

# ALL FOR ONE

## *Régime Diabolique*

### RICHELIEU'S GUIDE TO

# *Serious Situations*

## ❧ *Introduction* ❧

A band of daring Musketeers cautiously sneak through a nobleman's castle, intent on reaching the dungeons without alerting the guards to their presence before the deranged noble can complete the fell ritual to summon a demon. A carriage loaded with gunpowder and a burning fuse careens down a hill toward the Spanish ambassador's residence, closely followed by mounted Musketeers desperate to board the moving vehicle and pull out the fuse before the deadly cargo explodes. A madman stalks the streets of Paris by night, murdering young noblewomen, but hot on his heels are the intrepid Musketeers. Can the heroes deduce the identity of his next victim and locate her before the killer claims another life? Do these situations sound like the sort of things you want your *All for One* characters to be involved in, but you're not sure how to pull it off? Well, look no further! This supplement contains rules for exactly just these sorts of wild and exciting events.

## ❧ *Group Extended Actions* ❧

Extended actions are a standard part of the *Ubiquity* rules. At their most basic, they involve one hero, perhaps with others providing a Teamwork bonus, attempting to acquire a certain number of successes through using a single Skill in order to complete a task. Group extended actions, as the name implies, are an extension of those rules, intended to involve the entire group in the completion of a complex or lengthy task, while encouraging the use of *different* Skills to complete the objective.

Group extended actions are intended to simulate things such as chases, exploring a castle, negotiating treaties, boarding actions or sieges, planting bombs, and so on. In combat situations, it is more likely the standard extended actions rules will apply, with just one or two characters cooperating on a task while the rest lock swords with the group's foes.

The key difference between group and regular extended actions is that in these rules every hero participates in the task. Although he makes a roll as an individual, his actions usually directly benefit the entire group. For instance, if one character makes an Athletics roll to close the distance to an escaping villain, then every member of the group acts as if it scored the same total. We'll have plenty of examples for you later, showcasing typical scenes. Although the rules presented below may appear complex at first glance, they are quite intuitive and extremely flexible once you learn the basics. The main thing to remember is that these are abstract rules intended for a cinematic roleplaying game of swashbuckling horror, and thus work differently than the standard combat round rules.

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## Defining the Scene

Before she can run a group extended action, the Gamemaster needs to determine the nature of the scene, the outcome, and what failure may do to the group.

For now all she needs are the raw essentials—adding in specific details come later. For instance, a group extended action might be defined as, “Chase the villain through the bustling streets of Paris and catch him before he disappears from sight and goes to ground.”

Armed with this basic information, the Gamemaster can now elaborate on the description at the start of the scene, describing the location exactly as she would in a combat encounter. As the extended action plays out, the scene is likely to change, opening new avenues for the characters and presenting them with new challenges they must overcome.

## Running Group Actions

In a combat scene, the characters and villains take turns to perform actions in order of initiative. In a group extended action, initiative is optional, as the villain may be an inactive participant rather than an active one. That is, only the characters’ rolls directly affect the outcome of the scene. Whether or not initiative is used is left to the Gamemaster to decide. If she elects not to roll, then the characters can act in any order, even changing the order in which they take actions on a turn-by-turn basis. Every character must act.

## The Passage of Time

Because a group extended action is abstract, so is the passage of time. A “combat turn,” the time it takes to perform an action, might represent a few seconds, several minutes, one hour, or an entire day, depending on the nature of the task. For instance, a chase through the streets of Paris is likely to be run in standard combat turns (about six seconds), whereas scouring Paris for clues to the hideout of a notorious arsonist might take an hour or an entire day per roll.

## Skills

Characters can use either Skills or Attribute rolls in group extended actions. For brevity we will refer only to Skills below, to include both Skills or Attribute rolls.

In a group extended action, every character must take one Attack action each turn. This can be an Attribute or Skill roll. Every character must act, but one may delay his action in order to use Teamwork (see below).

Don’t bother with Move actions, even in a chase—it’s logical that the party is moving, either at a cautious walk or full sprint during the extended action. As a general rule, running does not forfeit the character’s Attack ac-

tion for the round. Remember, this is an abstract set of rules intended to promote fun and dramatic play, not stifle player creativity by strict adherence to the rules.

For the purposes of group extended actions, Magick is treated like any other Skill. The sorcerer does not have to cast a spell over multiple rounds—he simply describes his intended action and rolls the dice.

The character’s choice of Skill is up to him. He should pick whatever he thinks best fits the scene, his intended action, and, of course, gives him the best chance of successes. However, repeated use of the same Skill should be discouraged and even penalized or disallowed.

Players should be encouraged to describe their character’s action, not just designate Skills and roll dice. Players are both actors in and the audience of a swash-buckling movie—performing exciting stunts and giving cool descriptions should be rewarded with Style points. Without this description, a group extended action becomes a boring series of “I roll this” and “I roll that.”

## Skill Use

Although certain Skills will be more suited to the action than others, group extended actions are, for the most part, intended to be dramatic and encourage creative and collaborative roleplaying. In order to prevent characters from using their highest Skill turn after turn or from relying on the same Skill over and over, the Gamemaster may wish to use one of the following options.

- \* Each time the same Skill is used during the extended action a cumulative –2 penalty is incurred, regardless of who performs the action. This works for extended actions where 20 or fewer successes are required, but it gets very restrictive when the group needs more.

- \* Each character may use a specific Skill only once during the extended action. Thus, once a character has attempted a Riding roll, he cannot use Riding again.

- \* Skills may be reused, but each specific Skill may be used only once a turn, regardless of how many characters are in the group.

- \* Each Skill may be used a set number of time throughout the extended action, regardless of which character uses the Skill. As a general guideline, a Skill may be used just once for every 10 successes required to complete the extended action. Thus, a task with 30 successes permits the same Skill to be used a maximum of three times.

- \* No Skill is restricted. The characters can all use the same Skill round after round. This is ideal for extended group actions that take the form of combat, such as boarding a pirate ship, where repeated use of certain Skills is logical.

Regardless of which option you use for a given action group extended action, encourage the players to use different Skills, and reward those who do in entertaining or clever ways with a Style point. Characters who rely solely on the same Skill should never lose Style points, but they should not earn them either, even if they perform dramatic stunts.



## Keeping the Group Together

Despite just one character making each roll, he is generally doing so on behalf of the entire group. For example, if a character successfully uses Riding to bring his horse level with a runaway carriage, then it is easiest to assume the entire party moves to the same position so you don't have to begin tracking relative positions.

However, in some circumstances actions will only benefit the individual who made them. In general, such actions do not count toward achieving ultimate success. Using our example above, only the character who makes an Athletics roll leaps from his horse onto the carriage roof.

Gamemasters should try to keep the party together for the sake of progressing the narrative, but common sense must always apply.

**Example:** *Claudette is chasing a villain through the streets of Paris. Henri, a fellow Musketeer, has already used Athletics. If Claudette uses the same Skill, she will incur a -2 penalty. A native of Paris, she asks the Gamemaster if she knows any short cuts. After a brief think, the Gamemaster says she can use her Intelligence at Difficulty 3 to know of a short cut.*

*Claudette says, "This way, my friends! We should be able to avoid the crowds by using these alleys, and perhaps even close the distance to our quarry."*

*On his action, Jacques mounts a horse and kicks its flanks. Although this scores nothing toward the party's successes, Jacques can now use his Riding Skill on subsequent turns. Although he will be moving faster than the others in theory, he is also clearing a path through the street for his comrades to follow, allowing them to stay close behind.*

## Teamwork Bonuses

Logically, the best thing the characters can do to ensure success is use teamwork, where applicable, to support the character with the highest dice pool in the hope of getting a lot of successes.

While this makes perfect sense from a purely game mechanics point of view, it does nothing to encourage creativity or promote acts of derring-do among the group as a whole. In cinematic terms, it would look extremely dull on the big screen if the main hero kept repeating the same action over and over. As such, a maximum of one character per round may provide a Teamwork bonus.

Note that in extended actions where the villains get to roll dice (see below), they never use Teamwork.

## Taking the Average

Depending on the type of failure used and the group's dice pools, the Gamemaster may disallow Taking the Average. While it is a standard die mechanic, group extended actions are intended to be dramatic, and there is no drama without the risk of failure.

In general, Taking the Average should only be al-

lowed when the extended action is time-sensitive, or the characters suffer damage each turn the task is left uncompleted. While the characters can accrue a small number of successes each action, the time limit or damage is a natural encouragement to risk rolling the dice in the hope of ending the venture sooner.

## Resources

The Gamemaster must decide whether or not a Resource Skill bonus can be applied. This should be based on the Skill being augmented and the nature of the group extended action.

For instance, a character with Contacts (Church) likely can't use his Contacts' knowledge if aboard a ship caught in a storm, but by dropping a name or two he might be able to gain a bonus to bluff his way past the Cardinal's Guards or convince a servant he is on an errand for a senior churchman.

## Talents

Certain Talents provide a fixed bonus to Skills. So long as the appropriate Skill is being used, these apply as normal during a group extended action. Other Talents must be adjudicated by the Gamemaster, based on specific circumstances and the nature of the scene.

For instance, the Run Talent doubles a character's speed when running. Since extended actions forgo the measurement of distances, the Gamemaster might decide to grant a character a +2 bonus if he uses Athletics to try and close the gap to a fleeing foe during a short duration chase scene. The bonus probably doesn't apply in chases where a combat turn is measured in hours or days—the character likely couldn't keep up a run for that long.

## Skills Without Successes

On occasion, a character might make a Skill roll that does not push the extended action toward completion. For instance, a character might ask to make an Intelligence roll to see if he knows of a shortcut, has visited a location before, or knows a specific person in their path. Another might use his Strength to bar a door, preventing guards from following the characters, use Brawl to knock out a sentry, or use Athletics to leap from the back of a horse he is sharing, thus gaining him his own mount and enabling him to use his Riding Skill on future turns.

Successes gained from such actions may affect the story, but they do not increase the accumulated successes needed to complete the task.

## Moving the Action Forward

At the end of each character's action, the Gamemaster should interpret the result and describe the outcome.

While this presents the characters with a clear reference to how well they are doing and how near they are to victory, it also gives the Gamemaster chance to insert

new information or change the scene, advancing the narrative of the extended action and giving the heroes new problems to overcome. This in turn may bring other Skills into play, preventing the action from grinding to a halt as the characters start to run out of useful Skills.

**Example:** *Claudette makes her Intelligence roll and succeeds. She leads the group into the narrow back alleys of Paris. The Gamemaster says, "Claudette leads you into a twisting maze of narrow alleys, taking left and right turns seemingly at random. As she nears the end of an alley, you see your quarry rush across the entrance. You've closed the gap!"*

*"Unfortunately, before you reach the end a group of Cardinal's Guards turns into the alleyway. On seeing you, they stop, smiling evilly. Sensing you are giving chase, and always seeking for ways to embarrass the Musketeers, they move to block your route."*

*Whoever gets to act next might try Con, Diplomacy, or Intimidation to get the Cardinals' men to move aside, use Acrobatics to tumble past them, or use Brawl to shove them aside and clear a path.*

## Difficulty

The Difficulty of the task is determined by the Gamemaster. In most instances it should be based on the player's choice of Skill in relation to his description of the action and the intended outcome. The more plausible and directly applicable a Skill is to the action, the lower the Difficulty. However, even the most applicable Skill has a minimum Difficulty of two.

Other Difficulties might be set by a NPC's attributes. For instance, questioning a subject might have a Difficulty equal to the captive's Willpower rating, while tricking one is likely to be set against his Intelligence.

**Example:** *The Musketeers are chasing a suspected murderer through the crowded streets of Paris. One of the heroes wants to discharge his pistol in order to cause the crowd to move aside. He proposes a Firearms roll, saying he will fire at the walls to amplify the blast and make it louder, and avoid hitting anyone.*

*The Gamemaster ponders this, and decides the Difficulty is 5—firing a gun in the streets may well cause a panic, with frightened citizens blocking the route in their bid to escape the madman firing at them. Thus, it is more a liability than an aid.*

*Had the character opted for Intimidation, perhaps barking out, "King's men, let us through!" the Gamemaster would have lowered the Difficulty to 3—the street is noisy and full of people, so the command might not be heard.*

## Modifiers

Group extended actions rarely take place in static, empty environments. Fields and roads are uneven, forests require maneuvering between trees, castles have

creaky floors, streets are crowded or slippery with filth, ships toss and buck in storm-tossed seas, and darkness can make it hard to pursue quarry. Such factors affect the characters by imposing modifiers. Of course, not every action taken during a group extended action will be affected by environmental conditions, no matter how prevalent they are.

For instance, making an Athletics roll to sprint across icy cobblestones while trying to work a path through a flock of sheep might incur a -4 penalty for the twin impediments. However, these environmental conditions have little impact on an Animal Handling or Intimidation roll to shoo the sheep along, or on a character who uses Perception to keep an eye on the fleeing quarry.

Positive modifiers are usually awarded based on character decisions. For instance, if they are infiltrating a noble's castle on the night of a Satanic ritual, donning black cloaks with face-concealing hoods may give them a +2 bonus to fool guards or servants into thinking the infiltrators are actually members of the coven. Similarly, a necromancer likely knows a few generic terms that could be used to fool sentries in a similar manner.

## Ending the Action

A group extended action typically reaches its conclusion in one of three ways.

- \* The party secures a set number of successes. Typically, an easy action requires just 10 successes, a moderate one 20 successes, an arduous task 30 successes, and a herculean endeavor 40+ successes.

The number of successes should be modified to suit the characters' competency. If the average rating of Skills likely to be used is 8 or higher, then even a simple task might require 20 successes. Conversely, if the party is sorely lacking in useful Skills, a herculean endeavor might be lowered to 30, or even 20, successes. The overall requirement for victory might be lower, but without the right Skills securing victory is no less arduous.

- \* The characters fail (see below).

- \* The nature of the action might prematurely and permanently change, invalidating the rest of the extended task. For instance, the characters end their questioning of a nobleman suspected of devilry and decide to draw their blades and engage him in combat.

## Breaking Down Actions

Although a task usually has one overall objective, reaching it might involve one or more shorter tasks. Each of these small tasks should be completed when the characters reach a set number of successes.

For instance, the characters have to infiltrate a noble's house, locate important papers, and then make good their escape. The Gamemaster decides to split the extended action into three scenes. The first, the infiltration, requires 8 successes; the second, finding the papers just 4 successes; and the escape a further 8 successes.

Each task is normally isolated from the next one. That is, excess successes from one extended scene do not carry over to the next—they are simply lost. However, Gamemasters may carry these over if they feel the successes would help in the next scene as well.

The advantage of designing smaller tasks is that while a character might not have a Skill set suited to one part of the overall task, he may shine in another.

**Example:** *Using the example above, the characters have managed to sneak into a noble's chateau and are searching for incriminating letters that prove he is a traitor. So far the group has accumulated a total of 10 successes. They need just two more to find the papers.*

*Louis makes a Linguistics roll and scores a huge 8 successes! In a single scene task, the party would now have secured 18 successes and be close to escaping (the Gamemaster could rule that during the search Louis uncovered a reference to a secret passage leading from the noble's study). However, because each scene is a separate extended action, Louis scores 2 successes, enough to complete the second part of the endeavor.*

*Escaping with the papers still requires the party to accrue another 8 successes.*

## The Price of Failure

The characters may be heroes, but success is not guaranteed. If group extended actions simply allowed the players to keep rolling dice until the characters succeeded then there would be no drama, and little point in actually rolling the dice. Hence, the possibility of failure must be worked into each task.

Failure can take many forms. Some options for failing a die roll are presented below. The list is not exhaustive, and Gamemasters are strongly encouraged to come up with their own ideas suited to the specific task.

Similarly, these suggestions need not be used in isolation, and in some cases they impose no overall chance for failure by themselves. By combining two or more elements, the Gamemaster can create a unique set of failure conditions for a specific task.

Regardless of the option chosen, failure in the group extended action should not mean the entire adventure comes to a sudden halt. Failure may result in reprimands, loss of reputation, or loss of equipment, but there must be an avenue open to continue the game.

For example, perhaps a storm sinks the heroes' ship. While the Gamemaster could rule they drown, he decides they are washed up on a small island. Although they have lost their only mode of transportation and much of the personal equipment, they are alive. Maybe they can build a raft, or they discover scurvy pirates using the island as a base. The group's misfortune may be a blessing in disguise, as not only can they steal a ship, but they can rid the sea of France's enemies at the same time (and maybe recover a little of the pirates' booty).

\* **Damage:** At the end of each round, after every character has completed one action, they, their mounts,

or their vehicles, as appropriate to the task at hand, take damage. Damage may be lethal, representing actual physical harm, or nonlethal, representing physical and mental fatigue, or non-life threatening injuries like bruises. Such damage is typically applied automatically, ignoring all Defenses. For instance, if the characters are trying to rescue someone from a burning house, they suffer one automatic nonlethal wound from smoke inhalation and the heat of the blaze at the end of each turn until the task is completed.

\* **Increased Difficulty #1:** Each failed roll makes the heroes' task much harder to accomplish. If the party is chasing someone, a failure might mean they are further away, increasing the odds their prey will escape.

Each failure increases every the Difficulty of every action by one point. Eventually the Difficulties will get so high that the characters have no hope of success and will be forced to abandon their endeavor.

If the Gamemaster decides to use this, he should allow the characters to lower the Difficulty penalty by one point by forfeiting all the successes from a successful roll. For instance, due to a run of bad luck the characters are at +2 Difficulty to all actions and they still need another 9 successes to achieve victory. The next character to act manages to score 2 successes. He elects to forfeit these. The group still needs 9 successes, but the task is now slightly easier as the Difficulty is only +1.

\* **Increased Difficulty #2:** As above, except only the Difficulty of the next roll made by one of the characters increases by 1. After this, the Difficulty resets to normal.

\* **Individual Peril:** A character who fails a roll may be placed in individual peril. Actions used to rescue him do not garner successes toward the greater goal—such is the price of failure. For instance, a character who fails to leap from his horse onto a carriage roof is clinging on by his fingertips. He can drag himself up with a Strength or Athletics roll, or nimbly flip onto the roof with an Acrobatics roll next turn, but his action does not accumulate successes toward completion of the extended action.

\* **Three Strikes:** The characters fail the group extended action if they score three failures before reaching the required number of successes.

\* **Time-Sensitive:** The characters must achieve the required number of successes in a fixed time period (such as six turns) or they fail the task automatically. A failed roll has no effect beyond wasting valuable time. As tide and time wait for no man, there is nothing the heroes can do to claw back lost time caused by failed rolls.

\* **Zero Successes:** Each level of failure subtracts from the heroes' accrued successes. For instance, a hero rolls two successes on a Difficulty 4 action. The party loses two successes from their accumulated total. Should the total ever reach zero (or lower) at the end of a turn (after every character has taken an action), then the group extended action is a failure.

## Villainous Dice

In most group extended actions, the focus of the story

is centered solely on the player characters—they are the stars of the adventure, and it is their actions that determine success or failure. The villain might be running away or chanting a dark incantation, but he has no direct impact on play outside of the Gamemaster's narrative.

This complication allows the villain to roll dice each turn, making them active participants in the scene. If the Gamemaster is using initiative, then he takes his turn as normal. When initiative is not used, the villain always rolls last. His successes subtract directly from the party's accrued total. This is best used with the Zero Success failure option.

## Opposed Rolls

This optional rule is intended primarily for combat scenes within a group extended action. Instead of slowing down the action by resorting to the regular combat rules, things are handled abstractly. Rather than the hero facing off against one specific foe, the roll simulates a short period of time during which the character may face and defeat several opponents.

When a character uses a combat Skill, such as Brawl or Fencing, against an enemy who can fight back, the Gamemaster rolls dice for the opponents. For ease, most minions have a pool of 6 or 7 dice. This covers both his attack and Defense, which for these purposes is combined into a single abstract action.

If the hero beats the villain's roll, he kills one or more enemies. Every success over that of his enemy counts directly toward the overall number of successes the group requires to complete the task. If the villain wins, the character suffers automatic damage—Defense is not used—equal to the difference in successes.

**Example:** *Henri is leading a company of French soldiers in battle. The Gamemaster describes how a company of Spanish pikemen are holding the right flank, preventing the French from using their cavalry. Henri, who likes to lead from the front, elects to use Fencing, describing how he and his men charge the enemy ranks.*

*Henri has a Fencing rating of 8 (including his rapier damage), the same as the Spanish pikemen. Henri rolls his dice and scores 5 successes, while the Spanish score a measly 3. The Gamemaster describes how Henri and his men tie up the pikemen, allowing the French cavalry to outflank them. Henri is now 2 successes near the goal.*

*Had the results been reversed, Henri would now be nursing 2 lethal wounds and several of his men lie dead on the battlefield, his brave endeavor ending with the French being soundly driven back by the wall of pikes.*

## Sample Actions

Detailed below are a number of generic group extended actions. Gamemasters may use them straight from the page or modifier them to fit a specific situation.

## Boarding Action

While most combats will likely be played out using the normal rules, there may be times when the Gamemaster wants to use group extended actions, instead. This example is of the heroes and allied mariners boarding a pirate ship. Although it is assumed the characters have allies, the focus is purely on the heroes. Skills like Diplomacy, Intimidation, and Warfare represent the effectiveness of the allies' actions.

**Difficulty:** Non-combat Skills have a base Difficulty of 3. Combat Skills are Opposed actions against a generic Skill rating of 6.

**Modifiers:** If the characters and their allies outnumber the pirates by less than 2:1, all rolls have a +1 modifier. A ratio of 2:1 or better gives +2, 5:1 or higher a +4 modifier, and 10:1 or greater a +8. The opposite applies if the pirates have superior numbers.

### Suggested Skills:

- \* Athletics (throwing grenades or grappling hooks, climbing the rigging to cut ropes)
- \* Combat Skills (Archery, Brawl, Fencing, Firearms, Gunnery, Melee)
- \* Diplomacy: Leadership (issuing orders)
- \* Intimidation (issuing orders or scaring the pirates)
- \* Magick (almost every Art is useful, especially those intended to inflict damage)
- \* Seamanship (maneuvering the ship to a good initial position, fouling the enemy rigging)
- \* Warfare (determining tactics, organizing the allied mariners)

**Skill Limit:** For each additional use of the Skill by a single character, he alone suffers a cumulative -2 penalty. Thus, every hero may use Fencing once and suffer no penalty, but a hero who resorts to the same Skill twice has a -2 modifier.

**Time:** Every combat action represents approximately one minute of time.

**Success:** Defeating the pirates and capturing the ship requires 20 successes.

**Failure:** Failed opposed rolls inflict damage on the character. If the characters as a group fail any three rolls before securing 20 successes, the pirates win. The characters are captured, and their ship taken as a prize.

## Cross-Country Chase

Whether mounted, in a carriage, or on foot, the characters are chasing someone across open country.

**Difficulty:** Variable. Most Difficulties will be 2 or 3.

### Suggested Skills:

- \* Animal Handling (urging the horses on)
- \* Athletics (running, swimming)
- \* Craft: Carpentry (building a raft to cross a river)
- \* Magick (Transportation is the most useful Art, but others can apply—Divination might reveal the quarry's route, Faunamancy may let a mage use a bird as a scout)



- \* Perception (looking out for signs of the quarry)
- \* Riding
- \* Streetwise (questioning locals as to whether they have seen the heroes' quarry passing through)
- \* Survival (navigating through woods, finding short-cuts, tracking)

**Skill Limit:** Each Skill may be used only once per turn, and no individual may use the same Skill more than once during the action.

**Time:** The chase might be a short one, with combat turns measured in minutes, or represent a lengthy pursuit across a France, with each turn being a day or a set number of miles.

**Success:** Chases typically need 10 to 20 successes. Once they reach their total, the character catch up with their opponents, at which time the extended action ends and normal play resumes.

**Failure:** Three failures allow the quarry to escape, forcing the characters to find alternate means of completing their goal. The villains are allowed a single Skill roll each round with no teamwork bonus. Any successful roll (regardless of number) counts as one of the heroes' three failures.

## Escaping Captivity

The characters have been captured. First they must escape from their cell. After that, they must escape from the prison in which they are being held.

**Difficulty:** Variable based on the nature of the action and the level of security. For example, sneaking through the corridors of a castle bristling with guards might be Difficulty 4, whereas throwing a makeshift hook to grab keys left on a table might be Difficulty 2.

### Suggested Skills:

- \* Acrobatics (crawling through narrow gaps, squeezing through bars)
- \* Athletics (climbing, throwing a makeshift hook to grab keys)
- \* Brawl (overpowering guards, potentially giving the heroes access to weapons and thus other combat Skills)
- \* Con (bluffing guards)
- \* Empathy (determining which guards might be bribable or fall for ruses)
- \* Larceny (picking locks)
- \* Magick (most Arts have uses; divination might let a magician avoid patrols, geomancy may bend bars or open locks, pyromancy can soften or melt metal, transmutation can make bars more malleable, and so on)
- \* Strength (bending bars, smashing down doors)
- \* Stealth (avoiding guards)

**Skill Limit:** No Skill may be used more than three times in total during the extended action, no matter which characters makes the roll.

**Time:** Variable. The Gamemaster determines the passage of time based on individual actions.

**Success:** In order to escape captivity, the characters must secure 20 successes in total. The Gamemaster

breaks this into two separate extended actions. The first, escaping the cell, requires just 5 successes. Once these are achieved, they must escape the actual prison, a task needing 15 successes. Extra successes gained in the first part do not count toward the second task.

**Failure:** Three failed rolls lead to the heroes being recaptured and placed in a more secure holding facility.

## Find the Papers

The characters have to sneak into a building and find specific papers. This extended action might involve infiltrating a Spanish military camp and swiping battle plans, recovering a love letter that might incriminate a powerful person, locating ledgers that prove a merchant is involved in black market schemes, and so on..

This extended action is divided into three separate tasks—gaining entrance, finding the papers, and escaping. The first and third tasks involve similar Skills, while the second requires a different set.

## Entering & Escaping

**Difficulty:** Base Difficulty is set by the Gamemaster based on the nature of the action. Any roll to locate the papers is Difficulty 4.

### Suggested Skills:

- \* Con (bluffing guards or servants)
- \* Larceny (opening locks)
- \* Magick (Divination is the most useful, though others can be beneficial in the right circumstances)
- \* Perception (detecting guards)
- \* Spying (bribing guards, acting unobtrusively to avoid drawing attention)
- \* Stealth (avoiding being seen)

**Skill Limits:** Each time the same Skill is used during the extended action a cumulative -2 penalty is incurred, regardless of who performs the action.

**Time:** Variable. Sneaking through corridors might take just a few seconds, but searching a room might take 10 minutes.

**Success:** Finding the right area requires 8 successes. Once the papers are found, escaping also requires 8 successes.

**Failure:** Any failure means the heroes encounter a small squad of guards. These must be defeated using regular combat. If victorious, the characters may continue their search. However, more failures automatically mean more guards are encountered.

## Finding the Papers

**Difficulty:** Difficulty 3.

### Suggested Skills:

- \* Bureaucracy (recognizing specific types of papers)
- \* Investigation (searching stacks of papers)
- \* Linguistics (determining whether the papers are the right ones)

\* Magick (Divination is the most useful, though others can be beneficial in the right circumstances)

\* Spying (speed reading)

**Skill Limits:** Each time the same Skill is used during the extended action a cumulative -2 penalty is incurred, regardless of who performs the action.

**Time:** 10 minutes per roll.

**Success:** Finding the papers requires four successes.

**Failure:** As above.

## Interrogation

The characters are charged with interrogating a prisoner. He might be a suspected enemy spy, a bureaucrat suspected of treasonous activities, a demon worshipper, or a captured enemy soldier. In order to progress with the adventure, the characters garner important information from their captive.

**Difficulty:** Equal to the captive's Willpower.

**Suggested Skills:**

\* Con (tricking or seducing the captive into revealing information)

\* Diplomacy (negotiating with the captive)

\* Empathy (reading body language, detecting lies)

\* Intimidation (threats or torture)

\* Investigation (interview technique, piecing together snippets of information)

\* Magick (Divination and Homomancy—mind control—are best suited)

**Skill Limit:** A Skill may be used only once per turn.

**Time:** One hour, one day, or one week per turn.

**Success:** Basic information requires 10 successes, rising higher for more secret information.

**Failure:** Three failed Skill rolls means the prisoner cannot be broken by any means—his will is simply too strong. The heroes are going to need another prisoner.

## Investigation

The character seek information. This might pertain to the whereabouts of a kidnapped person, the headquarters of a shadowy and sinister organization, the final resting place of an ancient relic, or trying to find a bomb before it explodes.

**Difficulty:** Variable. Difficulty should be based on the level of secrecy surrounding the information, the power of an organization, or the antiquity of the object sought.

For instance, locating a missing child in a rural village might be Difficulty 2 if she has simply wandered off, rising to 4 or 5 if she has been kidnapped by a sinister cult. Something like finding the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant might be Difficulty 7 or 8, and uncovering the head of a secret society Difficulty 8 or higher.

**Suggested Skills:**

\* Academics: History (ancient clues, similar patterns)

\* Bureaucracy (gaining access to documents, dealing with officials)

\* Con (tricking people who may hold clues into revealing what they know)

\* Empathy (determining if someone is lying or understanding their motives)

\* Intimidation (coercing information)

\* Investigation (studying crime scenes, interviewing witnesses, trawling through libraries)

\* Magick (Divination works best)

\* Stealth (tailing a suspect)

\* Streetwise (following up rumors, finding leads to people who may have pertinent information).

**Skill Limit:** A specific Skill may be used only once per combat turn.

**Time:** Varies. At minimum, each turn represents a day. Trying to investigate well protected or forgotten information might allow one roll per week, month, or year.

**Success:** Varies. Finding something trivial may require 10 successes, while finding extremely old or protected information might require 40+ successes.

**Failure:** Each failed roll increases the Difficulty of all subsequent actions, either because the party is following a false trail or because someone is placing obstacles in their path. Three failures leads to a dead end. Worse, if the party is investigation a person or organization they are alerted to the characters' interest in their activities.

## Mass Battle

While in most adventures the heroes are operating as a small group, the Musketeers are soldiers of France, and France is currently at war. To that end, such characters may on occasion find themselves ordered to participate in battles. Later in their careers, once they have earned sufficient rank, a character may even hold the fate of an entire army in his hands.

**Difficulty:** All combat Skills are opposed by the enemy's generic rating of 7 dice. Other Skills are typically opposed by the enemy commander's Warfare rating. An incompetent officer has 5-6 dice, a competent one 7-8 dice, and an outstanding one 9-10 dice.

**Modifiers:** If the characters and their allies outnumber the enemy by less than 2:1, all rolls have a +1 modifier. A ratio of 2:1 or better gives +2, 5:1 or higher a +4 modifier, and 10:1 or greater a +8. The opposite applies if the enemy have superior numbers.

Other modifiers may apply depending on the specific battlefield. For instance, if the enemy holds the high ground, then the heroes might suffer a -2 penalty, either for the entire battle or until they score a certain number of successes, at which time they storm the hill, denying the enemy their advantage.

**Suggested Skills:**

\* Combat Skills (Archery, Brawl, Fencing, Firearms, Gunnery, Melee)

\* Con (feints, false retreats, and other subterfuge designed to confuse the enemy)

\* Empathy (deducing the enemy's next move)

\* Intimidation (orders)



\* **Magick** (most Arts are useful. Aeromancy might generate fog to conceal troop movements, Floramancy might cause grass to engage an enemy company, Hydromancy can cause a downpour, Geomancy might cause holes to appear in front of the cavalry, and so on.)

\* **Riding** (cavalry charge or maneuvering a formation)

\* **Stealth** (camouflage, outflanking maneuvers)

\* **Warfare** (tactics, issuing commands)

**Skill Limit:** Combat Skills (Brawl, Gunnery, etc.) and Warfare have no restrictions. Other Skills may be used only once per turn, and each subsequent use imposes a cumulative -2 penalty as men become jaded or the enemy becomes wise to the character's tactics.

**Time:** Typically 30 minutes or one hour per roll.

**Success:** A skirmish requires 10 successes, a modest engagement 20, and a clash of mighty armies 30.

**Failure:** Failed combat Skills inflict damage on the character *and* subtract from the total number of group successes.

Other failed rolls subtract from the characters' accumulated successes. If the heroes end up with zero successes or fewer at the end of a turn then the allied army is defeated. The heroes may be captured or forced to flee in ignominy.

## Negotiation

The characters are charged with negotiating with an important person. This might be a temporary truce between the French and Spanish, courting a nobleman who has valuable information or resources, convincing the mayor to release the peasants from the farms to help hunt down a werewolf, or persuading a Spanish official to turn traitor and serve the cause of France.

**Difficulty:** Skills used against the dignitary directly are opposed by his Willpower rating. Other Skills have Difficulty 3.

**Suggested Skills:**

\* **Academics** (quoting legal or historical precedent, quoting philosophical arguments)

\* **Con** (bluffing, seducing, or tricking)

\* **Diplomacy** (formal negotiation)

\* **Empathy** (detecting lies, reading body language, understanding the dignitary's motive)

\* **Magick** (Homomancy works best)

**Skill Limit:** Each Skill may be used only once per combat turn.

**Time:** Each combat turn can represent one hour, one day, or one week, depending on the seriousness of the request and its possible repercussions.

**Success:** 10 for a simple request, rising to 30 for asking the dignitary to turn traitor.

**Failure:** Three failures ends the negotiations. A character who succeeds in a Skill roll may trade the successes to remove an accrued failure.

**Special:** The dignitary may have an advisor who argues against the characters' words. At the end of each

turn, after the characters are finished, he makes a suitable Social Skill roll opposed by his master's Willpower.

## Riding the Storm

Mariners fear many things, for the sea is a harsh mistress. Storms are especially feared. Close to shore, they may drive a ship onto the rocks, shattering its hull. At sea, colossal waves may swamp her, causing the vessel to capsize. The only guaranteed way of surviving is to lash oneself down and ride out the storm.

**Difficulty:** The base Difficulty for actions in a storm is determined by the strength of the wind. A typical storm has a base Difficulty of 3, while a hurricane has a base Difficulty of 6.

**Suggested Skills:**

\* **Athletics** (climbing the rigging)

\* **Intimidation** (ordering the crew)

\* **Magick** (Aeromancy can negate the wind or propel the ship, Homomancy stirs the hearts of men, and Hydromancy can be used to halt huge waves or pump the bilges)

\* **Seamanship** (steering, handling the rigging)

\* **Strength** (hauling ropes)

\* **Warfare** (commanding the crew).

**Skill Limits:** Each character may use a particular Skill just once during the Scene.

**Time:** Each combat turn represents 30 minutes.

**Success:** Riding out the storm requires the group to accumulate 20 successes.

**Failure:** At the end of each turn, once every character has performed an action, the ship suffers a number of dice of structural damage equal to the storm's Difficulty. Should the Structure be reduced to zero, the ship flounders on rocks or capsizes.

**Special:** Unless the characters are tethered, a critical failure causes the hero to fall overboard. The character has no hope of rescuing himself—he must make an Athletics: Swimming roll each round to avoid drowning.

Anyone aboard the ship can attempt to rescue him. Athletics: Throwing is an obvious Skill choice. However, any successes earned saving the stricken character do not count toward weathering the storm.

## Smuggling

The characters are tasked with smuggling something past official inspectors. For instance, they might have to smuggle a mage out of Paris past Richelieu's guards, or deliver weapons to rebel groups in French land occupied by the Spanish.

**Difficulty:** The Difficulty depends on the vigilance of the officials being bypassed and the size of the cargo. Smuggling a single, small object past guards might warrant Difficulty 2, but trying to bring a wagon full of weapons past Spanish soldiers without the cargo being inspected might be Difficulty 4 or 5.

## Suggested Skills:

- \* Bureaucracy (expertise at dealing with officials)
- \* Con (bluffing their way through)
- \* Magick (Homomancy is ideal—"You don't need to search these crates"—but Transmutation can be very handy as it allows the cargo to be disguised)
- \* Perception (watching out for officials approaching)
- \* Spying (bribery, or looking innocuous to avoid scrutiny)
- \* Stealth (hiding the smuggled goods)

**Skill Limit:** Each Skill may be used only once per combat turn.

**Time:** A combat turn typically represents a few minutes, though trying to unload a shipment of arms undetected might take 30 minutes per roll.

**Success:** Typically 20 successes.

**Failure:** Three failures means the characters are caught red-handed. At best, the officials may want to confiscate the item. At worst, they intend to hold the characters captive and try them, possibly as traitors or spies) depending on the nature of the cargo).

## Thwarting the Ritual

A vile nobleman is in the process of conducting a ritual intended to summon a powerful demon. The characters have located his lair, his chateau, but they need to use stealth to infiltrate the dungeons—the noble has a lot of guards in his employ.

**Difficulty:** The base Difficulty for most tasks is 3. The guards are alert, there are servants moving around, doors are securely locked, and so on.

### Suggested Skills:

- \* Acrobatics (squeezing through windows)
- \* Athletics (scaling the outer walls)
- \* Con (convincing guards you belong in the castle)
- \* Empathy (deducing when the guards may change shifts, leave their post for patrol duties, or fall asleep)
- \* Investigation (searching for secret doors or staircases)
- \* Larceny (opening locked doors to find a more expedient route)
- \* Magick (Aeromancy can dampen sounds, Divination can help deduce the best route, Geomancy can open locks, and so on)
- \* Perception (hear patrols advancing or servants talking behind closed doors)
- \* Spying (disguise or acting like you belong in the castle)
- \* Stealth.

**Skill Limit:** Each time the same Skill is used during the extended action a cumulative -2 penalty is incurred, regardless of who performs the action.

**Time:** Variable. One turn might represent a few minutes of sneaking, while another may involve ten minutes bluffing the guards.

**Success:** The Gamemaster splits the action into three separate extended actions.

The first involves them sneaking through the chateau's ground and gaining access to the main house. Achieving this requires 5 successes.

Exploring the chateau, a sprawling structure with many wings, and locating the extensive dungeons requires a further 10 successes. The chateau is well guarded, and many servants are wondering the corridors. Difficulties are increased by 1 due to the number of NPCs present.

Finally, the characters must navigate through the dungeons and find the hidden chamber the noble is using for the summoning. This requires 5 successes. Once in the summoning chamber, the action reverts to normal combat against the sorcerer and his lackeys.

As normal, successes from one extended action task do not carry forward to the next.

**Failure:** This extended action has two separate failure conditions.

First, if the party fails three rolls the alarm is sounded, forcing them to fight their way to the dungeon through a squad of the noble's guards. After the fight, the Difficulty of all actions is increased by one point, the guards now patrolling the grounds, checking rooms for the intruders, locking doors to prevent further trespass, standing outside key areas, and so on.

Second, they have just six combat turns to reach the dungeons or midnight will strike and the ritual will be completed. Not only must they then combat a powerful sorcerer, but also a demon.

## ✧ Detailed Example ✧

Below is a detailed example of a group extended action. The player characters are all taken straight from the sample characters in the core rulebook. Alain (played by Jim) is an impoverished nobleman, Bertrand (Steve) is a messenger, Clementine (Maggie) is a spy (but an openly female Musketeer), and Didier (Wayne) is a polymath.

M. de Tréville has learned that a Spanish spy is carrying a coded message from the Spanish court to a Spanish spy in Paris. The Musketeer's' captain requires his men to locate the spy before he reaches the city, acquire the message without alerting the spy, decode it, and then slip it back into his possession.

The Gamemaster breaks the group extended action into four separate tasks—hunting the spy, getting the message, decoding the message, and returning the message.

## Finding the Spy

The first task involves locating the spy. All the heroes know is he is mounted, will be approaching Paris from the west, having landed at La Rochelle several days ago, and wears a black rose emblem. After some discussion, the characters decide to travel to Orleans, his likely route, and question tavern owners. If he has passed through recently, they hope to have the time to give chase before he reaches Paris. If he has yet to enter Orleans, they can

set up a temporary spy network among the tavern owners to inform them when he arrives.

**Difficulty:** The Gamemaster decides he will set the Difficulty based on the characters' actions.

**Suggested Skills:**

- \* Con (lies, bluffs)
- \* Diplomacy (polite questioning)
- \* Empathy (detecting lies)
- \* Intimidation (threats)
- \* Investigation (interviewing patrons)
- \* Perception (spotting the messenger)
- \* Streetwise (questioning locals)

**Skill Limit:** Given the low number of successes required, the Gamemaster decides each Skill can be used just once during this part of the extended action.

**Time:** One hour per combat turn.

**Success:** The characters must score 5 successes to find the spy.

**Failure:** Each failure increases the Difficulty of all subsequent actions by one. Should the party score two failures, the spy has already left Orleans. If this happens, the Gamemaster plans to allow a chase to give the characters chance to catch up with him.

The Gamemaster allows the heroes to act in whatever order they want. Alain's player decides to go first.

**Alain (Jim):** *(to GM)* I'm going to remove my Musketeer garb and don my noble clothing—no point in scaring the spy away if he's already here and overhears us asking questions. Then I'll begin trawling the taverns. I'm going to pretend I'm a nobleman looking for a friend I'm supposed to be meeting. I'll use Streetwise to pick up any rumors of a man wearing a black rose.

The Gamemaster agrees Streetwise is a suitable Skill. Because Alain is dressed the part and using his full noble title, he can use his Status 1 Resource to boost his roll. Orleans has a lot of taverns, so the Gamemaster sets the Difficulty at 4.

Jim picks up his dice (5 from Streetwise and 2 from his Status) and rolls 4 successes. This is not enough to score a success, but neither is it a failure.

**Gamemaster:** *The nobility does not seem to be in favor right now. A few citizens shrug, claiming to have seen no one matching that description, but most just turn their backs on you. Do you want to spend Style points?*

**Alain (jim):** *(To GM)* No, it's too soon to start spending them. *(To others)* "Ignorant peasants! Sorry, mes amis, but the influence of the nobility does not seem to carry the weight it once did. Maybe one of you will have more luck. You are commoners, after all."

**Bertrand (Steve):** *(To GM)* I'm a messenger. I want to put myself in our quarry's shoes. I'm carrying a secret message to a Spanish agent, so I'd want to avoid trouble and people who might ask too many questions. So what sort of taverns might I stay in for the night. Hopefully I can reduce the number of places we have to visit.

**Gamemaster:** *(To Steve)* Okay, I can go with that. Make an Intelligence roll.

**Bertrand (Steve):** *(To GM)* I have Contacts 1 among

*tavern owners. I reckon that gives me a good knowledge of the sorts of taverns around here, and maybe a few friends who can point me in the right direction.*

Although Steve isn't making a Skill roll, the Gamemaster agrees that his Contacts would be helpful in helping him find a certain class of establishment. Steve rolls 6 dice (double his Intelligence 3) and adds 2 bonus dice for his Contacts. Given he and the messenger share the same occupation and thus a certain mindset, the Gamemaster grants Steve a further +1 bonus.

With the field narrowed down, the Gamemaster decides the Difficulty is 3—still not an easy task. Steve rolls his dice and gets 6 successes. After subtracting the Difficulty, that nets him 3 successes toward the goal.

**Gamemaster:** *Good roll! After spending a few minutes talking to one of your old contacts, he mentions that a man wearing a black rose emblem came into his tavern just a few hours ago. He didn't stay, but he did ask where to find a quiet tavern. The owner pointed him to the north of town, where there are several small taverns popular with travelers.*

**Clementine (Maggie):** *I'll go next! I'm going to strip off my Musketeer clothing as well as unbutton my blouse a little. I'll visit the taverns in that area why you guys wait outside. I'm going to pretend I'm looking for my brother.*

**Gamemaster:** *Okay. Combined with your cleavage exposure, that sounds like a Con roll to me.*

**Clementine (Maggie):** *Okay, that's just 5 dice.*

The Gamemaster sets the Difficulty at 2—the characters are in the right area of town and there are plenty of men willing to help a damsel in distress, especially one showing a little flesh. Maggie rolls just 3 successes, netting the group another 1 success.

**Gamemaster:** *Most people just stare at your chest, but one elderly patron says he saw a man with the black rose emblem enter the Goose and Lion just down the street. At least he thinks, he did.*

**Didier (Wayne):** *I'll go into the tavern, order a drink, and have a look round. If he's there I should be able to spot his distinctive emblem.*

Wayne is scanning the patrons, he opts to use Perception (6 dice). Given the characters are now at the right tavern and there are only a handful of patrons, the Difficulty is 1. Wayne scores 4 successes, bringing the group's total to 7 and ending this task.

**Gamemaster:** *It doesn't take you long to spot him. He's seated away from the fire, his back to the wall, allowing him to watch the entire tavern. Okay, you've successfully completed this part of the task with flying colors. The next thing you have to do is get the message from him without alerting the messenger.*

**Alain:** *"We should wait until later in the evening, mes amis. If the tavern is busier, it will be easier to cause a distraction."*

**Gamemaster:** *Unless you want to do anything in the meantime, we can skip ahead to the evening. All okay with that? Great! Okay, several hours pass. The messenger orders a light lunch and a few weak beers,*



but doesn't leave his seat. During that time you notice he has a small satchel, which he keeps very close to his person. As the sun sets, the tavern grows busier, with new patrons ready for a night on the town.

## Stealing the Papers

**Difficulty:** The Gamemaster decides he will set the Difficulty based on the characters' actions.

**Suggested Skills:**

- \* Con (seduction, distractions)
- \* Diplomacy (trying to make a friend)
- \* Empathy (reading his emotions)
- \* Larceny (trying to lift the letter)
- \* Performance (distraction)

**Skill Limit:** The Gamemaster decides each Skill can be used just once during the extended action.

**Time:** The Gamemaster sets no specific time for the actions, since it is unimportant to the task.

**Success:** The characters must score 10 successes to take possession of the letter.

**Failure:** The characters have 3 turns to acquire the letter. After that, the spy meets several local contacts, who escort him to a well-protected safe house. Each failed roll makes the messenger suspicious, causing him to tighten his watch over the satchel. All Difficulties increase by one for every failure.

**Alain (Jim):** *(To GM) I want to try and work out what sort of person he is, deduce his possible interests and what might distract him from that satchel.*

**Gamemaster:** *Good call. Sounds like an Empathy roll to me. Roll your dice.*

Alain grabs 5 dice, his Empathy rating and rolls them. The man is a complete stranger, but there are several activities going on in the tavern that could attract his attention. Since knowing these will open up new avenues for the characters, he sets the Difficulty at 2. Jim rolls 4 successes, getting his 2 toward the group's goal.

**Gamemaster:** *He looks generally shifty, continually glancing at the door each time it opens. When he isn't doing that his eyes wander between the serving girls, and a game of cards taking place at a nearby table.*

**Clementine (Maggie):** *So he likes pretty girls, eh? Is there any music? A band, maybe?*

**Gamemaster:** *No band, but there is a musician playing a lute quietly by the fireside. No one is paying him much attention, really.*

**Clementine (Maggie):** *That's okay, so long as there's music. I'm going to dance for a bit. Nothing fancy, just a wiggle of the hips to get his attention and distract him long enough for one of you to grab the letter.*

**Gamemaster:** *Okay, dancing is definitely Performance. Roll your dice!*

**Clementine (Maggie):** *Since I'm trying to be sexy as well, can I use Skill Synergy with Con? I have 5 dice in that.*

**Gamemaster:** *Sure! That makes perfect sense. So that's a total of 7 dice for you. You don't get your Acting Specialization, though, since you're dancing.*

Maggie rolls 7 dice against Difficulty 3—the messenger's Willpower. She manages 6 successes. Overall, that's 3 successes, leaving the party needing just 5 more.

**Gamemaster:** *As you gyrate through the tavern the others notice the messenger's eyes, and those of many other patrons, drift to follow you. His right hand, which is lying across the satchel, drifts away momentarily, but quickly returns to rest across it once more.*

**Bertrand (Steve):** *Right, I've got a plan. I'm going to act drunk and stagger into his table, spilling my beer over him. With any luck he'll be so angry he stands up, forgetting his satchel, and allowing... er... Didier to rifle through it.*

**Didier (Wayne):** *"A poor choice, sir. I'm a scholar, not a common thief! Clementine is better at that sort of thing. No offence, m'lady."*

**Bertrand (Steve):** *(Breaking character) Yes, but she's already acted this combat turn. After me, you're the only one left to act. I have 6 dice in Acrobatics, which should give me a chance of soaking him in beer.*

Wayne relents, albeit reluctantly. Steve repeats his intended action for the Gamemaster. The Difficulty is set at 2—drenching the messenger with beer is easy enough, but unless it looks convincing he may detect the ruse. Wayne reaches for his 6 dice. Everyone looks on as the dice roll to a halt—and groans as a measly three successes are revealed. After accounting for the Difficulty, that's just one success toward the total.

**Bertrand (Steve):** *If I spend Style points I get one bonus die per Style point, right? (The GM nods). So if I spend four I'll get another four dice to roll. Even a few more successes might take some of the pressure off Didier. Okay, I'll spend four Style points!*

Steve picks up four more dice and rolls them. Everyone groans loudly as the dice reveal just one more success. The party now needs three successes to grab the papers from the satchel. All eyes turn to Wayne.

**Gamemaster:** *You stagger across the bar, tripping just at the right place to send your ale flying toward the messenger. Splat! It soaks the front of his tunic. He quickly stands, cursing you vehemently. Alas, he has picked up his satchel with one hand while he wipes away from excess liquid.*

**Bertrand (Steve):** *I'll apologize, trying my best to make the situation worse yet seeming to be helpful. Maybe he'll drop the satchel as he tries to get rid of me.*

**Gamemaster:** *Actually, it's Didier's turn to act now.*

**Didier (Wayne):** *Ab. Right.*

**Gamemaster:** *Just do something that suits the situation. I know your Skills aren't best suited to this situation, but you'll get your chance to shine real soon.*

**Didier (Wayne):** *Can I make an Investigation roll? I want to see what sort of clasp the satchel has. That might make it easier for someone to open quickly.*

**Gamemaster:** *Hmm, you can, but it won't count toward the successes you need for victory. I'll tell you what, though, if you succeed I'll let you grant a +2 bonus to anyone who tries Larceny to covertly open the satchel. How does that sound?*

**Didier (Wayne):** *That's fine. Okay, that's 6 dice.*

Didier is across the tavern and the satchel is partially concealed, so the Gamemaster sets the Difficulty at 4. Wayne rolls three successes, not enough.

**Gamemaster:** *Unfortunately you can't get a clear look at the satchel. On the plus side, though, your action goes unnoticed, so it doesn't count as a failure in terms of the overall objective. Right, everyone has acted so a new combat turn begins.*

**Clementine (Maggie):** *While the messenger is insulting Bertrand, I'll quietly sneak behind him and try to open the satchel using my Larceny. That's 6 dice.*

**Gamemaster:** *Okay, that'll be an opposed roll against the guy's Perception, which is 5 dice. Since he is involved in a row with your fellow Musketeer and somewhat distracted, I'll give you a +2 bonus.*

Maggie grabs her dice and scores 6 successes from 8 dice. The Gamemaster rolls 4 dice for the messenger and only manages 1 success. Maggie doesn't know it yet, but her five successes are enough to complete the group extended action.

**Gamemaster:** *The messenger shoves Bertrand with both hands, leaving the satchel unguarded just for a moment. With a nimble flick you manage to lift the clasp. Inside is a large letter, folded and sealed with wax.*

**Clementine (Maggie):** *I'll grab it quickly! Then I'll wink to Bertrand so he knows it's time to back off and cool things down. Oh, and I'll refasten the clasp so the messenger in none the wiser.*

**Gamemaster:** *Good work. Right, that's the second task complete. Now you need to decode the letter.*

## Decoding the Letter

**Difficulty:** The code is quite complex and time is against the characters, so the Difficulty is set at 4.

### Suggested Skills:

- \* Intelligence (clever insights)
- \* Linguistics (cracking codes)

**Skill Limit:** The Gamemaster decides there is no limit to how many times a Skill can be used.

**Time:** Ten minutes per combat turn. The time means nothing in terms of the adventure, but the Gamemaster wants the players to sweat a little.

**Success:** The characters must score 5 successes to crack the cipher.

**Failure:** A single failure means the code cannot be cracked without a lot more work, more time than the heroes can reasonably spare. The Gamemaster also records that he earlier set a limit of three combat turns. He decides to keep this in place—the characters have to crack the code and return the letter in just two turns!

**Gamemaster:** *Right, we'll carry on from where we left off in terms of who has acted. That's just Clementine for the current combat turn, so everyone else can take their action now.*

**Bertrand (Steve):** *Carrying on sounds ominous. We may be under a time limit or something. I have Linguistics 5 specializing in Codes, so maybe I should go first?*

**Didier (Wayne):** *My Linguistics rating is 7. Do we work together using Teamwork or make individual rolls. If you helped me, that would be 9 dice. That's an average of 4+, so we could be methodical.*

**Bertrand (Steve):** *What if the code is complex? Even 9 dice might not be enough for a quick success. Maybe we should each make a roll and spend Style points? Not that I have many left, mind you. Anything Alain can do to help us?*

**Alain (Jim):** *Not my thing, sadly. I guess I can make an unskilled roll, though. I have Intelligence 3, so that would give me... oh... just one die. Not much point helping. I'll hold for now and try to think of something in case you guys fail.*

**Didier (Wayne):** *I'll go first. I'll start using standard cipher keys to the letter to see if I can find a pattern. Hang on, can I get a Synergy bonus from my Investigation? It says I can solve riddles and enigmas.*

**Gamemaster:** *Er... sure, you can use it for a +2 bonus since it has a rating of 6. So that's 9 dice in total.*

Wayne rolls his 9 dice at Difficulty 4 and scores 6 successes, netting the group 2 toward their goal.

**Gamemaster:** *It looks like a substitution code, but there's also a key element needed. Without that, the task will take some time.*

**Didier (Wayne):** *I have three Style points. I'll blow the lot for 3 more dice.*

Wayne achieves another 2 successes. Four down, and just one to go (not that the players know that).

**Gamemaster:** *Excellent work. You think the cipher has something to do with "black rose," which you can recognize in the code. Now you know that, the task is just a matter of time.*

**Bertrand (Steve):** *Right, I'll carry on from Didier's observations, applying what he has learned. I have Linguistics: Codes at 6 dice and one Style point left.*

Steve scores 5 successes. At Difficulty four, that nets him just enough to complete the task.

**Gamemaster:** *Didier has already done much of the work, but with your assistance the task is complete! I'll tell you what the message reads afterward. Now, you need to put the letter back before the messenger realizes it is gone.*

## Returning the Letter

**Difficulty:** Again, the Gamemaster decides he will set the Difficulty based on the characters' actions.

### Suggested Skills:

- \* Con (seduction, distractions)
- \* Empathy (reading his emotions)
- \* Larceny (trying to lift the letter)
- \* Performance (distraction)
- \* Stealth (surreptitious behavior)

**Skill Limit:** Again, the Gamemaster waives recording any passage of time.

**Time:** Ten minutes per combat turn.

**Success:** The characters must score 5 successes to discretely return the letter to the satchel.

**Failure:** The Gamemaster elects to keep time flowing, leaving the characters with just an action from Alain and then one more combat turn before the messenger's contacts arrive.

**Gamemaster:** *We're carrying on from where we left off again, so it's just Alain to act in order to finish this combat turn. What are you planning on doing?*

**Alain:** *Do I know they've decoded the message yet?*

**Gamemaster:** *Sorry. Yes, you do. You see Bertrand and Didier return to the main bar area and give you a nod. Now it's time to distract the messenger so the letter can be returned.*

**Didier (Wayne):** *We forgot to reseal the letter after we broke the wax!*

**Gamemaster:** *Don't worry. You guys are professionals, especially Bertrand, who does this sort of thing all the time. I'll assume this time you carefully put it back in place and stuck it down with a blob from one of the candles you were reading by.*

**Alain (Jim):** *Time for a distraction, then. You said earlier that the messenger was watching a card game, didn't you? (GM affirms this). Okay, I'll start a card game nearby. On the next table if possible. Thing is, I want to play to lose. Can I do that? I want to make him think he can win big by playing cards with me.*

**Gamemaster:** *Nice idea. Have a Style point. Okay, I guess you just need to make a Gambling roll to play to lose a few hands.*

Jim rolls Alain's Gambling, 5 dice. Losing is much easier than winning, since you can throw away good hands, so the Difficulty is set at 2. Jim scores 4 successes, netting two toward the required total.

**Gamemaster:** *After a few hands, you notice the messenger taking a great deal of interest in you. He politely coughs, and asks if he might join you for a hand or two before he retires for the night.*

**Alain (Jim):** *"I would be most grateful for the company, sir. Perhaps you are my lucky charm and the tide of fortune will turn in my favor."*

**Gamemaster:** *(Speaking as the messenger) "Let us pray it does not change too much, sir."*

**Clementine (Maggie):** *Where he has put the satchel? Has he left it on his table?*

**Gamemaster:** *No, he's taken it with him and placed it on the back of his chair. After a few minutes, it's his turn to deal, so he needs to use both hands and is distracted. More so thanks to Alain's losing streak.*

**Bertrand (Steve):** *Alain is impoverished. How can he afford to lose this much money?*

**Clementine (Maggie):** *Here goes nothing. I shall grab a tray and some beers, and wander over to the card game. I'll put the tray down and lean across to hand out the drinks, if you know what I mean. While I'm doing that I'll use one hand to slip the letter into the satchel.*

**Gamemaster:** *Are you focusing on the distraction side or slipping the letter back? One will be Con and the other Larceny.*

**Clementine (Maggie):** *Can I use Larceny, but get a*

*Synergy from Con? I know they're separate things, but one is directly related to the other, isn't it?*

**Gamemaster:** *Fair enough. But you roll is opposed by his Perception with no modifier this time. So he'll be rolling four dice.*

**Clementine (Maggie):** *Okay. I have Larceny 5, and get another two dice from my Con Synergy. That's 7 dice in total against your four.*

The Gamemaster rolls first and scores 4 successes! Maggie grimaces and rolls her 7 dice—also scoring four. It isn't failure, but it doesn't give her any successes toward putting the letter back. Maggie decides to spend three Style points. She rolls two successes, leaving the group needing just one more.

Unfortunately, time is passing and there are just Bertrand and Didier left to act before the messenger's goons turn up.

**Gamemaster:** *The messenger casts a quick eye over you, but he doesn't seem particularly distracted. Rather, he leans back to check his cards, causing you to fumble with the clasp. The satchel is open, but the letter is still in your hands.*

**Bertrand (Steve):** *Didier will have to act next.*

**Didier (Wayne):** *Why me?*

**Bertrand (Steve):** *Because he knows my face. All we need is a simple distraction and the letter can be dropped into the satchel. Just go and ask him for a light for your pipe.*

**Didier (Wayne):** *I'll walk up to the table and ask if I can borrow their candle to light my pipe. I don't really have any useful Skills for this sort of thing. Can I make a Charisma roll?*

**Gamemaster:** *Sure. Just roll your Charisma dice.*

Wayne rolls 3 dice, Didier's Charisma. The Difficulty is set at 1—all the party needs is a momentary distraction. Wayne manages to score two!

**Gamemaster:** *The messenger looks up at you and leans forward slightly, just enough for Clementine to quickly open the satchel and slide the letter inside.*

Just then, the door opens and four burly men enter. They look around the room, pause, and then head for the card game! One of them stands behind the messenger and coughs politely while glaring menacingly at Alain. "Sir, we are here to escort you to your lodgings for the night."

The messenger looks up and nods. "Sir," he says to Alain as he rakes in his winnings, "it has been a pleasure playing with you. Perhaps next time your luck will run better, yes?" With that he lifts the satchel off the chair and indicates to the goons he is ready to follow them.

**Clementine (Maggie):** *Wow! That was close!*

**Didier (Wayne):** *We need to get the information back to M. de Tréville. What does it say, by the way?*

**Bertrand (Steve):** *What I want to know is how could Alain afford to lose so much money at cards? He's an impoverished noble with the Poor Flaw.*

**Alain (Jim):** *(Accepting a Style point from the grinning Gamemaster). Easy! I used the money I took from your saddlebags last night!*