, allowed his relatives to bring only this much of him back into the country.) A white pyramid, 21 feet high, marks the final resting spot of Napoléonic general André Masséna, who appears on its side

in bas relief portrait.

Famous doomed lovers Héloïse and Abelard occupy their own tomb here, built from materials taken from the abbey she governed.

Investigators should note that many of the disinterred have been mislabeled over the years. The greater the vintage of a historical worthy, the less likely it is that a grave contains the specific remains listed on its monument.

Many of the figures described in this book are also destined for berths here—one hopes not due to the actions of your player characters.

A massive crematory furnace rises from a clearing in the tombstones, turning departed Parisians into smoke.

Picpus

The only private cemetery in Paris is the Picpus Cemetery, in the 12th arrondissement. The first people buried here were 1306 victims of the Revolutionary guillotine, executed during a six-week period in 1794. Thus it contains members of Europe's top aristocratic families. It was later purchased and privatized by their families and afterwards admitted other dignitaries. Americans make a point of stopping at the tomb of General Lafayette. Other celebrated names include the poet André Chénier, the historian Charles Montalembert, and iconic diplomat Charles Talleyrand.

Saint-Ouen

This small cemetery near Montmartre has only been open for a few generations. Nicknamed either Champ de Navets, the turnip field, or Cayenne, after the penal colony

better known as Devil's Island, it has yet to accumulate any noteworthy dead people. That must be because of its current policy of letting the dead remain in place for five years only, at which point the remains are shunted to the Catacombs or the crematorium at Père-Lachaise.

The unworthy dead come here, including criminals whose graves may not legally be marked. This may bring the investigators on a mission to disinter a lowlife whose body may conceal a crucial clue.

The comrades of a player character receiving a Final Injury card might say a sad final farewell to him here. Later the fallen PC's American relatives presumably foot the bill to have him shipped across the Atlantic to a reliably permanent resting place.

Cultural Institutions

Between cases, the visual artists and architect of your group spend much of their time at the **École des Beaux-Arts** on Rue Bonaparte in the 6th arrondissement. Even as the Impressionists achieve greater prominence, the school sticks staunchly to the older Academic style. Here classical subjects are depicted with the hard lines and careful delineations of the old masters. (Players are of course free to depict themselves as casting aside this tradition in favor of the avant garde, an arc that might be traced over the course of your series.)

What started as the Bibliothèque Richelieu, and was once and will again be called the Bibliothèque Nationale, is at present **The Imperial National Library**, on Rue de Richelieu in

the 1st arrondissement. It houses the world's largest collection of books. The PCs might find themselves frantically scheming to either keep a copy of *The King in Yellow* out of its stacks, or remove one that has already been placed there.

Clues concerning the history of the city might found at the **Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris** in the 3rd arrondissement, housed in a 16th century building called the *Carnavalet*.

The **University of Paris**, about to return to its traditional name, the Sorbonne, also maintains an impressive library in the Latin Quarter (5th arrondissement).

Notable for its imposing modern glass and iron reading room, the **Sainte-Geneviève Library**, opened in 1843, bases itself around a much older collection, started by monks of the abbey of the same name in the 12th century. Its librarians now seek to buy back the key items from the collection that were sold off in the 1600s.

Founded by the Cardinal and Prime Minister of the same name, the **Bibliothèque Mazarine** stands as one of few cultural institutions that improved during the Revolution, whose leaders considerably increased its holdings. They are located in the 6th arrondissement, near the Louvre. The investigators may come here seeking information of a scientific or scholarly nature.

Auctions of fine art, jewelry, and antiques take place at the **Hôtel Drouot** (9th arrondissement). These events attract intense social interest. It provides a rare intersection where women from proper society find themselves in the presence

of courtesans, who enhance their reputations by amassing prestigious art collections.

The **Jardin des Plantes**, in the 5th arrondissement, comprises a large riverside botanical garden and zoo, the *Ménagerie du Jardin des Plantes*. The collection of animals has been restocked after starving Parisians ate most of it during the siege a generation ago.

The **Musée du Louvre** in the 1st arrondissement, the central point of the city, began as a palace, became an art museum during the Revolution, and has been remodeled and added to ever since. Unless you count that unpleasant sacking during the Commune. Famed highlights include the chapel of the tomb of Akhethetep, the Venus de Milo, and of course the Mona Lisa. For your work to be hung here, you have to be dead.

For the work of living artists, head to the **Luxembourg Gallery** in the 6th arrondissement. The protagonists of Chambers' story "The Mask" visit it to see the latest works of Rodin and Monet. It has occupied its present location since 1884, taking over a structure originally built to shelter the king's orange trees.

Owned and run by the team behind the Moulin Rouge, the **Olympia Music Hall** in the 9th arrondissement is big enough to host circus performances. It also provides a venue for ballet, operettas, and concerts.

Named after its architect, Charles Garnier, the **Palais Garnier** (9th arrondissement) is the city's premiere opera house. Thanks to its starring role in Gaston Leroux's 1910 novel *The Phantom of the Opera*, it is probably what



you envision when you think of a 19th century opera house. Construction began during the Haussmann era and was interrupted during the Siege and Commune. During those bloody final days of that time, the unfinished structure became a Communard fortress and saw heavy urban combat. It finally opened in 1875. Investigators in attendance will note the jeweled opulence of its attendees, who proceed up the grand staircase to the velvet-lined auditorium itself. The backstage area is a bustling neighborhood unto itself. Any of the stagehands can attest that the rumors of a lake beneath the building are true, if exaggerated: a system of cisterns manages the inflow of water from the Seine, which rushed in during the digging of the Garnier's foundations.

The **Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique** in the 10th arrondissement stages the hits of the 19th century to a 2,000-seat house. Spectacle-heavy melodramas and novel adaptations alternate with staged recreations of notorious murders in the *boulevard du crime* genre. The popularly known version of a past case may come back to haunt the characters as a play staged here—perhaps with supernatural consequences.

The **Théâtre Lyrique**, an oft-renamed opera house on the Place du Châtelet, currently houses the Opéra-Comique company. The opera fan among the investigators can explain that the relatively new “opéra-comique” genre encompasses operas with spoken dialogue, not necessarily funny. A prime example, *Carmen*, is not exactly a barrel of laughs. The structure was built during the Haussmann era, burned during the Commune, and rebuilt to the

same specifications three years later, in 1874. In three years, Sarah Bernhardt will take over the building and rename it after herself.

Government and Law Enforcement

Characters looking for City Hall will discover that Parisians call it the **Hôtel de Ville**. (It may take a while to get used to “hôtel” as the word for “hall,” setting aside its more specific English meaning as a place offering paid temporary lodgings to travelers.) Burned during the retaking of the city from the Communards in 1871, it opened in its reconstructed form just three years ago. The new version combines the remnants of the 16th century stone walls with an opulent Belle Époque interior. Characters might come here to ask questions of a bureaucrat or gain permission to search public records.

As a precursor to the welfare state first established in medieval times, the city runs a network of pawn shops, the **Mont-de-Piété**. Branches can be found throughout the city, allowing the pawning and recovering of items. One must wait a day or two for a reclaimed item to be located in the 4th arrondissement headquarters building and delivered to a branch. The most frequently pawned item is the mattress. An obvious story seed has a copy of *The King in Yellow* making its way to the main warehouse. More obscurely, the team might head here while pursuing rumors of a magical carpet from a mythical Arabian city, which adjusts its weave to answer questions of an oracular nature.

Various functions of policing and the court system occur at the **Palais de**

Justice (1st arrondissement) on the Île de la Cité, a large island in the Seine, central to the city. Suitably imposing yet also ornately decorated, the neoclassical structure dates to Haussmann's grand Paris renovation project. Here proceeds the work of the:

- **Cour de Cassation**, the high court, divided into three divisions: a civil appeals court, a civil trial court, and a criminal appeals court.
- **Cour d'Assises**, a criminal trial court.
- **Conciergerie**, jail for accused persons awaiting trial at the Cour d'Assises.
- **Souricière**, a suffocating basement prison, nicknamed the Mousetrap, where already convicted prisoners with business before the courts stifle and curse their fates.
- **Dépôt**, administrative offices for these and other justice officials.

The headquarters of the **Sûreté**, the criminal investigative bureau of the Paris police, adjoins the Palais de Justice, at 36 quai des Orfèvres. Erected to replace structures burned during the Commune uprising, this staunch neoclassical rectangle projects the sort of calm authority Carcosa intends to devour.

Soon to be decommissioned but at the moment still stocked with 1200 miserable prisoners, the **Mazas** prison squats ferociously in the 12th arrondissement. A challenging investigation might require some of the characters to go incognito among the prison population, posing as inmates.

Women who run afoul of the justice system wind up in the **Prison Saint-Lazare**, subject of frequent condemnations for its appalling conditions. One section houses convicts; another, those awaiting trial. The building

also houses a hospital, a local police station, and the bakery that makes the bread for all of the city's prisons.

Juveniles go to **La Petite Roquette** (11th arrondissement), while those awaiting appointments with the guillotine languish in its nearby twin structure, **La Grande Roquette**.

Montparnasse's **La Santé Prison** (Prison of Health) cages prisoners serving short sentences, convicts with cases under appeal, and those held in solitary confinement.

PCs in trouble with the law might hope to be sent to the city's smallest yet most prestigious prison, the **Sainte-Pélagie** (5th arrondissement). This is where writers, artists, and other rabble-rousing members of the intelligentsia wind up when the state convicts them of sedition or obscenity. Alumnae include Balzac, de Sade, Gustave Moreau, and pioneering thriller writer Eugène Sue. All described the conditions as unpleasant in the extreme.

Investigators needing to speak to a particular vagabond might brave the **Dépôts de Mendicité** in Nanterre, on the city's outskirts. This massive poorhouse/prison/hospital/nursing home provides beds for 3,000 of the poor, indigent, sick, and aged. Some check in voluntarily, while others are sentenced here for vagrancy. Color-coded accessories reveal which of those two categories an inmate falls into: hats for the men, lace ribbons for the women.

If you can't find a reason to get horror investigators to the **Paris Morgue**, in the shadow of the Notre Dame Cathedral in the 5th arrondissement, we don't even know you. *Appareils frigorifiques* (freezing machines) finally

allow attendants to preserve bodies in icy condition for months or years. People come to see if any of the bodies displayed to the public on the morgue tables are their missing loved ones. Or just to gawp. The morgue takes in about 900 unidentified corpses a year, one-seventh of which are never claimed. Photographers make images of each body. Coroners have all necessary equipment to conduct full autopsies, including access to a toxicology lab.

Hospitals

The **Charenton** lunatic asylum, on the outskirts of the city, houses those deemed incurably mad. Reforms from the mid-1810s transformed it from the wild conditions known when the Marquis de Sade called the place home into the era's model of humane treatment. The characters might come here to interview a witness shattered by an encounter with Carcosan manifestations. Investigators who wind up with 3 Shock cards in hand could face much worse fates than consignment here.

The city places women, girls, and young boys with mental afflictions in the **Salpêtrière** (13th arrondissement). Treatments include sewing, making artificial flowers, concert attendance, and dancing. A second wing of the building functions as a nursing home for elderly men. Its former head, pioneering neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, died two years ago. Troubling secrets related to his practice of mesmerism might still lurk in its moldering records.

An alternate destination for the retirement of mentally shattered player

characters is the **Bicêtre Hospital**, in a suburb south of the city.

The city's largest and oldest hospital, the **Hôtel-Dieu de Paris** (13th arrondissement), was founded by a saint in 651. In its overwhelming hubbub even the most demanding patient may go ignored. Injured PCs may find its impersonal service ideal, as none of the interns have time to question where those unusual wounds came from.

A younger and smaller institution, the **Hôpital Saint-Louis** (10th arrondissement) goes back only to the early renaissance.

Founded at the behest of Marie de' Medici in the early 1600s, the **Hôpital de la Charité** (6th arrondissement) serves the indigent and houses the offices of the National Academy of Medicine in its former chapel.

The most relevant obscure fact about the **Hôpital Cochin** (14th arrondissement) is that a tunnel network exists beneath it. This was closed off because bored young doctors kept going exploring down there and getting themselves lost. It dates back to the 1780s to serve workers and the poor. It now offers the city's department for the treatment of syphilis and other venereal diseases, which will come in handy if your series embraces the period's full grottness.

Founded two generations back in the wake of a cholera epidemic, the **Lariboisière Hospital** (10th arrondissement) might feature in your game when cast members seek expert advice on infectious diseases.

If the clues take them to a military hospital, they'll bask in the Baroque serenity of **Val-de-Grâce** (5th

arrondissement), built in the mid-1600s. Rich young men fear becoming ill while serving in the army, as they'll be sent here for treatment, instead of an expensive private hospital likelier to save their lives.

Hotels

The characters stay in cheap student accommodations. Family allowance only takes one so far in Paris! They may however find themselves meeting contacts, witnesses and well-heeled adversaries at some of the city's many hotels.

A smattering of names to borrow appear below. These sometimes suggest the type of clientele. You don't need to spend an Investigative Push to guess that the London and New York hotel caters to Anglophone customers.

As in most cities, major hotels cluster in a few select areas, close to transport or attractions. Several of these still do business today, sometimes under the same name.

- Beretta's London and Milan Hotel, 9 Rue St. Honoré (1st arrondissement)
- Hotel Métropole, 6 Rue de Castiglione (1st arrondissement)
- St. James Hotel, 211 Rue St. Honoré (1st arrondissement)
- Hôtel Meurice, 228 Rue de Rivoli (1st arrondissement, across from the Tuileries)
- Hôtel Belle Vue, 39 Avenue de l'Opéra (2nd arrondissement)
- Grand Hôtel Anglo-Américain, 113 Rue St. Lazare (8th arrondissement)
- Grand Hôtel Terminus, Gare St. Lazare (8th arrondissement, near the train station of the same name)
- London and New York Hotel, 15

Place du Havre (8th arrondissement)

- Hôtel Bedford, 17 Rue de l'Arcade (8th arrondissement)
- Hôtel Meyerbeer, 2 Avenue Montaigne (8th arrondissement)
- Imperial Hotel, 4 Rue Christophe Colomb (8th arrondissement)
- Grand Hôtel, 12 Boulevard des Capucines (9th arrondissement)

César Ritz, already a fixture in the hotel and restaurant business, will soon open a hotel that bears his name. Buttonhole him and he'll tell you all about his plans to make it synonymous with luxury.

Shops

Seekers of occult and esoteric books, or Symbolist and Decadent literature, hobnob at Edmond Bailly's shop **Librairie de L'Art Indépendant** (9th arrondissement).

Also in the 9th, the **Librairie du Merveilleux** is less a bookshop than an alchemical supply house, run by a Catholic mystic named Lucien Chamuel. He dabbles in publishing, especially the books of his mentor Papus (p. 130).

Department stores as we know them today took root in the city a generation ago and continue to develop such innovations as electric lighting, elevators, branch locations, and set prices—one need no longer haggle! The house look of **Printemps'** 9th arrondissement flagship location, popularizes the Art Nouveau style. **Le Bon Marché** in the 7th employs thousands, bolstering its sales with extensive advertising and mailed catalogs.

Haunted Paris

Hausmann's renovations of the 1850s and 60s supposedly slew the old, dark, irrational Paris, described by one lamenting critic as "the gothic, black, filthy, feverish city, the city of darkness, of disorder, of violence, of misery and of blood!" It is that slumbering, suppressed city that the forces of Carcosa seek to awaken.

The Catacombs

Excavations for the Catacombs began after a 1774 cemetery collapse. Over a decade later the process of carting remains from the city's overflowing graveyards began in earnest. The final push to empty Parisian boneyards came during Hausmann's reconfiguration of the city. Workmen dug up 16 small cemeteries, accumulating 40,000 cubic feet of bones in need of a new resting place. After filling up the nearby (and now already defunct) Vaugirard Cemetery, the rest were interred here. New bones join the collection whenever anyone excavating in the city digs up a full or partial skeleton. This rule may provide the Hook required to get the team into the Catacombs—they learn that bones they need to examine have been moved here.

Injuries sustained by casual visitors have led the authorities to restrict licit entrance to the Catacombs to every other Saturday. Characters can use Bureaucracy to gain permission from a quasi-mayoral official, the *Préfet* of the Seine, to enter at other times. To disdainers of paperwork, Streetwise or Sneaking remain options.

Since 1810 the Catacombs' bones have

been carefully stacked on shelves lining its labyrinthine walls, sorted by type. Expanses of large leg and arm bones give way to cornices made of skulls. Small bones are tucked out of sight behind them. Every so often visitors come across a portion of shelving where the stackers of bones broke the pattern to make an ornamental design from mismatched bones.

The bones of those killed during the Commune uprising remain grouped together, near an underground stream prowled by crayfish.

What restless spirits, annoyed by the careless shifting of their bones, wait to be activated by the Carcosan incursion?

Temple Square

Hausmann turned the former site of Paris' Knights Templar fortress into one of its public squares. Located in the 3rd arrondissement, it surely still reverberates with Templar energy and must certainly have a secret crypt worth digging into in the dead of night. The medieval fortress once situated here might still remain had it not been used as the royal family's prison during the Revolution. As such it became a place of pilgrimage for Royalist sympathizers and therefore a political annoyance to Napoléon, who had it demolished in 1808. The square's main feature today is a botanical garden. Statuary includes a portico with Ionic columns and allegorical figures of Hope, Justice, Abundance, and Prudence.

Tour Saint-Jacques

The gothic Saint-Jacques Tower in the 4th arrondissement is all that remains of a church demolished during

the Revolution, the Church of Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie.

After the massacre of the Commune, the park surrounding the tower became an impromptu mass graveyard. Witnesses still speak in hushed tones of arms jutting up from shallow pit, of the moans of those buried alive. If the king with the tattered mantle feeds on the dark energies emitted by the city's undigested sins, surely those interred here will stir themselves, if in spirit if not in desiccated flesh.

Famed 14th century alchemist Nicolas Flamel used to be buried beneath the floor of the demolished church. As dark magic floods the city the present location of his corpse may become a burning question.

Horror in the Countryside

1895 finds Paris growing into the surrounding farmland. A bucolic country village is never more than half a day's travel away. Amid the hay bales and picturesque farmhouses, the heroes might find terrors including:

- cannibalistic or murderous peasants—a staple of French horror then and now
- prowling beasts granted fresh powers by Carcosan reality-bending
- ghosts of soldiers killed in fighting outside the city

Rural awfulness is not complete without a visit to a leech farm.

In this entirely historical and not remotely supernatural encounter, the investigators may discover how leeches are raised and fed to meet the heavy demands of the medical industry. Yes, respectable doctors still believe that bleeding with leeches cures all manner

of ailments, particularly the mysterious, undiagnosable ones. Leech farms buy old horses otherwise at the end of their usefulness, submerging them up to their necks in leech-filled ponds. The agonized animals, held in place with rope or leather ties, nourish the leeches with their blood. Farmers pull the horses out periodically to harvest the leeches. They let the beasts recover their strength for a while before putting them back in the ponds. Surely a key clue awaits your characters at such a farm.

Shadows of Brittany

A rugged outcrop jutting into the cold Atlantic, the region of Brittany maintains a reputation as France's most haunted region. In its relative isolation it has retained cultural influences from its Celtic past and ancient Germanic invasion. Weird and often cryptic, Breton folklore features faeries, sorcerers, and walking dolmens, alongside bizarre creatures like wasps with diamond stings and lions with manes made of writhing serpents.

Chambers' narrator in "The Yellow Sign" mentions it as a place of mystery. It appears as a locale in his modern fantasy tale "The Demoiselle d'Ys" and his best non-Carcosan horror story, "The Messenger," about the vengeful skull of a dead wizard. "The Purple Emperor," a non-supernatural story about rival butterfly collectors featuring some of the same characters, also occurs there.

Brittany's influence appears in this book mostly in the "Foes" section, where Carcosan entities have taken on the qualities of the following mythical



creatures: Ankou, korrigans, nains, and night washers.

The most famous myth of Brittany tells of the lost city of Ys. Legend situates it in the Bay of Douarnenez, about 50 kilometers northeast of Pont-Aven. Its tale of a drowned utopia combines the myth of Atlantis with elements of the ejection from Paradise and the destruction of Sodom. Ys either sits on an island or is ringed by a basin that captures the incoming waves and protects it from flooding. Its virtuous early Christian prince, Gradlon, fails to see the evil of his daughter, the sorceress Dahut. Her many sins lead to the city's sinking beneath the waves, either due to a spell gone awry or when

she accidentally opens the floodgates while sneaking her lover into the city. Gradlon flees the sinking of Ys on his horse, either failing to save Dahut or kicking the villainous schemer from his saddle into the waves.

This tale may reflect in garbled form an earlier Carcosan incursion into our world, during the Dark Ages or earlier. If so, Ys would have been a Carcosan city on Earth, destroyed when historic precursors to the PCs found a way of banishing the King in Yellow and his evil daughters from this reality.

The PCs' investigation of the myth may kick off with a revival production of Édouard Lalo's 1888 opera *The King of Ys*.

PEOPLE

This chapter presents the notables, real and fictional, of Belle Époque Paris, for inclusion in your Carcosa-haunted scenarios.

Real people appear with their age, as of 1895, followed by their dates of birth and death, in the subtitle:

Sarah Bernhardt
51, 1844–1923

Imaginary characters appear with an age and then a descriptor:

Pierre
43, Barman at Le Veau Gras

Some players will be perfectly happy to play a game in which they meet the period's still-famous names on a regular basis. Others may feel overshadowed by a constant parade of historical titans. Watch your group's reactions to your first famous cameo and play it by ear. Often this comes down to a matter of plausibility. Well-motivated encounters justify their presence in a scenario, while a random encounter with a key figure will go down as just that—random.

Entries concluding with an **As a Patron** identifier indicate how this character might give tips, aid, and assignments to the group in an On Call series. Pick the one:

- you think the players will most enjoy
- their improvised choices in your introductory sequence lead them to

Detailed profiles of each historical figure mentioned below would fill a whole book of their own. Treat these capsule descriptions as a starting point for your own research. For the purposes of a scenario a quick visit to Wikipedia will likely give you as much additional material as you need.

Artists and Bohemians

Here are the people the characters aspire to mingle with, or eclipse:

Sarah Bernhardt
Actress
51, 1844–1923

Three decades after her first acting successes, Sarah Bernhardt still packs them in on both sides of the Atlantic, making her the biggest star in the world. Especially when the subject is herself, the investigators may have to use Assess Honesty to discern her wild true anecdotes from equally fabulous falsehoods. Proud of her smash hit US tours, she may take a shine to American art students.

Bernhardt also dabbles in decorative sculpture, in a decadent Art Nouveau style that could easily indicate a

familiarity with Carcosa.

Bernhardt appears in the secret files the Sûreté maintain on courtesans and their clients, as someone who very occasionally charges a phenomenal fee for a one-off encounter.

As a Patron: Sarah glimpsed Carcosa when imagining one of her sculptural pieces. She sought out and nearly read a copy of the book before coming to her senses. That one lies burnt in her fireplace, and she now seeks a team of young admirers to track down and destroy the others before she and others of her circle succumb.

Sarah Brown

Artist's Model

26, 1869–1896

Marie-Florentine Royer calls herself Sarah after the great Bernhardt and adopted an English surname in reference to her Celtic looks. She reigns over Paris as its most in-demand artist's model. Successful painters shell out colossal fees to book her time; if they annoy her, she sashays out of their studios to pose for free at the École des Beaux-Arts, or maybe just wreak havoc there. If not receiving enough attention at a party, she leaps up onto the nearest table. Sarah boasts a long list of lovers, from clients to fellow models. Her allegedly nude appearance at the 1893 art student's parade, and subsequent arrest by the authorities, sparked widespread rioting.

Sarah burns her candle fast. Hard living leaves her vulnerable to tuberculosis, which kills her three years from now.

Aristide Bruant

Performer, Impresario

44, 1851–1925

Most performers claim uniqueness but no one blends singing, emceeing, and class-drenched insult comedy like Aristide Bruant, billed as “the Poet of the Gutter.” You still recognize him today even if you haven't heard of him, as the slim, hawk-nosed man in the black slouch hat, red scarf, and black cape drawn by Toulouse-Lautrec in a series of iconic nightclub posters. At his Montmartre cabaret, Le Mirliton, aided by his perennially arching eyebrows, he celebrates the decadence of the demimonde for the delectation of the slumming well-to-do, who delight in the vulgar invective he dishes out to them.

As a Patron: As the poet laureate of decadence, naturally Bruant has learned of the book and its corrosive influence. Corruption belongs on the stage and in one's verse, he declares, not gnawing at his beloved city from another dimension. Aware of every rumor and connected to people high and low, he guides the students in their quest.

Mary Cassatt

Painter

51, 1844–1926

An American painter and printmaker, Cassatt has been exhibiting with the Impressionists for the last decade and a half. Daughter of a Philadelphia land speculator, her family wealth and outsider status allows her to disregard social convention and gain standing alongside men of similar talent. Her closest colleagues are Degas and the painter Berthe Morisot, who dies in March 1895. Not Decadent or

Symbolist, her work portrays the social world of women with a beguiling line and impeccable composition.

Paul Cézanne

Painter

56, 1839–1906

Difficult and shabby-looking, with intense eyes and a drooping mustache, Cézanne, lives in Provence but visits Paris when his work is exhibited. His revolutionary paintings still divide the city's art buyers. If questioned by investigators about weird events, he may first grumble about his diabetes or allude to ongoing trouble with his wife, Hortense.

Soon he will enter the final period of his art, painting still lifes of stacked skulls. *Is it the activities of the PCs that drive him over this aesthetic brink?*

A friend since boyhood of Émile Zola's, Cézanne has not spoken to him since reading the galleys for his 1886 novel *His Masterpiece*, in which a character clearly based on him is depicted as a wretched failure driven to suicide. Zola still wonders how he could possibly have been offended by that.

Claude Debussy

Composer

33, 1862–1918

Debussy pursues life with the willfulness of the former child prodigy he is and shows little tolerance for those less brilliant than himself. Heavy brows and a mop of dark hair announce his stubbornness, even before he opens his mouth to complain about a recently endured indignity. Debussy's latest drama-filled relationship finds him living with opinionated tailor's daughter

Gaby Dupont. He relegates her to the role of sensible stick-in-the-mud while he pursues women on the side and spends money they don't have. In 1895 Debussy has already written "Clair de lune" (part of his *Suite bergamasque*) and *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, though it is not yet clear that they are immortal masterpieces. Influenced by Wagnerian mysticism, he may surface in an investigation through his connection to Symbolist poets or interest in Rosicrucian texts.

Edgar Degas

Painter and Sculptor

61, 1834–1917

Like most other Impressionists, Degas hates that term. Scion of a wealthy bourgeois family, he takes various other traditionalist stances that separate him from the others, including a dislike of Monet. Prickly and wielding a cutting wit, he makes a point of refusing to flatter people, particularly women. Apparently asexual, he forms a close friendship with Mary Cassatt (above). The investigators may come upon him busily micromanaging an exhibition, to the suppressed frustration of his colleagues.

Jean Delville

Painter

28, 1867–1953

Mason, Rosicrucian, and attendee of mystical soirees, the young Belgian painter Jean Delville has surely gazed into Carcosa. This year he will paint a piece called *Satan's Treasures*, in which writhing nudes in a fiery hellscape get sucked into a mystical portal of suckered tentacles. The group can find him

mingling with other esoteric minds at the salons held by Joséphin Péladan (p. 130). With his dark beard and regal mien, he affects the air of a magician.

Anatole France

Author

51, 1844–1924

An ironic and skeptical writer, journalist, and essayist, France recently published the novel *The Queen Pédauque*, spoofing belief in the occult. He will soon join the fight to exonerate Alfred Dreyfus. This future winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature might vex the party by ignorantly debunking events they know to be genuinely supernatural. His waxed mustache and elegantly pointed beard help him project his air of bookish authority.

As a Patron: On the other hand, it is possible that his skeptical pose serves merely as a shield. Does he debunk to slow the spread of the Yellow Sign? He may enlist the group to help him in covering up its existence and keep the King at bay.

Loie Fuller

Dancer and Theatrical Lighting Pioneer

33, 1862–1928

Born in Fullersberg, Illinois, the vivacious Loie Fuller worked in American circus and vaudeville, at one point as sidekick to Western-themed entertainer Buffalo Bill Cody. Her flamboyant form of modern dance incorporates spectacular stage and lighting effects. Trademark spectacles include the Dance of Fire and the Dance of the Butterfly, which ends with her revealed as the pistil of an unfolding

flower. She uses her chemistry expertise to perfect new lighting effects, including luminescent fabric paint. Fuller belongs to the French Astronomical Society, a fact that might come into play when the investigators are bedeviled by visions of black stars.

Paul Gauguin

Painter

47, 1848–1903

Hard-living, irascible, frustrated, and haunted by the suicide of his friend van Gogh half a decade ago, the rough-hewn Symbolist painter Paul Gauguin will leave Paris for Tahiti halfway through the year. Before his departure, the investigators may come to him for the secret folklore of Brittany, where he lived and painted in the mid-1880s. Gauguin's dark curly hair and lush mustache give him the look of a world-weary romantic. This fades when he gets drunk and wants to fight you.

Jean-Léon Gérôme

Painter and Art Teacher

70, 1825–1904

When the players need to interact with a paragon of the stodgy Academic style now being eclipsed by Impressionism, Gérôme stands out as an obvious choice. Painters in the group may take classes under him at the École des Beaux-Arts. They find him a harsh but not inaccurate critic of their work. Though generally stern, he still takes enthusiastic part in the annual art student's ball, supervising a parade float and carousing like a man one-third his age. White-haired and neatly mustached, he resembles an elderly Edgar Allan Poe.

As a Patron: G  r  me's passion for mythological and Orientalist subject matter may have led him to investigate, and recoil from, the book. Or perhaps he's seen past students destroyed by it and wants to shepherd the next crop to properly fight its influence. But make no mistake: he won't ease up on grades just because you've been out fighting cat-demons all night!

La Goulue (Louise Weber)
Can-Can Dancer and Singer
 29, 1866–1929

Beloved performer La Goulue has just quit working with the Moulin Rouge to strike out on her own, starting with a national tour. Currently the biggest star in Paris, she has no idea of knowing that this move will mark the beginning of a long downward arc. A popular model with the Impressionist crowd, she features in what will become one of Toulouse-Lautrec's signature works, "La Goulue arriving at the Moulin Rouge." An observant player character may notice the depression lurking behind her mask of gaiety.

Joris-Karl Huysmans
Novelist
 47, 1848–1907

Huysmans, who his friends know by his real first names, Charles-Marie-Georges, wrote the scandalously decadent 1884 novel *Against the Grain*. Its narrator, based on the aesthete and poet Comte de Montesquiou-F  zensac, thinks various misanthropic and shocking thoughts while very nearly rousing himself to leave the comforts of his house to pursue a campaign of evil. The passages arousing the greatest

shock allude to the protagonist's homosexuality. The scandal surrounding *Against the Grain* (or *Against Nature* as it is sometimes translated) may have been the inspiration for Chambers' decadent play, which suggests Huysmans as a natural supporting player for a *TKRPG* series. His less readable novel *L  bas* depicts an investigation into contemporary Satanism in Paris. Two years ago Huysmans, who looks more like a banker than a scandal-maker, threw occult Paris into a tizzy by accusing rival Rosicrucians Stanislas de Guaita and Jos  phin P  ladan (see "Occultists") of teaming up to cast spells on him. He also claims that their magic slew the notorious defrocked priest and cultist Joseph-Antoine Boullan. Since then Huysmans has been drifting to his final philosophical destination, conservative Catholicism.

As a Patron: If Huysmans had a hand in creating *The King in Yellow*, he tries to atone for his cosmic blunder by guiding the cast in finding and destroying them any remaining copies. If they made the book, he might understand the horrors of writing something too terrible for the world, helping them on behalf of unseen, deep-pocketed ultra-Catholics.

Gail Loveless
 53, *Spy Novelist*

An American author who lives full-time in Paris, the celebrated Mrs. Loveless writes spy novels set during the US Civil War. Her fetching and brilliant female heroes go undercover, leveraging their wits and charm to pry secrets loose from easily swayed

Confederate officers. Gail, who these days cuts a formidable, matronly figure, claims to base her fiction on her own true experiences working with Allan Pinkerton under the code name of Secret Service Operator 13. Though few believe her, the PCs may spot the clues revealing that she's hiding the truth in plain sight.

Though not the athletic young lady she was thirty years ago, Gail still knows her way around a pistol and retains her nose for danger. She might be tempted to join the art students on one of their cases if they tell her too much. Whether this leads the PCs to have to rescue her, or vice versa, depends on your scenario needs.

Maurice Maeterlinck

Playwright

33, 1862–1949

The Symbolist playwright Maurice Maeterlinck has freshly arrived in Paris, having left his native Belgium to escape disapproval of his relationship with the actor and opera singer Georgette Leblanc. The church won't grant her a divorce from her husband, requiring them to live in sin.

Maeterlinck's plays evoke a fairy tale world of melancholy mysticism. The most famous of his plays, *Pelléas and Mélisande*, debuted three years ago and will later achieve immortality when adapted as an opera by Debussy. The tale of doomed love between a woman and her brother-in-law revolves around concepts of Pythagorean mysticism, in which the forces of love and chaos do eternal battle, with chaos always winning in the end.

His current manuscript, *The Treasure*

of the Humble, consists of essays on philosophy and mysticism dealing with such themes as the awakening of the soul, inner beauty, and the tragedy of daily life.

Maeterlinck's friends include Alphonse Mucha, and, through him, Joris-Karl Huysmans.

Stéphane Mallarmé

Poet

53, 1842–1898

A Symbolist poet with occult leanings, Stéphane Mallarmé writes as much by the music of his words as their meanings. Long after his death his works will continue to inspire literary theoreticians. He scrabbles for francs the same way the player characters do, and may be pliable with coin and the Negotiation ability. Mallarmé holds court in literary salons visited by the worthy and famous, including the similarly occult-inclined poet W. B. Yeats, should he happen to be visiting Paris. Finally gaining wider recognition, Mallarmé has adopted a sunnier disposition of late, little suspecting that sudden death from unclear causes lies just three years away.

Henri Matisse

Art Student

26, 1869–1954

At this stage, Matisse, later a towering figure of modernism, is a young student still painting in a conventional style. He might provide a fun cameo as a rough contemporary of the PCs, struggling just as they are. A disappointment to his father, who wanted him to continue his legal studies, Henri might commiserate



with them regarding the travails of the aspiring painter.

Gustave Moreau
Painter and Illustrator
69, 1826–1898

The prolific painter of such eerily mythological Symbolist works as *Oedipus Wanderer* and *Athenians Being Delivered to the Minotaur* teaches at the École des Beaux-Arts and thus might be instructor to the group's painter characters. He may dragoon them into lending physical labor to his current project, turning his home in the 9th arrondissement into a museum named after himself. After its opening this year, he donates it to the state and continues to live on its main floor. A melancholy surrounds him. Others at the school might discreetly explain that he mourns the death of his longtime model and lover Alexandrine Dureux, who passed five years ago. Three years from now he'll be dead from stomach cancer.

Alphonse Mucha
Painter and Illustrator
35, 1860–1939

After slugging it out in Paris for seven long years, the Czech artist Alphonse Mucha hit it big in January this year, with an arresting poster advertising a Sarah Bernhardt performance. His delicate lines and colors, and the filigreed frames within his images, will come to epitomize the Art Nouveau style. In French company, Mucha finds little reason to propound his Slavic nationalist views. He'd rather make the most of his sudden popularity. Soon he will set up an informal salon

at his studio where spiritual questers speak. While there the characters may encounter his friend Joris-Karl Huysmans (above).

Marcel Proust
Gossip Columnist
24, 1871–1922

Dapper young Marcel Proust writes a society column in a journal called *Le Mensuel*. Investigators may run into him when traveling in elevated company. He might provide them with gossip, try to break stories about their cases they would prefer to keep secret, or merely subject them to his Olympian snobbery. Like most social climbers, young Proust is a fervent traditionalist, opposing the left and its attempts to separate church and state. He says that one day he'll take the things he's discovered in his explorations of Parisian society and turn it into a novel. Though he's not sure how he can fit them all into one book...

Odilon Redon
Painter
55, 1840–1916

Though much of his work shines with a lightness and delicacy, other pieces by Odilon Redon dive further than any other Symbolist into the realm of the grotesque. The characters may see images in his paintings that they then see in the flesh when they glimpse Carcosa. *The Smiling Spider* has a human face—and it's not smiling, it's weeping. His drawing *The Eye Like a Strange Balloon Mounts Toward Infinity* depicts an eyeball floating like an aeronautic balloon; its basket is a strange combination of hat and skull. (If

this image figures in the game's modern sequence, characters may interpret it as a skull in a space helmet. *Can Redon see through time?*)

Redon remained obscure until Huysmans (above) celebrated him as a paragon of decadence in his novel *Against the Grain*. A reticent, dour-looking man, Redon once regularly frequented the occult bookshop of Edmond Bailly (p. 127) but has been laid up with a mysterious illness for the last year or so. History tells us that his recovery led to a radical shift in personality, turning him into an outgoing, contented man. *Do the heroes bring about this transformation by saving him from Carcosa's pall?*

Pierre-Auguste Renoir
Painter
54, 1841–1919

Born the son of a tailor, Pierre-Auguste Renoir has weathered scorn and poverty to finally gain esteem as a leading light of the Impressionists. Characters can gain his cooperation by appealing to his yearning for respectability. The calm and beauty of his images mirror his less-than-turbulent personal life. He maintains zero interest in strangeness, the occult, or adventure in general.

Auguste Rodin
Sculptor
54, 1840–1917

Fury and controversy dog the career of Auguste Rodin, whose roughly rendered, energetic works have done to sculpture what his Impressionist friends have with painting. His blocky features

and grandly unruly white beard help keep annoying would-be interlocutors at bay. An emotional brawler, he grew up poor and fought for every scrap of recognition he could grab. He may fly into a rage if asked weird questions about statues, flashing back to that time in 1877 when he was accused of casting his unsettlingly vivid piece *The Bronze Age* from a corpse.

Erik Satie
Composer
29, 1866–1925

The wry young composer has already composed the haunting piano pieces that will earn him musical immortality, the *Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes*. He serves as chapel master and composer in residence to the Rosicrucian order of Joséphin Péladan (p. 130) and regularly joins the conversation at the occult bookshop of Edmond Bailly (p. 127). He carries himself with a confident authority belying his relative youth. His outward wit and poise disguise his sad awareness of life's fleeting nature, acquired on the death of his mother when he was six.

Always alert to the next creative wave, Satie may be drawn to the play and require rescuing. In later decades he becomes a Dadaist and inspiration to the Surrealists.

Painter and Printmaker
31, 1864–1901

It is the rare Montmartre drinking establishment that does not claim Toulouse-Lautrec as a regular customer, making him a strong candidate for first famous figure of

1895 Paris that the group spots in the wild. They might also find him at the occult bookshop of Edmond Bailly (p. 127), though he goes there more for the art talk than the Rosicrucianism. His striking posters advertise the Moulin Rouge and the shocking cabaret of Aristide Bruant (above). An unidentified ailment caused his legs to stop growing in early adolescence: he stands four feet eight inches high, with the torso of an adult and the legs of a child. Though his separated father and mother might tell a different story, he believes that his deformity caused his aristocratic family to shunt him aside. Characters seeking his cooperation would do well to buy him his favorite cocktail, a skull-bending concoction of cognac and absinthe correctly named The Earthquake.

He will finish drinking himself to death in less than a decade.

Paul Verlaine

Poet

51, 1844–1896

Stooped, bald, white-bearded, and hollow-eyed, the revered Symbolist poet looks a good two decades older than his year of birth would indicate. Down and out, guzzling absinthe, he makes appearances at cafés and clubs like the Soleil d’Or, where he is greeted with reverence by the demimonde and literati alike. Perpetually at his side hovers a clownish ragamuffin known as Monsieur Bibi-la-Purée, who will submit to various humiliations in exchange for a drink or crust of bread.

In better days Verlaine served as press attaché for the Commune, loved the gun-running poet Arthur Rimbaud,

taught in the United States, and saw his elusive, layered poems set to music by Debussy, Fauré, and others.

The ravages of alcohol and drug addiction finish him off in January, 1896.

James McNeill Whistler

Painter

51, 1834–1903

Characters seeking an idol sprung from American soil might try to gain access to James McNeill Whistler’s Montparnasse studio. He lives in Paris with his wife and former student Beatrice–Trixie to her friends. Whistler self-mythologizes as the issue of Southern aristocrats. He dislikes it when anyone points out that he was born in Massachusetts to a family that came into money only as his father’s railroad career progressed. Famously prickly, he once sued British critic John Ruskin for publishing a scathing review. Long established as an internationally recognized artist, he now experiments with color photography, and may share tips on that medium with an interested character. One might also gain his cooperation by running down his hated enemy, Oscar Wilde.

Whistler decamps for London in February of 1896.

Émile Zola

Novelist

55, 1840–1902

Like his Impressionist friends, Zola once earned widespread scorn for his work but is now considered a lion of the arts. His trademark style, Naturalism, examines society with an unflinching eye conservatives still find scandalous. Once retiring, success has fostered

NOT PRESENT

Poets Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, and the “Comte de Lautréamont” (Isidore-Lucien Ducasse) are already dead, having passed in 1867, 1891, and 1870, respectively. That might not stop the King in Yellow from reanimating them or summoning their specters.

The short story writer Guy de Maupassant died halfway through 1893, after a paranoia-fueled suicide attempt and commitment to a Paris asylum. They say it was syphilis, but could he have seen intimations of Carcosa, as reflected in his classic 1887 horror story “The Horla”?

Though we associate Oscar Wilde with Paris, absinthe, Decadent literature, and portraits that age while their owners do not, 1895 finds him on trial, and then imprisoned, on sodomy charges in England.



a growing grandiosity. He finds the pose of Grand Old Man easy to strike, especially among young artists like the player characters.

He alienated most of his painter friends with his novel *His Masterpiece*, which depicts thinly veiled versions of them in a cruelly honest light. Disregarding social convention, Zola takes public outings with his illegitimate family.

Zola’s realism and focus on society leaves him little patience for the occult or supernatural. You won’t find him reading *The King in Yellow* any time soon.

His interest in the Dreyfus case will soon pull him into a public spotlight, draining him of his vitality.

Scientists and Inventors

Space limitations crueler than any alien monarch prevent us from doing more than nodding in the direction of Paris’ thriving scientific scene.

In addition to the figures detailed below, players might seek out:

- Engineer and architect Gustave Eiffel (1832–1923) designer of the eponymous tower.
- Auguste and Louis Lumière, inventors of an improved motion picture camera and makers of short, naturalistic documentaries that thrill the world.
- Industrialist Édouard Michelin (1859–1940), inventor of the pneumatic tire.
- Biologist and chemist Louis Pasteur, inventor of vaccination and pasteurization, instrumental in proving the germ theory of disease. He dies a national hero in October 1895, aged 72.

Marie Curie

Physicist and Chemist

28, 1867–1934

Polish scientist Marie Skłodowska returns to Paris in the middle of 1895, disappointed by her inability to gain a post in her home country. She marries her older physicist lover Pierre Curie and gets to work figuring out uranium rays. Despite her relative youth, Marie strikes all who meet her as self-evidently brilliant and single-minded.

As a Patron: Curie's radiation research has been sidetracked by weird instrument readings rendering her experiments unreplicable. The instruments grow particularly unpredictable in the presence of certain individuals. Curie has found but one similarity between them: all have read *The King in Yellow*. And all came to terrible ends shortly thereafter. She and Pierre have been performing investigations on their own, but detective work is not their métier, and they want to start a family together. Marie enlists the group to take over the footwork, agreeing to perform any necessary lab work.

Nadar

Photographer, Entrepreneur, Cartoonist, and Balloonist

75, 1820–1910

Corpulent and elderly but still puffing steadfastly away, Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, aka Nadar, may show up to regale the investigators with tales of a glorious and often aerial past. Supposedly he's in Marseilles in 1895 but surely that's a lie the group will have to tell to cover up events he drags them into.

The son of a Paris bookseller,

Tournachon turned his back on an expensive medical education in the late 1840s, joining the city's literary scene. Always one to adopt multiple roles, he went from publishing cartoons in journals to publishing journals, and then into the burgeoning field of portrait photography. Subjects of his classic images include Sarah Bernhardt, Alexandre Dumas, Jacques Offenbach, and his friend Charles Baudelaire.

Nadar enthusiastically embraced the ballooning craze of the mid-century, devising the system required to become the world's first aerial photographer. He used to fly *The Giant*, a massive, ungainly double-decker balloon over the city. Nadar goosed his income by charging tourists to take the terrifying ride with him. The most prominent client of his ballooning business was Napoléon III, who paid him to perform aerial reconnaissance on Austrian positions at the Battle of Solferino in 1859. He appears under an anagram of his name in Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon*.

Nadar may appear in a scenario as an expert on unexplained aerial phenomena, or as a rememberer of the city's past. Even today Nadar shudders at the sudden convulsions that changed the city in the middle of the century, when Baron Haussmann utterly transformed it.

Occultists

Like any self-respecting hotbed of occult activity, the esoteric side of Belle Époque Paris bubbles with schisms and rivalries. Most of the beliefs propounded here either derive from, or react against,

the works of Éliphas Lévi, dead for twenty years now. This Second Republic revolutionary turned Second Empire magician wrote about the mastery of ritual magic as an exercise that could turn one into a man-god. By pressing inhuman intelligences into service, he wrote, one can grow powerful enough to turn night into day.

The main strains of Parisian occultism, which intertwine to various degrees, are:

- **Martinism**, a form of Christian mysticism that proposes to square conservative Catholicism with the working of magic.
- **Synarchy**, which seeks a better-run society through a secret dictatorship of mystical masters.
- **Theosophy**, the pursuit of human divinity through esoteric understanding, which reveals a mythology of various human root races and secret masters. Popularized by Helena Blavatsky, who died four years ago.
- **Catharism**, a form of Gnosticism, or heretical Christian knowledge, which held that God and the Creator were two separate, opposed entities. Today's Catharists invent Gnostic beliefs and impute them to the French communities wiped out by Crusaders and the Inquisition in the 13th and early 14th centuries. The religious texts of the medieval Cathars were systematically destroyed, leaving nothing authentic to quote from.

Though many occultists model their structures on Freemasonry, of the

large number of Masons in Paris, the vast majority belong to conventional and entirely non-mystical orders. These Masons tend to hold secular and republican views.

Edmond Bailly *Occult Bookseller* 45, 1850–1916

This bookseller and publisher, and his shop, the Librairie de l'art indépendant at 11 Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin (9th arrondissement) act as a nexus connecting Paris' art and occult communities. His best-stocked shelves devote themselves to Symbolist literature and ritual magic. A captivating talker, Bailly composes music, espouses theosophy, and took part in the Communard movement in his early twenties. Though his name may lead characters to expect a meeting with an Englishman, he was born Henri-Edmond Limet. His writing on the esoteric power of music might make him a useful expert to consult when the investigators tackle a symphonic or operatic mystery.

As a Patron: When Bailly discovers the group's interest in *The King in Yellow*, he recounts a recent incident in which a cloaked, menacing figure slid into his shop to insist he accept a case of copies of the play on consignment. Bailly refused. Terrifying dreams have plagued him ever since. He agrees to guide the heroes in finding copies of the book, using his mystical insights and personal connections to keep them on the right track.

Jules Doinel

Neo-Catharist Visionary
53, 1842–1903

After making contact with an entity identifying himself as the Aeon Jesus, Jules-Benoît Stanislas Doinel du Val-Michel has taken on the mantle of prophet, tasked with the revival of the Gnostic church in France. Since then he has received regular visits from the spirits of medieval Cathars. Foremost among the roster of shades appearing at his séance sessions is Catharism's top theologian, Guilhabert de Castres (1165–1240).

Doinel's Universal Gnostic Church, founded five years ago, ministers to a small group of loyal seekers, mixing spiritualist practice with heretical Catholic theology. When he meets the characters, he may tell them which of three categories they belong to: pneumatics (spiritually advanced), psychics (could go either way), or hylics (doomed to gross materiality). Styling himself the Gnostic Bishop of Montségur, he adorns his squarish face with spectacles, an backswept haircut, salt and pepper beard, and magnificent black mustache.

1895 finds him on the brink of transformation: he is about to renounce these spiritual beliefs in favor of a conversion to conventional Catholicism. Under the pseudonym Jean Kostka, he will write the book *Lucifer Unmasked*, condemning both Gnosticism and Freemasonry. *Do the investigators play a role in the terrifying events that provoke his renunciation?*

Camille Flammarion

Astronomer and Science Fiction Writer
53, 1842–1925

The polymath Camille Flammarion crosses not only the streams of science and spiritism but throws the arts in for good measure. He believes both in evolution and the transmigration of souls, continually improving as they find new incarnations throughout the universe. His science fiction titles, such as *Lumen* and *Real and Imaginary Worlds*, envision alien life from a naturalist's perspective. Like Albert de Rochas he applies the scientific method to parapsychological research. Since souls go to other planets after death, he reasons, manifestations at séances must emanate from the extra-sensory powers of the mediums who conjure them. Always ready to write a foreword or appear at an occult talk, he might be found in the corners of any event held by any other figure in this chapter.

His snowy mane, incisively cocked eyebrows, and flowing Van Dyke reinforce his grand old man persona.

As a Patron: Flammarion might recruit the heroes to round up copies of the book, drawing on his contacts in the scientific and occult communities. His insistence on explaining Carcosan events through his established pet theories may lead the heroes astray.

Stanislas de Guaita
Crusading Rosicrucian
34, 1861–1897

Equal parts righteous and romantic, the aristocratic Stanislas de Guaita practices ritual magic as an earnest spiritual quest. Seven years he

founded one of Paris' main occult orders, the Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix, with Joséphin Péladan (below), with whom he is now on the outs. He investigated the cult leader Abbé Boullan before his death in 1893. De Guaita accused him of seducing women through magical dominance, and performing reverse exorcisms that infested nuns with demons. In retaliation, the novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans (p. 119), a Boullan devotee, accused de Guaita and Péladan of torturing him with evil spells.

De Guaita feverishly labors on his book *The Key to Black Magic*, containing instructions on the fight against evil sorcerers. It won't be published for another two years, shortly before his premature death.

He also writes verse and may bond with the group's resident poet. He crops his sandy hair close and permits himself the most modest of mustaches.

As a Patron: De Guaita's investigations have led him to *The King in Yellow* and the Carcosan incursion. He may describe it as such or incorrectly understand it as a manifestation of earthly black magic. Needing to concentrate on his own book, he directs the main cast as they take the lead against the pallid king.

Antonio Herrera
Mexican Seer
Age Unknown

An occasional visitor to Paris, the psychic Antonio Herrera stays in the best hotels, where he reluctantly agrees to use his otherworldly talents on behalf of wealthy fellow guests. He can be

spotted by his delicate profile and grand halo of white hair, which everyone compares to that of the classical pianist Paderewski.

Herrera is not who he seems. In truth, he one of many guises adopted by the elusive con artist Colonel Caoutchouc (p. 134).

Moina and Samuel Liddell
"MacGregor" Mathers
Golden Dawn Founders
30, 1865–1928 and 41, 1854–1918

Samuel Mathers, founder of the London-based Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, moved to Paris four years ago with his wife and co-ritualist Moina. He says he acted on instructions from the incognito masters known as the Secret Chiefs to come to the world capital of occultism. Here he pursues his research into ritual magic and the Kabbalah and struggles to establish his authority over other ambitious members of his order, who want to displace him.

English occult visitors often drop in on their villa in the suburb of Auteuil. Aleister Crowley doesn't show up until 1900, but in a game about horrific reality shifts you can certainly find a way to get a 20-year-old Beast-in-Waiting onstage.

Given the reputation of his order, Mathers may strike the characters as a surprisingly gray and retiring presence. The charisma in the family radiates from Moina, who makes feminist art and carries herself like a walking, talking Pre-Raphaelite painting. She spent her early childhood in Paris and speaks the language well.

The Matherses are about to enter their Isis phase, in which they stage ritual homages to the Egyptian goddess decked out in white robes with leopard fur trim. *Are the heroes present for this transformation, and how do their Carcosan investigations trigger it?*

Papus (Gérard Encausse)

Founder of Martinism

30, 1865–1916

Gérard Encausse, who goes by the *nom de occultisme* *Papus*, says that his gypsy blood allowed him to spontaneously initiate as a prophet, tarot reader, and chiromancer. A Martinist, he sticks by Stanislas de Guaita (above) and his *Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix* against that splitter, Josephin Péladan (below). He founded and co-edits a monthly journal, *L'Initiation*, with his protégé and owner of the *Librairie du Merveilleux*, Lucien Chamuel. Though dense with heavy-duty esoteric theorizing, investigators may find this publication useful in tracking the constantly altering alliances and betrayals of the city's occult scene.

Papus wants to unify occultists, always a quixotic goal, through an organization called the *Groupe Indépendant d'Études Ésotériques* (Independent Occult Study Group). It delivers its own variation on the multi-tiered, Masonic-inspired structure of its rivals. Recruits start as *Servants of Work*, graduating through the ranks of *Equerry*, *Knight*, and *Commander*. The group boasts fifty lodges across the world and has spread as far as Argentina.

Though not as wizardly as he will look in later years, Papus still musters a top-notch dark-eyed stare. He received

a conventional medical degree last year.

As a Patron: Papus assembles networks of allies, especially promising young ones, from the arts, humanities, and scientists. He might agree to help them with *The King in Yellow* without quite understanding what he's gotten himself into.

Joséphin Péladan

Imperator and Super-Magician

37, 1858–1918

Diehard Wagner fan Joséphin Péladan spontaneously initiated as a magician during a performance of *Parsifal* at the composer's music festival in Bayreuth, Germany. Not a man to diminish his own importance, he titles himself *Sâr-Assyrian* for "king." He recently left the *Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix*, the Rosicrucian group he founded with Stanislas de Guaita (above), to form the not at all confusingly similar *Mystic Order of the Rose + Cross*. A staunch Christian mystic, he opposes any effort to accommodate non-Western influences into occultism. He views female participation in rites as anti-magical. He stages regular art events featuring Symbolist art, poetry, and music and is a collaborator with Erik Satie (p. 123). Péladan once offered his remote viewing services to the French President. Three years ago, he wrote the popular book *How to Become a Magus*.

In September of 1895, his father, the early homeopath Adrien Péladan, dies of strychnine poisoning after testing a remedy on himself. Joséphin blames the German pharmacist Willmar Schwabe, who shipped his father an incorrectly labeled concentrate of the stuff. *Do the*

investigators discover a less worldly culprit behind this strike at the Sâr?

Charles Richet
Physiologist and Parapsychologist
 45, 1850–1935

A gaunt man with searching eyes, the physiologist Charles Richet studies a range of medical subjects and is destined to win the Nobel Prize for his work on anaphylaxis. His interests range from aviation to theatrical writing. The investigators, however, will care most about his role as a scientific psychic researcher. Last year he coined the term “ectoplasm” to describe the strange material mediums produce during séances. He believes that paranormal powers exist but will all be rationally explained through scientific inquiry, without the need to invoke spirits or an afterlife. In our reality, he falls for, and in at least one case helps to cover up, hoaxes perpetrated by mediums. In a universe pervaded by Carcosa, he might instead fail to see the supernatural causes behind their effects.

Richet dedicates himself to pacifism, eugenics and hardcore racism, especially against blacks. Calibrate the way you deal with these last two according to your group’s desired level of troubling social realism.

Albert de Rochas
Paranormal Investigator
 58, 1837–1914

Trailblazing parapsychologist Albert de Rochas, also a historian, military engineer, and officer of the Legion of Honor, seeks scientific understanding of mysterious phenomena. He probes such matters as telekinesis, spirit

photography, magnetic emanations, past lives, and Odic force. (The latter is an energy force described by the mid-century multidisciplinary scientist Baron Carl von Reichenbach. Named after Odin, it penetrates us, surrounds us, and binds the world together.) Characters may seek him out after reading his 1887 book *Undefined Forces*. With his erect bearing, high forehead, and well-disciplined, upturned mustache, he may strike them as more military than mystical.

As a Patron: When he discovers Carcosan phenomena, de Rochas seeks young, vital, and perhaps unwise assistants willing to do the active legwork in putting a stop to them. He can draw on his army contacts for a limited amount of logistical aid. This may extend to the occasional covert military raid against the lairs of supernatural creatures too tough or numerous for mere art students to handle.

Alexandre Saint-Yves
Synarchist
 53, 1842–1909

Joseph Alexandre Saint-Yves, the Marquis d’Alveydre, invented the term synarchy to refer to the secret rule of mankind by occult masters. He believes that Abraham and the Hindu deity Ram are really the same figure, a primordial lawmaker and father of all peoples. Though the surface world has lost touch with the truth, millions dwell in Agartha, a subterranean realm benevolently overseen by a trinity of rulers: a Brahatmah (God-soul), Mahatma (Great Soul) and Mahanga (Great Path). It relocated underground, far below the plateaus of Tibet, during

the Hindu dark age three thousand years ago, protecting its people and advanced technology from encroaching disaster. He knows this because he communicates with Agartthan officials telepathically.

The Marquis claims the power of astral travel. When characters ask about it, he proves notably short on details.

He writes the popular *Mission* series of books in which various groups are issued instructions for bringing about the synarchy on the surface world: *Mission to the Sovereigns*, *Mission to the Jews*, and so on. When not occupied with synarchy he studies possible commercial applications for seaweed.

He became independently wealthy through marriage and was granted his title 15 years ago by the Republic of San Marino. Describe him as a dour-looking man with a thick, pensive mustache.

Ely Star

Astrologer

48, 1847–1942

If you think an astrologer might have been born with the last name Star, allow me to introduce to you the former Eugène Jacob, an ex-butcher who once worked as a prestidigitator alongside legendary stage magician Robert-Houdin.

Turning from conjuring to the occult, he studied the writings of Éliphas Lévi to create a system of astrology informed by Kabbalism and the tarot. He has now entered the Matherses' Golden Dawn group and by the end of the century will become its high priest.

Léo Taxil

Conspiracy-Promulgating Con Artist **41, 1854–1907**

Setting a pattern unknown to our more innocent age, pundit Léo Taxil (real name Gabriel Jogand-Pagès) masterminds a convoluted series of hoaxes, in which he appears to ricochet between extreme ideologies, selling books and calling attention to himself every step of the way. He started as an anti-clerical rabble-rouser, writing books that mock Biblical inconsistencies or depict Catholic ecclesiastics as enthusiastic participants in Sadean debauchery. In the 1880s he infiltrated occult circles, convincing Jules Doinel (above) and others that he was one of them.

Ten years ago, he staged a public conversion to Catholicism, tarring Freemasonry with similar sensational slanders. Taxil is the one who took Lévi's famous image of Baphomet and forever associated it with Satanism. He described a global conspiracy, the Palladium, led by a Masonic worthy of Charleston, South Carolina named Albert Pike. Three years ago, he published the best-selling *The Devil in the 19th Century*, introducing to the world the reformed Satanist arch-priestess Diana Vaughan. Anecdotes include her encounters with incarnate demons, including a crocodilian specimen that plays the piano. He is now writing her first-person book of prayers and confessions.

Two years from now he will announce a press conference with Vaughan, at which he instead reveals that it was all a hoax. Reverting to his original persona, he says he has been exposing

the stupidity of the Church's fear of Freemasonry.

But that's the historical timeline.
*Might Carcosa's reality contagion
 summon thoughtforms of the demons
 from Taxil's books?*

Oswald Wirth
Cartomancer and Magnetic Healer
 35, 1860–1943

This Swiss tarot expert, Freemason, and Theosophist practices a form of hypnotic healing he calls curative magnetism. Sometimes, when he puts a patient into trance to convince their bodies to repair themselves, the patient rewards him with a prophecy from the other side.

A possible ally to the characters among the occult crowd, Wirth was among the first to look into the activities of the recently deceased cultist and abuser Abbé Boullan.

Wirth serves as a friend, collaborator, and sometime secretary to Stanislas de Guaita (above). Six years ago, they produced a strikingly illustrated cartomantic tarot deck, the Arcanes du Tarot Kabbalistique, the first to overtly incorporate magical symbolism. Taking his friend's side in the Rosicrucian schism, he speaks of Péladan (above) with undisguised contempt.

The GM decides whether Wirth's healing powers actually work. If so, impose some cost, risk, or limit on their ability to substitute for First Aid successes in removing Injury cards.

Wirth's forked beard and shaved temples lend him a severe intensity.

Police and Thieves

Weird adventures in Paris will surely bring the art students into contact, likely unwanted, with both law enforcers and law breakers.

Julien Alerte
25, Tracer of Lost Persons

Julien Alerte came to Paris as a medical student in 1892, arriving from his home in the Caribbean island of Martinique. Martiniquean med students are famed in Paris as sartorially resplendent fixtures of its night life. Celebrated for their impeccable fashion, they are swarmed by young women whenever they arrive at a ball or dance hall. Julien still devotes his evenings to the social whirl but has set aside his studies for a vocation better suited to his keen deductive skills and aptitude for research. After a brief but sterling apprenticeship, he recently took over the Paris branch office of Keen and Company. This American detective firm, headed by the kindly, brilliant New Yorker Westrel Keen, specializes in finding missing persons.

Until now, Julien's investigations have tended toward the romantic. Clients hire him to find lost loves. His successes bring about happy engagements.

The PCs' arrival in his life may lead him to discover the menace of Carcosa.

When not out dancing or getting fitted for another splendid suit by his favorite tailor, Julien cultivates his interest in philosophy and political science.

Julien goes on to greater fame a generation from now—in one of the game's timelines, at least. In 1919, as covered in *Aftermath*, he becomes a key player in the formation of the

independent African-American nation of Suanee.

Alphonse Bertillon

Forensics and Eugenics Trailblazer
42, 1853–1914

Seven years ago, forensic criminology pioneer Alphonse Bertillon invented the police mug shot as we know it today, formalizing procedures for photographing accused criminals.

He promotes a system he calls bertillonage, which claims to predict criminality by noting the presence of certain facial and bodily traits. He first conceived it as a way of vetting migrants. His system's prejudices against so-called "savage races" mark it as a key element of the eugenics movement, now its infancy.

The PCs can find him measuring inmates at La Santé Prison. They may notice his unpopularity with jailers and inmates alike. Bertillon does not allow this to bother him.

Expelled from school as a young man, he is a self-trained scientist who largely invented his own field. As rigid in his presentation as his goatee is sharply pointed, he sells the credibility of his procedures with an air of unwavering confidence.

Bertillon pioneers not only forensics but also the tradition of condemning suspects with faked or bogus science. He soon becomes embroiled in the Dreyfus affair, falsely implicating the accused with handwriting analysis expertise he in no way possesses.

Right before his death he publishes a paper that becomes the basis for fingerprint analysis, which will later be exposed as rife with faulty and forged data.

Colonel Caoutchouc

Man of Means

Age unknown

The greatest quarry of the French police, sought by law enforcement from London to Johannesburg, is a wily master of disguise known here as Colonel Caoutchouc. English speakers may know him as Colonel Cuthbert Clay. Accompanied by a female accomplice whose impersonation skills rival his own, he scams his way through the Continent's over-moneyed class, targeting those who offend his socialist ideals. Aliases include Reverend Richard Peplow Brabazon, the Honourable David Granton, Count von Lebenstein, Professor Schleiermacher, and Dr. Quackenboss. Often he will grift the same deserving victim many times over, using a different identity each time. His most famous mark is the diamond magnate Sir Charles Vandrift, whose greed and fulminating self-righteousness suck him in every time.

This fictional character stars in the highly recommended 1897 novel *An African Millionaire: Episodes in the Life of the Illustrious Colonel Clay*, by Grant Allen.

As a Patron: Clay's interest in masks leads him to the unwelcome discovery of *The King in Yellow*. Unearthly matters lie beyond his expertise, so when he discovers a group of art students willing to take on the burden, he tricks them into volunteering, convinces them to spearhead the fight. To their effort he lends cash liberated from Charles Vandrift, and every so often a surprise rescue carried out in one of his many guises. Will he reveal that he is really an Englishman named Paul Finglemore? Probably not.

Georges Grison***Police Reporter*****54, 1841–1928**

Paris' most famous police reporter endlessly combs the city for scoops, pistol stuffed in his gray overcoat. Never seen in public without his top hat and white scarf, he strikes an incongruous figure among the demimonde's pickpockets and street prostitutes. They speak to him despite the palpable contempt for the criminal poor he expresses in his articles, which appear in *Le Figaro*. Grison delights in any opportunity to show up the police during a high-profile investigation. A character with Demimonde knows this and can perhaps play him and the police off of one another.

As a Patron: Grison first apprehends the book's terrible influence when the cases he covers reveal a citywide rise of frenzied violence. He finds a copy of it, missed by the police, near a crime scene, but has the self-preserving instinct not to look inside. Unwilling to do the most dangerous investigative work himself, he feeds missions to the main cast, provided they reward him with whatever details of each case can safely be printed in the respectable pages of *Le Figaro*.

As an Antagonist: Grison not only found the book at a crime scene but read it. Where he used to cover crimes, now he commits them, bent on exterminating the city's criminal vermin.

Maric-François Goron***Private Eye and Author*****48, 1847–1933**

After an illustrious career, the former head of the Sûreté has retired

to establish a private detective agency and write his memoirs. A restless and energetic figure, he talks in a spray of rapid-fire syllables, always ready with an anecdote from his policing days. Four years back, he worked the notorious 1889 Gouffé case, in which a con man murdered a bailiff and left his corpse to be found in a blood-soaked trunk. A debunked theory held that the killer commanded the loyalty of his mistress by subjecting her to hypnosis.

Two years prior, as deputy chief, Goron helped investigate the murder of celebrated courtesan Régine de Montille. Scandal erupted around him when it was revealed that he and other top officers commissioned cardholders and books bound in the skin of the alleged perpetrator.

Should they join him for dinner, the PCs see that Goron voraciously gulps his food. When not eating, he complains about stomach problems, surely the result of his hurried eating habits.

As a Patron: Goron may enlist the player characters into one of his investigations, especially when it goes beyond the bounds of his previous experience into a strange realm these odd American art students seem to understand.

Along with his four-volume autobiography, a work in progress he will publish a couple of years from now, Goron later writes pulpy detective fiction. *Do his turn-of-the-century tales of an evil alchemist master criminal equipped with a flying machine owe inspiration to his activities with the player characters?*

One must assume they have nothing to do with his ground-breaking

1913 work of dog detective tales, *The Memoirs of Poum, Police Dog*.

Louis Lépine
Prefect of Police
49, 1846–1933

Bald and diminutive, with an interrogator's discomfiting stare, police chief Louis Lépine bears the nickname Little Man with the Big Stick as if it was intended as a compliment. He earned his post after the failure of his predecessor to quell the student riots that rocked the city a few years ago. Conservative forces applaud his tight grip on the police baton; the left predicts that he will soon overreact to the next trivial incident and plunge the city into chaos.

Lépine does his best to blur the line between soldiers and police, so that cops will receive the same deference due to military officers. His improved training for Paris policemen includes compulsory military training. In keeping with this effort, he has rooted out corrupt and lazy policemen. Many of the men he has cashiered pray for his comeuppance, so things can go back to normal and they can get their jobs back.

As part of his modernization campaign, investigating officers are now required to use modern forensic techniques, including the fingerprint. He is also responsible for the new bicycle units patrolling the Paris streets.

His general anti-shenanigans stance makes him an unlikely believer in the supernatural. The contacts the art students can raise with Cop Talk undoubtedly quail at the thought of crossing the fearsome prefect.

Luigi Parmeggiani
Anarchist Art Forger
35, 1860–1945

Parisians remember the erudite Luigi Giovanni Francesco Parmeggiani as host of an informal anarchist salon held at his former home in the 11th arrondissement. There he and his confederates, mostly fellow Italians, developed the theory that, since property is theft, stealing from or swindling the rich must therefore be the highest form of anti-capitalism. Along with partner in crime Vittorio Pini, he put this into action as leader of a criminal gang variously known as L'Anomito or L'Anonymat or L'Initiative Libre or Les Intransigeant or Le Groupe des Introuvables. When crime becomes poetry, there's no such thing as having too many names for your gang.

Their career of theft, propaganda, and terrorism hit a wall six years ago, when Parmeggiani and Pini traveled to Mirandola, Italy, stabbing a Socialist member of parliament who accused them of being police provocateurs. Pini fled to Paris, was caught, and shipped to Devil's Island.

Parmeggiani escaped to England, adopting the persona of womanizing antiquarian Louis Marcy. He may return from time to time in disguise to do business at his Paris gallery, the Maison Marcy. Whether in London or Paris, he specializes in selling fake silver, books, paintings, and arms and armor to museums and wealthy individuals, including the American banker John Pierpont Morgan. The PCs, whose families might know Morgan or another swindling victim,

could find themselves investigating Parmeggiani's smuggling ring at their behest.

Pyotr Rachkovsky
Russian spymaster
 42, 1853–1910

Pyotr Rachkovsky founded the Okhrana, the Czar's foreign secret service. He runs the organization not from St. Petersburg, but from two modest offices in the Russian Imperial Consulate at 97 Rue de Grenelle in the 7th arrondissement. This unusual arrangement affords him and his small staff access to the resources and files of the Sûreté Générale, which has entered into a not especially secret cooperation agreement with them. Rachkovsky spies on, infiltrates, provokes, and arranges for the arrest of revolutionaries and anarchists hoping to overthrow the Czar. He may have been an earnest revolutionary before he transformed himself into their primary hunter. Or maybe it was a ruse all along. With Rachkovsky, one can never tell.

Even today he takes a surprisingly personal role in Okhrana operations. He can authorize summary executions if they take place in Russia, but must proceed with care for niceties in France.

A bushy mustache enlivens his small,

bland face. When the investigators meet him they may sense the quick-turning mind behind his penetrating gaze. Should he take a shine to them, they may glimpse the delight he takes in executing his various schemes.

A few years from now, Rachkovsky commissions a text called *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This anti-Semitic hoax tract ripples through history, gaining an eradicable hold on conspiratorial minds that continues to this day. *Did Rachkovsky learn to how to imbue the written word with thought-degrading properties by studying The King in Yellow?*

As a Patron: Rachkovsky's Okhrana hires French, German, and English private detectives to bolster its intelligence-gathering operations. When probing a spreading occult conspiracy, he might even employ American art students, perhaps as unknowing operatives dealt with through cut-outs.

He pays journalists to write articles favorable to the regime in the French press, and so may take a special interest in your Belle-Letttrist character.

Should the group ally with Rachkovsky in this sequence, the Loyalist forces in *The Wars* include Russians along with the French.

THE KING, HIS PLAN, AND HIS MINIONS

As you build your series, you may find reason to nail down exactly who our eponymous villain is, and why he spreads incoherence and destruction in our world.

Three of the four Chambers stories that refer to the King in Yellow treat him and the play named after him as a background element, either a symptom of a rising irrationality infecting ordinary life, or as the cause of it. The imaginative hold these ideas continue to exert on the horror genre is rooted in their very indeterminacy. The play's influence operates at the boundaries of plot logic, allowing us to project more onto it than Chambers specifies.

Rather than bolt layers of logic onto something that ought to be hazy, this game presents a number of options to toy with. You might watch as your extended narrative moves toward a definitive explanation for Yellow Sign phenomena. Or you could settle on one overarching motivation behind it all, then reveal the apparent sense it makes as just another layer of its underlying cosmic joke.

Today most horror fans come to the Yellow King stories through their interest in writer H. P. Lovecraft (1890–1937). Lovecraft celebrated them in an essay, “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” and made reference to them in his own stories, just as Chambers did with Ambrose Bierce. Lovecraft's tales

elaborated the idea of the book that drives its readers insane with his creation the *Necronomicon*, and took inspiration from Chambers' technique of instilling terror through oblique references that suggested more than they explained. The writer, editor, and publisher August Derleth (1909–1971), as part of his effort to systematize HPL's often contradictory continuity, also fleshed out Chambers' mythology and merged it with the Cthulhu myths.

This game strips away the Cthulhu elements to build its own mythology atop Chambers' work, as also seen in my short story collection *New Tales of the Yellow Sign*. It sets aside Derleth's version of the Yellow King as a manifestation of a malign grub-like god called Hastur.

Of course, if you want all of that stuff back in, you already know enough about it to do that on your own.

The Unreliable Narrations of Robert Chambers

Chambers' stories are told by first-person narrators who have already gone mad due to exposure from the book or may get their information from others who have. In a couple of cases brief passages from the play appear as epigrams to the stories, granting them at least a semblance of outside reality

The Testing of Cassilda



within the fiction. These reveal *The King in Yellow* as a drama in verse.

The Chambers short story anthology of the same name uses the following excerpt as its overall epigram:

*Along the shore the cloud waves
break,
The twin suns sink beneath the lake,
The shadows lengthen
In Carcosa.
Strange is the night where black
stars rise,
And strange moons circle through
the skies
But stranger still is Lost Carcosa.
Songs that the Hyades shall sing,
Where flap the tatters of the King,
Must die unheard in
Dim Carcosa.
Song of my soul, my voice is dead;
Die thou, unsung, as tears unshed
Shall dry and die in
Lost Carcosa.*

This is labeled as Cassilda's Song, from Act 1, Scene 2 of the play.

Dialogue from the play appears as epigram to the story "The Mask":

CAMILLA: *You, sir, should unmask.*

STRANGER: *Indeed?*

CASSILDA: *Indeed it's time. We all have laid aside disguise but you.*

STRANGER: *I wear no mask.*

CAMILLA: *(Terrified, aside to Cassilda.) No mask? No mask!*

Hildred Castaigne, narrator of "The Repairer of Reputations," set in a then-futuristic, now alternate reality, 1920s New York, describes his experience reading the play. This passage gives us the most detailed look at the book and the beings who make up its cast of characters:

I had bought and read for the first

time, The King in Yellow. I remember after finishing the first act that it occurred to me that I had better stop. I started up and flung the book into the fireplace; the volume struck the barred grate and fell open on the hearth in the firelight. If I had not caught a glimpse of the opening words in the second act I should never have finished it, but as I stooped to pick it up, my eyes became riveted to the open page, and with a cry of terror, or perhaps it was of joy so poignant that I suffered in every nerve, I snatched the thing out of the coals and crept shaking to my bedroom, where I read it and reread it, and wept and laughed and trembled with a horror which at times assails me yet. This is the thing that troubles me, for I cannot forget Carcosa where black stars hang in the heavens; where the shadows of men's thoughts lengthen in the afternoon, when the twin suns sink into the lake of Hali; and my mind will bear forever the memory of the Pallid Mask. I pray God will curse the writer, as the writer has cursed the world with this beautiful, stupendous creation, terrible in its simplicity, irresistible in its truth—a world which now trembles before the King in Yellow. When the French Government seized the translated copies which had just arrived in Paris, London, of course, became eager to read it. It is well known how the book spread like an infectious disease, from city to city, from continent to continent, barred out here, confiscated there, denounced by Press and pulpit, censured even by the most advanced of literary anarchists. No definite principles had been violated in those wicked pages, no

doctrine promulgated, no convictions outraged. It could not be judged by any known standard, yet, although it was acknowledged that the supreme note of art had been struck in The King in Yellow, all felt that human nature could not bear the strain, nor thrive on words in which the essence of purest poison lurked. The very banality and innocence of the first act only allowed the blow to fall afterward with more awful effect.

Later Castaigne describes a meeting with a sinister man, Mr. Wilde, who has also read the book and urges Hildred to accept his Carcosan birthright and become America's Emperor. He sums up Wilde's description of the people and places of the play:

He mentioned the establishment of the Dynasty in Carcosa, the lakes which connected Hastur, Aldebaran and the mystery of the Hyades. He spoke of Cassilda and Camilla, and sounded the cloudy depths of Demhe, and the Lake of Hali. "The scoloped tatters of the King in Yellow must hide Yhtill forever," he muttered, but I do not believe Vance heard him. Then by degrees he led Vance along the ramifications of the Imperial family, to Uoht and Thale, from Naotalba and Phantom of Truth, to Aldones, and then tossing aside his manuscript and notes, he began the wonderful story of the Last King.

The story also mentions the Yellow Sign, an emblem or sigil marking the loyalty of an army of insurgents ready to overthrow the government and install Castaigne as king.

Castaigne, it must be said, has suffered a head injury after falling from his

horse, leaving us to wonder how much of his narrative to credit. That is, if you follow the most evident reading of that enigmatic story and the multiple layers of cognitive dissonance it causes the modern reader. We'll tackle these questions in greater depth in *Aftermath*, which takes place in an alternate timeline where Castaigne didn't go mad and die in an asylum, but instead became Emperor of America.

In "The Mask," about dread events arising from the discovery of a chemical that appears to ossify the living, the narrator, an American in Paris in let's say 1895, reads the play despite his conscious effort never to do so. The book sends him into a fever, after which he summarizes its details:

I thought, too, of the King in Yellow wrapped in the fantastic colours of his tattered mantle, and that bitter cry of Cassilda, "Not upon us, oh King, not upon us!" Feverishly I struggled to put it from me, but I saw the lake of Hali, thin and blank, without a ripple or wind to stir it, and I saw the towers of Carcosa behind the moon. Aldebaran, the Hyades, Alar, Hastur, glided through the cloud-rifts which fluttered and flapped as they passed like the scoloped tatters of the King in Yellow.

Although this passage too could be used to call into question the narrator's reliability, the play takes no further role in a tale of weird science gone awry.

The narrator of "In the Court of the Dragon," who has read the play, sees a dread figure emerge from behind the organ at the Church of St. Barnabé (p. 102) on Paris' Rue St. Honoré. He leaves the church, escaping pursuit from

this menacing being—only to wake up in his pew. Roused from his nightmare, he exits the church once again, to be transported to Carcosa, and his destruction, by the King himself:

I saw the black stars hanging in the heavens: and the wet winds from the lake of Hali chilled my face. And now, far away, over leagues of tossing cloud-waves, I saw the moon dripping with spray; and beyond, the towers of Carcosa rose behind the moon. Death and the awful abode of lost souls, whither my weakness long ago had sent him, had changed him for every other eye but mine. And now I heard his voice, rising, swelling, thundering through the flaring light, and as I fell, the radiance increasing, increasing, poured over me in waves of flame.

Then I sank into the depths, and I heard the King in Yellow whispering to my soul: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

In "The Yellow Sign," set in New York, an artist named Scott, presumably the Jack Scott who appears as a secondary character in "The Mask," discovers to his dismay that a copy of the play, bound in serpent skin, has appeared in his library. He has sworn never to read the book, because of what happened to "young Castaigne." Like the protagonist of "The Mask," the next thing Scott knows, he and his lover Tessie have both read the book and are discussing its contents:

We talked on, unmindful of the gathering shadows, and she was begging me to throw away the clasp of black onyx quaintly inlaid with what we now knew to be the Yellow Sign. I never shall know why I refused, though even at this hour, here in my bedroom

as I write this confession, I should be glad to know what it was that prevented me from tearing the Yellow Sign from my breast and casting it into the fire. I am sure I wished to do so, and yet Tessie pleaded with me in vain. Night fell and the hours dragged on, but still we murmured to each other of the King and the Pallid Mask, and midnight sounded from the misty spires in the fog-wrapped city. We spoke of Hastur and of Casilda, while outside the fog rolled against the blank window-panes as the cloud waves roll and break on the shores of Hali. [...] We had understood the mystery of the Hyades and the Phantom of Truth was laid.

Shortly thereafter, the animated corpse of a dead watchman attacks, causing the bolt securing door to corrode into nothingness. It kills Tessie and mortally wounds Scott, giving him only enough time to write his terrible confession.

Chambers never tells us that the King in Yellow is named Hastur. References to Hastur appear to be to a star in the sky above Carcosa—a black star, presumably. Castaigne calls himself a "son of Hastur" but this can easily be read as a metaphorical reference to his alleged Carcosan bloodline—like a Canadian game designer referring to himself as a Son of the Silver Birch.

Your Unreliable Universe

In a one-shot game or brief cycle of episodes, you probably don't need to decide anything about Carcosa's underlying reality.

For a series with a grander sweep, you may want to nail down exactly what is going on. The equivocal nature

of Chambers' source material allows you to choose between a range of explanations. Suggestions include:

- ☞ Carcosa is a real, alien planet and the King a literal entity who dwells there. He has found a way to open a portal from his world to ours, which he does in 1895.
 - He (or one of his Carcosan allies) writes the play and impels humans to distribute it.
 - A sensitive poet detects this stirring and writes a play about it.
 - Which surprises the King, who views it as beneficial.
 - Which angers the King, who does not want his invasion plans signaled.
 - The most prominent other members of the King's court are his daughters, Camilla and Cassilda.
 - Both of whom aid their father's invasion.
 - Because they are loyal daughters.
 - Because one or both plan to wrest his empire from him for themselves after he conquers it.
 - Both of whom compete with him to take over the world.
 - At least one of which sides with humanity and works to thwart him because:
 - His victory would bring doom to Carcosa as well as Earth.
 - She has fallen in love with one of the PCs and all of their later incarnations or echoes.
 - Her exposure to our world has infected her with an empathy the rest of her family will always lack.

- The King is:
 - As he claims, a living god.
 - A vastly powerful sorcerer.
 - A mortal in control of an alien reality-bending apparatus, the effects of which appear supernatural.

☞ As above, but Carcosa is separated from our world not only in space, but through eons of time.

☞ As above, but Carcosa is an ancient civilization of our own world, now forgotten to history. As it dies, the King in Yellow schemes to bring his court forward to our time, conquering us in the process.

☞ Carcosa exists as a fantasy spawned in the mind of a mad dreamer whose imaginings increasingly take on a tangible, but supernatural reality.

- He does this consciously.
- He thinks he is discovering a real world when really he is creating it.
 - He wrote the play.
 - His visions have become so real that others are picking up on them, allowing someone else to write the play.
 - He is:
 - One of the PCs.
 - An antagonist the PCs must overcome.
 - An unwitting destroyer of reality who has no idea what he's doing.
 - Also, he is a she. Or a them.
 - This happens during:
 - The Belle Époque and radiates chronologically through time.
 - Our 2017 and radiates backwards through time.

☞ The play's contents travel like a meme; the more people

who read about it...

- The easier it becomes for Carcosans to travel to Earth.
 - The easier it becomes for supernatural beings to manifest and use powers here.
 - The more reality shifts, spawning alternate timelines and improbable futures.
- ☞ The book exists as an omen of upcoming events but does not create or enable them, except to foster a connection between its readers and an entity who may or may not be the Yellow King.
- ☞ The book exists as the mere product of a disturbed mind. Some people who read it go on to imagine dreadful supernatural events, sometimes writing feverish accounts of otherworldly horror before committing suicide or entering treatment for severe hallucinatory psychosis. Everything the PCs undergo was imagined:
- By them, after they read the play.
 - About them, by someone else who read the play. They aren't even real.
 - Your players will probably pelt objects at you, and rightfully so, if you make either of these disappointing answers, which undercut everything you encouraged them to creatively and emotionally invest in, the ultimate truth. But as a false theory they fear might be true before finding proof to the contrary, it could merit brief exploration. The PCs might even float this idea themselves at some point.

By default, the game assumes you're using the first, and simplest, backstory

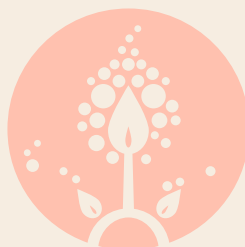
for the King in Yellow and his realm of Carcosa. This may require the occasional mental adjustment as you read or play.

Using Theories of Carcosa In Play

Starting in *Paris* and over the course of your series, various GMCs, perhaps including the King himself, might offer various explanations of the book and its accompanying outbreak of eerie happenings. You might decide in advance that a certain one of the above suggestions is the true one or keep it an open question until you absolutely have to decide one way or the other. Given that the Carcosa effect causes reality to shift, the initial truth might mutate over time.

You may find that you never need to explain anything—that the contradictory possibilities are more fun than a neat tying up of loose ends.

However, if you're circling back to do a Climax that connects all four sequences, the final truth probably plays into that in some way. We'll get to that in *This Is Normal Now*.



H A L Y



FOES

This collection of foe entries should not be read as meaning that all of these adversaries and beasts simultaneously prowl the streets of Paris or its surrounding countryside en masse. Set aside conceptions of a fantasy setting defined by a large, hidden population of monsters. Carcosan influence has only now started to turn the world strange. The Walking Corpse or Patchwork the players initially meet might be the first one to ever exist. The handful of supernatural beings predating the incursion from Hali, like vampires, laid low and kept their numbers small.

The player characters are the only people who encounter monsters on a regular basis, and that's because they're going out looking for them.

Foe Format

Foes are described using the following format:

Name of Foe: Descriptive text.

Numbers: How many individuals this foe entry represents. A foe might be a singular entity, or a group of combatants. In the latter case, this may vary according to the number of player characters present. This changes the way you narrate the fight but requires no further numerical change to any of the foe's numbers.

Difficulty: Name of Relative Challenge, followed by the Difficulty numbers for the Escape, Other, and Kill goals.

Adapt to Other Sequences: Each sequence provides slightly different baseline numbers for foe Difficulties. Some foes may vary from the baseline; this entry appears only when that is the case. It shows you how to adjust Difficulties when you bring a foe from the sequence it is tuned for to another sequence. When adapting these numbers, find the baseline numbers by looking up the foe's Relative Challenge on the Relative Challenge table for the sequence you're adapting the foe to. Then adjust as the entry indicates.

You want to have riot dogs from Aftermath fall through a reality hole onto the banks of the Seine. They are Tough but Outmatched.

In Paris, Tough but Outmatched Foes are rated as Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4.

The Adapt to Other Sequences entry for riot dogs tells you to Drop Kill by 1. When you drop Kill by 1, that gives you final ratings of: Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3.

Difficulty Adjustments: Conditions under which a bonus or penalty applies to the above Difficulties. A foe might be, for example, harder to fight in the dark,

or easier to defeat when characters have burned its copy of *The King in Yellow* or are choosing the Drive Away objective.

Toll: Number of points a character who made the Fighting test must spend to avoid taking a Minor Injury. Points may be spent from any combination of Athletics, Fighting, and Health.

Tags: These divide foes into categories which may interact with certain card texts from other sequences, if you use these creatures there. In *Paris*, card texts may refer to supernatural or human foes, both of which are intuitive enough not to require mention. Tags found below are:

- **Alt**, a supernatural being who used to be human.

- **Animal**, a natural creature of our world.
- **Carcosan**, a sapient humanoid from the alien realm inhabited by the King in Yellow.
- **Construct**, an animate, non-biological object that may act or even think like an animal or person.
- **Human** means what you think it does.
- **Invasive**, a creature native to Carcosa which is non-sapient, non-humanoid, or both.
- **Mutant**, a supernatural creature that used to be an animal.

Injuries, Minor and Major: Name of Minor Injury card/Name of Major Injury card

Foe Master Table

Foe	Difficulty	Minor Injury	Major Injury
Ankou	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4	Choked	Throttled
Brute	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5	Cudgel Blow	A Thorough Thrashing
Cannibal, Provincial	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5	Broken Bone	Knockout Dart
Carcosan Assassin	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6	Stab Wound	Slashed Throat
Civilian with a Gun	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3	Not a Significant Bullet	Shot
Civilian with a Knife	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3	Laceration	Flesh Wound
Dame Blanche	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6	Stolen Years	Stolen Decades
Dogs	Escape 1, Other 3, Kill 4	Atavistic Terror of an Animal Attack	Bitten

Foe	Difficulty	Minor Injury	Major Injury
Egregore (Insubstantial)	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6	Influence	Violent Impulse
Egregore (Physical)	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6	Choked	Throttled
Gargoyles, Solitary	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5	Gargoyle Strike	Crushing Gargoyle Strike
Gargoyles, Pack	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6	Gargoyle Strike	Crushing Gargoyle Strike
Garguille	Escape 3, Other 6, Kill 7	Dragon Claw	Dragon Bite
Gendarmes	Escape 2, Other 4, Kill 6	Blow to the Head	Ringling Cranium
Ghost, Vengeful	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5	“But This is Wondrous Strange!”	Soul Strike
Hoodlums	Escape 1, Other 3, Kill 4	You Should See the Other Fellow	Concussed
Horla	Escape 3, Other 6, Kill 7	Steam-Drill Heart	Apoplexy
King in Yellow (Corpse Manifestation)	Escape 4, Other 4, Kill 6	Soul Swipe	Yellow Doom
King in Yellow (Direct Manifestation)	Escape 5, Other 8, Kill 12	The Final Pallor	He Ripped Out Your Heart, Showed It to You, Then Stuffed It Back In
Korrigan (Psychic Attack)	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5	Enthralled	Alien Passion
Korrigan (Physical Attack)	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5	Carcosan Dagger	Carcosan Rapier
Macabre Experimenter	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4	Muzzy Headed	Heavily Sedated
Matagot	Escape 1, Other 3, Kill 4	Scratched Psyche	Poisoned Psyche
Dwellers in Hali	Escape 4, Other 7, Kill 8	Clawed	Eviscerated
Mesmerist, Sinister	Escape 3, Other 5, Kill 6	Brain Fever	Shown Your Own Horrific Death



Foe	Difficulty	Minor Injury	Major Injury
Nain	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6	Head Butt	Curb Stomped
Night Washers	Escape 2, Other 4, Kill 6	Cough, Choke, Sputter	Lungful of Water
Night Watch	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4	Cracked Skull	Curb Stomped
Operatives	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5	Cane Blow	Sword Cane Stab
Orderlies (Force)	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4	Strong Armed	Restrained
Orderlies (Sedation)	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4	Muzzy Headed	Sedated
Patchwork	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6	Picked Up and Thrown Hard	Monstrous Battering
Peasants, Scythe-Wielding	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3	Impressive Yet Superficial Cut	Arterial Spray
Pétroleuses	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5	Singed	Ghost Fire
Rakes	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5	Thrashed	Rapier Wound
Soul Moths	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3	Fed Upon	Thought Drain
Spiders of Carcosa	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3	The Shudders	Sawed Flesh
Statue (Animated)	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6	Fearsome Gut Punch	Broken Jaw
Students	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3	Roughed Up	Sucker Punched
Vampires, Fledgling	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4	Enrapturing Bite	Vampiric Death Strike
Vampire, Solitary	Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6	Throat Punctures	Intoxicating Bite
Vampire, Legendary	Escape 4, Other 7, Kill 8	Scratched	Throat Punctures
Viper Swarm	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3	Snakes, Our Oldest Fear	Venomous Fangs
Walking Corpse	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4	Undead Thrashing	Monstrous Mauling
Yeth-Hound	Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3	Yeth Bite	Yeth Mauling

Ankou

Breton folklore describes the Ankou, a skeletal female equivalent of the Grim Reaper who trundles through villages on a creaking cart, seeking the souls of those soon to die. A recent evolution of the tradition has her arriving by train, giving off an eerie wail like the squeal of a locomotive's wheels.

The Carcosan entity Bretons might identify as an Ankou is a spirit that sustains itself on the souls of the recently dead. It appears as a skeleton clad in ragged women's attire and is visible only to those about to die. In the case of PCs, that means anyone 1 Injury shy of a Final card.

The sight of an Ankou requires a **Difficulty 4** Composure tests to avoid Shock—**Minor**: Rattled; **Major**: Questioning Your Senses.

Ankou can command the loved ones of the dying to perform simple actions. These may have sinister results but must seem outwardly ordinary. A victim might absently toss a cigarette into bedsheets at a hospital but wouldn't set the building alight with a burning torch. Player characters are immune to this effect.

An Ankou can only physically strike at someone who can see it, and vice versa.

When it actively connives in the demises of its victims, the Ankou then goes on to target someone else somehow connected to the last target.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4)

Difficulty Adjustments: +2 for each character who can see it but does not join the fight

Toll: 0

Tags: Carcosan

Injuries, Minor and Major: Choked/Throttled

Brute

A meek, physically unprepossessing aesthete, academic, or scientist might, after exposure to *The King in Yellow*, endure periodic transformations into a brute. Muscles ripple to life across his body. His skull thickens and widens. His hair lengthens and coarsens, sprouting from his cheeks, ears, and neck. The meek sufferer's voice drops an octave, discarding perfect elocution for the patois of the Parisian gutters.

Along with the alterations to his frame and appearance, the brute behaves in a violent and uninhibited manner, indulging all the secret desires and aggressions he has long suppressed. The changes come at dusk; the brute reverts to true form either at dawn or when he falls asleep, whichever happens first. The man behind the brute may clearly recall his nocturnal depredations, understand them as fuzzy dreams, or experience complete amnesia.

Though the brute believes himself to be cracking skulls and wreaking havoc only in furtherance of his own appetites, his actions may unconsciously aid other Carcosan meddlers in Parisian affairs.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if at least one of the combatants has figured out who the brute really is

Toll: 1

Tags: Alt

Injuries, Minor and Major: Cudgel Blow/A Thorough Thrashing

Cannibal, Provincial

During the hard times of the Franco-Prussian war, some starved peasants kept themselves alive by dragging corpses home from the battlefield. The resulting *humain bourguignon* left some with a taste for this most forbidden of delicacies. Under the Yellow Sign, the countryside's covert cannibal communities may feel emboldened to hunt less discreetly.

Numbers: Number of PCs, plus 3

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if characters have eaten recently and are fragrant with garlic, or have been marinating in wine

Toll: 1

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Broken Bone/Knockout Dart

Carcosan Assassin

Clad in a hooded cloak and armed with a sickle, this mute humanoid slayer has leapt between worlds to protect the play from those who try to stop its propagation.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 for each past encounter between this Carcosan assassin and the PCs

Toll: 1

Tags: Carcosan

Injuries, Minor and Major: Stab Wound/Slashed Throat

Civilian with a Gun

Use this foe profile when the seemingly innocuous witness a cast

member is interviewing suddenly draws a pistol from the desk drawer and fires it. The gun-wielding civilian probably won't try this when facing more than two opponents, as the prospect of being eventually overwhelmed, disarmed, and arrested becomes a certainty.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 for each PC present after the first (penalties for fighting at less than full strength do not apply)

Toll: 0

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Not a Significant Bullet/Shot

Civilian with a Knife

As above, but less bang bang, more stab stab.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if character is not surprised by the attack; -1 for each PC present after the first (penalties for fighting at less than full strength do not apply)

Toll: 0

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Laceration/Flesh Wound

Dame Blanche

Tales from Normandy and the Pyrenees tell of the dames blanche (white women), ghostly faerie women who lurk in narrow places, ready to accost travelers. In the stories they demand a favor or require a dance before allowing the terrified human to

go on their way.

Carcosan energy has turned this story into reality. Young women who die near the Seine, particularly if they drown, may return in tangible spirit form. They look pale and faded, yet at the same time more enthrallingly lovely than in life. The dames blanche seek out warm, breathing people to love, picking the type and gender they favored in life. Attracted by the distant music of dance halls and night spots, they mingle among the party-going throng in search of vital, suggestible celebrants incautious enough to ignore their eerie qualities. They seek only respite from the loneliness of the grave, but their touch ages the objects of their longing. A kiss steals a month; an embrace takes a year; a night of love can cost decades.

To get a dame blanche to return forever to the river, one must convince her that she is not who she thinks she is, but a copy of a person who has died. That means identifying the person whose identity she echoes and learning the secret story behind her death.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if you danced with her; +2 if you kissed her; +4 if you spent the night; -1 if you know who she was; -1 if you can recount a key anecdote of her life to her

Toll: 1

Tags: Alt

Injuries, Minor and Major: Stolen Years/Stolen Decades

Dogs

Use this foe profile either for trained guard dogs or fierce feral dogs willing to

attack humans.

Numbers: Two to three times the number of PCs

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 1, Other 3, Kill 4)

Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop Escape by 1; increase Kill by 1

Difficulty Adjustments: -2 on a Natural History Push

Toll: 0

Tags: Animal

Injuries, Minor and Major: The Atavistic Terror of an Animal Attack/Bitten

Dwellers in Hali

These clawed, fish-headed denizens of Lake Hali prefer to dwell peaceably in the underwater grottoes hidden by its apparently shallow waters. Under the influence of the Yellow King, they become ruthless marauders, intent on the evisceration of his foes.

Numbers: Same size as party

Difficulty: Overwhelming (Escape 4, Other 7, Kill 8)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 on Carcosa; +1 if in sight of Lake Hali

Toll: 3

Tags: Carcosan

Injuries, Minor and Major: Clawed/Eviscerated

Egregore

Investigators with the Occultism ability know the concept of the egregore. Believers describe these entities as discarnate thoughtforms capable of influencing the masses. Some describe them as the great forces that move human history. While certain ritual magicians seek them out as sources of arcane insight, Christian

occultists like the Martinists warn that they are really a form of demon.

As with so many other occult beliefs, the opening of the gates to Carcosa has granted substance to the imaginary. The egregore the PCs might encounter is the shade of a dead Carcosan noble, held together by spite and glee in the suffering of others. Translucent and insubstantial, it acts as a spirit guide to questing occultists. It uses its ghostly powers to grant would-be magicians an entirely illusory impression of spiritual progress. Sometimes the deluded protégé's hallucinated experiences convince them that they can manipulate external events through magic.

In return for these gifts, the egregore requires the protégé to commit acts of calculated cruelty. Seemingly trivial at first, the entity steadily escalates them to encompass sabotage, assault, kidnapping, and murder. Egregores gain a particular charge from acts of cultural desecration, from arson in churches to the destruction of beloved art works.

To remain anchored to a protégé, the egregore must arrange for its true name to be hidden in a place significant to the manipulated person. If the PCs discover this, and then find the name, they can call it out, causing the egregore to assume substantial form, which can then be physically dispatched in a fight.

An insubstantial egregore cannot be captured or killed, and deals out Shocks instead of Injuries.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if the heroes know the egregore's Carcosan name; -1 if they have neutralized the

egregore's protégé as a threat

Toll: 1

Tags: Carcosan

Injuries, Minor and Major:
Choked/Throttled (if substantial)

Shocks, Minor and Major:
Influence/Violent Impulse (if insubstantial)

Gargoyle, Solitary

Paris' remaining medieval architecture veritably crawls with gargoyles. Players often choose "I see gargoyles moving on the buildings" as their Deuced Peculiar Business. Animated gargoyles may serve merely as omens in your game. But if it comes to a scrap, here are the numbers.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)

Toll: 1

Tags: Construct

Injuries, Minor and Major:
Gargoyle Strike/Crushing Gargoyle Strike

Gargoyles, Pack

Use these numbers when an entire group of the stony beasts confront the heroes.

Numbers: 3-7 (does not exceed number of characters)

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)

Difficulty Adjustments: +3 vs. a single character; +2 vs. only two characters

Toll: 1

Tags: Construct

Injuries, Minor and Major:
Gargoyle Strike/Crushing Gargoyle Strike



Garguille

The dragon of the Seine, sometimes referred to as a giant serpent and supposedly slain by the heroic 7th century bishop St. Romanus of Rouen, may make a reappearance in haunted Paris. It might be the ghost of the original dragon, a hallucination given partial substance by Carcosan energy, or an aquatic predator that found a gateway between worlds while swimming in Hali's depths.

As long as three omnibuses laid end to end, the garguille prowls mostly abandoned streets near the Seine in the dead of night, looking for stragglers to pick off and drag back into the river. It might literally eat them or gain ritual sustenance from the act of drowning them.

A flesh and blood Carcosan monster can be killed physically. Other versions of the garguille keep coming back even after the group defeats and apparently slays it. If it's an emanation of its namesake dragon, the investigators will need to find St. Romanus' sword to permanently kill it. A hallucinated entity might require the group to find the artist or madman who dreamed it originally into being and create a ritual to undo that.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Vastly Superior (Escape 3, Other 6, Kill 7)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if the group has learned the myth of St. Romanus; -1 if one of them wields his sword

Toll: 2

Tags: Invasive or Mutant (GMs choose one based on story needs)

Injuries, Minor and Major: Dragon Claw/Dragon Bite

Gendarmes

These trained police officers outnumber the player character combatants and are more than ready to show that Paris cops have always deserved their reputation for toughness.

Numbers: Number of characters × 2

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 2, Other 4, Kill 6)

Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop Escape to 2

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if heroes are drunk

Toll: 1

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Black and Blue/Badly Beaten

Ghost, Vengeful

Few ghosts show the inclination or ability to actively attack anyone. Most exist as spectral images frozen in time, mindlessly reenacting moments from the lives they echo.

Others appear to be alive, breathing and corporeal. When a PC meets someone apparently alive and breathing who later turns out to be a ghost, a **Difficulty 4** Composure test ensues, to avoid Shock—**Minor:** More Things in Heaven and Earth; **Major:** Anyone Could Be Secretly Dead.

For the rare tormented soul capable of perceiving and harming the living, use this foe profile.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)

Difficulty Adjustments: -2 on an

Occultism spend; -1 if the group knows key facts about the living person

Toll: 1

Tags: Alt

Injuries, Minor and Major: "But This is Wondrous Strange!" / Soul Strike

Hoodlums

Full of fight and low on brains, untrained brawlers like these infest decaying neighborhoods in any timeframe or reality you care to name.

Numbers: Number of characters, plus 2

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 1, Other 3, Kill 4)

Adjust to Other Sequences: Drop Escape by 1; increase Kill by 1

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if heroes are drunk

Toll: 0

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: You Should See the Other Fellow / Concussed

Horla

As described in Guy de Maupassant's short story of the same name, the horla is an invisible spirit entity that chooses and haunts an individual victim. By sensing and contemplating the presence of the horla, the victim becomes ever more obsessed by it. Unless somehow able to break its mental hold, the target eventually dies of apparently natural causes. Depending on the case, the victim may succumb to stroke, cardiac arrest, or suicide.

The spread of the horla phenomenon resembles an epidemic. Belief in horla

spawns more horla. The first horla outbreak occurred in Brazil nine years ago, and spread to at least one victim in Rouen, who made the simple mistake of waving to a three-masted ship freshly arrived from Rio de Janeiro. In retrospect the investigators might conclude that this was sparked by Carcosan incursion.

Suppressing a horla epidemic can prove difficult, as it involves convincing people that there is no horla epidemic.

Also hard: fighting a horla. It attacks physically only when interlopers try to break its mental hold on its primary victim. It remains invisible, but its position might be intuited from its effect on the surrounding environment. Combatants might see grass or drapery moving, or see its footprints in sand or ripples in a puddle.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Vastly Superior (Escape 3, Other 6, Kill 7)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if heroes have figured out the horla facts given above; -3 if somehow made visible; -1 if a PC cares deeply for this horla's primary victim

Toll: 2

Tags: Invasive

Injuries, Minor and Major: Steam-Drill Heart / Apoplexy

King in Yellow (Corpse Manifestation)

The king with the tattered mantle can reach into this world to animate a recently deceased corpse. The cadaverous face contorts into a sinister visage striking profound unease into any who behold it.

The king may only be able to send these manifestations against those foolish enough to read the play, or to otherwise make willing contact with him.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 4, Other 4, Kill 6)

Adapt to Other Sequences: Increase Escape by 1

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 for each combatant PC who has read the play; +1 if anyone met the person whose corpse the king has stolen

Toll: 1

Tags: Alt

Injuries, Minor and Major: Soul Swipe/Yellow Doom

King in Yellow

(Direct Manifestation)

Lord of Carcosa and human-shaped incarnation of shattered reality, the King does not deign to fight. But if you come at him with fists and guns, his colorless mask-like face contorts, and he sets about teaching you a lesson with an air of weary finality.

In almost any conceivable circumstance the King does not personally pursue player characters who wish merely to escape his terrible presence. That's what minions are for.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Too Awful to Contemplate (Escape 5, Other 8, Kill 12); drop Kill by 3 if this is the final episode of an entire series

Adapt to Other Sequences: Increase Kill by 2

Difficulty Adjustments: -2 if not in Carcosa

Toll: 4

Tags: Carcosan

Injuries, Minor and Major: The Final Pallor/He Ripped Out Your Heart, Showed It to You, Then Stuffed It Back In

Korrigan

In Breton folklore the term “korrigan” may refer to any faerie creature, or to a version of the classic alluring faerie maiden who lures young men away from this world into an unholy supernatural realm.

Do these tales reflect past eras of Carcosan influence on earth, when they came here to take slaves?

With the gates open (perhaps again) between our world and Carcosa, slave-hunters, either following an old pattern or mimicking folk tale imagery, have come here to collect healthy young human specimens to serve its noble courts.

Korrigans look like red-haired humans of great physical allure, but of indeterminate age. Their delicate beauty may strike wary observers as alien or eerie. When aroused to anger or passion, their eyes glow a fiery red.

They hunt by emotional entrapment, winning the love of their victims over a period of weeks or months. At the end of the mysterious courtship, the target signs an agreement consigning his (or, more rarely, her) soul to the korrigan. The korrigan then takes the subject to Carcosa and sells the contract to the head of a noble Carcosan household. The victim loses vitality but does not otherwise age, regretfully toiling for his new masters for many generations before fading away into nothingness.

Korrigans prefer flight, or the use

of psychic influence, to combat. A few prove physically formidable when cornered. PCs resist the psychic attack dealing a korrigan's Shock cards, which it can use on one PC per scene, with Difficulty 5 Composure tests. Once one character has one of these cards, it reuses its power only when desperate.

When revealed or pressed, the hypnotic beauty of the korrigan may give way to the pale, mask-like visage typical of Carcosans.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)

Difficulty Adjustments: +2 for each character who can fight but doesn't

Toll: 2

Tags: Carcosan

Shocks, Minor and Major:

Enthralled/Alien Passion

Injuries, Minor and Major:

Carcosan Dagger/Carcosan Rapier

Macabre Experimenter

A surgeon or scientist, the macabre experimenter follows a perverse compulsion to reconfigure the anatomies of the helpless. They may justify their grotesque procedures as necessary to breakthroughs that will benefit all mankind. Or perhaps they harbor few illusions about their perverse need. They attack by sneaking up from behind with a syringe full of special tranquilizer formula. After rendering their victims unconscious, they whisk them to their laboratory, likely with the aid of malleable confederates. The experimenter straps their prey to an operating table and gets to work reshaping their flesh. They credit their impossible results to their own genius,

unaware that the laws of science have been altered by Carcosa.

Threatened with violence, they lurch for their meticulously planned means of escape, leaving servitors to take the blows of meddlesome investigators. When forced to get physical, they wield a scalpel coated with their unearthly knock-out juice.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 1, Other 3, Kill 5)

Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop

Escape by 1; increase Kill by 1

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 vs. all but one of main cast; -2 vs. entire cast

Toll: 0

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Muzzy Headed/Heavily Sedated

Matagot

In southern French folklore, the matagot is an animal familiar to a sorcerer—usually a black cat, but perhaps a dog, fox, rat, or, in more whimsical tales, a cow.

On the streets of haunted Paris, the matagot is an observing spirit bound to the service of a Carcosan royal or noble. It can possess the body of any mammal smaller than a mastiff, telepathically transmitting what it sees, hears, and smells to the mind of its master. The matagot may do this continually or in bursts, as its superior desires. Once inside the body of an animal, it remains in place until the host dies. At that point it becomes incorporeal, wafting about as a diffuse mist until it finds another creature to inhabit.

When its master dies or returns to Carcosa, the matagot gains freedom,

which it generally uses to sow chaos and misery in the lives of humans. A freed matagot can attune to a person, implanting thoughts and impulses. It uses these to push its targets to crimes ranging from theft to murder, carefully calculated to maximize the suffering of its playthings.

The matagot would rather flee than fight but can use its psychic powers to deal damage far beyond the natural capabilities of its hosts.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 1, Other 3, Kill 4)

Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop Escape by 1

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if bound to a Carcosan; +2 if bound to the King, Camilla, or Cassilda

Toll: 0

Tags: Invasive

Injuries, Minor and Major: Scratched Psyche/Poisoned Psyche

Mesmerist, Sinister

An ordinary hypnotist before the Yellow Sign appeared in Paris, the Sinister Mesmerist can override human will with a penetrating glance. They fight by convincing their enemies they're physically wounding them, when really they're destroying their minds.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Vastly Superior (Escape 3, Other 5, Kill 6)

Adapt to Another Sequence: Drop Other and Kill by 1

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if you previously succeeded at a Composure test to resist his mental influence; -1 if

the party has read the diary in which he records his methods

Toll: 2

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Brain Fever/Shown Your Own Horrific Death

Nain

Bretons fear the nain, hulking, demonic figures who haunt dolmens and the roofs of old churches.

Former residents of Brittany now living in Paris claim to have seen them lurking the city's ill-lit streets, now clad in dark top hats and flowing opera capes.

Really the so-called nain belong to an offshoot species of Carcosan noted for absurdly developed musculature, long silky hair, and rage-filled howling. Though pale and mask-like like your standard Carcosan, their faces contort into ogre-like grotesquerie, with gaping mouths and curving tusks. In calm moments they are capable of speech and enthusiastically agree that they are the nain of folklore.

Pressed into servitude as goons and servitors back home, the nain of Paris seek a freedom on Earth they would be denied if the gates closed. Though not known for long-range planning, they may be plotting to break away from their masters for good. Doubtless this will involve the spilling of blood, or some other chaos forcing the investigators to intervene.

Numbers: 1 for every 2 PCs

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 vs. characters wielding missile weapons; +1 if the group believes they're the nain

of folklore; -1 if the group knows what they really are

Toll: 1

Tags: Carcosan

Injuries, Minor and Major: Head Butt/Curb Stomped

Night Washers

Stray Carcosan energies have granted these mournful spirits, cited in Breton legend, renewed existence along the banks of the Seine. They appear at night, never in groups, washing bedclothes in the river. The night washer cries out for assistance. They don't like to be refused. If you're alone, and a night washer shrieks for your aid, a refusal may get you dragged into the river and drowned. When resisting a night washer's attack, you can fight to kill, and might seem to succeed at it. But the next night the specter will be back, no worse for wear.

Each night washer resembles a long-deceased relative, usually the mother or aunt, of a recent victim of an unjust death. Although it never volunteers this information, it will explain itself when properly asked. To dispel the haunting, one can bring the person responsible for the injustice to the Seine. Unless somehow prevented, the night washer pulls the wrongdoer into the river, vanishing forever after the corpse washes up.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 2, Other 4, Kill 6)

Adapt to Another Sequence: Drop Escape by 1; increase Kill by 1

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if the PCs know who the night washer mourns; +3 if trying to prevent the night

washer from claiming the justly accused target of its vengeance

Toll: 1

Tags: Alt

Injuries, Minor and Major: Cough, Choke, Sputter/Lungful of Water

Night Watch

These paid guards, past their prime and probably outnumbered by the protagonists, deter trouble by their presence.

Numbers: 2

Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4)

Difficulty Adjustments: -2 if surprised

Toll: 0

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Cracked Skull/Curb Stomped

Operatives

These international knifeworkers might be working for the forces of Carcosa. Alternately, they might serve a foreign power or shady tycoon. Sleekly dressed and impeccably polite, they ply the dark waters of the European espionage scene, dispassionately advancing the interests of whoever offered them the tallest stack of francs.

Numbers: Half the number of characters, or 1, whichever is higher

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 2, Other 4, Kill 6)

Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop Escape by 1

Toll: 1

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Cane Blow/Sword Cane Stab

Orderlies

Keeping patients and visitors compliant amid the chaos of a Paris hospital requires one part medical know-how to three parts muscle. These white-coated working men dispense sedatives and headlocks as required.

Numbers: Number of characters, minus 1

Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if the character has First Aid

Toll: 0

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Muzzy Headed/Sedated (if attempting sedation)

Injuries, Minor and Major: Strong Armed/Restrained (if using physical force)

Patchwork

Carcosa's alien energies have corrupted the laws of science. In one of your scenarios, someone believing himself to be a modern Prometheus might sew together parts from various corpses and grant animation to the resulting hodgepodge of body parts. The resurrected being gets its intelligence and a semblance of personality from the brain used in the procedure. But if your version of the classic tale runs true to form, the awakening twists that mind into a murderously embittered analogue of its former self. And frankly, who can blame it?

The Patchwork displays a surprising propensity for returning to imitation life after its seeming destruction. Composure tests against Shock upon seeing it increase by 1 each time it comes

back for a sequel.

A Patchwork first encountered in 1895 might reappear in any or all of the game's later realities.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Vastly Superior (Escape 3, Other 6, Kill 7)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if it has reason to think the PCs are in league with its creator; -1 if it has seen them take firm action against its creator

Toll: 1

Tags: Alt

Injuries, Minor and Major: Picked Up and Thrown Hard/Monstrous Battering

Peasants, Scythe-Wielding

These country farmers may be charging the heroes with their razor-sharp farm implements because they fallen into the grip of Carcosa. Or perhaps their fury comes because they reasonably, if mistakenly, believe the characters to be responsible for whatever horror haunts their forests and pastures.

Numbers: Number of PCs, plus 3

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if the characters have previously had friendly interactions with the locals

Toll: 0

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major: Impressive Yet Superficial Cut/Arterial Spray

Pétroleuses

During the Commune a cadre of female anarchists terrorized the bourgeoisie by roaming the city with

gasoline bottles, which they set alight and tossed through the basement windows of well-appointed homes. Compared by journalists of the day to vengeful maenads, they sometimes committed these acts of revolutionary arson with their children in tow.

The King in Yellow has conjured them back, in ghostly form, translucent and wreathed in flame.

Numbers: Number of PCs

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if the party has already learned of the historical significance of the Pétroleuses; +1 if not

Toll: 1

Tags: Alt

Injuries, Minor and Major: Singed/Ghost Fire

Rakes

The rich fathers of these sneering ne'er-do-wells underwrote their study of fencing and fisticuffs before packing them off to Paris to get the havoc out of their system.

Numbers: Number of PCs

Difficulty: Evenly Matched (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 5)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 in the afternoon (fully sober); -1 at night (drunk); no adjustment in morning (hung over)

Toll: 1

Injuries, Minor and Major: Thrashed/Rapier Wound

Soul Moths

These eerily luminescent Carcosan flying insects feed on emotion and memory. With flicking tongues they

drain these from sapient prey, fearing only the King in Yellow and his kin.

Numbers: Dozens

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 for each Shock card the player holds

Toll: 0

Tags: Invasive

Injuries, Minor and Major: Fed Upon/Thought Drain

Spiders of Carcosa

These hard-shelled, fist-sized arthropods with gnawing mandibles that saw easily through human flesh can't technically be described as spiders. The ninth leg affixed to the back of the abdomen, used for leaping, rules that out. Nonetheless, when you see a swarm of them scuttling at you, your first impulse will be to yell "*Spiders!*"

Numbers: Number of PCs

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 for characters holding 1 or more Injury cards

Toll: 0

Tags: Invasive

Injuries, Minor and Major: The Shudders (Shock)/Sawed Flesh

Statue (Animated)

When you have a sculptor character type and a horror setting, the question is not "Will the characters fight an animated statue?" It is, "How long will it take them to fight an animated statue?"

The player probably supplies the physical description. This foe profile does the rest.

Numbers: 1



Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 for each character trying to harm it with bullets, projectiles, or blades; -1 if characters wield heavy artillery or other high-end military weapons

Toll: 1

Tags: Construct

Injuries, Minor and Major:

Fearsome Gut Punch/Broken Jaw

Students

Parisian students fight when drunk and affronted. They are often the former if not always the latter. Investigators can't kill them without risking pesky murder charges.

Numbers: Number of PCs present, plus 1

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Toll: 0

Tags: Human

Injuries, Minor and Major:

Roughed Up/Sucker Punched

Vampires, Fledgling

Use these as your flock of recently turned, ferocious but inexperienced bloodsuckers. Their supernatural nature only becomes apparent if provoked to bare their teeth. Resulting Composure tests get a +1 bonus, +2 if the group has killed vampires before.

Numbers: 2 fewer than the group (unless this results in 0 vampires, in which case it's 1 vampire)

Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Adapt to Other Sequences: Drop Kill by 1

Difficulty Adjustments: Choose one or two standard vampire vulnerabilities (crosses, garlic, fire) and one oddball one; +1 for PCs using at least one of these measures

Toll: 0

Tags: Alt

Injuries, Minor and Major:

Scratched/Throat Punctures

Vampire, Legendary

If this vampire isn't Dracula, Carmilla, or Addhema (scalp-stealing antiheroine of Paul Féval's gonzo 1856 novel *The Vampire Countess*), it can stand toe to toe with them.

If it makes eye contact with a character, it can issue a simple verbal instruction which must be obeyed if the character fails a Composure test. Commands that clearly threaten the life of the victim test against a Difficulty of 8. A command that clearly threatens the life of another PC or an innocent the victim has reason to sympathize with faces a Difficulty of 6. Otherwise the Difficulty is 4. Each time a character succeeds in resisting a vampire's command, the Difficulty of resisting further commands from any vampire during that scenario decreases by 1, for the duration of the scenario.

Legendary vampires didn't get that way by being stupid and will generally tailor their commands so that they are likely to be obeyed.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Overwhelming (Escape 4, Other 7, Kill 8)

Difficulty Adjustments: +5 if heroes are fighting to Kill or Render Helpless but have not investigated sufficiently to know the special means required to

dispatch it (stake through the heart, silver bullets, decapitation, or what have you; otherwise, on a kill result, it appears to have been destroyed but then reforms, angry and ready for vengeance. +2 if heroes have tried to kill it before and failed. -4 if this is the last session of the sequence.

Toll: 3

Tags: Alt

Shocks, Minor and Major:

Enrapturing Bite/Vampiric Death Strike

Vampire, Solitary

Use this vampire when you need a single, moderately powerful example of the breed.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)

Difficulty Adjustments: Choose one or two standard vampire vulnerabilities (crosses, garlic, fire) and one oddball one; -1 for PCs failing to use at least one of these precautions

Toll: 1

Tags: Alt

Injuries, Minor and Major: Throat Punctures/Intoxicating Bite

Viper Swarm

Venomous snakes are rare in France—but over the last year naturalists have noted an unexpected growth in their numbers in the countryside around Paris. The creatures' behavior has changed, too. Now they swarm in great numbers, and aggressively defend their territories.

Numbers: 5 per hero

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Difficulty Adjustments: 0

Toll: 2

Tags: Animal

Injuries, Minor and Major: Snakes, Our Oldest Fear/Venomous Fangs

Walking Corpse

This dead body has regained animation, but no will or volition, through the pervasive bleed of alien energy to Earth after the publication of *The King in Yellow*. It may just wander around frightening people, draining their sanity through its very existence. If provoked, by the group or some less altruistic individuals, it becomes a violent attacker.

Unlike a Romero zombie, this does not eat the flesh of the living, nor does it exert a contagion effect on attack survivors.

Numbers: 1, or equal to group size

Difficulty: Tough but Outmatched (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 4)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 for any Investigator who met the corpse when it was a person; -2 for any Investigator who knew and liked the corpse when it was a person (does not stack with previous penalty)

Toll: 0

Tags: Alt

Injuries, Minor and Major: Undead Thrashing/Monstrous Mauling

Yeth-Hound

When a child is murdered near a hub of Carcosan activity, weird vibrations gather around it, coalescing into a

yeth-hound. These headless, quasi-substantial, canine-shaped beings strike terror into those unfortunate enough to behold them. A newly fledged yeth-hound travels forests and uninhabited byways until it finds a pack to join. Sorcerers can find and command them, forcing them to track or attack specific individuals.

Because the creatures have no apparent heads, investigators may react with surprise when one of them leaps at them and invisible teeth tear through clothing to rend the flesh beneath.

Unless so impelled, they simply range through deep woods, joining each other in a hideous howling that sears the soul of those unlucky enough to hear: Difficulty 6 Composure test to avoid

Shock—**Minor:** Unease; **Major:** A Diverting Indiscretion Will Put This in Perspective.

Numbers: Twice the number of PCs

Difficulty: Weak (Escape 2, Other 3, Kill 3)

Difficulty Adjustments: +1 if the group could have avoided a fight but goaded the creatures into it

Toll: 0

Tags: Invasive

Injuries, Minor and Major: Yeth Bite/Yeth Mauling

GHOST OF THE GARNIER

In this scenario the investigators discover an attempt to mount *Cassilda*, an opera production based on *The King in Yellow*.

On first glance it appears that composer **Isidore Cuvier** and librettist **Marcel Brisson** have chosen the play for their own creative purposes. The casting of **Céleste Vicaire**, an untried and uneven singer, in the leading role appears to be the work of a wealthy patron pulling strings behind the scenes for his mistress. One might assume that he has paid off the opera's two heads, impresario **Theodore Larssonneau** and general manager **Jacques Picou**.

As they investigate, the characters may talk to additional witnesses:

- **Albert Vanel**, the handsome florist Céleste loves, but has been pulled away from.
- **Miette Servais**, a chorus girl and estranged friend to Céleste.
- Set painter **Xavier Lassouche**, acquaintance and contemporary to one of the PCs.
- **Orane**, the **Duchess de Roudier**, wife of a man who might at first be mistaken for Céleste's benefactor.

This works well as your first full, complex mystery after a quick introductory scenario you improvise based on your characters' Deuced Peculiar Business.

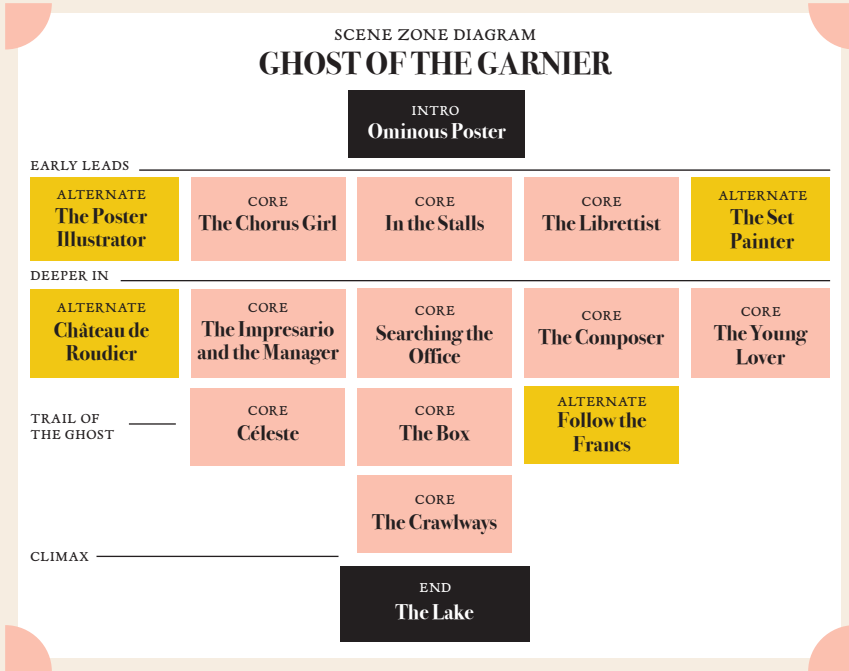
The Alien Truth

Céleste's rise in the opera has been engineered not by the Duc de Roudier (who has gone missing), but by a mysterious masked figure, the Ghost. The Ghost took over de Roudier's identity, and opera box. In the Duc's guise he performs the various mundane tasks required to get the production on the boards.

By default, the Ghost is trying to extend Carcosa's power over our realm by staging a production of *The King in Yellow* that will drive countless Parisians mad. Should he succeed, the Carcosa effect will grow in power, making the metaphysical environment more favorable to a coming wave of invaders. One of the three Carcosan royals has sent him to do this: pick Camilla or Cassilda if you have plans to further develop one of them in your series. Otherwise, select the King.

Though the Ghost aims to change our world, our world has also changed him. Overcome by romantic obsession, he also intends to transform her not only into a singer capable of infusing her role with the passion needed to unleash widespread chaos, but also his Carcosan bride. As *Cassilda*'s final act dissolves the opera house into chaos, Céleste will become a bone-white creature with a hideous, mask-like face.

Fortunately, the art students should



be able to meddle with that plan, halting production before rehearsals begin.

If the above contradicts your chosen approach to the Yellow Sign phenomenon, adjust the Ghost's motivations accordingly.

Inspiration

At some point, probably pretty early on, players will realize that the scenario puts a Carcosan spin on Gaston Leroux's 1910 novel *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Assure players who are not familiar with it that they don't need to know the source material to succeed in, or enjoy, the scenario. If they know it (or more likely, one of its popular adaptations, all of which depart considerably from the book), that adds an extra shiver of fun but no particular advantage in solving this mystery.

Should this arise, tell the players that Leroux always insisted that his novel was based on true events. Obviously, their characters are playing out the real story, 15 years prior to its publication and worldwide bestseller status. You might have a player who gets hung up on this, even after that explanation. Have the raffish Leroux, 27 years old and working as a court reporter for *L'Écho de Paris*, show up at an inconvenient time to pepper them with questions and make a general obstacle of himself. Leroux might even purloin their notes (Difficulty 5 *Sense Trouble* test to avoid).

And, As Always...

As with any published scenario, this can't cover every eventuality player choices will present you with. Use it as a basis for any necessary improvisation.

Scenes

OMINOUS POSTER

Scene Type: Introduction

Lead-Outs: In the Stalls, The Chorus Girl, The Set Painter, The Librettist, The Poster Illustrator

Start with a scene in which one of the investigators learns of the upcoming production. Possibilities, from strongest to weakest:

1. The production ties into a character's Deuced Peculiar Business.
2. The character with Intuition sees a poster advertising the production and Gets a Bad Feeling About This.
3. The Muse character knows Miette or Xavier, who shares strange rumors of a masked figure stalking the opera. (In that case, the first scene might be *The Chorus Girl* or *The Set Painter* instead of *Ominous Poster*. The group sees the poster whenever they look for it.)
4. The group's patron finds out about the production and tells them to look into it.
5. If they know about Cassilda as a figure in the play already, the mere sight of a poster advertising a production bearing her name, with a strange vista pictured behind her, serves as ample reason to investigate.

Either by heading to the 9th arrondissement, where the Palais Garnier is, or by happening through it (as in intro #5), they see a poster on the wall, still sticky with glue. Blazoned with the title of the production, *Cassilda*, it depicts a forlorn yet also subtly menacing

romantic figure: a woman clad in tattered yellow silk, with long raven hair. The background depicts an ominous palace below a white sky dotted with black stars. Beneath the title is the name Cuvier. The only other text on the poster appears along the bottom: Palais Garnier (core, *In the Stalls*), followed by the line *Bientôt* (Coming Soon).

The illustration has been drawn in the freshly popular style of Alphonse Mucha (profiled on p. 122).

(alternate, *The Poster Illustrator*) **Art History:** But it's not by Mucha; it's an imitation, probably by the famously unoriginal illustrator Lucien Vidalin. Vidalin hangs out at a café called Le Soleil d'Or in the Latin Quarter.

(core, *The Librettist*) **Culture:** The name Cuvier sounds familiar. The character knows an up-and-coming librettist, Marcel Brisson, who maybe mentioned something about a composer with that name.

(core, *The Chorus Girl*) The Muse's player might ask if the character knows anyone who performs at the opera. If so, that's Miette.

(core, *The Set Painter*) If the Landscape Painter, Portrait Painter, or Sculptor ask the same question, that's Xavier.

THE CHORUS GIRL

Scene Type: Core

Lead-In: Ominous Poster

Lead-Outs: The Impresario and the Manager, Searching the Office, The Young Lover

Miette is an underfed, brunette soprano in her early twenties. Dark circles under her eyes attest to her ill-health, devotion to the night life, or both.

A character who already knows Miette doesn't have to convince her to talk. Invite the player to define the nature of their acquaintance.

Barring that, Miette needs a prompt to reveal telling her friend's story to strangers:

- **Bonhomie** (appearing charming and fun, perhaps with gossip to exchange)
- **Reassurance** (promising they'll look after Céleste if she's in trouble)
- **Negotiation** (offering to find her a sugar daddy, which costs a Push to actually do, but then gains a return favor in this or a later scenario)

Miette tells the story like this: no more than six weeks ago, the management came around and offered Céleste an audition for a supporting role in the opera *Hellé*. Céleste has always aspired to lead roles but her voice is not so much better than Miette's, due to lack of lessons. Her singing suddenly improved—though perhaps not enough for Paris' demanding audiences. She has been snubbing Miette since her elevation to the main cast.

More details require specific questions:

- Céleste's role in *Hellé* is meant to prepare her for her debut in *Cassilda*.
- Some nights she sings acceptably,

other nights, not so well.

- Come to think of it, her expression when she wouldn't talk to Miette seemed more worried than haughty—like she was obeying instructions, somewhat reluctantly.
- Supposedly a ghost haunts the Garnier, perhaps someone killed when it was used as a fortress during suppression of the Commune.
- When backstage, Miette fears wolves more than ghosts. She refers to men who try to get familiar without earning the privilege.
- (core, *The Impresario and the Manager* or *Searching the Office*) If someone is pulling strings for Céleste, it would be Larssonneau and Picou who would deal with that person. The first handles the artistic side of the operation; the other, the money.
- (core, *The Young Lover*) Céleste used to be sweet on Albert, a handsome florist who works for his uncle's shop nearby, on the Boulevard Haussmann. The fellow had a nice face and set of broad shoulders, but wasn't the cleverest. Surely he should have expected that Céleste would set him aside, once she found someone substantial to sponsor her career.



THE POSTER ILLUSTRATOR

Scene Type: Alternate

Lead-Ins: Ominous Poster, The Set Painter

Lead-Outs: The Impresario and the Manager, Searching the Office, The Young Lover

Lucien Valadin isn't at Le Soleil d'Or when the group looks for him. Its proprietor, Pauline, shares the address of Valadin's Latin Quarter flat if prompted with **Bonhomie**, **Reassurance**, or **Negotiation** plus a generous tip.

Valadin answers his door, wild eyes reddened by insomnia. Bandages cover his fingers. He says he designed the poster according to instructions written by the client. Play him as twitchy and barely clinging to reality.

(alternate, *The Impresario and the Manager* or *Searching the Office*) The instructions were conveyed to him by opera manager Picou, but were not in his hand. They included rough sketches, which Valadin did his best to approximate while removing their indefinably unwholesome quantity. He ate the sketches because he was afraid they would attract egregores.

"Egregores? You haven't heard of these? They are monsters from beyond that eat our abstract thoughts."

If asked, he explains that he came to understand egregores while drawing the poster.

In response to other specific questions he says:

- He was given a photo of the singer and asked draw the main figure to match.

- He does have a scrap of the written instructions. It describes the white sky, black stars, and the dark lake in the background. Valadin happily turns it over to them, as if freeing himself from a curse. It is in a strange, crabbed hand (and matches another note from the Ghost, p. 178).
- (alternate, *The Young Lover*) A young florist came around after the posters went up, asking if he could have one. Valadin didn't have any and didn't want to keep any personal copies. The fellow saw Valadin's photo of the singer and looked forlorn. He left the card of the shop he works at, in hopes that Valadin would arrange to send him a poster.
- At first Valadin can't remember what happened to his fingers. To remind himself, he pulls off his bandages, revealing that he has torn off his fingernails, most likely with pliers. If asked to explain he says, in tone dismissive of the questions' stupidity, that this protects him from egregores. Difficulty 4 **Composure** test to avoid Shock—**Minor:** Unease; **Major:** Dread.

THE SET PAINTER

Scene Type: Alternate

Lead-In: Ominous Poster

Lead-Outs: The Librettist, The Impresario and the Manager, Searching the Office

The group can find Xavier Lassouche backstage or at an art students' hangout like the Veau Gras (p. 99) or Maison Darblay (see *Absinthe in Carcosa*). Play

him as a cynical young man making a few extra sou wasting his talents on a job he doesn't give a fig for. He loathes opera and tries to leave before any singing breaks out.

He answers questions with an indifferent puff of his clay pipe:
(alternate, *The Impresario and the Manager*) The artistic director, Larssonneau, keeps giving the set designer specific instructions. Xavier gets the impression that they're coming not from him, but from the piece's unseen financier. Whoever it is, he's a fussy devil. Nothing they do is ever right, and he keeps demanding fixes: "Make the stars black, not white! The sky white, not black!"

(alternate, *The Librettist*) Xavier has never met the composer, but the librettist, Marcel Brisson, who seems slightly touched in the head, keeps coming around to demand changes to the set. They contradict Larssonneau's directives, and so are never acted on. He frequents a bookstore nearby, the Librairie de l'art indépendant.

All manner of odd birds move around backstage here, because this is where rich men come to make mistresses of young cast members, with the arrangements often negotiated by their mothers. The richer they are, the more eccentric. A few weeks ago, Xavier saw one fellow in a slouch hat, cape, and mask, like you'd wear at a masquerade ball. He ducked around a corner like he was afraid Xavier would confront him. As if he would bother!

On a suitable Interpersonal Push, Xavier agrees to vouch for the group if anyone questions their presence backstage. He'll say that they came to deliver him supplies or whatever else makes sense under the circumstances.

Xavier comes through on this, if it comes up. A Difficulty 4 **Preparedness** success allows a player to specify this retroactively, when they get caught.

THE IMPRESARIO AND THE MANAGER

Scene Type: Core

Lead-Ins: Ominous Poster, The Librettist, The Chorus Girl, The Poster Illustrator, The Set Painter, Searching the Office

Lead-Outs: The Composer, Château de Roudier, Searching the Office

Culture, or a simple inquiry at the Garnier box office, identifies the management as artistic director Theodore Larssonneau and general manager Jacques Picou.

Culture reveals their reputations: Larssonneau as a cautious, nervous type fearful of disappointing the conservative tastes of his audience, Picou as a soupinching numbers man always looking for a new corner to cut.

Play the slender Larssonneau as an elegant talker anxious to smoothly deal with whatever crisis the investigators seem to represent, and the portly Picou as a gruff man unafraid to look as if he's trying to get away from unimportant people intent on wasting his time. If met together, Picou happily lets Larssonneau do all of the talking.

They can be found at their office in the Garnier, or, through **Culture**, at one of the many parties social niceties and the exigencies of fundraising require them to attend.

Their official story about Céleste is that Larsonneau heard her golden voice beaming out from the muck of the chorus and regards her as an obvious star. That's why she's singing in *Hellé* and slated to perform the lead in *Cassilda*. **Assess Honesty** registers this as dishonest and suggests that this is a lie behind told out of acute fear.

Other statements **Assess Honesty** might reveal as untruthful:

- They would never cast a singer on the command of a single patron, no matter how wealthy.
- Rumors of a ghost prowling the opera are complete nonsense.
- (alternate, *Château de Roudier*) The box seen identified in *In the Stalls* belongs to the Duc de Roudier. They have not seen him in a while, but his payments remain up to date, so it's still his box. They have not rented the box to anyone else, nor granted permission to anyone else to use the box. (All true, so far.) Nor do they know of anyone using it without permission. (This is the untrue part; it's where they drop off envelopes for the Ghost when he extorts them for money.)
- (core, *The Librettist*) The choice of subject matter was that of the librettist, Marcel Brisson, whose Latin Quarter address they happily supply.
- They chose to mount the obscure opera *Hellé* as a novelty for a jaded audience. (In fact the Ghost demanded they do it, because one of its minor roles suits Céleste's voice.)

True statements they might make in response to questions:

- Neither of them has read the unproduced play the libretto adapts.
- The building's false reputation for being haunted stems from the lives lost here during the retaking of Paris from the Commune.
- They would like to have a firm date for the debut but the composer, they fear, has fallen behind on his work. His name is Isidore Cuvier.
- The last time they sent a messenger to Cuvier's garret, the concierge told them he had moved out, without leaving an address. Since then, they've been forced to deal with him through Brisson.
- If asked for Céleste's address, they insist on her privacy.

(core, *Searching the Office*) If the conversation takes place in their office, an Investigator who isn't asking so many questions sees Picou ever-so-casually lock a drawer in his roll-top desk.

What they know but won't say: the threat behind the Ghost's extortion is not the release of compromising information. Rather, it is of the "nice opera house, shame if anything happened to it" variety. They pay him off to avoid the disastrous drop in ticket sales that would accompany, say, a chandelier plummeting into the stalls mid-performance.

THE LIBRETTIST

Scene Type: Core

Lead-Ins: Ominous Poster, The Librettist

Lead-Outs: The Composer, Château de Roudier

Frustrated poet Marcel Brisson paces the tiny area of his wretched garret, going slowly mad after having the text of *The King in Yellow* dictated to him by the Ghost. Play him as a mess of nervous tics.

Culture: Brisson's works have appeared in a handful of lesser literary magazines. Generally of a Symbolist bent, these overlong narrative pieces include "The Korrigan" and "The Ankou," both about feverish young Breton men ensnared by sinister, if lissome, faerie women.

If the group fails to win his confidence, he says only the following:

- The libretto is his full invention. After Larsonneau commissioned his friend Cuvier to write a new opera, he convinced Cuvier to use it. (**Assess Honesty** flags this as untrue.)
- He won't reveal where composer Isidore Cuvier is now staying, as he has sealed himself off from the world to avoid distractions as he finishes the work.
- It was Larsonneau's idea to hire Céleste.
- The girl can't sing worth a damn and will surely be replaced.

Reassurance (expressing empathy for his evident distress) or **Steel** (confronting him with the fact that he's obviously lying) gets him to reveal what he really knows. As always, let players take the

lead, supplying these bullet points as answers to their questions.

- A mysterious masked figure dictated the text of the libretto to him in a series of sessions held in Larsonneau and Picou's office.
- The masked man worked from memory, not from a book.
- The masked man's verse drama went even further, but Brisson could not continue to write down its horrific contents. When he started leaking a sickly sweet clear substance from the ears, the masked man relented. He agreed that the opera would still be sufficiently powerful if it ended at the play's halfway point.
- There is no way any of that perversity could be acted on a public stage—except perhaps in ancient Rome, back in the days when they used condemned prisoners as actors and murdered them live in the Coliseum.
- The masked man has some kind of hold on Larsonneau and Picou. Commissioning the opera was his idea, as was casting that poor talentless girl, Céleste.
- Only one copy of the libretto exists. Cuvier has it.
- (alternate, *Château de Roudier*) Despite the efforts to conceal his identity, Brisson knows who it is: the Duc de Roudier. Why? He once saw him emerge, mask and all, from the Duc's box. And de Roudier is a well-known disciple of de Sade, a clear influence on the unproduceable second half.
- (core, *The Composer*) He supplies the address of Cuvier's new flat. If antagonized or pushed too hard to recall the details of the play's second act, and the story could use a burst of horror

and violence, Brisson snaps and attacks the nearest Investigator. Use the Civilian with a Knife foe profile (p. 152).

THE COMPOSER

Scene Type: Core

Lead-Ins: The Librettist, Céleste

Lead-Outs: The Librettist, The Impresario and the Manager, Céleste

Muscular and sweaty, young Isidore Cuvier tackles the task of writing music like he's hauling rocks down a hill. Sheaves of music lie in wild disarray across his new flat. A loaded revolver lies on top of his piano; if asked, he says he needs it in case neighbors complain about his playing. "Shuts them up," he explains.

On a Difficulty 5 **Sneak** success, a character can get the gun off the piano into a satchel or purse while other questioners distract him.

Play Cuvier as calm but frustrated by the enormity of his task. He doesn't lie or resist efforts to get information, but does complain about how long it will take to regain his concentration after the group leaves.

In response to specific questioning he explains:

- (core, *The Librettist*) Larsonneau hired him, and asked him to find a librettist. Cuvier suggested his old friend Brisson. Brisson is a better talker than he is, and he'll be happy to make introductions if they haven't spoken to him yet.

- The terms of the deal required Brisson to adapt a play by an amateur writer. Cuvier understands that his meetings with this fellow involved quite odd measures to protect his anonymity.
- That's fine by Cuvier—music is a math problem, not a human problem. He can set any words to music. Even if these ones are deucedly peculiar.
- The girl is another problem. She can't sing, not well enough that is. But the anonymous patron insists on her. She seems to admire and fear him, and said Cuvier was lucky not to have to deal with him directly.
- He went to Céleste's new flat once, to try to tutor her. Afterwards Brisson told him that the mystery man would take over the singing lessons. And judging by her recent performances, he's doing a better job of it than Isidore ever could.
- Only one copy of the libretto exists, here in this flat.
- (core, *Céleste*) He resists revealing her address, but gives in if shown sufficient musical appreciation (**Culture**), personal flattery (**Bonhomie**), or given reason to trust the group's discretion (**Reassurance**). Brisson cheerfully offers to play a passage from his work in progress. A **Culture**, **Bonhomie**, or **Poetry** Push, plus an excuse that makes sense, persuades him not to. Otherwise, he bangs out a mind-bending section of his score for them, occasioning Difficulty 4 **Composure** tests to avoid Shock—**Minor**: Music of the Night; **Major**: Point of No Return.

The group may want to destroy the libretto. Respond to their plan with a

fitting array of General ability tests. My team sent the Portrait Painter to break in by climbing up to the balcony (**Athletics**) and then set the place on fire (because that's how they roll). They did this a little soon in my scenario, so I later revealed that Cuvier had a peerless memory and would keep working until the Garnier dropped the commission.

As with Brisson, you might want to have him suddenly snap and attack. Use the Civilian with a Gun profile (p. 152) if they haven't taken his pistol; or the knife variant otherwise.

IN THE STALLS

Scene Type: Core

Lead-In: Ominous Poster

Lead-Outs: Céleste, The Box

Eventually the characters likely decide to attend the opera to see Céleste sing. She is currently singing in a production of *Hellé*.

Culture identifies this as an infrequently mounted opera from composer Étienne-Joseph Floquet. When it debuted in 1779, over a hundred years ago, the audience booed, and it closed after three performances. Set in mythic Greece, it revolves around a love triangle between a dispossessed princess, the ruthless queen of Thebes, and a handsome young fellow who turns out to be Neptune. This is a curiously old-fashioned and unpopular piece for the Garnier to revive.

Céleste plays the minor role of Ismène, a lady of the court. **Culture** recalls her as the daughter of Oedipus.

Characters watching Céleste perform

see her falter when she first begins to sing. Then her posture stiffens, as if struck by a bolt from the blue. She recovers, singing well if not spectacularly, avoiding humiliation.

(core, *The Box*) Anyone looking around when she is singing sees that the curtains have been drawn across one of the boxes.

Culture: Boxes still come with curtains as a nod to the days when lovers used to tryst during performances. That hasn't been the custom since the days of the Sun King.

A glance around sees that a couple of boxes are empty, but with curtains open.

The character who looked first sees a gloved hand slightly part the curtains when Céleste sings, and vanish when she's offstage.

When the investigators poke around in the auditorium itself, the Ghost, if he has reason to regard them as threatening, may drop a chandelier on them: see *Chandelier Fall*, p. 186.

SEARCHING THE OFFICE

Scene Type: Core

Lead-Ins: The Impresario and the Manager, The Chorus Girl

Lead-Outs: The Composer, Château de Roudier

A Difficulty 4 **Sneak** success gets the group inside the Garnier's management office unseen, assuming they take the elementary caution to wait until they're sure it's empty. This success also includes the unlocking of the drawer to Picou's desk.

(core clue, *Follow the Franks*) Inside

they find a red envelope containing a message written in a strange, crabbed hand. It reads:

*Your next payment, this time
7,000 francs, has now come due.
Also you must speed delivery of the
score. Tell that laggard Cuvier that if
I must come to him, he will not like it.
-G.*

Confronted with the note, neither administrator admits to knowing anything about it. “It must be some kind of peculiar joke. How do I know you didn’t put it there, as an American mockery of the French arts?” **Assess Honesty**, if needed, says they’re lying.

The handwriting matches that of the note from de Roudier the Duchess may produce in *Château de Roudier*.

(alternate, *The Chorus Girl*) The group also finds a master list of addresses of cast and crew. Céleste’s outdated entry lists the flat she once shared with Miette Servais.

THE YOUNG LOVER

Scene Type: Alternate

Lead-Ins: The Chorus Girl, Céleste

Lead-Outs: Château de Roudier

Albert Vanel can be found at his uncle’s florist shop near the Garnier. If the characters enter during business hours, they find him flustered, as a matronly woman scolds him for giving

her incorrect change. He blushes and takes her abuse.

Play him as your classic handsome, slightly dim male ingénue.

(alternate, *Château de Roudier*) If approached about Céleste, he regards the group with suspicion, assuming that they’ve been sent to harass him by her former tutor, de Roudier. They may learn about the former owner of the Ghost’s box this way.

Given **Reassurance**, or mollified with **Bonhomie**, tells what little he knows, most of it mistaken.

He incorrectly believes that it is de Roudier who has torn his love away from him, and grooms her for singing stardom.

(core, *The Impresario and the Manager*) The man has something on Picou and Larsonneau, and blackmails them into doing his bidding. (A misinterpretation on Albert’s part, but it will get the investigators to that scene.)

Céleste has warned him to stay away, assuring Albert that her tutor poses no danger to her, but might well hurt him if he keeps trying to see her.

If asked, Albert admits that Céleste has never directly said that it is de Roudier who has taken her away from him—he assumed it, and she did not correct him.

The last time he saw her, it was backstage at the Garnier. She seemed terribly distracted, even unwell. So much of her usual energy had been drained from her that Albert asked her if de Roudier had drugged her. She insisted that he had not.

(core, *The Lake*) There was a deuced peculiar thing, though: the hems of her skirts were wet, as if she’d been walking

through a deep puddle. But she was inside the building, and said she'd been there all day.

Should an investigator say anything to arouse his protective fury, Albert falls into a fit of self-recrimination. Cursing himself as a coward, he proclaims his intention to find de Roudier and put a stop to this for good, no matter what promises Céleste extracted from him.

If the group has already determined that de Roudier is not the Ghost, they can persuade Albert to exercise continued restraint. Otherwise it takes a **Reassurance** or **Steel Push** to get him to stay put. Failing to dissuade him can lead to the Antagonist Reaction *Attack on Albert*, p. 186.

CHÂTEAU DE ROUDIER

Scene Type: Alternate

Lead-Ins: The Impresario and the Manager, The Librettist

Lead-Outs: The Box

Once the group has heard the name de Roudier, **Society** leads them to his manor in the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

Society also provides some background on the Duc: he was widely loathed for his arrogance, and for flaunting his indiscretions.

In the **Demimonde**, he was known for his sadistic tastes, catered to by houses that specialize in that line of service.

The group can gain access to the Duchess via **Society**. A fragile former beauty now in her middle years, Orane approaches the group with a remote formality, flinching when asked to think

about her husband. She says that her husband has left on a long trip and isn't expected back any time soon. Pressed further, she says he suddenly left a note one day. Its handwriting matches that of the Ghost's note to Larsonneau and Picou from *Searching the Office*.

The Duc's given name is Antoine. Orane calls him "the Duc."

*My dearest Orane —
I must suddenly depart for the Americas. My apologies for the suddenness of my departure. I'll not bore you with the business matters that command my haste. I have paid my opera box fees well in advance; do not interfere with this. You are free to otherwise manage our household as you see fit. I will be unable to contact you for a good while. Try not to worry.
—R*

Play Orane as if worrying about her husband is the last thing on her mind; she's glad to see him gone. (She'll be even more openly relieved if the group has already discovered his corpse, as might happen in *The Crawlways*.)

In response to questions she supplies the following facts:

- Orane does not care for the opera and will not be using the box. Her husband used it to entertain mistresses and... others.
- Hmm, yes, that handwriting is a terrible mess. She never stopped to think that it might not be the Duc's, even though the scrawl

does not match older samples of his penmanship. She assumed he had finally succumbed to syphilis, alcoholic tremors, or some other similar and much-deserved ailment. (**Assess Honesty:** The Duchess may have been indulging in some wishful thinking.)

- (alternate, *Céleste*) Her husband also rented a flat at 21 Avenue Montaigne, which she was not supposed to know about.

CÉLESTE

Scene Type: Core

Lead-Ins: In the Stalls, The Young Lover, Château de Roudier

Lead-Outs: The Composer, The Librettist

The jealous Ghost has warned Céleste not to talk to strangers, much less reveal anything of her involvement with him.

If they look for her backstage after a performance, she attempts to evade them. A Difficulty 4 **Athletics** success from any one Investigator lets them cut her off before she can slip away.

Alternately, a Difficulty 6 **Sneaking** success allows an Investigator to follow her to de Roudier's flat in the city, where they can then confront her.

They can also discover the location of the flat during *Château de Roudier*.

Assess Honesty shows that she is clearly terrified and attempting to tell a story she has been given. She says her tutor is de Roudier, who she happily visits in order to improve her singing. She claims to have lost interest in her

former lover, Albert.

(core, *The Composer*) Yes, she has been preparing to sing the role of Cassilda in Cuvier's opera. Her face tics and twitches when she says this. She does not like the libretto and finds the words hard to sing.

(core, *The Librettist*) If they wish to know the secrets of the text, they should talk either to him or to the librettist, Brisson.

On an **Inspiration** or **Reassurance** Push, she admits that the tutor is not de Roudier, but someone else she dare not name. She warns the group to avoid him at all costs, and to give up their inquiries. She absolutely refuses to put them in danger by leading them to him. If asked about any supernatural proclivities he might have, she sobs and says he takes her to a place with a white sky and black stars, whispering the power to sing into her lungs. She then suffers a breakdown and collapses sobbing at their feet.

Shadowing her with **Sneaking** (Difficulty 4 for each journey) shows that she goes back and forth from the flat to the Garnier. From this the group might realize that the lessons must take place in a secret corner of the opera house.

(alternate, *The Crawlways*) If the group never explores the Garnier and gets no closer to the Ghost's Carcosan lair in the lake below, nudge them in that direction by having the Ghost snatch her up while they follow from a distance. Following them leads back to the Garnier and *The Crawlways*.

THE BOX

Scene Type: Core

Lead-Ins: In the Stalls, The

Impresario and the Manager

Lead-Outs: The Impresario and the Manager, Follow the Francs, The Crawlways

During performances, ushers patrol the corridor leading to the boxes. They will politely and quietly intercept any out-of-place types snooping around there. Ushers fear being fired for indiscretion—or for making noise during a performance. They can at the very least delay the group's effort to get into de Roudier's box.

If the Ghost is inside the box when they approach, he can scramble up into the crawlway (described shortly) and seemingly disappear.

(leveraged clue, *The Lake*) Once inside the box, the Ghost's scent surrounds them. **Natural History** identifies possible ingredients of this fragrance as orchid, cinnabar, and a terrible decay—perhaps from a corpse flower? No, that would be mad!

Fashion: The scent remains strong, despite the ventilation system, because it has permeated the curtains and upholstery. Such a problem with strong perfumes and thick fabrics!

If the group has not yet found the letter from the Ghost otherwise discovered in *Searching the Office*, the Ghost has left it here instead, in a red envelope, for Picou to find. They can use it to then confront the management, breaking through the outer layer of their cover story.

(core, *The Crawlways*) **Architecture:**

A metal heating grid, marked with the lyre design found throughout the structure, leads to a larger-than-usual duct system. It might serve a dual purpose, allowing movement through the skeleton of the building.

THE CRAWLWAYS

Scene Type: Core

Lead-Out: The Lake

If the Ghost was just in the box, a Difficulty 4 **Athletics** success allows the first character to crawl up into the network of ducts quickly enough to see him ably navigating its cramped spaces. The character can pursue him to the flies, the area over the stage, to a catwalk, and then watch him swing away on a rope used to hoist scenery.

(alternate, *The Lake*) *Are you looking for a way to leapfrog them to the conclusion?* The pursuing character sees him land behind a piece of stage setting, open a trap door, and vanish beneath the stage.

From the crawlways they can climb up higher to the top of the structure, finding the spot from which the Ghost can cut the chandelier cord and send it toppling into the stalls below. Architecture warns them of this capability so they can avoid the Antagonist Reaction *Chandelier Fall*.

At any rate, this hidden part of the structure shows them how the Ghost can move around inside it undetected, seeing what's going around, without being literally ephemeral.

Characters who explore the crawlways will know better than to talk to Céleste



inside the opera house, as the Ghost could easily be anywhere behind the walls, observing.

This depiction of the Garnier as riddled with plot-friendly secret passageways is fanciful, mirroring Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera*. If the players question it, they realize that they owe their existence to a supernatural reality shift. Difficulty 3 **Composure** to avoid Shock—**Minor**: Uncertainty; **Major**: Questioning Your Senses. You might add a coda to the scenario in which they return to find the crawlways missing, replaced by ordinary ventilation ducts.

While in the ducts the characters come across a cache of old rifles. **History**: these must have been stored here by Commune fighters during the 1871 civil conflict, and never moved or discovered. Expect the heroes to scoop these up, because these are weapons and they are roleplaying characters.

If the group has learned about the Duc de Roudier, they make a second discovery: his corpse, rolled up in an old backdrop. His identity papers are missing from his formal outfit.

Society: That's the Roudier ducal crest sewn into the lining of his evening jacket.

Natural History: The Duc has been dead for weeks, perhaps longer. The corpse emits no smell of putrefaction—which is uncanny to say the least. A pinkish powder has been sprinkled on it. Could this have disguised the odor of death?

FOLLOW THE FRANCS

Scene Type: Alternate

Lead-In: Searching the Office

Lead-Out: The Box

Once the investigators know of the Ghost's extortion scheme, they might follow Picou to the bank and back, seeing that he then returns and leaves the money in a red envelope in *The Box* (core clue if they haven't yet found it).

They can shadow him unseen on a Difficulty 4 **Sneak** success. On a failure, he confronts them and, depending on the relationship they've established with him, threatens to reveal their meddling to the Ghost. Though probably an empty threat, you might decide that it does lead to the Antagonist Reaction "Attack on the Party."

Alternatively, a **Steel, Officialdom**, or **Reassurance** Push might get him to unburden what he knows about the Ghost, Céleste, and the opera production they've agreed to at his behest.

THE LAKE

Scene Type: Conclusion

Lead-In: The Crawlways, Attack on Albert, Chandelier Fall

Beneath the stage, accessible through any one of a dozen trap doors, the group finds several tons of stage equipment, including quite a few different literal *deus ex machina*—the device gods are flown in on to mete out solutions at the end of Baroque-period operas.

Either **Architecture** or the wretched orchid stink of the Ghost's poisonous fragrance (as discovered in *The Box*, *Attack on Albert*, or *The Ghost Strikes*) lead the group to an out-of-place trap door. Instead of the lyre design found throughout the building, it bears an enameled white mask.

Has the group somehow gotten here without talking to much of anyone?

The door is locked and can't be smashed open without attracting burly stagehands. The key might later be found in the crawlways, at de Roudier's flat, or another location requiring additional detection.

The trap door descends deep into the earth, via a vertical access tunnel with copper handholds punched into the walls.

It leads to a long, narrow hallway that snakes far underground. It's wide enough to walk two abreast. About six feet high, it requires any character who has been defined as particularly tall to stoop a bit.

After traveling it for ten or fifteen minutes, **Architecture** or **Intuition** reveal that something strange is up: they've gone too far to still be beneath the opera house. And if they're not, they should have met up with the notorious sewers of Paris. But that hasn't happened. If the group has not yet made a **Composure** test to avoid the Shock cards *Uncertainty/Questioning Your Senses*, that happens now, at Difficulty 4.

Traps (Optional)

The hero of Leroux's novel faces a series of death traps under the opera house. Your players might enjoy reprising that, or turn up their noses at motifs they associate with *D&D*. Throw in some traps and obstacles between here

and the big finish if you think they fall into the first category, and could use some softening up beforehand.

For example:

Fire Nozzles, Difficulty 4 **Athletics** to avoid Injury—**Minor**: Singed; **Major**: Burned.

A creepy Carcosan animal brushes against them in the darkness: Difficulty 4 **Composure** to avoid Shock—**Minor**: Unnerved; **Major**: Dread.

Portcullis drops, hemming them in for a few minutes: Difficulty 4 **Sense Trouble** to avoid a +1 to the Ghost's Relative Challenge in upcoming scene, as he has heard the metal gates drop.

Doorway to Carcosa

At the end of the corridor, which the students increasingly realize is a distorted bridge between worlds, they see a brass door marked with the mask emblem they may have already seen on the hatch.

If a player asks for more details on the distortions, that means that they've stopped to contemplate them, risking further perceptual distress. Difficulty 4 **Composure** to avoid Shock—**Minor**: Must Have Been a Hallucination; **Major**: Reality Collapse.

When they open the doorway, they step into another world—one with a white sky in which black stars pulse. The Ghost stands in a skiff, poling his way toward the horizon. Describe the boat as being close enough to do whatever the players hope to accomplish: fire on it with rifles, throw a rope to Céleste, wade in and fight hand-to-hand.

Unless the group has somehow taken action to absolutely guarantee that Céleste cannot be there, she is in the boat. Obviously dazed, she sings at

the Ghost's command, her voice more beautiful yet also eerier than the students have previously heard it.

If the group did somehow make it completely incredible that she would be there, the masked figure curses them, saying that he will soon be back with the weapons he needs to retake her and make her his forever. Amend this as needed to fit the situation. The group gains +1 to their **Fighting** test against him. Make it clear that his agitated state has increased their odds of beating him.

The Ghost appears to shimmer and waver; **Occultism** or **Intuition** reveals that he is especially vulnerable while in this state of transition between worlds.

Fighting to Kill or Topple him will send him into the lake, which causes the gateway to Carcosa to come apart. So will Escaping with a Captive, assuming Céleste is present to be that captive. The group can rush to safety as the door and corridor shift and fold back on themselves, leaping at the last moment into the real sub-basement of the Garnier.

Ghost of the Garnier

The Ghost fights by unhinging the jaw of his mask-like visage and singing. Visible sound distortions blast from his mouth to scourge his targets, as if with a gale-force wind. If Céleste is present, she sings too, the attack becoming an unwilling duet.

Numbers: 1

Difficulty: Superior (Escape 3, Other 4, Kill 6)

Difficulty Adjustments: -1 if heroes are fighting to Topple, -1 if they made sure Céleste isn't there, +1 if the

portcullis trap went off

Toll: 3

Injuries, Minor and Major: Keening of the Damned/Hellish Aria

Capturing him may extend the scenario, leaving them with the new problem of figuring out what to do with him. He may reluctantly explain his deeper motivations and/or reveal that he is but the vanguard of Carcosan influence over Earth, before they strike some kind of bargain with him to halt production of the play. The group will presumably also insist that he leave poor Céleste alone.

In this case, though, you might want to keep a twist up your sleeve—maybe Céleste prefers stardom as a singer, and a role in the transformation of Paris, over a return to obscurity as a barely adequate chorus girl, or the wife of a florist.

When they escape the collapsing reality portal, characters with Continuity cards gained in previous scenes may spend 3 **Composure** to discard one such card apiece.

If the Ghost wins the fight: Céleste has now seen that the Ghost's mask is really his face. As the Ghost prepares to pole his skiff deeper into Carcosa, while the heroes lie dazed, defeated, or otherwise unable to continue, she recoils from him in horror. He tries to cover his face, but it's too late. Céleste grabs a dagger from his belt. Enraged, he attacks her, breaking her neck. Immediately riven by remorse, he shrieks out an alien aria of dismay, as the reality portal collapses. **Difficulty 6 Composure** to avoid Shock—**Minor:** The Price of Failure; **Major:** A Morbid Scene.

Coda

If they rescue Céleste, they earn her thanks, as well as Albert's, and that of the Garnier management. They announce the cancellation of *Cassilda*. Should they check up on Cuvier and Brisson, they find both of them exhausted but in good spirits, as if released from a terrible nightmare. With the Ghost dealt with, they no longer want anything to do with this piece, and Cuvier gratefully turns over the only copy of the libretto.

As mentioned in *The Crawlways*, a group that had a lot of questions about those oddly convenient passageways might revisit the opera house to find them edited out of reality.

Antagonist Reactions

Remembering that Antagonist Reactions happen only when you think they'll add a pacing jolt or necessary internal logic to the scenario as it plays, here are some of the things the Ghost might do in response to moves made by the investigators.

Chandelier Fall

Triggering Condition: The Ghost regards the team as a threat, and they're in or around the seats in the main auditorium.

Difficulty 5 Athletics to avoid Injury—**Minor:** Glass Shards; **Major:** Direct Chandelier Hit.

Seeing the chandelier detach from its moorings might lead the group to investigate *The Crawlways*, p. 181.

Attack on Albert

Triggering Condition: In *The Young Lover*, the group riled up Albert, prompting him to go looking for the Ghost

Miette, Albert's florist uncle, or someone else who knows about the investigators' talk with him alerts them to the fact that Albert has disappeared or been killed.

Choose disappearance if it feels like time to lead the group to The Lake. (core, *The Lake*) The witness tells the characters that Albert learned where Céleste's tutoring sessions take place—in a basement level accessible through a hatch beneath the stage. He went off promising to deliver a thrashing to de Roudier, or whoever it is. In this case, during *The Lake*, they find his body.

Choose death if the case remains in its early stages. The witness found Albert dead on the street not far from the florist's shop. The body has been taken inside to the back of the store. Black lesions mottle his flesh. His uncle says he last saw him leaving for the Garnier, declaring his intention to seek out and confront the thief of Céleste's affections.

First Aid or Natural History: The symptoms resemble poisoning, but not any common sort of toxin.

First Aid: A pinprick wound in his left side must have been the entry point for the poison.

(leveraged clue, *The Lake*) Albert's wounds reek of the Ghost's perfume, as described in *The Box*.

If the team canvasses the neighborhood, Mme. Larive, a milliner, reports that she saw a man bump into Albert not long before he was found unconscious. She spotted him only through her store window, and was

distracted, but could swear that the man wore a white face mask. But that's absurd, she says; she must have been mistaken.

Did the group passively or actively lead Albert to this fate? Difficulty 3 **Composure** tests to avoid Shock—**Minor**: Rueful; **Major**: Self-Reproachful.

If Albert winds up dead, the group can go to Céleste and get her to change her tune. She tells them about the hatchway leading to the tunnels, where the Ghost takes her to coach her in singing. They should stake it out, waiting for the next time her takes her down there, she says.

The Ghost Strikes

Triggering Condition: The group talks to Céleste but fails to gain a promise of secrecy, or speaks with her in the Garnier, where the Ghost can see them.

The Ghost takes up a sniper position either from a high vantage within the opera house or out on the street and fires at the group member who has most offended him. Difficulty 4 **Athletics** to avoid Shock/Injury—**Minor**: Not a Significant Bullet; **Major**: Shot.

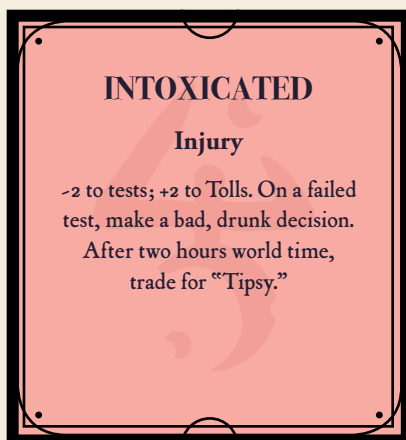
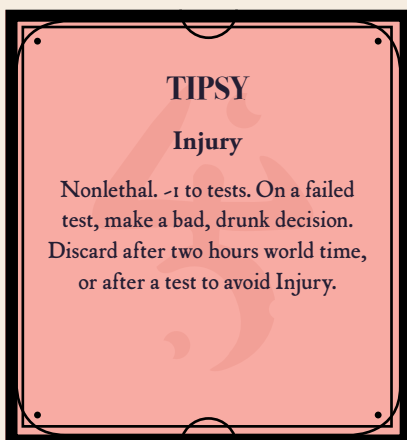
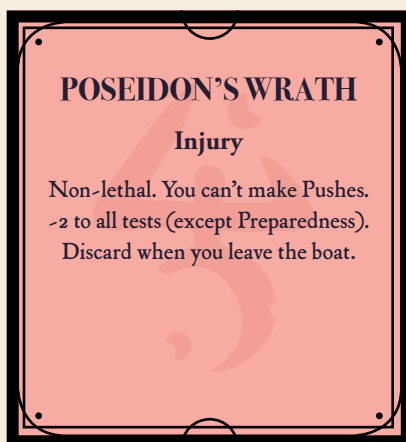
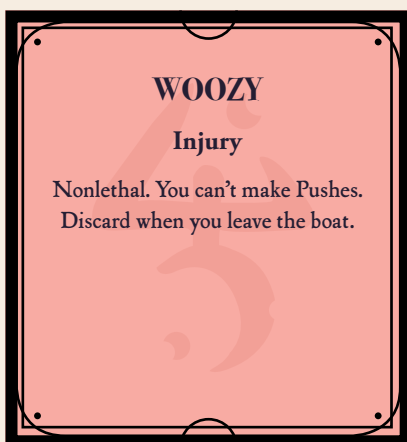
If the investigation has been mainly completed and you're looking for a way to get to *The Lake*, the group spots him and is able to pursue him in that direction.

Otherwise they see his cape fluttering away after the shot, but only find his dropped rifle and shell cases when they rush to his position. Like a ghost, he has fled again.

CARDS

Cards appear, usually in Minor/Major pairs, in their order of appearance in the main text. Cards appearing in more than one pair are not repeated. Instead later appearances pair them with a graphic element.

Injury Cards



**COUGH, CHOKE,
SPUTTER**

Injury

-1 to non-Focus tests.
Discard at next interval.

LUNGFUL OF WATER

Injury

-2 to tests.
As immediate recipient of
Difficulty 4 First Aid success, or
at end of next interval, trade for
“Cough, Choke, Sputter.”

**STAY BY THE
WATER CLOSET**

Injury

Nonlethal. You must remain within
proximity of a water closet. -2 to tests.
After four hours of world time, you
may make a Difficulty 4 Health
test at the beginning of any interval,
discarding this card on a success.

RUCTIONOUS INNARDS

Injury

Nonlethal. You must remain
within proximity of a water
closet. You can't make tests.
After six hours of world time, you
may make a Difficulty 4 Health
test at the beginning of any interval,
discarding this card on a success,
and losing 3 Health on a failure.

ABRASION

Injury

Nonlethal. Roll a die before making
an Interpersonal Push. On a 2 or
less, you can't make the Push.
Discard on a Physical test.



HARD LANDING

Injury

-1 to your next Physical test.
Discard as recipient of a
1-point First Aid spend.

TURNUED ANKLE

Injury

-2 to Physical tests.
Trade for “Hard Landing”
on a Physical failure.

SOMETHING IN YOUR EYE

Injury

-3 to Sense Trouble tests, -1 to
Physical and Focus tests.
Discard on a Sense Trouble,
Physical, or Focus failure.

PUNCTURE WOUND

Injury

-2 to tests (except Preparedness).
Discard as recipient of a Difficulty
4 First Aid success, or at the end of
any interval by spending 2 Health.

SINGED

Injury

To make an Interpersonal Push you
must also spend a Composure point.
At any time after the next interval,
you may spend 1 Health to discard.

BURNED

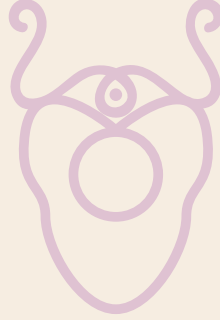
Injury

-2 to tests (except Preparedness).
Trade for “Badly Hurt” after
you fail a test and then receive a
Difficulty 5 First Aid success.

GRAZED

Injury

-1 to Physical tests.
Discard on a Physical success.



THROWN FREE OF THE EXPLOSION

Injury

-1 to Physical tests.
When you receive this card, and
at every subsequent interval,
roll a die. Even: discard.

IN THE BLAST RADIUS

Injury

-2 to Physical tests. Counts as
2 Injury cards. Trade for "On
the Mend" as recipient of
Difficulty 6 First Aid success.
If still in hand at end of scenario,
trade for "Permanent Injury."

MOSTLY RESISTANT

Injury

You can't spend Health points on tests.
At the end of each interval,
roll a die. Even: discard.

FIND THE ANTIDOTE

Injury

If scenario ends with this card
still in hand, you die.
Discard by finding the antidote.

IT LOOKS WORSE THAN IT IS

Injury

Upon seeing you for the first time after the incident that saddled you with this card, any other PC loses 1 Composure. Discard after six hours world time.

BROKEN FINGERS

Injury

Nonlethal. -2 to non-Presence tests. Penalty drops to -1 as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success. Penalty drops by 1 if in hand at start of session. Discard when penalty equals 0.

THROUGH THE RINGER

Injury

+1 to Tolls.
Other PCs take -1 Composure penalties while in sight of you. Trade for “Black and Blue” as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.

BREAKING POINT

Injury

+2 to Tolls.
For the next six hours of world time, other PCs take -2 Composure penalties while in sight of you. After six hours world time, trade for the Injury card “Black and Blue” and the Shock card “They Broke You.”

CONTUSED

Injury

-1 to Physical tests. Discard on a Physical success.

CRUSHED

Injury

-2 to Physical tests. Counts as 2 Injury cards. As recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for “Black and Blue.”

BLACK AND BLUE

Injury

+1 to Tolls.

Discard when you take a Major Injury.

BADLY BEATEN

Injury

+2 to Tolls.

After two intervals, trade for "Black and Blue" as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.

GLASS SHARDS

Injury

-1 on your next Physical test.

Any time after that test, discard with a Difficulty 3 Health success.

DIRECT CHANDELIER HIT

Injury

-2 on Physical tests, -1 on any other tests.

After you fail a test and receive a Difficulty 5 First Aid success, trade for "Glass Shards."

LINGERING COUGH

Injury

Lose 1 Health point (if available) every time you test a non-Focus ability. At the end of any interval, roll a die. Even: discard.

SCARRED LUNGS

Injury

Lose 2 Health points and 1 Fighting and 1 Riding point (as available) every time you test an ability other than Preparedness. At the end of scenario, roll a die. On a 1, this becomes a Continuity card.

WARM BLANKET NEEDED

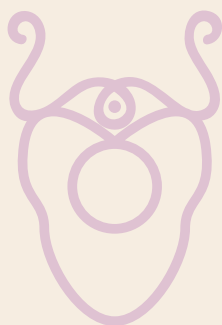
Injury

If you don't get to a warm, dry place by the end of the next interval, you are unable to spend Health points for the following two hours of world time. Discard after two hours of world time.

RAVAGED BY THE ELEMENTS

Injury

Your Health pool drops to 0. After 2 hours of table time, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: trade for "Badly Hurt."



FALL TO STREET LEVEL

Injury

-1 to Physical and Presence. As recipient of an immediate Difficulty 5 First Aid success, discard at end of interval.

SNAKEBIT

Injury

Unless you receive a Difficulty 4 First Aid success before end of interval, trade for the "Deadly Venom."

DEADLY VENOM

Injury

-2 to all tests (except Preparedness). Counts as 2 Injury cards. Spend 3 Health to trade for "Badly Hurt." You may do this even if it would otherwise be your Final card.

WHIFF OF CYANIDE

Injury

-1 to Physical tests. Health drops to 0.
On a Physical success, refresh
Health and discard this card.

SNOOTFUL OF CYANIDE

Injury

-1 to Physical tests. You can't
discard Injury cards.

IT'S A MIRACLE YOU'RE ALIVE

Injury

-1 to Physical tests.
After a Physical failure, roll a die.
Even: trade for Shock card "Rattled."

MASSIVE INJURIES

Injury

Counts as 2 Injury cards. Until
end of interval you can't make
tests. Thereafter, -2 to Physical
tests and -1 to Focus tests.
If scenario is not over at end of
session, trade for "On the Mend."

STILL HURTING

Injury

Discard on a Physical success
with a margin greater than 1.

ON THE MEND

Injury

1 to all tests. Trade for "Still
Hurting" on a Physical success.

PERMANENT INJURY

Injury; Continuity

DAZED

Injury

-1 to all tests. Discard at end of session.

JARRED

Injury

Discard at end of session.

PRECARIOUS RECOVERY

Injury

-1 to Physical tests.

On a Physical failure, roll a die. Odd: trade for the card you traded this card for.

Discard on a Physical success with a margin of 3 or more.

BADLY HURT

Injury

-1 to Physical and Focus tests.

DRAGGY

Injury

Choose one General ability type: Focus, Physical, or Presence.

-1 to tests of that type.

After any failure, discard if you have no other non-Continuity Shock or Injury cards.

CHOKED

Injury

Lose 2 Health. +1 to Tolls for rest of scenario, even after this card is discarded.
Discard after one interval.

THROTTLED

Injury

Lose 2 Health.
On or after one interval, trade for "Choked" as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.

CUDGEL BLOW

Injury

-1 to Physical tests.
At each new interval, roll a die. Odd: -1 to Focus until next interval. Even: discard.

A THOROUGH THRASHING

Injury

-1 to Physical and Focus tests.
On or after two intervals, trade for "Black and Blue" as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.

BROKEN BONE

Injury

-2 to all tests. Lose 1 Health each time you make a Physical test.
After two intervals, as recipient of a Difficulty 4 First Aid success, trade for "On the Mend."



STAB WOUND

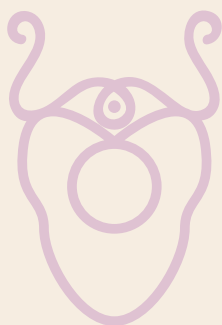
Injury

-1 to Physical and Focus tests.
Discard after a Physical
or Focus success.

SLASHED THROAT

Injury

You can't take tests or make
Pushes, or do anything but lie
on the ground bleeding out. As
recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid
success, trade for "Stab Wound."



SHOT

Injury

-2 to Physical tests. Counts as
2 Injury cards. Trade for "On
the Mend" as recipient of
Difficulty 6 First Aid success.
If still in hand at end of scenario, you
succumb to your injuries and die.

LACERATION

Injury

When called on to make a
Physical test, you may choose
to take a -2 penalty on the test
and then discard this card.

FLESH WOUND

Injury

-1 to non-Focus tests. Trade
for "Laceration" after any
non-Focus success.

STOLEN YEARS

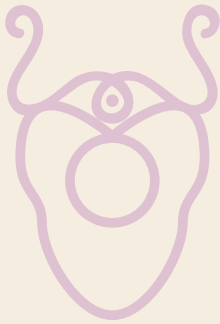
Injury

Roll a die. Odd: permanently lose 1 point from your Health rating.

STOLEN DECADES

Injury; Continuity

At the beginning of each scenario, pay a Toll of 3.
If this is your only Injury card at the end of a scenario, roll a die. Even: discard.



BITTEN

Injury

-1 on Physical tests.
To discard, receive a Difficulty 4 First Aid success, then make a Physical test.

GARGOYLE STRIKE

Injury

-1 to Physical and Focus tests.
At end of any interval, roll a die. Even: discard.

CRUSHING GARGOYLE STRIKE

Injury

-2 to Physical and Focus tests.
After two intervals, trade for "Gargoyle Strike."

DRAGON CLAW

Injury

-1 to Physical tests.
Discard on a Physical success
with a margin greater than 2.

DRAGON BITE

Injury

If you have no other Injury
cards when you receive this,
counts as 2 Injury cards.
If still in hand at end of
scenario, you die.
Trade for “On the Mend” as recipient
of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.

YOU SHOULD SEE THE OTHER FELLOW

Injury

Nonlethal. You can't make
Interpersonal Pushes.
Discard after 24 hours of world
time, or when you gain another
Injury, whichever comes first.

CONCUSSED

Injury

You can't make Pushes.
Discard after 48 hours of world time.

STEAM-DRILL HEART

Injury

Lose 1 Health on any Physical success
and 2 Health on any Physical failure.
Discard by going for three intervals
without making a Physical test.

APOPLEXY

Injury

All Physical pools drop to 0.
-2 to tests.
Trade for “On the Mend” as recipient
of an immediate Difficulty 6 First
Aid success or after 24 hours (world
time) convalescing in hospital.

SOULSWIPE

Injury; Shock

As recipient of dream command from the Yellow King, you must obey it, or gain the card "Yellow Doom."

YELLOW DOOM

Injury; Shock; Continuity

If still in hand after 24 hours (world time), your character dies.
Discard by striking a significant blow against the forces of Carcosa.

THE FINAL PALLOR

Injury; Shock

-1 to all tests.
When you strike a significant blow against the forces of Carcosa, roll a die. Even: discard.

HE RIPPED OUT YOUR HEART, SHOWED IT TO YOU, THEN STUFFED IT BACK IN

Injury; Shock; Continuity

-2 to tests. For the rest of this scenario, starting with the scene after the one in which you received this card, counts as 2 Injuries and 2 Shocks.
Discard by participating in a fight against the Yellow King that routs or thwarts him.

"BUT THIS IS WONDROUS STRANGE!"

Shock

-2 to all Focus tests. (-1 if you have the Occultism ability.)
Discard on an Occultism Push from any character, or on a Focus success.

SOUL STRIKE

Shock; Injury

Discard when the Ghost is destroyed or banished from the world of the living. If still in hand at the end of the scenario, your hair turns as white as bone.

CARCOSAN DAGGER

Injury

-1 to Physical.

Discard if the entity responsible for your taking this card is destroyed.

CARCOSAN RAPIER

Injury

-2 to Physical tests.

Discard if the entity responsible for you taking this card is destroyed.

MUZZY HEADED

Injury

Lose 1 point from all Presence pools.

At end of next interval, regain those points and discard this card.

HEAVILY SEDATED

Injury

Roll a die. You remain unconscious for that number of hours (world time). If all characters get this card, they all wake up, confined and in a bad situation.

When you wake up, trade for “Muzzy Headed.”

SCRATCHED PSYCHE

Injury

-1 to Focus tests.

Discard as recipient of an Occultism spend, or by taking a risk/ paying a cost to locate a healing incantation in a rare grimoire.

POISONED PSYCHE

Injury

You can't discard Shock cards.

Discard by discovering and successfully performing the ritual that permanently kills the entity that did this to you.

At end of scenario, roll a die. 1-2: becomes a Continuity card.

CLAWED

Injury

-2 to all tests.
Trade for "On the Mend"
on any Physical success.

EVISCERATED

Injury

Counts as 2 Injuries. You
can't make Physical tests.
After six hours of world time, trade
for "On the Mend" as recipient
of Difficulty 6 First Aid success.
After 12 hours of world time,
Difficulty of that test drops to 4.

HEAD BUTT

Injury

Ten minutes (world time) after
the fight, roll a die. Even: discard.
Odd: trade for "Concussed."

CURB STOMPED

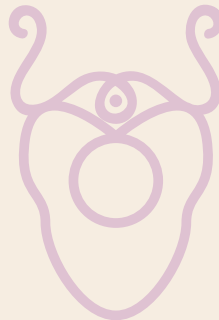
Injury

-3 to all tests.
After 24 hours of world time,
trade for "Cracked Skull."

CRACKED SKULL

Injury

You always fail Physical tests. -2 to
all other tests. After four hours of
world time, trade for "Cudgel Blow."



CANE BLOW

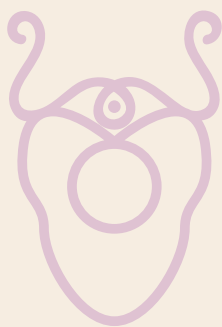
Injury

At each new interval, roll a die. Even: discard.

SWORD CANE STAB

Injury

Lose 1 Health each time you make a Physical test.
Discard as recipient of Difficulty 4 First Aid success.
If still in hand at end of scenario, roll a die. Odd: you die.



SEDATED

Injury

Lose 2 points from all Presence pools. You wake up three hours later in a place and circumstance of the foe's choosing, at which point you discard this card.

STRONG ARMED

Injury

Lose 1 Athletics and 1 Fighting.
At next interval, regain those points and discard this card.

RESTRAINED

Injury

Your foes succeed in rendering you helpless. -1 to Physical tests.
When you are no longer helpless and fail a Physical test, discard.

PICKED UP AND THROWN HARD

Injury

Lose 2 Health and 2 Composure.
Discard after half an
hour (world time).

MONSTROUS BATTERING

Injury

-2 to Physical tests. Counts as 2
Injury cards. Trade for the card
“On the Mend” as recipient of
Difficulty 6 First Aid success.
If still in hand at end of scenario,
trade for “Permanent Injury.”

IMPRESSIVE YET SUPERFICIAL CUT

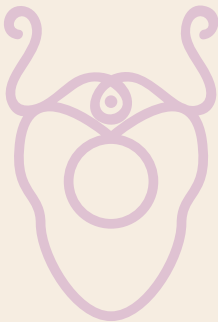
Injury

+1 to Presence tests. (Yes, +1.)
Spend 2 Health to trade any
other non-Continuity Injury
you hold for “On the Mend.”
Spend 2 Health to discard.

ARTERIAL SPRAY

Injury

If your Health exceeded 4 when you
took this Injury, -1 to Physical test.
Otherwise, -2 to Physical tests.
Discard as recipient of Difficulty
4 First Aid success.



GHOST FIRE

Injury

Make a Difficulty 4 Composure
test when you get this card. On a
failure, it is also a Shock card.
-2 on Physical tests and -1 on all
other tests until next interval. For
following interval, -1 to Physical tests.
At end of that interval, discard.

BLOW TO THE HEAD

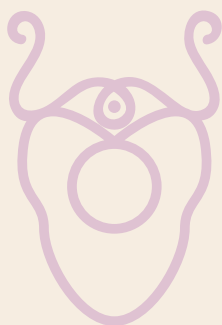
Injury

-2 to Sense Trouble tests.

RINGING CRANIUM

Injury

-2 to Focus and Presence tests; -1 to Physical tests. After four hours of world time, trade for “Blow to the Head.”



SAWED FLESH

Injury

Roll a die; lose that number of Athletics points. Discard as recipient of a Difficulty 5 First Aid success.

FEARSOME GUT PUNCH

Injury

-2 to Physical and Focus tests until end of interval. -1 until subsequent interval. Then roll a die. Even: discard. If not then discarded, keep trying at each new interval.

BROKEN JAW

Injury

-2 to Physical and Focus tests. You can't make Interpersonal Pushes. Trade for “On the Mend” as recipient of Difficulty 5 First Aid success.

ROUGHED UP

Injury

Lose 1 Composure.
Discard after any Physical success,
or by spending 1 Athletics.

SUCKER PUNCHED

Injury

Lose 2 Health.
Roll a die; discard after that
number of successes.

SCRATCHED

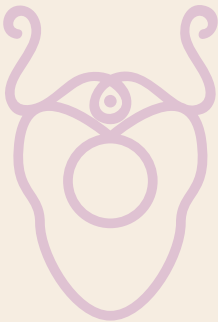
Injury

Discard as recipient of successful
Difficulty 5 First Aid success. After
one interval, test Difficulty drops to 3.

THROAT PUNCTURES

Injury

Health pool drops to 0. -2 to
Focus tests. After two intervals,
trade for "Scratched" by
spending 2 Composure.



VENOMOUS FANGS

Injury

Roll a die; lose that number of
Health points. -2 on Physical tests.
Discard as recipient of a Difficulty
5 First Aid success. Difficulty
increases to 7 if your Health is 0.

UNDEAD THRASHING

Injury; Shock

When the walking corpse(s) is/are killed, roll a die. Even: trade for the Injury card “Jarred.” Odd: trade for the Shock card “The Tremors.”

MONSTROUS MAULING

Injury; Shock

-1 to tests.

Trade for “Still Hurting” by paying a price or overcoming a relevant obstacle.

If still in hand at end of scenario, gain the card “Permanent Injury.”

YETH BITE

Injury

-1 to Focus tests.

Discard when you take part in a fight ending in defeat for the sender of the yeth-hound.

YETH MAULING

Injury

-1 to tests.

Trade for “Still Hurting” when you take part in a fight ending in defeat for the sender of the yeth-hound.

Shock Cards

OVERSTEPPED BOUNDS

Shock

-1 on your next Composure test, then discard.

WRACKED BY REMORSE

Shock

Your next Composure test automatically fails, with a margin of 2. Then discard.

OHDEAR

Shock

Discard by finding a means of escape.

BIT OF A STICKY WICKET

Shock

-1 to Focus tests.

When you escape your current predicament, discard and roll a die. Odd: gain Shock card "Unnerved."

UNNERVED

Shock

Discard by using an Investigative ability to gain information.

AGITATED

Shock

-1 to Presence tests.

When you use an Investigative ability to gain information, roll a die. Even: discard.

UNCERTAINTY

Shock

Discard when something you thought might be unreal turns out to be real.

QUESTIONING YOUR SENSES

Shock

-1 to Presence tests.

Discard when something you thought might be unreal turns out to be real.

ENTHRALLED

Shock

You may not act against the interests of the entity responsible for you taking this card, as you reasonably understand them.

When the entity harms another PC, roll a die. Even: discard.

Discard if the entity harms you or is destroyed (not by you, of course).

ALIEN PASSION

Shock

You love the entity responsible for your taking this card and may not act against its interests, as you reasonably understand them.

Discard when the entity is destroyed (not by you, of course).

INFLUENCE

Shock

The GM may require you to make a Difficulty 5 Composure test. On a failure, you take a subtly destructive, barely detectable action, specified by the GM, that would please the entity that gave you this card. After completing the action, roll a die, discarding this card on an even result. The GM must wait two intervals before triggering the effect again.

Discard when the entity is destroyed.

VIOLENT IMPULSE

Shock

After two or more intervals, the GM specifies that you strike violently against another PC. Test Fighting, spending 2 points (if available). The PC tests Athletics, with your result as the Difficulty, taking the Injury card "Abrasion," "Laceration," "Scratched," or "Roughed Up" (GM chooses). After completing the action, roll a die, discarding this card on an even result. GM must wait two intervals before triggering the effect again.

Discard when entity is destroyed.

ALARMING VISION

Shock

-1 Fighting vs. your main foe and its allies. +1 Fighting vs. your main foe's rivals.

When you gain important information about your main foe, roll a die. Meet or beat the number of Shock and Injury cards you hold to discard.

GHASTLY VISION

Shock

All PCs take -1 Fighting vs. your main foe and its allies. All gain +1 Fighting vs. your main foe's rivals.

When you aid your main foe, roll a die. Even: discard.

EMBARRASSED

Shock

Nonlethal. -1 to Focus tests. Discard on a Composure failure.

HUMILIATED

Shock

Nonlethal. -1 to Presence tests. Discard by winning over a difficult or intimidating witness.

UNEASE

Shock

Your next Presence or Focus test takes a -1 penalty. Then discard.

DREAD

Shock

-1 to Presence and Focus tests. After any such test, roll a die. Even: trade for "Unease."

PITY

Shock

Lose 2 Health and 2 Composure when you make a Push.

You received this card through concern for another. Discard by at least partially alleviating that character's distress.

SICK WITH WORRY

Shock

Lose all of your Health or Composure pool, whichever is higher, when you make a Push. If the pools are equal, you choose.

You received this card through concern for another. Discard by conclusively solving that character's main problem.

JINX

Shock

Player to your left takes -1 to tests. Discard when that player fails a test.

ILL-OMENED

Shock

When your group starts its next fight, its margin before anyone tests Fighting is -2, not the usual 0. Discard when your group loses a fight.

BAD PLACE

Shock

Counts as a Shock card only when you are in the place where you got it.

AWFUL PLACE

Shock

-1 to Presence tests. Discard if, while in the awful place, you find a core clue or make a Push.

RUEFUL

Shock

If the murderer is still at large or unidentified at the end of a session, lose 2 Composure. Trade for “Self-Reproachful” if you have 0 Composure in your pool at end of scenario.

SELF-REPROACHFUL

Shock; Continuity

You can’t refresh Composure in mid-scenario. If the murderer is found to be human, discard this card by bringing the murderer to justice. If the murderer is inhuman, discard by killing the murderer.

SKewed REALITY

Shock

-1 to Focus tests. When you get information from a GMC other PCs are reluctant to speak with, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: give this Shock card to another player.

REALITY HORROR

Shock

-1 to Focus tests. At the end of a scene in which you take the lead in gaining a core clue from a GMC, roll a die. Even: discard. Odd: give this Shock card to another player.

RATTLED

Shock

Your next test takes a -1 penalty. Then discard.

A DIVERTING INDISCRETION WILL PUT THIS IN PERSPECTIVE

Shock

-1 to Presence tests. Discard by taking a risk to indulge a vice.

RACING PULSE

Shock

Lose 1 Health each time you attempt a Physical test. Discard after your next Physical success.

RAMPANT DISTRUST

Shock

-1 to Composure tests against mental hazards. Discard by making a false alarm that creates a risk for any player character.

MORE THINGS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

Shock

When testing Composure due to a supernatural event, you get a +2 bonus when your die roll is even, and a -2 penalty when odd. Discard when you succeed at such a test.

ANYONE COULD BE SECRETLY DEAD

Shock

You can't make Interpersonal Pushes. Discard when your check to see if someone really has a material form causes you to pay a price.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Shock

Discard when another PC makes a successful test.

TIME TO PANIC

Shock

-1 to Focus tests. Make a tick mark whenever another PC succeeds at a test. Start over on any failure. Discard when you have three tick marks.

THE SHUDDERS

Shock

Roll a die; lose that number of Composure points, noting the number lost. If your Composure is already 0, trade for "An Image Seared in the Mind." Discard after a night's sleep. When you discard, roll a die. Even: regain those lost Composure points.

SHAKEN

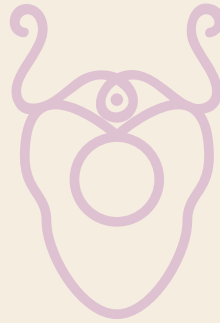
Shock

-1 to Composure tests.

HARDENED

Shock; Continuity

When you make a ruthless choice that saves a life, spend 3 Composure to discard.



SUPERSTITION

Shock

-1 to Focus tests.
Discard by taking a risk to avoid bad luck.

MAGICAL THINKING

Shock

Roll a die when receiving this card.
Odd: you can only make even-numbered point spends. Even: you can only make odd-numbered spends.
Discard when an apparently supernatural event has a logical explanation.

APPALLED

Shock

-1 to Composure tests.
Discard by bringing justice
to the torturer.

A DISH SERVED COLD

Shock

-1 to Composure tests.
Discard, and refresh your
Composure pool, by playing a
role in the torturer's demise.

THE PRICE OF FAILURE

Shock; Continuity

You can't spend Improvement points.
Discard by pursuing a lead the
team first learned of more than
an hour ago (table time).

A MORBID SCENE

Shock; Continuity

You can't spend Improvement points.
Lose 1 Health after any failed test.
Discard by pursuing a lead the
team first learned of more than
two hours ago (table time).

WHISPER OF THE SIGN

Shock

While in your presence,
other player characters suffer
-1 to Composure tests.
When another player character
fails a Composure test by a margin
of 1, roll a die. Even: discard.

SONG OF THE SIGN

Shock; Continuity

-2 to Composure tests; -1
to other Presence tests.
You may refresh any pool other than
Composure by committing murder.
Discard as recipient of an
Inspiration or Reassurance Push,
or by making a Steel Push.

BUTTERFLIES

Shock

Discard at end of scene.

COLLYWOBBLES

Shock

-1 to Focus tests.

Discard by nullifying the consequences of a previous setback.

HUMANS ARE THE TRUE MONSTERS

Shock

-1 to Presence tests.

Discard when you witness an act of redemptive altruism.

SHATTERED ILLUSIONS

Shock; Continuity

Take a Presence penalty equal to the number of Shock cards held by the PC (other than you) holding the highest number of Shock cards.

Discard when you witness an act of redemptive altruism.

A TOUCH OF THE SHAKES

Shock

-1 to Focus tests.

Discard by engaging in a restful activity.

AN IMAGE SEARED IN THE MIND

Shock

-1 to Focus tests.

At the end of any interval, make a Difficulty 3 Composure test. Success: discard.

Becomes a Continuity card if in hand at end of scenario.

THE CURSE IS THINKING ABOUT BEING CURSED

Shock; Continuity

+1 to Sense Trouble tests. Lose
1 Health on any character's
Sense Trouble success.
Discard when the person
who cursed you releases you
from the curse or dies.

CURSED

Shock

Discard when the person
who cursed you releases you
from the curse or dies.
If still in hand at end of scenario,
you inexplicably die.

A GNAWING AT THE BACK OF THE MIND

Shock

-1 to Composure tests.
When you take another Shock card,
spend 1 Composure to discard this one.

THE WILL ERODES

Shock

+1 to Tolls of supernatural creatures.
When you take another Shock card,
spend 1 Composure to discard this one.

THE TREMORS

Shock

-1 to Presence.
Discard by going to a scary location.
Discard by initiating an encounter
with a scary person, creature or entity

HACKLES RAISED

Shock

Pay 1 Health or Composure each
time a player character (including
you) attempts a Sense Trouble test.
Trade for "The Tremors" when
your Health and Composure
pools both equal 0.

MUSIC OF THE NIGHT

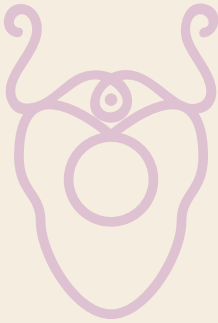
Shock

When you are about to fight the scenario's main foe, roll a die. On an odd result, -1 to Fighting until end of scenario. Discard on a Fighting success against the scenario's main foe.

POINT OF NO RETURN

Shock

If you meet the scenario's main foe, -1 to Fighting until end of scenario. Discard on a Fighting success against the scenario's main foe.



THE MIND REELS

Shock

+2 to Tolls of supernatural creatures. Discard when you destroy (or deliver to the reliable safekeeping of your allies) a copy of *The King in Yellow*.

WITNESS TO CARNAGE

Shock

-1 to all tests. Discard as recipient of a Push. Explain why that Push would help with this.

EXISTENCE IS A MEAT-GRINDER

Shock; Continuity

Tests take a penalty equal to the number of Shock cards you have in hand. Discard after participating in an event that restores your faith in humanity.

HAUNTED

Shock

Tests take a penalty equal to the number of Shock cards you have in hand.

Discard on a successful test that aids the group against supernatural horror.

RATIONALITY'S CRUEL VEIL

Shock

All tests take a penalty equal to the number of Shock cards you have in hand, plus 1.

STUNNED AND SADDENED

Shock

Lose 1 Composure at the end of each scene in which the deceased is mentioned.

At end of session, if you have more Composure in your pool than any other player character, discard this card.

WAVES OF GRIEF

Shock; Continuity

Whenever you regain lost Composure, subtract 1 from the number of points you would otherwise regain.

Discard by decisively defeating or countering the being or force that caused the death you mourn.

A BEASTLY SIGHT

Shock

Tests take a penalty equal to the number of Shock cards you have in hand.

Discard by killing or helping to kill the being, or another one like it.

IF ONLY YOU COULD FORGET

Shock

All tests take a penalty equal to the number of Shock cards you have in hand, plus 1.

Discard by killing or helping to kill the being, or another one like it.

A TRICK OF THE LIGHT, SURELY

Shock

Discard on a successful test that furthers the anti-Carcosa cause.

NO MASK! NO MASK!

Shock; Continuity

-1 to Composure tests when not in the presence of the supernatural. -2 when in the presence of the supernatural.

On a successful test that furthers the anti-Carcosa cause, trade for "A Trick of the Light, Surely."

MUST HAVE BEEN A HALLUCINATION

Shock

-1 to Sense Trouble tests.

Discard when you uncover a core clue.

REALITY COLLAPSE

Shock

-2 to Sense Trouble tests. Lose 1 Health each time you make a Push.

Trade for "Must Have Been a Hallucination" on a success that restores normality to the world.

A CROSSED LINE

Shock; Continuity

OUT OF CONTROL

Shock; Continuity

-1 to Composure tests to contain your emotions or resist destructive urges.

THE SELF CRUMBLES

Shock; Continuity

+3 to Tolls of supernatural creatures.
Trade for “The Mind Reels” when
you destroy (or deliver to the
reliable safekeeping of your allies)
a copy of *The King in Yellow*.

MORAL VERTIGO

Shock; Continuity

When you are in a position to kill
an adversary in cold blood, score
a Difficulty 4 Composure success
or give in to that impulse.
+2 to Sense Trouble tests when the danger
emanates from Carcosa or its minions.
Trade for “The Self Crumbles”
when you destroy (or deliver to the
reliable safekeeping of your allies)
a copy of *The King in Yellow*.

ALIEN SHORES

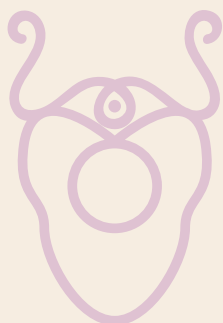
Shock

-1 to all tests.
Discard by succeeding at a test
that harms the schemes of the
King in Yellow or his minions.

UNEARTHLY JOURNEY

Shock

-2 to all tests.
Trade for “Alien Shores” by
succeeding at a test that harms
the schemes of the King in
Yellow or his cat’s-paws.
If still in hand at end of scenario,
counts as 2 Shock cards and
becomes a Continuity card.



WHEN YOU LOOK IN THE MIRROR, THE KING STARES BACK

Shock; Continuity

-1 to all tests.
Lose 1 Push at the start
of each scenario.
At the start of a scenario, spend all
your Composure points to trade
for “No Mask! No Mask!”

THEY BROKE YOU

Shock; Continuity

When you see an act of torture or violent bullying, you must make a Difficulty 4 Composure test to do anything other than hunch over, frozen in panic. Trade for "Avenger" by succeeding at the test and then taking decisive action against the perpetrator.

AVENGER

Shock; Continuity

When you see an act of torture or violent bullying, you must take decisive action against the perpetrator, or suffer -1 to Presence tests for the rest of the scenario. When you take decisive action, roll a die. Even: discard.

DISTRACTED

Shock

-1 to Focus tests.
After a Focus failure, spend 1 from the pool of any Focus ability to discard this card.

VISIBLY DISTRAUGHT

Shock

-1 to Presence tests.
After a Presence failure, spend 1 point from the pool of any Presence ability to discard this card.

DO NOT GO FORTH INTO THE AGORA

Shock

Make a Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble test every time you enter a place you have never been before. On a failure, -1 to all tests while in that location. Discard when you take an Injury card in a location you are very familiar with.

WEIRD INSIGHT

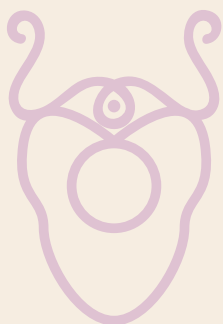
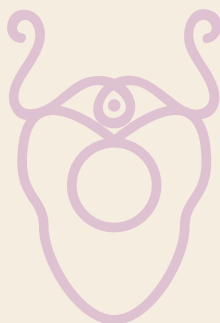
Shock

Spend 3 Composure to allow another player to discard a non-Continuity Shock card. Each time you do this, roll a die. On an odd result, this becomes a Continuity card.

KNOCKOUT DART

Shock

Unless your side routs the cannibals, you are captured and wake up in a basement veal-fattening pen. When the rest of the group rescues you from an appointment with a roasting spit, trade for Shock card “Humans are the True Monsters.”



NOT A SIGNIFICANT BULLET

Shock

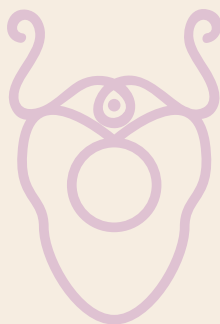
On your next test, roll a die and discard this card. Even result: +1 on test. Odd: -2 on test.

THE ATAVISTIC TERROR OF AN ANIMAL ATTACK

Shock

Lose 2 Health when you make a Push. If you can't spend the points, you can't make the Push.

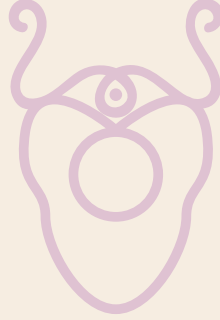
Discard by establishing your mastery over this type of creature.



BRAIN FEVER

Shock; Continuity

When you encounter the Sinister Mesmerist, -2 to Composure tests and -1 to Health tests until end of session. Discard when the Sinister Mesmerist is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, dead.



SHOWN YOUR OWN HORRIFIC DEATH

Shock; Continuity

-2 to Composure tests;
-1 on all other tests.
Discard when the Sinister Mesmerist is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, dead.

FED UPON

Shock

-1 to Composure tests.
Discard on a Composure success.

THOUGHT DRAIN

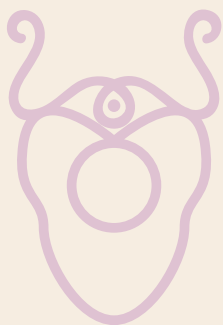
Shock

-1 to any Presence test on which you spend ability points.
If you gained this card while in Carcosa, discard when you leave it.

INTOXICATING BITE

Shock

Each time you attempt to act against the interest of the vampire who bit you, you must succeed at a Difficulty 6 Composure test to proceed.
Trade for "Haunted" as recipient of an Occultism Push.



ENRAPTURING BITE

Shock

You can't take part in fights against vampires and actively interfere with your comrades' attempts to fight them. -2 to Fighting tests against PCs combating vampires in your presence. -2 to Composure tests to resist vampire commands.

Discard when the vampire that bit you is destroyed.

VAMPIRIC DEATH STRIKE

Injury; Shock

Counts as 2 Injuries and 1 Shock. Vampire may choose to instead deliver an "Enrapturing Bite." Discard after vampire is killed and you become recipient of a Difficulty 7 First Aid success.

If still in hand at end of scenario, your character becomes an undead foe controlled by the GM and you create a new one.

SNAKES, OUR OLDEST FEAR

Shock

Roll a die. Even: lose 1 Composure.

Odd: lose 2 Composure.

Discard after a Composure success.

KEENING OF THE DAMNED

Shock; Continuity

Whenever you hear music, or a loud or strange sound, -1 to Presence tests until the next interval.

Discard at end of any scenario by spending 2 Composure.

HELLISH ARIA

Shock; Continuity

Whenever you hear music, or a loud or strange sound, this also becomes an Injury card, and remains so until the end of the next interval.

Discard whenever it is an Injury card by spending 3 Composure.

PARIS

CHARACTER SHEET

NAME

PLAYER

FIELD

DRIVE

INVESTIGATIVE ABILITIES

I Rely On

I Seek To Protect

That Deuced Peculiar Business

PUSHES (2): ○ ○

GENERAL ABILITIES

Athletics (Physical) _____

Composure (Presence) _____

Fighting (Physical) _____

First Aid (Focus) _____

Health (Physical) _____

Mechanics (Focus) _____

Preparedness (Presence) _____

Riding (Physical) _____

Sense Trouble (Presence) _____

Sneaking (Focus) _____

Upper-Crust American Names

Use these lists as inspiration for player character names, or for the names of supporting characters, such as friends and family back home.

Male Given Names

Albert	Dallas	Lawrence	Percy
Anthony	Dennis	Lewis	Philip
Archie	Edward	Luther	Raymond
Arthur	Ernest	Marion	Reggie
Benjamin	Everett	Martin	Richard
Bernard	Fraser	Max	Samuel
Calvin	Harry	Ned	Sillerton
Chester	Henry	Newland	Sim
Clarence	Herbert	Oliver	Theodore
Claude	Horace	Oscar	Walter
Clifford	Howard	Owen	Warren

Female Given Names

Ada	Elizabeth	Julia	May
Adeline	Ella	Laura	Nellie
Alice	Emma	Lena	Rachel
Annie	Eva	Lillian	Regina
Augusta	Flora	Lily	Rose
Carrie	Francesca	Louise	Sallie
Catherine	Grace	Luna	Sarah
Clea	Helen	Mabel	Stella
Cora	Henrietta	Margaret	
Daisy	Ida	Mary	
Dora	Jennie	Mattie	

Gender Neutral Given Names

Ainsley	Dorian	Leigh	Shelly
Ashley	Evelyn	Laurie	Shirley
Aspen	Frankie	Lesley	Sidney
Avery	Gale	Lindsay	Theo
Bailey	George	Lynn	Tracy
Bertie	Hilary	Manny	Val
Beverly	Jack	Marion	Vivian
Cissie	Jay	Monroe	Whitney
Cory	Jess	Reggie	
Dana	Jules	Rudy	
Daryl	Kay	Sandy	

Surnames

Appleton	Elliot	Leath	Tilden
Archer	Fallowby	Lefferts	Trenor
Astor	Farish	Letterblair	Trent
Barris	Farrar	Pierpont	van der Lyden
Beaufort	Fortin	Rosedale	van Siclen
Braith	Godfrey	Rowden	Vine
Carfry	Gryce	Sanford	Viner
Carver	Hayes	Schuyler	Welland
Chivers	Helmer	Selby	Wentworth
Curtis	Hilton	Selden	Wharton
Darrow	Jackson	Silverton	Winsett
Dorset	Jameson	Stepney	
Drummond	La Grange	Struthers	

French Names**Male Given Names**

Alexandre	Émile	Joseph	Odilon
Aloysius	Étienne	Jules	Pascal
Alphonse	Eugene	Justin	Paul
Amable	François	Lebigre	Philippe
Andre	Gabriel	Leon	Pierre
Antoine	Georges	Léonard	Raymond
Aristide	Gustave	Marc	René
Auguste	Henri	Marcel	Samuel
Balthazar	Isidore	Maurice	Silvère
Baptiste	Jacques	Maxime	Théodore
Charles	Jean	Michel	Victor
Édouard	Jean Marie	Octave	Xavier

Female Given Names

Adelaide	Catherine	Gabrielle	Miette
Adèle	Céleste	Gervaise	Noëlle
Adelina	Celestine	Hélène	Pauline
Adelphe	Cesarine	Hyacinthe	Renée
Adrienne	Cirette	Joséphine	Rosalie
Anathalie	Claire	Julienne	Rose
Ange	Clémence	Laure	Sidonie
Angèle	Clotilde	Lea	Sophie
Artémise	Colombe	Leontine	Suzanne
Azélie	Delphine	Lisa	Sylvia
Berthe	Elizabeth	Marcelline	Virginie
Blanche	Félicité	Marie	
Cadine	Flore	Marthe	

Gender Neutral Given Names

Alix	Cléo	Léonide	Morgan
Amour	Cyrille	Loïs	Narcisse
Ange	Dany	Lou	Nico
Ariel	Dominique	Lucrèce	Noa
Aubrey	Florence	Mady	Placide
Camille	Francis	Manu	Sacha
Candide	Jordan	Maxime	Yaël
Claude	Kim	Modeste	

Surnames

Adenis	Ducasse	Lacaille	Roudier
Arnaud	Durand	Lantier	Saccard
Aubertot	Escudier	Larsonneau	Sagette
Avenel	Eyriès	Lassouche	Sarriette
Bapaume	Fath	Logre	Sicardot
Barbier	Fontaine	Mareuil	Sorgue
Béraud	Forneret	Masson	Tabareau
Bihan	Fouard	Méhudin	Teissière
Brisson	Francon	Mignon	Touche
Burget	Frenet	Mouret	Toutin-Laroche
Cabot	Garçonnet	Patin	Tregunc
Cain	Gavard	Peirotte	Trevec
Cassoute	Gavaudan	Picou	Uzanne
Chantegreil	Goulven	Plamondon	Vanel
Chantemesse	Gouraud	Privat	Vatout
Cuvier	Gradelle	Puech	Verlaque
Daste	Jay	Quenu	Vicaire
de Carnavant	Johanneau	Rébufat	Villiers
de Rozan	Joly	Rengade	Vuillet
Dubruel	Jusserand	Robine	

Tables and References

Relative Challenge Table

Relative Challenge	Difficulty (Escape)	Difficulty (Other)	Difficulty (Kill)	Toll
Weak	2	3	3	0
Tough but Outmatched	2	2	4	0
Evenly Matched	3	4	5	1
Superior	3	4	6	1
Vastly Superior	3	6	7	2
Overwhelming	4	7	8	3
Too Awful to Contemplate	5	8	10	4

FIGHTING QUICK REFERENCE

1. Players define objectives.
2. GM determines Difficulty.
3. GM prepares the Fight Tracker.
4. Players declare spends.
5. GM determines order of action.
6. Participating characters take -1 Fighting and +1 to Tolls for each non-participating character (see p. 59 for exceptions).
7. Next player in order:
 - (a) Describes what the character is trying to do.
 - (b) Makes a fighting test.
 - (c) On a success, the player:
 - i. Narrates a successful action.
 - ii. Either:
 - A. Pays the foes' Toll.
 - B. Takes a Minor Injury, which the GM narrates.
 - (d) On a failure:
 - i. The GM narrates the foe's successful action.
 - ii. On a margin of 0 or 1: the character takes a Minor Injury, which the GM narrates.
 - iii. On a higher margin, the character takes a Major Injury, which the GM narrates.
 - (e) The GM notes the player's margin, truncating margins of 4 or more to 3, and underlining them.
 - (f) The GM incorporates the player's margin into the group's running total and announces it.
 - i. If it is greater than 0, the players narrate a situation in which they have the upper hand.
 - ii. Otherwise, the GM narrates a situation in which the foes have the upper hand.
8. When all players have acted, consult the final margin.
 - (a) If more than 0:
 - i. Players whose characters scored margins of 0 or more describe the group achieving its chosen objective.
 - ii. Players whose margins were truncated choose to:
 - A. Gain a Push.
 - B. Refresh a General ability other than Fighting.
 - (b) If less than 0, the GM describes their failure to achieve the objective, possibly including the circumstances preventing the victorious foe from killing the surviving PCs.

Physical Hazard Table

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Injury	Major Injury
Cobra Strike	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Snakebit	Deadly Venom
Drinking (Moderate)*	4	<i>Health</i>	Tipsy	Intoxicated
Drowning	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Cough, Choke, Sputter	Lungful of Water
Escape Burning Building	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Singed	Burned
Exploding Bomb	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Thrown Free of the Explosion	In the Blast Radius
Flying Debris	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Something in Your Eye	Puncture Wound
Food Poisoning	4	<i>Health</i>	Stay by the Water Closet	Ructious Innards
Leap From Second Story Window	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Hard Landing	Turned Ankle
Roughed Up While Helpless	4	<i>Health</i>	It Looks Worse Than It Is	Broken Fingers
Sea Sickness	4	<i>Health</i>	Woozy	Poseidon's Wrath
Sniper Fire	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Grazed	Shot
Thrown Rock	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Abrasion	Concussed
Toxin	4	<i>Health</i>	Mostly Resistant	Find the Antidote
Crushing Hazard	4	<i>Athletics</i>	Contused	Crushed
Angry Mob Sets Upon You	5	<i>Athletics</i>	Black and Blue	Badly Beaten
Falling Chandelier	5	<i>Athletics</i>	Glass Shards	Direct Chandelier Hit
Severe Exposure	5	<i>Health</i>	Warm Blanket Needed	Ravaged by the Elements
Smoke Inhalation	5	<i>Health</i>	Lingering Cough	Scarred Lungs
Tortured	5	<i>Health</i>	Through the Ringer	Breaking Point
Leap Between Rooftops	6	<i>Athletics</i>	Hard Landing	Fall to Street Level

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Injury	Major Injury
Cyanide Poisoning	7	<i>Health</i>	Whiff of Cyanide	Snootful of Cyanide
Fall From Great Height	7	<i>Athletics</i>	It's a Miracle You're Alive	Massive Injuries
Drinking (Heavy)**	8	<i>Health</i>	Tipsy	Intoxicated

*Moderate, by today's standards

**Unrestrained binge drinking, as is the norm among Bohemians of Belle Époque Paris

Mental Hazard Table

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Shock	Major Shock
You Badger a Vulnerable Witness	3	<i>Composure</i>	Overstepped Bounds	Wracked by Remorse
You Find Yourself Hemmed In	3	<i>Composure</i>	Oh Dear	Bit of a Sticky Wicket
You Hear a Disquieting Sound	3	<i>Composure</i>	Unnerved	Agitated
You Make a Public Spectacle of Yourself	3	<i>Composure</i>	Embarrassed	Humiliated
Your Senses Deceive You (or Do They?)	3	<i>Composure</i>	Uncertainty	Questioning Your Senses
A Malign Spirit Tries to Direct Your Actions	4	<i>Composure</i>	Influence	Violent Impulse
A Psychic Sending Floods Your Mind	4	<i>Composure</i>	Alarming Vision	Ghastly Vision
A Supernatural Being Kills or Maims a Bystander	4	<i>Composure</i>	A Beastly Sight	If Only You Could Forget
A Worker of Dread Magic Curses You	4	<i>Composure</i>	The Curse is Thinking About Being Cursed	Cursed
After a Violent Demise, You Come Upon the Corpse	4	<i>Composure</i>	The Shudders	Shaken
An Alluring Entity Tugs at Your Heartstrings	4	<i>Composure</i>	Enthralled	Alien Passion

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Shock	Major Shock
Carcosan Wildlife Dines on Your Soul	4	<i>Composure</i>	Fed Upon	Thought Drain
Evidence Suggests That You Helped Publish <i>The King in Yellow</i>	4	<i>Composure</i>	The Will Erodes	The Mind Reels
For the First Time in Your Life, Someone Just Tried to Kill You	4	<i>Composure</i>	Racing Pulse	Rampant Distrust
Glimpsing Carcosa	4	<i>Composure</i>	The Tremors	Hackles Raised
Music Foreshadows a Coming Foe	4	<i>Composure</i>	Music of the Night	Point of No Return
Someone You Care About Is in Severe Distress	4	<i>Composure</i>	Pity	Sick with Worry
Something's Just Not Right Here	4	<i>Composure</i>	Unease	Dread
That Person You Just Spoke to Was a Ghost All Along	4	<i>Composure</i>	More Things in Heaven and Earth	Anyone Could Be Secretly Dead
Things Go from Bad to Worse	4	<i>Composure</i>	Cause for Concern	Time to Panic
You Court Bad Luck	4	<i>Composure</i>	Jinx	Ill-Omened
You Enter an Eerie or Haunted Place	4	<i>Composure</i>	Snakebit	Deadly Venom
You Gaze Willingly at the Yellow Sign	4	<i>Composure</i>	Whisper of the Sign	Song of the Sign
You Revisit a Past Source of Distress	4	<i>Composure</i>	Butterflies	Collywobbles
You See a Monster Up Close but Do Not Further Interact With It	4	<i>Composure</i>	Haunted	Rationality's Cruel Veil
You See, But Do Not Interact With, a Ghost	4	<i>Composure</i>	Rattled	A Diverting Indiscretion Will Put This in Perspective
You Suspect That Reality is Being Rewritten	4	<i>Composure</i>	Skewed Reality	Reality Horror
You Tempt Fate	4	<i>Composure</i>	Superstition	Magical Thinking

Situation	Difficulty	Ability	Minor Shock	Major Shock
Your Snooping Led to a Witness' Murder	4	<i>Composure</i>	Rueful	Self-Reproachful
A Friend or Loved One Has Been Violently Killed	5	<i>Composure</i>	Stunned and Saddened	Waves of Grief
An Apparent Mask Is Really a Monstrous, Living Face	5	<i>Composure</i>	A Trick of the Light, Surely	No Mask! No Mask!
You Enter an Area Where Carcosa Overlaps with Our Own World	5	<i>Composure</i>	Must Have Been a Hallucination	Reality Collapse
You Just Killed a Person	5	<i>Composure</i>	A Touch of the Shakes	An Image Seared in the Mind
You Look at the Frontispiece Illustration of <i>The King in Yellow</i>	5	<i>Composure</i>	A Gnawing at the Back of the Mind	The Will Erodes
You See Many Corpses or a Large Battle	5	<i>Composure</i>	Witness to Carnage	Existence is a Meat-Grinder
You Witness Man's Inhumanity to Man	5	<i>Composure</i>	Humans are the True Monsters	Shattered Illusions
You Witness Torture	5	<i>Composure</i>	Appalled	A Dish Served Cold
Your Failure Brings About a Tragic Resolution	6	<i>Athletics</i>	The Price of Failure	A Morbid Scene
You Kill in Cold Blood or Commit Torture	6	<i>Athletics</i>	A Crossed Line	Out of Control
You Learn for Certain That You Helped Publish the Play	6	<i>Athletics</i>	The Mind Reels	The Self Crumbles
You Just Read the Play	7	<i>Athletics</i>	The Self Crumbles	Moral Vertigo
You Leave This World to Explore Carcosa	7	<i>Athletics</i>	Alien Shores	Unearthly Journey
You Meet the Yellow King	8	<i>Athletics</i>	No Mask! No Mask!	When You Look in the Mirror, the King Stares Back

Investigative Ability Worksheet

Player name					
Character name					
Architecture (A)					
Art History (A)					
Assess Honesty (I)					
Belle-Lettres (A)					
Bonhomie (I)					
Culture (A)					
Demimonde (I)					
Fashion (A)					
History (A)					
Inspiration (I)					
Intuition (I)					
Military History (A)					
Miscellany (A)					
Natural History (A)					
Negotiation (I)					
Occultism (A)					
Officialdom (I)					
Painting (T)					
Photography (T)					
Poetry (A)					
Reassurance (I)					
Research (A)					
Sculpture (T)					
Society (I)					
Steel (I)					
Technology (T)					

Spotlight Tracker Table

Player	Character	Last Key Episode

Relationship Table

Player	Character	Relies On	Protects

Group Matrix

Player	Character	Role	Drive	Deuced Peculiar Business

Fight Trackers

Player						
Spend						
Margin						
Total						

Player						
Spend						
Margin						
Total						

Player						
Spend						
Margin						
Total						

Player						
Spend						
Margin						
Total						

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