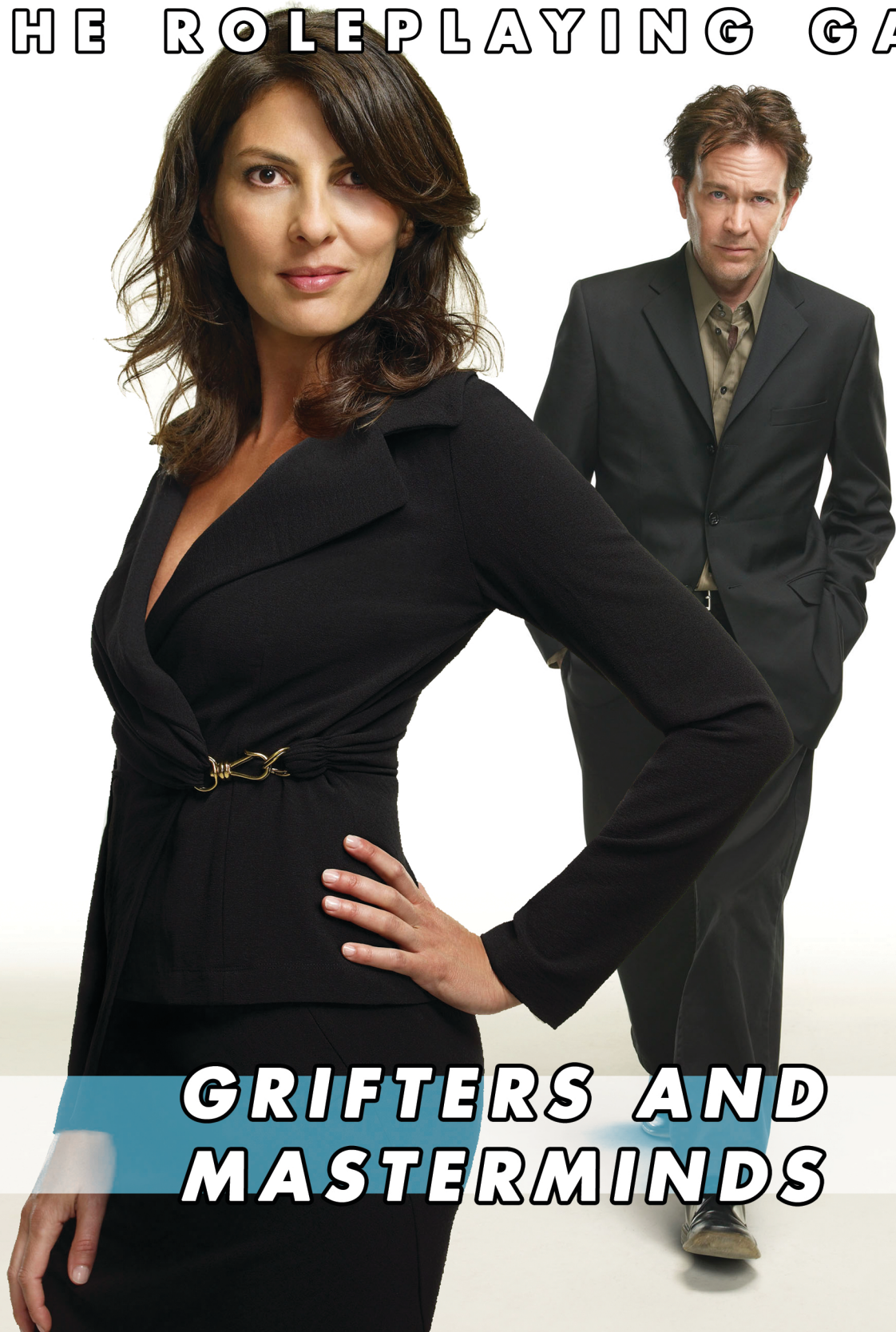


LEVERAGE

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME



**GRIFTERS AND
MASTERMINDS**

LEVERAGE

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

Credits

Project L Conceptual Design Leads:

Cam Banks and Rob Donoghue

LEVERAGE RPG Design

and Development:

Cam Banks, Bill Bodden, Maurice Broaddus,
Jimmy McMichael, Ryan Macklin, Andrew Peregrine

Additional Design and

Development:

Matt Forbeck and Laura Anne Gilman

Editing: Ryan Macklin

Cover Design: Fred Hicks

Art & Creative Design:

Tiara Lynn Agresta

For Electric Entertainment:

Rachel Olschan

Photography:

Gavin Bond, Erik Heinila, Alan Markfield,
Michael Muller, ©2008–2011 TNT Originals, Inc.
A Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.
TM & © Turner Network Television.

Special Thanks:

Adrian Agresta, Jessica Banks, Gina Bellman,
Tracy Benton, Sally Broaddus, Christi Cardenas,
Dean Devlin, Chris Downey, Paola Ferrari, Aldis Hodge,
Timothy Hutton, Christian Kane, Claire Mehegan,
Beth Riesgraf, John Rogers, Jeri Ryan, Mark Sheppard,
Kat Wood, Sidney Worrell, Source Comics & Games,
and Margaret Weis

*Based on the LEVERAGE Roleplaying Game created by
Cam Banks, Rob Donoghue, and Clark Valentine with
Tiara Lynn Agresta, Matt Forbeck, Stephanie Ford, Laura
Anne Gilman, Fred Hicks and Ryan Macklin*



*Margaret Weis Productions, the MW Logo, Cortex System, the Cortex System Logo (and derivatives),
and Project L are trademarks of Margaret Weis Productions, Ltd. © 2011.*

© Leverage Holdings, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

TNT logo, photography, and key art TM & © TNT Originals, Inc. A Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD 4

THE GRIFTER 1

Grifting 101: A Primer 2
<i>What's in this Chapter</i>2
<i>Greed</i>3
<i>Social Compliance</i>3
<i>Distraction and Misdirection</i>4
<i>When You Need A Woman To Do A Man's Job</i>5
<i>Why Go On the Grift?</i>6
<i>The Challenge and Rush</i>6
<i>Being the Outsider</i>6
<i>One Step Ahead</i>6
<i>Big Scores</i>6
<i>North America</i>7
<i>Europe</i>8
<i>Russia</i>8
<i>The Far East</i>9
<i>Developing Nations</i>9
<i>Grifter Communities</i>9
New Grifter Talents 20
<i>Attributes and Grifters</i>11
Setting the Stage 26
<i>Staging the Short Con</i>27
<i>Staging the Long Con</i>29
Quick Rules for Handling Short and Long Cons 31
Seduction Actions 32
<i>Stage One:</i>
<i>Getting Noticed</i>33
<i>Stage Two: Eye Contact</i>33
<i>Stage Three: Flirting</i>34

<i>Stage Four:</i>
<i>You Wanna Go Somewhere?</i>34
<i>Stage Five: Seal the Deal</i>34
<i>Do a Little Something For Me</i>34
<i>When Not To Use Seduction Actions</i> ..35

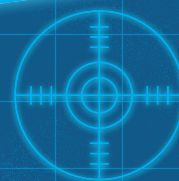
THE MASTERMIND 39

<i>What's in this Chapter</i>40
Mastermind 101: Now You're In Charge 40
<i>Masterminds Through History</i>42
New Mastermind Talents 45
<i>Attributes and Masterminds</i>47
The Plan: Master Class 62
<i>Plan Frameworks</i>63
<i>Wrapping Up the Plan</i>64
<i>Framing the Heist: Retrieval Plans</i>65
<i>Framing the Foul-Up: Disruption Plans</i> 67
<i>When Plans Go South</i>67
Masterminding the Rules 71
<i>The Fixer's Right Hand</i>71
<i>Quick Plan Generation</i>71
<i>Play to your Shtick</i>71

THE FIXER 73

<i>What's in this Chapter</i>74
Fixer 101: Crime World, I Am In You 75
<i>Fixers and Style</i>75
<i>This Is Your Game</i>76
<i>Make Characters Distinct</i>77
<i>A Little Light Reading</i>77

Running the Game: Master Class 78
<i>The Devil's in the Job's Details</i>79
<i>Cohesion and Clarity:</i>
<i>Keeping the Crew Together</i>79
Complicating Complications 80
<i>Job Complications</i>80
<i>Location Complications</i>80
<i>Personal Complications</i>81
<i>Dealing with Complications</i>81
<i>Changing the Difficulty with Complications</i>83
More Plot Twists 84
Season by Season: Handling Story Arcs 85
<i>Season Openers and Big Finishes</i>85
<i>Changing the Focus:</i>
<i>From Job to Arc</i>87
<i>Story Arc Example</i>88
<i>Variations on a Theme</i>90
<i>Changing the Roles</i>90
<i>Using Different Roles</i>91
<i>Alternate Job Structures</i>92
<i>Capers and Heists in Other Worlds: Fantasy, Sci-Fi, and Alternate History</i>93
Games Without A Fixer:
Collaborative Episodes 98
<i>No Fixer? That's just weird!</i>100



FOREWORD

Hitters, hackers, grifters, thieves... solo, teams, short cons, long cons - no matter, I've seen them all. There are really only two categories of con-men - those that have been caught and those that will be. Of the second, only a very select few have the ability to survive for any significant length of time. These rare birds are the "brains".

The term "criminal mastermind" is in most cases an obvious oxymoron. Your average criminal has difficulty successfully tying his own shoelaces let alone forging and swapping a Carravagio or taking down a casino.

But there are exceptions. A few exceptions. Very few exceptions.

Don't kid yourself—they don't do it for the money, for the fame or even for the good of others—they do it for the rush, pure and simple. They do it just to prove that they can do it. But behind every grift there's a narcissistic psychopathic egomaniac just begging to get caught, and that's where I come in.

And I always win.

- Jim Sterling





The Grifter



THE GRIFTER

Not everybody can rise to the heights of a Sophie Devereaux or a Tara Cole, but the Crime World is populated with Grifters every bit as skilled and cunning. If you're a player of a Grifter Crewmember in the Leverage Roleplaying Game, this chapter is yours. If you're the Fixer, this chapter is also helpful for providing your Grifter players with fun things to do on the Job. And if you're not a Grifter but your Crewmember has Grifter at d8, it's worth paying attention.

What's in this Chapter

Here's a summary of what you're going to find in this chapter of the book.

Grifting 101: A Primer How do you do it? What is grifting, anyway?

Why Go On the Grift? The big question, and many supportive answers.

Grifters Around the World How the art of the con is shaped or affected by the part of the world it's being carried out in, with some helpful regional advice.

New Grifter Talents More than a dozen new Talents to use when recruiting new Grifter Crewmembers or adding some variety to others.

A Dozen Grifters Examples of the Grifters that Crime World has to offer, for use as Foils or as readymade Crewmembers on your next Job.

The Con: Master Class Once you've got the basics down, here's more advice and insight into pulling off the short, long, and troublesome cons.

Seduction Actions New rules for turning up the charm and directing it toward the bedroom... or so the Mark believes, at least.

Identities and Alter-Egos A selection of quick cover stories or disguises to use as examples.

Grifting 101: A Primer

"So you want to know a little more about the art, sweetie? The thing is, I have expenses. I can't just do it for free. No, not much at all, you just pay me whatever you can afford and I'll send you the first lesson in the post. Cash would be lovely. What? Don't you trust me?"

Does that sound a little transparent? You'd be surprised how well it works. There is a reason you keep getting those e-mails from a Nigerian banker looking to move his money out of the country.

I know, I know. You think you're too clever to be fooled in this way. Say, where's your wallet? Or did you not notice the guy that bumped into you while we were talking and you were seeing through my little scam?

Okay, enough of that. You want to learn and I'm here to teach you. You can trust me now. What? You still don't? Ah, now you're getting it. Now Nate's been over the structure of the Job and all that. Don't get me wrong, that's all good, but it's just structure, nuts and bolts. I'm here to teach you art, how to do it with style.

You see, a con is much like a magic trick. There aren't very many tricks in any stage magician's repertoire; the key is to dress them up differently so the audience thinks they are getting something new. Con tricks work in much the same way. While the players and the setting may change, the con itself is almost always founded on



a few basic techniques. The true Grifter's talent lies in adapting each con to the Mark and selling it the right way.

There are three things that a con can be based on: **greed**, **social compliance**, and **distraction and misdirection**. Some cons might use all three, others only one or two.

Greed

One of the key factors in any con is the Mark's greed. We tell him he can have what he wants, we can make it happen, and he deserves it. Marks love to dream big, and we're all about selling the dream here.

The level of greed varies. You needn't always be trying to offer millions to a cash-obsessed city broker. Sometimes you just need a spark of greed to hook the Mark on the "deal of the century." We do this by framing the con around the idea they're actually getting the better of us, though sometimes you get them complicit in the con together.

Most Internet scams are prime examples of this type of con. Because the Mark is salivating over the potential rewards, they fail to realize what exactly they're handing over. It's greed that gets them to this point. Without it, they are likely to be more cautious and see the con coming.

Social Compliance

Uniforms have power. We are programmed to react a certain way to those in authority. Most of us grew up thinking that someone with a uniform or badge is trustworthy and should be obeyed. Even those who don't respect a uniform still react, often with worry or fear. A skilled Grifter can use this built-in social compliance to her advantage. Uniforms can be used to gain trust, and once you have the Mark's trust the con practically runs itself.

One of the most famous cons using a uniform is the safe deposit scam. Many malls have a night safe

the nearby shops deposit cash into when the banks are closed. One enterprising Grifter rented a security guard's uniform and wrote a sign: *deposit box closed, please deposit cash with security guard*. Then he just waited for all the local shops to hand over their takings. The box got so heavy he had to ask two policemen to help him get it into his car!

A suit and an badge are often all you need. Many detectives and higher-level authorities don't wear a uniform but they do have a recognizable badge. These days we are taught to always check the identity of those we meet who claim to be in authority. However, how many police badges have you actually seen? Do you know what the company ID card for the man who checks your gas meter ought to look like? As long as your badge looks like they do in the movies most people believe you. And then they feel safe and secure after having asked you for identification.

Law enforcement is just one type of authority. Sure, its fun to be the police or the FBI, but they aren't the only ones that people trust and obey. Wear a contamination

suit and march into a restaurant shouting the letters CDC, and I guarantee no one will check your ID badge. A worn out boiler suit can give you credibility as a mechanic, construction worker, or engineer. Being an expert on something is just another form of authority; if you sound like you know what you are talking about people trust you. Ah, there's that word again, *trust*.

One word of warning: there are some people who really do know what these badges and uniforms are meant to look like, and that's the people who wear them. If you are going to try and convince policemen or even other FBI agents that you are feds, you'd better have bloody good credentials. Not only will they spot a forgery but, if they suspect you are not who you say you are, they can check with their superiors in a matter of moments.

Distraction and Misdirection

The basics of most stage magic shows is misdirection. Not just palming the Queen of Spades, but something on a more psychological level. Often you can't make the



Mark entirely blind to the con, because if they can't see what is going on they'll realize something's amiss. Instead, you need to make sure they are looking, but only where you want them to look. While you perform with one hand, the other hand sets up the trick out of sight.

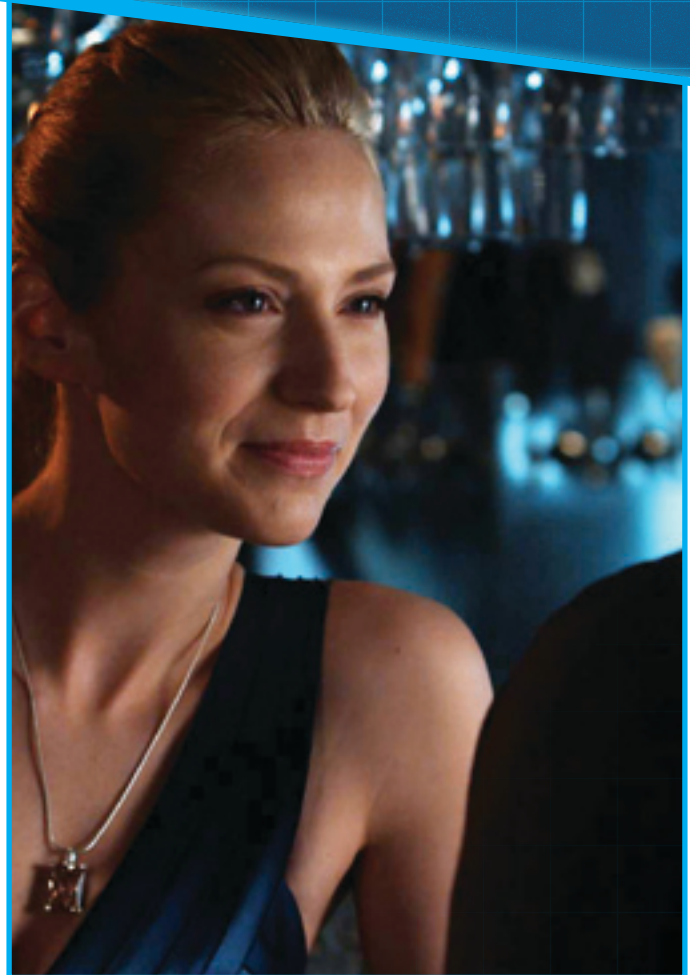
Misdirection works well with a two-man team. One gets the Mark's attention, the other sets up the con. Remember your wallet from early? Exactly. Working this angle might be as simple as one of you casing a scene and the other slipping into a secure area, or stealing something out on show. A subtler version is to allow the Mark to suspect one of the Crew is trying to play him. While he watches that Crewmember, the others are free to run the con.

Of course, you can't simply point something out and hope the Mark looks the right way (although that sometimes works). You need something to hold his attention while the Crew pulls the job. Get the Mark to decide for himself to where you want him to look. If he comes to that on his own, he has no reason to look anywhere else.

Sometimes, the Mark'll think he's one step ahead of you, and that only helps the con. For the advanced student of distraction, the best plan is to have the Mark constantly changing their focus with a constant stream of new ones. Done wrong, it'll get messy and hard to keep track of. Done right, he'll run around like a headless chicken while you pull the Job.

When You Need A Woman To Do A Man's Job

More than any other role, the gender of a Grifter can make a huge difference to how the con works and how the Crewmember operates. Nate may be one of the best Grifters in the Crew, but when Sophie's away and they need a woman to pull off the con, it's Parker that has to put on a dress. As with so many things for a Grifter, it's all about playing with others expectations.



Even in this day and age, we expect men and women to behave in certain ways. While a Grifter can often use that to her advantage, it can just as easily make things harder. At first glance, a female Grifter may seem to hold all the cards. After all, a beautiful, charismatic woman is a very potent distraction. Men also often underestimate women, especially the sort of power-broker types that might usually become Marks for your Crew. Women in power, the sort that become Marks, tend to be more guarded against men and sometimes open up a little more to women. In general, people consider women to be less of the threat, making the con all the simpler.

However, for all the advantages a female Grifter might possess, most people still expect to see a man in charge of things. Women are often perceived as the secretaries rather than the corporate sharks and go-getters. While this perception is rubbish, of course, it makes it harder

for a woman to create a convincing persona as a power broker or gang leader (although it can be done—see *The Beantown Bailout Job*).

We both know there is nothing a man can do a woman can't, and vice versa. Use that against your Marks. If a Mark is chauvinistic, he's telling you how he's vulnerable and giving you the tools to manipulate him.

Why Go On the Grift?

What makes someone choose a Grifter life? It's no easy path. You need to keep sharp to stand any chance of making a living. When you need to stay one step ahead of the authorities, you're constantly looking over your shoulder. A life of deceit makes it hard to trust other people, since they're all potential Marks or other Grifters.

It's lonely, dangerous, and has a lousy retirement package. So where is the upside?

The Challenge and Rush

The constant stress and pressure really attracts some Grifters. Every day you have to face someone in a battle of wits and prove yourself. That adrenaline rush can be addictive. It's like constant gambling for the highest stakes. If you get caught, you'll face prison. Or if you're unlucky, you'll cross the wrong people, the sort that are comfortable making shallow graves in the desert.

That sort of risk brings a certain level of excitement few things can match. Many Grifters chase bigger and bigger scams for better returns, until finally they take a step too far and overreach their abilities. Going on the grift can be fun and exciting, but it can end sharply with one simple mistake.

Being the Outsider

Grifting has no health benefits or retirement plan, but for some that's part of the charm. If you live off cash and fake IDs, you can escape the system. There is no boss, no jury duty, no IRS checking you out. They don't know who you are, don't have you on file, and won't ask you for a personal assessment at the end of the year. You can go where you like and do as you please.

Grifting is the ultimate road trip. You have to keep moving, since staying in one place means exposure. Only a few people get fooled with the same con twice. But that only adds to the sense of freedom, as you just get in your car and journey on for opportunity.

One Step Ahead

Constantly putting one over on your fellow man can make you arrogant. Each time you pull a con, you prove to the world that you are better and smarter than everyone else. That confidence is a big part of the rush you get from doing the job. It's good to feel that everyone else is your toy. This makes you hard to live with, but that's to be expected. Grifters don't often play well with others.

Some of you may have an axe to grind. Quite laudably, you go after the bad Marks, but at the core you're simply "sticking it to the Man." It's all part of that need to prove to yourself that not only are you better than other people, but also better than their culture and lifestyle. You might have been one of those rubes if you hadn't broken free, and that makes the loneliness you feel as an outsider easier to manage.

Big Scores

While they may be few and far between, the main draw to a life on the grift is the big score. You are always looking for that con that will set you up for life. You pull that ten million dollar Job and you are sorted. The hope you'll find a monster score is what keeps you going. You might pull off the ultimate con one day, and there is no way you'd ever have that sort of reward by working at an office.

Most of us Grifters dream of a life of ease. Sadly, few Grifters are any good at saving money. Where would you put it? In a bank? Means you have to join the system. In a cash tin? Means someone else can steal it? No, better to invest in cars, clothes, and the next con. It's no wonder most of us never get out of the game, with money passing like water through their hands.

Grifters Around the World

It's hard to know how many Grifters there are around the world and what they're up to. The simple fact is that the good ones don't usually get caught. The best look like you and I—well, ordinary people—otherwise they get noticed. Getting noticed gets you caught.

Across the world, most scams are all the same. No matter where you go, people aren't so different that the game isn't played the same way. The style changes—you might con a city banker out of his money in New York and a village elder out of his goat in Africa—but the playbook doesn't.

Having said that, most Grifters keep to their culture of origin. It's harder to play a con when you don't know the language and local customs. If your motto as a Grifter is “the world is my stage,” you need to know it intimately. The smallest twist in procedure or custom—in expectations—can throw the con off completely, and the chance of that happening goes up when you're in unfamiliar territory.

The problem is that while it is vital to know your territory, it is also vital to keep moving. There aren't many people you can con over and over. Stay in a small town too long, and you'll run out of friends very quickly. So what do you do? You can't move out of your comfort zone and you can't stay in one place. The only answer is to find a very big comfort zone and move around in it. That means hitting the road or grifting in the big cities.

If you hit the road, you deal with the tradeoff of a lot of freedom but few big scores. You could have a vehicle big enough to stash all those fake IDs and stolen uniforms. It's cheap, and if you have a Crew aboard your RV, you can often find a way to skip out when it comes to paying for the gas, diner tab or occasional motel stay. But a vehicle is recognizable. If you have the cash you can move from hotel to hotel, using trains and hire cars. It's expensive but leaves a lot less to recognize. You have to be careful of the paper trail though; hotel receipts and car rental forms can lead back to you.

In a big city, you have a little less freedom. That's where the big money is, along with security and law enforcement. Most of the same cons still apply in big cities as anywhere else, and if you're looking for a quick grift, there's one resource that the road doesn't have: tourists. Cities are rich with naïve folks with fat wallets who don't know the rules or ways of the place, and any Grifter can take easy advantage of that.

North America

The United States and Canada are a Grifter's playground, full of huge cities and anonymous towns. Nothing is truly out of place and there's always somewhere to run to. State and provincial borders are jurisdiction nightmares for most law enforcement agencies, and unless the Feds get your scent you can usually create a new alias and carry on.

The USA, especially, is a very litigious nation. Personal injury, petty crime, identity theft, and medical malpractice coupled with a strong sense of individualism create an atmosphere of opportunity for successful settlements. Some Grifters string people along for years with promises of riches from fictional class action suits, phony legal charges,



and scams. Canada grows steadily riper for this kind of exploitation, but the law is often very different. Grifters who work both sides of the border have to stay alert (and keep good documentation).

Europe

The Continent is a place for the connoisseur. There is not as much wealth as you might find in American big business, but there is just something so much more elegant about pulling a con in Paris or running a scam in Milan. There is a history to Europe, but it is not for the amateur.

For a start you need a good grasp of several languages, as Europe has a lot of them. It's also a little harder to cross a national boundary than a state one. While there isn't much in the way of Federal authority

(Interpol? Really?), the local police forces are very well trained and have learned to co-operate with each other reasonably well.

Even so, it still draws Grifters like a moth to a flame. Where there is such history there are priceless relics. Europe isn't a place for bar scams and corporate fraud. It's the place to sell the Eiffel Tower or con museums out of priceless antiques. You've got to be good to work in Europe, but more than that, you've got to have style.

Russia

Grifting in Russia is tricky. There are certainly a lot of advantages there, not the least of which is the chaos and the space. It's a big place, difficult for the authorities to keep it all together. The disorder makes finding loopholes a lot easier.

Then there are the downsides. Russia is still a country trying to put itself together, so there just isn't

a lot of money. And when you do find a score, you have to consider the Russian Mafia. To say these guys play hard ball is an understatement, and the chances are whatever scam you are running, you are pulling it on their territory. They've already picked up most of the loopholes you might be looking at, and they take a very dim view of anyone stealing from them.

In general, unless you fancy joining the *bratva* and have a good grasp of several Slavic languages, there are easier grifting grounds than the former USSR.

The Far East

Ah, the mysterious East. It's an almost magical place, and there is a lot to recommend it. As with Russia though, the problem is avoiding the locals. The Yakuza run the scams in Japan and the Tongs and Triads consider China their turf. So the best plan when in a foreign land is to scam other foreigners.

To the westerner, the Far East is strange and exotic. Most of them spend their time being confused and disoriented. As Marks, they're as easy as they are plentiful. If you like to play the corporate con, Asia is a wonderful place to be.

Developing Nations

The Grifter working one of the poorer nations of the world is pretty low. Out in the villages of Africa, India, or Central America, the people don't have very much and taking it from them takes a special kind of scam. In some cases, desperation and poverty will make these people risk more than they can afford and there are those who take advantage of that.

However, there is work out there for those who are above using the rainmaker con on small time villagers. With little or no technology, the poorer places of the world are wonderful places to hide or move goods. Smuggling is a growth industry here, as are secret meetings away from the prying eyes you find in any major city. There is money in these places

when you get into the cities, and in some cases a lot more than you'd think. After all, those call centers in India are still charging for their services.

A word of warning, though. Plenty of people in these places still believe in magic and witchcraft. While that might be a good way to scam them, more than one Grifter has come to a sticky end when the villagers decide they have been guilty of witchcraft.

Grifter Communities

We don't have a trade union or health plan, but there are a few communities where *everyone* is on the grift. In most cases, these communities are simply outsiders who don't want to get involved with the rest of rat race society. The only way they can make enough money to live on is to steal it from the buffers, gadjo, peyos, gorgios, or whatever else they call people that aren't part of their clan—you know, Marks.

Those growing up in these communities are born to the grift. They don't often get much in the way of standard schooling, but they've learned every way to con a Mark by the time they've hit puberty. Money is always tight, so you're expected you to earn your keep as soon as you're able to. Children are a powerful way to gain a Mark's trust.

The communities are as varied as Grifters themselves, but a few types are more popular than others. Gypsies are the most obvious, and those who are related to the true Romani (or pretend to be) can also hook a few more Marks with some "magical" scams that their reputation really helps with. There are also travelling carnivals and circuses (though not *every* circus is a Grifter convention). Mostly, they just fleece the public into paying over the odds, but there are plenty of cons available to the carnies that's gone from town tomorrow.

New Grifter Talents

The Best Medicine

It was only a joke. We're all friends here right? You can defuse a tense situation with laughter, setting everyone at ease.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're in the middle of a situation where people are about to become violent. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: You negate all social Complications currently in play, for the remainder of the scene. The Fixer can't create new ones related to hostility or tension until the scene is over. Any Asset you create from your humor is a D8 for this scene.

Cash Flow

Sometimes you need cash in a hurry. You might need local currency or just a few notes as a convincer. It might be that you've been dumped penniless in the middle of some hick town after having just escaped the angry Russian mob.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You spend at least a half hour in a populated area doing nothing but working the locals.

Effect: You create a D6 Asset involving a sudden influx of petty cash without spending a Plot Point. This Asset lasts until the first time you use it.

Cast of Thousands

Working the crowd is a very useful skill. You can assemble a group of people who have no idea about what you're pulling to act as scenery for your scam.

Role: Grifter

Activation: This Talent takes time to use, depending on the sort of people you are looking for. It usually takes a day, two days if you need them to have any special skills (such as bankers or engineers).

Effect: You collect a group of Extras D6 who act as witnesses or cover for your scam. Roll INTELLIGENCE + GRIFTER and use the highest rolling die as the number of witnesses, if that's important. They believe they're with you for some innocuous reason, such as a credit check, medical demonstration, or even just free food.

Faux Expert

With the right mixture of bluster, long words and overconfidence, you know how to sound like an expert in any field.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You need to dress the part or find the right trappings (clip board, lab coat, or limited edition collector's issue with foil cover and hologram).

Effect: You can step up by one any Asset you create that exploits your phony expertise (maximum D12). You can maintain one fake area of expertise per scene.

Foreign Affair

Accents are tricky things (just ask Hardison), but you do them with style, from Northern Mexican to Maltese. And with the few words you've picked up from those languages, you'll fool anyone unfamiliar.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You are faking an accent in a Face Action or Contested Action with others, but not talking to a native speaker from the country you are supposedly from.

Effect: So long as you're the only person in the conversation who's supposed to be from the country you're pretending to be from, the Fixer can't create Complications for you that imply you are not. Any Asset you create from fooling others is a d8 for this scene.

Attributes and Grifters

Using your natural skills at fleecing others of their hard-earned money or abusing them of their trust is all well and good, but which Attribute makes sense to bring to bear? Here are a few examples of Grifter combinations to get you thinking.

GRIFTER + AGILITY: Sleight-of-hand cons, bunko games, card tricks, palming coins, the whole range of subtle physical scams.

GRIFTER + ALERTNESS: Spotting other grifters in action, seeing through disguises, cons that rely on keen observation of the Mark rather than any real action on your part, and counting cards in a high stakes casino. Used to know that you're being conned by another grifter.

GRIFTER + INTELLIGENCE: Financial or money-related cons, number games, memory-based scams, and countering all of the above. Also used for when

recalling or referencing grifter lore or practice is the key part of an action's success.

GRIFTER + STRENGTH: Intimidation scams, arm-wrestling or other muscle-related scams, and any action where your ability to lift, press, or break something is being used to fool or con the mark.

GRIFTER + VITALITY: Physical cons that depend on your apparent state of health or physical appearance. This is the combo for staged accidents, some aspects of a seduction, and disguises that rely most on your body language and fitness.

GRIFTER + WILLPOWER: The mental con, where you put your own confidence, arrogance, assurance, or (feigned) ignorance into the mix and elicit trust or approval from the mark. It's one of the most common combos, and definitely used often in cons reliant on dialogue and bluff, or to resist those if they're being used on you and you want to flip it back.

Guest List

Doormen and bouncers pose no obstacle to you. Through a mixture of distraction and fast talk you find it easy to slip into a restricted or exclusive event as if you were an invited guest.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You are dressed appropriately for the event or building you are trying to get into. This Talent only gets you access to weddings, clubs, etc., not secure buildings with special ID.

Effect: You get all the access a guest would have, or a VIP if it's one of *those* parties. If you want to bring a plus-one, you'll need to succeed at a Face Action.

Little Old Me?

It is not always a good idea to look dangerous and threatening. If you don't appear to be a challenge, people will ignore you when the shooting starts.

Role: Grifter

Activation: The Mark must not have seen you show any form of fighting ability whatsoever. You cannot be carrying any form of obvious weapon.

Effect: When a Fight Action is about to start, you gain a d6 Asset relating to your unassuming nature. The Asset's lost once you show you aren't so unassuming. You can spend Plot Points to step up the Asset if you wish.

Looking Good

When you dress up, you're the definition of style. With a bit of effort, you turn heads, get compliments, and gain the attention and envy of others.

Role: Grifter

Activation: Have access to a decent wardrobe, and take at least an hour to get ready.

Effect: Add a d6 to any Face Action that depends on your looks. Step it up to d8 if you're in a couture-conscious environment like a magazine shoot, a fashion show, or a VIP function.

Make an Entrance

You know how to enter a room and get noticed. You might want to make others drool at the sight of you, or inspire a little respect from your peers for being a bad ass. Maybe even just want to distract the guy who is pointing a gun at one of your Crew.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're entering the scene for the first time, with the intent to impress. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: Any allies in the same scene with you may add your **GRIFTER** die to their pool when setting the stakes for any actions they take that might be aided by your distracting presence. This can include your opposition's Notice Actions to see your fellow Crewmembers sneaking around, Face Actions on the part of your fellow Crewmembers to set up their own non-descript personas in the scene, or even the first strike on a Fight Action.

Mob Rule

You know how to plant rumors into a crowd. Using a few choice words to the right people, you change moods and take control. An angry mob outside the offices of your Mark is a potent distraction.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're part of a crowd that has already formed (such as a protest march) and you look as if you are part of it. If no crowd has been previously established, you can spend a Plot Point to establish that first.

Effect: You can create an emotional-themed group as an Asset at a d6 (such as **ANGRY CROWD**, **OUTRAGED GROUP** or **CELEBRATORY PARTY**) as long as you have been there for an hour. Each hour you remain there you may step up the Asset die rating by one (maximum **D12**), or change the emotion behind the group.

Old Friend

There are plenty of people we've forgotten we met, and old school friends are a prime example. With a little cold reading and basic research, you can appear to be an old friend of the Mark, someone from their past that they are a little embarrassed to have forgotten.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're making a Face Action to give the Mark the impression that he should remember you, even vaguely. You need to know the Mark's name and a plausible reason why the Mark should know you (old school chums, distant family friend, etc.).

Effect: If the Mark gives you an Opportunity, you can create a **D6** Asset that supports this made-up history between you and the Mark, without spending a Plot Point. The Asset comes into effect on your next roll in the Face Action. If one already exists (or you wish to spend a Plot Point), you can step up the Asset to **D8**.

Red Tape Mastery

The devil is in the details, and few people ever read the small print. Using this Talent you can construct documents that are both legal and binding, which can get a Mark in all sorts of trouble.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're taking a Flashback Action involving the Mark or one of his Extras signing something you've put in front of them, however innocuous.

Effect: Step up any Asset you create with that Flashback Action by one. If this is part of a Wrap-Up Flashback, you can have this apply to another Crewmember's Flashback instead of yours.

Selling It

Some Grifters can convince people to spend money—or waste their time—on the most ridiculous things. With this Talent, you can convince people of something that just a bit beyond plausibility. So you can convince

someone you are actually a CIA agent or that you have the rights to sell a famous landmark.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're taking an action that includes your **GRIFTER** die. You need to spend at least one Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: Each Plot Point spent permanently removes a Complication the Fixer uses against you in this action. Any new Complications the Fixer creates during the action start at **D4**.

That Hurt!

You are adept at faking injuries. You know enough about medicine to scream the right way when a doctor prods you, and you can maintain a convincing limp. With some time and make-up, you can get really creative.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're attempting to convince somebody that you're injured, sick, or disabled when you're not.

Effect: If you wish, add an extra **D10** to your roll—but if you do, you must also add a **D4**.

Turn the Tables

When someone tries to trip you up by asking about something you should know in your identity, you are able to claim they are the one who got it wrong and might be the imposter.

Role: Grifter

Activation: The Fixer uses a Complication relating to your disguise or assumed identity against you. You must be in the presence of someone who could be considered a neutral witness, and you must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: You take the Complication from the Fixer, turning it instead into your Asset. If you succeed at a roll the first time you use this Asset, you can step it up by one (maximum **D12**).

Voice of Authority

You can make it sound like you're the one in charge, and people listen when you bark orders.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're using your **GRIFTER** die in an action that relies on your apparent authority or command position to get others to do what you want.

Effect: You may step back your **GRIFTER** die by one for this action in order to add your **HITTER** or **MASTERMIND** die to your roll.

Watch the Birdie

Sometimes you want someone (the Mark, one of his Agents, an Extra) to notice or make a point to keep an eye on something. Using this Talent you can do it subtly—without saying, “Hey, have you seen my diamond?”

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're making an action using your **GRIFTER** die to distract or draw the attention of an opponent and have them focus on a target of your choosing.

Effect: Every Opportunity the Fixer gives you during this action may be turned into a **d6** Asset, which you may immediately roll and add into your result to raise the stakes. If you fail the action, every Asset you created becomes a Complication that works against you unless you spend a Plot Point to negate it.

A Dozen Grifters

There are hundreds of scams and cons out there, and for each one there are hundreds of Grifters who make use of them. Here's just a sample of this extensive community of confidence tricksters and players. You can use these as readymade Crewmembers or throw them in as Foils for your own Crew.



Max Ashton, Seducer

Even as a baby, Max looked good. He grew up discovering that women, by and large, were very accommodating. He almost fell into modeling—and could have had a very good career at it—but he was more than just his good looks. He lost respect for women as more and more he met were only interested in quickly bedding a trophy.

While women may not rule the world on the outside, they always rule those that do. And with a smile and charm, Max can get those women to “help him out.” Keys to her husband’s safe, access to her legal offices, the combination to the evidence locker—given enough time, he’ll find someone who will give you what you want. That someone will be the next broken heart left in Max’s wake, waiting in an airport or train station with her bags packed for a man that will never show.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D8, INTELLIGENCE D8, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D10

Roles: GRIFTER D10 (CONNOISSEUR), HACKER D4, HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D6 (FASHION), THIEF D8

Distinctions: Charming, Nice Bad Boy, Your Mother Would Adore Him

Talents: How You Doing?, Looking Good

Signature Asset: SLICK OUTFIT D8: Max always has the latest fashion outfit, tailored to him and appropriate for the season. He can’t use it more than once or twice in any given job, or he’ll give the impression that his wardrobe is empty. Max saves the best outfit for his initial approach and for when he seals the deal, leaving the intermediary stages for his less extravagant clothes.



Terry Balsom, Small Timer

Terry has never worked a day in his life. At least, not like most folks. While he's never held a job, not a day goes by when he isn't conning. He sticks to his specialty, doing small-time cons and hitting the road. Terry was born into the life, so he's always been out of the system and never had to work for the man. While that's the only life he's known, it's just the way he likes it.

He never stays in one place for very long. Terry breezes into town, runs a few bar scams to get some cash together, and then plays a short con or two for a better score before making a silent exit. He once pushed his luck in a little town in west Texas, where there is an outstanding warrant for his arrest. The only thing that makes that a problem is that one of his brothers lives out there and gets in trouble often, making his life complicated.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D8, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D8

Roles: GRIFTER D10, HACKER D4, HITTER D6 (DRIVER), MASTERMIND D4, THIEF D8 (BARTENDER)

Distinctions: Small Timer, Outsider, Loner

Talents: Cash Flow, Wanna Buy A Watch?

Signature Asset: LUCKY CUPS D8: Terry runs a fine bunko game, something that never seems to get old. The three cups he uses are the ones he inherited from his huckster uncle, and he's at a loss when he doesn't use them. Something about the smooth, weathered Seventies era plastic both reassures his Marks that he's somehow legit and yet gives him the confidence to move on even the most unlikely targets.



Madame Caravaggio, Mystic

Born as Peggy Tuxville, Madame Caravaggio is one of the hot new psychics on the scene. The daughter of a preacher, Peggy saw first hand the power of faith and religion. Her father wasn't a man of strong faith, but played the part for his flock, so she got an education in how religion could part people from their cash. Like father like daughter; Peggy loved money. But she couldn't run religious rallies at school, so she learned a few card tricks from an uncle visiting in town one year. She practiced that new skill on her school friends, scamming them out of their allowances.

One day, bored with regular playing cards, she used a deck of Tarot cards. Even though she was playing the same tricks, she was amazed how many people believed she had some sort of psychic power. When she left home, Peggy assumed a new identity as Madame Ivanova Caravaggio. The techniques of cold reading she learned from her father stood her in

good stead, as did a gift for the theatrical. Madame Ivanova is quickly moving toward the big time, but she knows that while fame may bring fortune, it also brings people who like to snoop around.

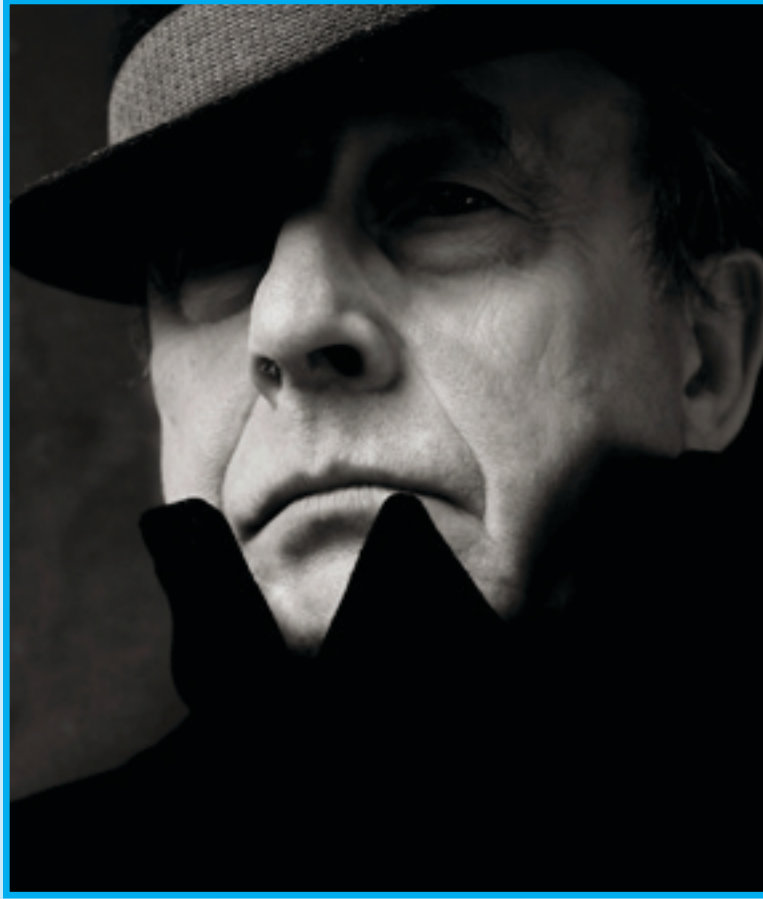
Attributes: AGILITY D6, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D8, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D10

Roles: GRIFTER D10 (TAROT), HACKER D4, HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D8 (ROMANI), THIEF D6

Distinctions: Mystical, Outsider, Gypsy Blood

Talents: Slip of the Tongue, Voice of Authority

Signature Asset: THE STRIGA TAROT D8: This is a well-worn and colorful deck of Tarot cards that Madame Caravaggio knows every painted image and scuffed corner of. One of only a hundred or so such decks in existence, the Striga Tarot is illustrated with lurid images drawn from both Roman Catholic tradition and Sicilian folklore. If nothing else, the glossy cards give some weight to her guise as an authentic Tarot reader.



Mickey Donovan, Retired Legend

Mickey was one of the best, in his day. There are cons he ran that the kids are still talking about. Sure, he did some time years ago, when he got sloppy, but that sharpened him. Mickey is one of the old school, born to grift. In his heyday, he was the best of the best. There are few today who could match him in his prime.

But age comes to us all. A few years ago, Mickey realized that his days as a Grifter were numbered. If he carried on the same old way, he was going to get caught. The world was changing and he simply didn't understand computers and other new technologies. He was too old for prison again, so he just stopped. He still misses that challenge though.

Every now and again, some young fool manages to find him. He's happy to share a few of his secrets if they seem decent and pick up the bar tab. Who knows, maybe he'll get tempted out for one last score by one of these kids.

Attributes: AGILITY D6, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D8

Roles: GRIFTER D10 (GRIFTER LORE), HACKER D4, HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D8 (THE GOOD OLD DAYS), THIEF D6

Distinctions: Old Man, Past His Prime, Legendary

Talents: Faux Expert, Little Old Me?

Signature Asset: WALKING CANE D8: Mickey's not lasted this long without getting into a few dust-ups with angry Marks. Although he's not in the greatest health, Mickey has fended off bodyguards and security guards before with this polished black cane. The handle, shaped like an eagle's head, can be unscrewed to reveal a hiding place for notes, papers, and coins. In a pinch, Mickey can accentuate his ruses as a weak old man by leaning on the cane and staggering along.



Susanna Ellis, Hustler

A lot of people told Susanna that girls couldn't play poker, so it was a running joke in her mid-western family that little Suzy would beat her uncles playing for matchsticks and candies. As she grew up, she dated boys who liked having a cute girl around while they played pool. She got one of them to teach her how to play and gained a knack for that, too. She learned a lot hanging out with the boys, in some ways a little too much—she was pregnant at 17. She wanted to keep the child, and her family was pushing her into adoption. So she ran off, to make her own way for her and her baby Lucille.

Susanna is a startlingly good at poker and pool. More than that, she knows only how to find the sort of Marks that will completely underestimate her. No one expects the cute girl they just picked up to hammer them at pool or strip them of everything they have in a game of Texas Hold 'Em. But that's what she does. Everything she earns goes towards her daughter and paying decent folks to look after her while Susanna is out "working." Her greatest fear is that one day the social services will catch up with her and take her daughter away.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D8, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D6, WILLPOWER D10

Roles: GRIFTER D10 (CARD GAMES), HACKER D4, HITTER D6, MASTERMIND D4 (CHILDCARE), THIEF D8

Distinctions: Mother, Unthreatening, Never Saw It Coming

Talents: Little Old Me?, The Best Medicine

Signature Asset: THE LOUISIANA PLAY D8: Susanna can only use this trick once in any given game of cards, and it generally fails if it's used on somebody who's seen it before, but it's a combination of misleading non-verbal cues, one or two bluffs, and a word or two in the right ears. It's never failed her in a room full of rubes, and it sometimes even fools the old hands. She'd teach it to you, but some things are more instinctual than academic.



John Smith, Ghost

John has one of those average, forgettable faces. There is nothing about John that stands out. No matter how many times you meet him, there's no reason his name or face should stick. And with his soft-spoken manner and unremarkable looks, John found it impossible to get anyone's attention. But he was good with computers, and in a virtual world he could be very noticeable.

Despite his excellent computers skills, John constantly failed to get a job. If he was up against at least one other person for anything his utter lack of charisma ensured the other candidate stood out. So he turned to make a career using his computer literacy, one that wasn't entirely legal. After years of watching and studying people, John is able to pick up how people react and how people gain trust. These days, he uses that knowledge and his skills to e-grift.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D6

Roles: GRIFTER D10, HACKER D8 (MMORPG GRIEFING), HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D4, THIEF D6 (PRETTY ORDINARY)

Distinctions: Forgettable, Quiet, Observant

Talents: I Just Work Here, Mob Rule

Signature Asset: JAILBROKEN SMARTPHONE D8: This is John's latest and most useful gadget, one he's personally broken down and rebuilt with all of the most reliable apps he can pack into its oversized flash drive. With a combination of discreet camera shots, voice recognition software, and cracking tools, John's found that he can swiftly get the skinny on his Mark and their behavior, and play the latest phone games when he's taking a breather.



**Angelique Façade,
High Roller**

Angie was born in the bad side of town. Growing up, she got a lot of attention for her looks. Life was hard and she wanted nice things, and she had few options to go about getting it. Her “assets” led her into prostitution, but not as some street corner whore. Instead, she found her way into snaring high-class customers. This meant better scores, nicer clothes and a lot of waiting in upscale hotel lobbies.

She was observant—watching the people in these places, seeing how they were all playing roles despite their wealth. It didn’t take her long to create one of those roles for herself. Cashing in a few favors from her regular clients, she accessed the salons of the rich and the famous, creating a new name for herself as Angelique Façade. She was accepted as one of the elite, and with that level of access she could steal what she liked as long as she keeps it simple and small. None of her set misses the odd thousand dollars. And if you take a thousand from twenty people in one night, that’s not a bad haul. But one day someone may pass by who knows the real Angie, and everything might come crashing down.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D8, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D8

Roles: GRIFTER D10 (TOP 100 WEALTHIEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, CELEBRITY GOSSIP), HACKER D4, HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D6, THIEF D8

Distinctions: Regal, Distant, Wealthy

Talents: Foreign Affair, Make An Entrance

Signature Asset: PAPARAZZI ON SPEED-DIAL D8:

Angie maintains a short list of low-rent reporters and bloodthirsty news hounds that she’s always sure will show up when she needs to turn any location into a media event. Typically, this helps her grease the wheels on a celebrity Mark, or shoo along the ones she’s no longer keen to be seen with. It’s also how she’s cornered her own market on incriminating evidence, after she slips the paparazzi a couple of grand for the digital images.



Albert Hazel, Wreck

Albert's absentee mother and drunken father seemed to care little for him. He had to work out how to provide for himself early on in life. All he ever heard from any of his family was what a useless burden he was. That sort of damage runs deep, and Albert began to escape into a fantasy world where he was someone else.

As a master of disguise, Albert's able to play any role seamlessly... as long as he's playing something far from himself. He takes self-loathing to a whole new level. When he is himself, he's a complete mess. He drinks too much, puts himself down, and insists he is worthless and useless to the Crew. But as someone else, he's so immersed in the role you can't believe he's the same man.

Unfortunately, Albert often doesn't like to come out of character. His crew needs to think carefully. If they have him playing a cop and he loses himself in the moment, he may well decide to make some arrests.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D8, STRENGTH D8, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D6

Roles: GRIFTER D10, HACKER D8 (FALSE CREDENTIALS), HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D4 (POLICE PROCEDURE), THIEF D6

Distinctions: Self-Loathing, Part of the Background, Wreck

Talents: Master of Disguise, Takes One To Know One

Signature Asset: PRESCRIPTION PICK-ME-UP D8: Albert's not one for narcotics or mind-altering substances, even on his worst days. But he keeps a bottle of beta-blockers and mood-stabilizers around for when he needs to get hold of himself. The problem is that when he's most in need of the medicine, he's in no shape to administrate it on his own. His associates have learned to look for the bottle when they need Albert to get out of his depressive episodes.



Tommy Knox, Professional Victim

No one ever expected much from Tommy. The only impressive thing he ever did was get into law school, but that lost its shine when he only barely passed the exams. Still, he set up a small practice and those who couldn't afford any better came looking for his services. It bored the hell out of him.

One day, distracted with worry about his lack of work and late rent, he accidentally walked in front of a moving car and all his troubles were over. The driver screeched to a halt, only leaving Tommy with a nasty sprain. But thinking quickly, he decided to lay it on thick when he noticed the car was a limousine. The occupant was a corporate executive who decided to settle on the spot as soon as he noticed the law papers spilling out of Tommy's briefcase.

Tommy stumbled, literally, into a new career. He has become adept at orchestrating accidents for himself that look like the fault of the rich and famous.

He's fallen off ladders cleaning gutters, bounced off the hoods of chauffeured cars, and electrocuted himself wiring in-home cinema systems. Every time, he manages to talk the wealthy victim into settling this out-of-court and walks away with a tidy sum.

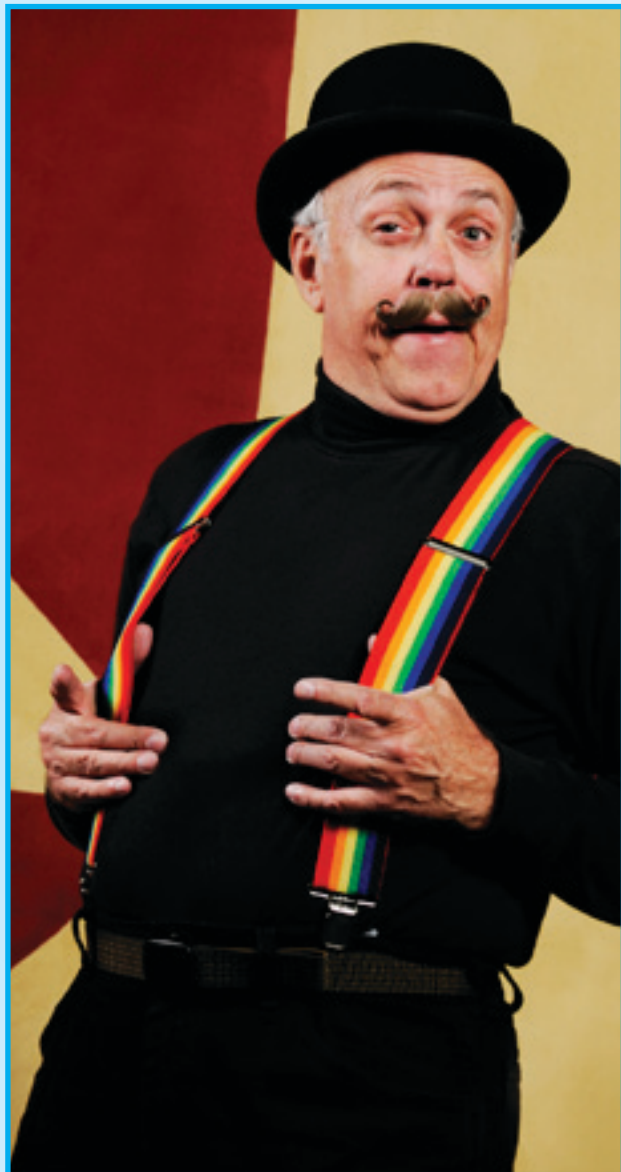
Attributes: AGILITY D10, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D6, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D8

Roles: GRIFTER D10 (FIRST AID), HACKER D4, HITTER D6, MASTERMIND D8 (PERSONAL INJURY LAW), THIEF D4

Distinctions: Genuine, Hustler, I Have Rights Here!

Talents: That Hurt!, Turn the Tables

Signature Asset: THAT BILLBOARD LAWYER D8: Tommy has a close but under-the-radar relationship with a crooked personal injury claims lawyer, one who's changed names and practices at least three times. At the moment, his name's Clive Crinnock, but Tommy's learned just to keep the legal papers and forms up to date and hand out the guy's most recent business card when he needs to.



Sal Mariachi, Carny

Sal was born into the carnival life, the son of a trapeze artist and a strongman. He had a loving family and knew no life beyond the travelling show. As he got older, he was eager to learn what he could and took part in every aspect of the show he was able. While he lacked his parent's acrobatic skills and strength, he was a natural showman. He never needed to shout to draw a crowd, and no matter what was in the closed tent behind him, he made it sound like the wonder of the age.

As he got older, Sal moved up the ranks. His parents retired, so he runs the show, and he makes a point of seeing the new kids are shown all the skills needed to bring in the cash. His travelling circus is a slightly flea-bitten affair, but it offers an entertaining evening for very little money. While the entrance is practically free, there are plenty of ways the carny folk have to make sure you leave with a lot less than you intend.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D6, STRENGTH D8, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D8

Roles: GRIFTER D10 (CARNIVAL SIDESHOWS), HACKER D4, HITTER D8, MASTERMIND D4, THIEF D6 (RIDE MECHANIC)

Distinctions: ENTERTAINING, FRIENDLY, DEFT

Talents: CAST OF THOUSANDS, OLD FRIEND

Signature Asset: MARIARCHI BROS. TUMBLER FAIRE D8: This is Sal's circus, after all, and being on-site makes everything that much easier. It's a small operation, and the carnies range from creepy to downright sinister, but with the lights up and the straw down it's no worse than any other family circus. Of special note are the trapeze artists and tumblers, who Sal has on occasion loaned out to his friends for Jobs requiring their unique talents. As a Signature Asset, however, Mariarchi Bros. is really only useful for sideshow grifting.



Sarah Pendalton, Corporate Fraudster

Sarah wasn't blessed with the abundance of beauty that her sisters had. Being the "plain sister," she was easily forgettable. Most of her youth was spent as the one holding the bags and coats while her friends went dancing. Throughout high school, she expected very little from life. However, she was born with a head for numbers, facts and figures. She flourished as a business major in college, graduating in the top ten percent of her class. Even so, because of her youthful shyness, she couldn't pull off being a powerful young executive. Ultimately she found herself—just as expected—working as a minor accounting assistant in a huge corporation.

It was there where she discovered subtle ways to siphon off funds into her own accounts. She noticed that executives never read the papers she handed to them to sign. After a decent score, she left that job to be a temp, sometimes a contractor, becoming even more

invisible. Sarah could turn that curse of childhood into quite the asset now, allowing her to steal millions from some of the most powerful companies in the world and sticking it to those who've ignored her all her life.

Attributes: AGILITY D6, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D8

Roles: GRIFTER D10, HACKER D8 (CORPORATE ACCOUNTS), HITTER D4 (TOMBOYISH), MASTERMIND D6, THIEF D4

Distinctions: Invisible, Plain, Axe to Grind

Talents: Red Tape Mastery, Takes One To Know One

Signature Asset: OFFSHORE BANK D8: It's never a bad move to get yourself a good working relationship with a bank in the Caymans. Sarah knows she needs to relocate funds from year to year, avoiding some of the notice she'd otherwise attract from the IRS. But she really only uses her bank accounts for shuffling money around. She's smart enough to know that the bank is her greatest asset in any corporate scam, and not to leave the money in it when she's done.



**Isabelle Thornton,
Saleswoman**

Isabelle is a smile in a suit. She has a gift for getting people to buy what she's selling. It might be her constant warm smile that provokes this trust, or that she looks like "that nice lady from across the street." Whatever it is, talking to Isabelle is like talking to an old friend, someone who couldn't possibly be scamming you.

Behind Isabelle's smile is seething bitterness. Once married blissfully and living very well as a rich housewife, that life came crashing down when she discovered his rather young mistress. Suddenly she was forced to make her own way in life, and she wasn't going to give up that lifestyle.

She had a talent for selling nearly anything and the money wasn't good enough to live like she wanted, so she started selling things she didn't own. Isabelle's signature con involves organizing open house days that have nothing to do with a realtor and happily taking deposits from prospective buyers. Even with her bitterness, though, she avoids scamming young couples too often. Maybe they'll have the lasting love she didn't.

Attributes: AGILITY D6, ALERTNESS D8, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D10

Roles: GRIFTER D10 (COSMETICS), HACKER D8, HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D6, THIEF D4 (REALTOR)

Distinctions: On the Level, Deal Maker, Loner

Talents: Selling It, Slip of the Tongue

Signature Asset: REALTOR'S CAR D8: This is a late-model American automobile with very little miles on it, always clean and ready to be decorated with the logo of whatever fake real estate company she's posing as. It's perfect for putting her marks at ease, for parking in a driveway and lending authenticity, and for getting somewhere without being pulled over. Because, of course, nobody ever asks a nice lady in an expensive sedan to pull over.

The Con: Master Class

By now you must think you have a pretty good handle on how to make a play, but really all we've shown you are the tools, not how to use them to get the Job done. Running a con's more than just card tricks and a little distraction. It's an art, a subtle dance with the Mark that plays to his greed and weaknesses.

If you think you have what it takes, the raw confidence to grift, we have some advice for you. But all the advice in the world isn't going to help you if you don't have the nerve and style. Grifting isn't a by-the-numbers game. While you need to plan meticulously and maintain rigid control of the environment, you also have to be flexible to adapt and improvise when things start to go wrong. Oh yes, trust me on this, things will go wrong. How you deal with it is what really tells if you have the skills.

Setting the Stage

It starts with **control of the environment**. Running a scam is like creating your own private world, inhabited only by your Crew and the Mark. This is especially true for the long con, where the wrong conversation with the right person can break the spell you have woven over the Mark. But this isn't quite as difficult as it sounds. You don't need to have the entire world on lock-down, just the places the Mark is likely to go. You'll need preparation, planning, and a little luck.

For instance, if you are trying to convince the Mark you operate a powerful corporation you don't need an entire office block to do it. All you need are a few rooms inside an office block for the Mark to visit. Details are key here. Deck the hallways with the right corporate logos. Make sure you've got a bathroom, that's a dead giveaway that's something amiss. Keep it simple, but remember it's like any other theatrical performance.

The audience only gets to see what you want them to. If they went around backstage, they'd see everything is held together with tape, so you keep them where they should be.

Setting the stage is really all about one thing, what we call the **convincer**. The convincer is the object, location, person, or simply large pile of cash that convinces the Mark the deal is real. The thing is, the convincer has to be real, be seen. If you need to offer a down payment of several thousand dollars to convince the Mark you are solvent enough to broker their million-dollar investment, you need that several thousand dollars. You might be tempted to try the "wads of newspaper with a few real bills on top" trick, but it will cost you the con.

Getting a real convincer can be the hardest part of any con. If you are looking to sell a forgery, getting hold of the real thing for an afternoon for a valuation (with no one noticing it's gone) is hard. Another way to look at it, though, is that's all part of the fun. The bigger the con, the tougher it will be to get the convincer you need. You can't just show the Mark a catalogue to convince him you're an international arms dealer. So don't skimp here. The better you make the convincer, the more he'll trust you. The more they trust, you the easier the con will be.

Sometimes you'll need **extra help**. For a small fee (or a few promises), you can get a few other people to play minor roles. Surround the Mark with people who'll back up your story, and he'll eventually decide there is no way this many people can be in on the con. Of course, everyone you bring on will want their cut, so it's only good for the large cons. But if the score is big enough, the crowd scenes are more than worth cutting a few more people in.

The clever Grifter doesn't always have to pay all the Extras from her own pocket. **People can be sheep**, and they'll often play along with whatever the rest of the flock is doing. They don't like telling the emperor he's walking around without any clothes.

So if you want to convince people you're a fashion designer, and you mount a fake show, you can often

give out free invites to a large crowd to play your fans. They won't have heard of you before, but they'll shout all you want, convinced you must be the next big thing. Many of them will invent all manner of background for you as they try to impress others—in fashion, in business, pretty much everywhere in life.

Staging the Short Con

There are two types of short cons: the true short con and the very short con (or **scam**). Most work-a-day Grifters use a variety of very short cons to make a daily wage. These involve getting \$20 of change in exchange for a \$5 bill, playing games of Three-card Monte or bunko, and lifting the odd wallet. There isn't much to talk about, as they're simply the application of skill. These hustles are useful to practice though, for more involved cons.

In each case, you make a few dollars with each one, but it's not enough to just play them once and go home. Instead, the Grifter moves through several bars and street corners over the course of the day, playing the same scam in different locations. Scam one person

out of a dollar, and you have a dollar. Scam a hundred people out of a dollar each, and you have... well, you get the idea.

So when we talk about the short con, we're really looking at the sort of thing that can be played out over an afternoon or evening. You don't need to know much about the Mark's personality, but you do need a certain amount of planning and control of the environment. You set up a situation where the Mark brings something valuable to an area you control. You pull some form of distraction while he's occupied and make a swift exit with the valuables before he knows what hit him. You might invite some guys to a poker game and convert their cash into chips. Then you switch out the cash boxes and leave by the back door. They'll only notice the cash isn't there when they've finished the game. Knowing where the back exit can be found is vital in most short cons!

As always, **control of the environment** is key, as often that environment itself is the convincer. If your poker game looks professional, people assume you can



be trusted with their money. Fake business cards and stylish stationary with company logos can be a great help as well. First impressions are vital in the short con. With little time to really build trust in the Mark, uniforms and the like provide an instant trust that bridges the gap.

Research is also vital before running a short con. The shorter the con, the less research you need to do, but it still pays to do your homework. Research the environment you are going to use and the habits of those who frequent it. Know the exits, security, and surveillance in the area, as well as who is likely to come past at any given time. These facts are key. Short cons aren't usually as personal as long ones so you rarely need to look into the Mark's background. Often you don't know who the Mark is, as you're looking to con anyone who shows up! However it's worth making sure none of them are cops before you pull on the line!

Misdirection is also crucial in the short con, as you don't have long to cover your tracks. You need to keep the Mark looking away from where you're pulling the switch. A good way to run this con is on two sets of people at the same time, making each believe the other group is the one to watch out for.

Let's say you spot a couple buying a car and they're looking to pay cash. When they drive off, you flag them down as vehicle inspectors and produce documents that prove the car is stolen. You tell them the people they bought the car from are known criminals selling stolen vehicles and are being watched. You may have previously planted evidence the car is stolen in the vehicle by posing as prospective buyers earlier in the day. You tell the first group of Marks you'll have to seize the car, but not to worry because you're going to reclaim their cash in a sting operation.

Now you have the evidence you need to arrest these dastardly criminals who sold them a stolen car. Next, you visit the seller and ask to see the money they were just given. You tell them that they suspect the cash

may be a forgery as they've been watching that couple who bought the car for quite some time. You might be able to point out the "thieves" waiting in your police car as evidence as well. Taking the money as evidence and using the car, you make a run for it while both Marks are blaming the other. Declaring to each group of Marks that the others are potentially dangerous criminals should avoid them trying to confront each other until you are long gone.

Another useful technique for running the short con is adding a little touch of **magic**. There aren't many people who completely believe in astrology and tarot cards. But there are a lot of people who would like to hear an answer to the problems in their lives and consult them in out of curiosity or desperation. All you need from the Mark is a kernel of belief. If you play to their hopes and find a few choice things "no one could have known," they're putty in your hands. They may not understand it, but you have demonstrated it works, and that's enough to make a Mark open up. See *The Future Job* for this in full display.

It is very easy to learn a few choice bits of information about a potential Mark. For psychic or medium shows, you plant people waiting in line to chat with potential targets, which they report back. People also leave a lot of data lying around on their phones or online. You don't usually need a Hacker to get to it, just someone who knows how to do some basic web searching. When coupled with an apparent mystical power and a little cold reading, it's a powerful convincer.

The best part of it is that people will be impressed by the bits you get right while disregarding what you got wrong. Even if you can't get the right information, you can always employ a few "Barnum Statements," named after the great showman who made them famous. These apparently personal observances are true for pretty much anyone, things like:

I can see that you have a tendency to worry.

Money is an issue to you.

Your family is important to you, isn't it?

Armed with a few of these, you can convince the Mark you have insight from beyond. The beauty here's that most psychic sessions are often done one on one, allowing you to recycle the statements for the next customer.

There are also a few simple card tricks you can do that allow you to always tell what a particular card might be. If you do these tricks with a normal deck of cards, people are entertained. However, if you do the same trick with a deck of tarot cards people are far more intrigued by you. Many people desperately wish the world were a magical place, where their wishes could be granted. It's perfect territory for the Grifter, since these Marks essentially want to be played.

Once you've played the short con, it's time to get the hell out while you can. It may take the Mark a little while to figure out what has happened, but that might not buy you much time. Many Marks call the police. But if they were doing something illegal, they may look for you personally and be far more unpleasant than the cops. If you've planned ahead, you could move to another part of the city and play the same con, or run several short cons at the same time with a large Crew. Just remember that greed gets you caught, so you get out as soon as you have the score and don't look back.

Staging the Long Con

The long con is where the real money is, but it takes **time and dedication** to pull off and it's not for the amateur. The longer you work the scam the more chance something will go wrong, blow the whole thing wide open and get you caught. It can happen at any moment, even with the most meticulous planning. So not only do you need to be at the top of your game, you need patience and endurance to maintain the con for days, weeks, or even months.

One big reason to go long is the Mark is very security conscious or especially paranoid or clever. You need to work long here because it'll take time to get the trust you need. Where misdirection and control of the environment are key to the short con,

for the long con you need to get personal, right inside the life of the Mark.

The trick to getting close is to take small steps. Each layer of the con is like a spiral dance of trust, each scam getting you close and closer. You need patience to work each bit as a short con with no obvious pay off. In the early stages, you need to actively avoid what you're after, as getting too close without the right access will tip your hand.

For example, you want the key to the Mark's safe deposit box. You work to get him to appoint you as his secretary, and talks about letting you be a key-holder. By refusing, you appear not to be interested in the key or the contents of the box. So later, when you steal a key from another holder and raid the box, you're the last person they suspect.

Getting just part of what you're after is no good to you in the long con. Having a key but no window in the security to use it makes the key useless. In fact, it's potentially harmful, as it might show your hand and make you a suspect. If you play the long con correctly, you lay all the groundwork first and get everything you need together, in time to pull the payoff and make an exit before anyone knows what you were after.

Preparing for the long con can take longer than actually running it. You need to research the Mark—not just his work and businesses, but his personal life and routines. This needs to get personal; there's nothing in the Mark's background that isn't of interest to you. What you are looking for is a way to get close without raising suspicion. Look for a hobby or interest. This keeps you close but also keeps you separate from the areas they are going to be most paranoid about.

Let's say you want some important papers in the Mark's house safe. It's highly secure and you need to scope it out on site to stand a chance of cracking it. Luckily, the Mark is a huge fan of horse racing, so you get hold of a prize racehorse and offer a great deal for them to be a part owner. Now you have access to



the house to go over racing documents and, as time goes by, invitations to parties the Mark is throwing. However, because the Mark sees you as friends from a hobby rather than work colleagues, it is unlikely he will see you as a spy after his company secrets. People often think of their work, social, and home lives as different things and forget how easily they might grant access to one another.

Constructing the layers you are going to use to get close to the Mark is where the real planning comes in. To a large degree it really depends on who the Mark is and what makes them difficult to approach, as well as what you are looking to con them out of. While there is no standard way to do this, there are two general approaches you can use. The first approach lets you gradually **step closer into their inner circle**; the second is to **bring them into yours**.

When you are taking the first approach, you need to come at the Mark sideways. One of the best ways is for the Mark to come to you. They might hear of your

(no doubt falsely constructed) reputation. You may have something useful you are prepared to sell them. Failing that, there's always the "beautiful stranger" trick, where you simply make them want you with a little seduction—always a classic.

You'll get what you need to run a few short cons that will run a loss. You get something they need, massage their ego, and do a few jobs for them. All the while, you're engendering more trust and assembling damning evidence of their activities you can use later. Remember, initially you aren't trying to get close to what you want; you are trying to get close to the Mark. You can't rush this, you have to move slowly, and one step forward is far better than three steps forward and two back.

If you go for option two, the game moves to another level. Instead of pretending to be something you are not and getting them to trust you, you turn the tables. You offer them a chance to grift with you. The first time this has to come almost accidentally, they are just in the right place at the right time to hold something for you. It all appears innocent, but the Mark is clever

and sees you are running a con. You give the Mark a taste for cons. The one they help you with pays big, and they get a cut for helping. Now they are interested in joining, but you insist they have to prove themselves to you so you'll let them join your Crew.

Having apparently seen through your scam, they think they are cleverer than you. If you keep them thinking this, you have them and they won't be looking past the obvious clues. Eventually, after a few cons with the new Crewmember, something goes wrong and the Crew needs a lot of money or some valuable item to escape not only the law but a bunch of very nasty criminals. The Mark by this point will do anything to help the Crew and will offer the thing the Crew needs to get them out of trouble. They think the Crew will find a way to get it back after all. Sadly this is not the case, the Crew vanishes and the bad guys turn out to be members of the Crew the Mark didn't know about, just like the person they originally conned to get the Mark interested.

The long con is where you really show if you have the stones for the grift. You need to be utterly devious, deceptive, show talent for detailed planning, and have very swift improvisational skills. And to really shine, you have to do it with style. That's something no one can teach you.

Quick Rules for Handling Short and Long Cons

Roleplaying is a fine way to resolve any form of con, as part of the Job your Crew is pulling. However, there comes a time where you want to just roll some dice to see what happened. This might be because the con is a small part of the Job, or because it only involves one of the Crewmembers and they've had enough of the spotlight for one session. So the following system allows the Fixer to resolve both long and short cons. While this system is designed to resolve a con with just a few rolls there are aspects of this system (such as Trust Assets) you might want to use when you are doing things the long way around.

Figuring Out What The Con Gets You

The first thing to decide is what the con is going to get you. This is essentially an Asset that you will be able to use in further cons or possibly for a longer job. The Asset can be almost anything. It is usually money (a Wealth-related Asset) or an Access-related Asset (such as **ACCESS TO THE HOSPITAL** or **ACCESS TO THE PARTY**). However it might also be the trust of the Mark (see below) or something strange like a **HORSE, MAGIC SHOW, FASHION SHOW** or **STATUE OF DAVID**.

If the Asset is quite generic (such as money) the players may decide on the die rating of the Asset. If the item is unique or special (such as the **FIRST DAVID**) the Fixer might insist on a specific value for the Asset. In general the Fixer should let the players pick what they like as the more valuable the Asset the harder it is to get hold of. For instance, any decent scam should be able to get the Asset **MONEY D6**, but a huge pile of cash described by **MONEY D10** is going to take some planning. If they want to get hold of **MONEY D12** they are going to need a shipping container.

Next you need to decide on what the con is and how it will be played. If the Asset the players want is quite specific, some of these details may already be apparent. Otherwise it is up to the players to roughly describe the con they are going to pull, such as "We'll set up a fake poker game where most of the players are working for us and strip the mark of his cash." In general the Marks will be anyone in the right place at the wrong time, but you might develop a few specific Marks for more involved cons.

The next thing you do is roll some dice to see how it turns out. The Grifter rolls **INTELLIGENCE + GRIFTER** against two dice that are the same as the Asset's value. The dice represent the people you have to con and the value of the Asset you are after. The bigger the Asset

the more protected it is, or the more people you have to scam. So if you are trying to pull a fake poker game to get hold of **MONEY D8** as an Asset, you are rolling against two d8s.

If you succeed the Asset is yours and you can move onto another con. If you pull off an Extraordinary Success the Asset is yours and is stepped up by one. If you give up you leave with nothing but there is no fallout, leaving you the option to try it again. If you get taken down the con is blow open and while you get out (at a run) you won't be able to try it again without moving to another location. If you pick up Complications things have really gone south—making things *really* interesting.

Trust Assets and the Long Con

If you are playing the long con you aren't after a specific Asset, instead you are trying to work your way into the mark's confidence. This is where Trust Assets come in. Gaining the mark's trust is a powerful tool, but very difficult to get hold of.

When running the long con you run a series of short cons as described above, but you are looking to gain a Trust Asset. Trust Assets always begin at a d4, but are considered to be a minimum of a d8 until they improve for the purposes of deciding what dice the Fixer rolls.

If you pull off the con, you gain the Trust Asset, and you can include it in any roll against the mark. If you already have a Trust Asset, it is stepped up by one. However, if you are taken down at any point the Trust Asset is stepped back by one. Trust Assets can go as high as a d12, but when you have maxed one out you can create a new Trust Asset at d4 and step that up also. There is no limit to how many Trust Assets you can acquire. However, the more cons you pull to get them the more chance you'll screw up and they'll start dropping. If a Trust Asset drops when it is at d4 you

have blown it and can no longer try to gain any more Trust Assets from that Mark.

Using Trust Assets you can gradually build the Mark's confidence in you until you are ready to spring the trap and pull the job. As they include in all rolls against the Mark they can be very powerful, even vital if security is tight. It is up to the Crew to decide how long to work to gain the Mark's trust before they pull the job.

Seduction Actions

Sooner or later, you're going to use sex to get what you want. It is a powerful, dangerous tool. While there are many Talents that can be used to add a layer of seduction into the Job, sometimes you want to go into a little more detail when your Grifter tries to charm an important Mark. These Seduction Actions can be used to play the ultimate game of cat and mouse.

Seduction Actions work in stages, as a series of Contested actions, though the speed varies on the way you want to play it. They might happen in a matter of moments or take hours or even days to move ahead.

In each stage, the Grifter and Mark struggle to see who holds the power in the seduction. Both sides are trying to make the other person make concessions to curry favor (and possibly sex) from the other.

They're contesting over a special Asset, called the Edge, which improves in value as the stages progress. The Edge is included in the dice pool for any seduction actions, and for any attempt to influence either party once they are on the hook. The person with the Edge may also decide if you are going to push to the next stage or not.

If the seduction is taking place over several meetings, it is up to the person without the Edge to find the other one. Complications gained from any previous scene are removed. So there is an advantage in stringing things out, if you have time.



Stage One: Getting Noticed

The first thing you need to do is get the Mark to notice you. You need to get them to approach you if you're going to hold the power in the exchange. Typically, this is a Face Action on the part of the Grifter, but you may need to make use of a roper (another Crewmember moving the Mark in your direction) to take care of this.

If the Face Action is a bust, the Mark fails to form an impression of the Grifter or just isn't interested. The Grifter must find another time and place to make the attempt again. If she does, you may not use any Assets or Talents based on her appearance until she has the Edge.

If you roll a 1 as a result of the Face Action, instead of picking up a Complication the Fixer may grant the Mark the Edge right off the bat at **D6**, stepping it up by one for every additional 1 you rolled. As with Complications, the Fixer must hand over a Plot Point.

If the Face Action is a success, the Mark notices the Grifter without any apparent effort on her part and she gains the Edge at **D6**.

If you manage an Extraordinary Success, the Grifter gets the Edge and it begins at **D8**.

Stage Two: Eye Contact

Now you've caught the Mark's eye, the game about making eye contact and who approaches whom. This time it's a Contested Action, usually **WILLPOWER + GRIFTER** against the Mark's appropriate Traits and suitable difficulty dice set by the Fixer.

The loser of the Contested Action has to make the first move, and the winner either gains the Edge or steps it up by one. An Extraordinary Success allows you to do both, and getting Taken Down steps back the Edge by one if it was in your possession—you don't seem quite the catch anymore.

Stage Three: Flirting

Now the game really begins with both participants able to flirt and get close to each other. By this time you've established you both find each other attractive, so the game is about who is doing the chasing and in control.

This is another Contested Action and the one who manages to raise the stakes and keep it gains or improves the Edge as above.

If the Grifter has the Edge she might try to get the Mark to **Do A Little Something For Me** (see below) as well instead of moving to the next stage.

Stage Four: You Wanna Go Somewhere?

After a little bit of chitchat, it may be time to take the conversation somewhere more private. Again, the game is about who is doing the chasing and who is doing whom a "favor." The Contested Action is resolved the same way

Structure, Game Mechanics, and You

As you can tell, the Seduction Action is a very structured and formalized way of handling this part of the game. It follows a pattern, goes by stages, talks about moving on to the next stage, and so forth. If you do this once or twice, no doubt you'll begin to see ways you can adjust the pattern a little, or leave something out. Maybe you want to add in a stage or treat the entire operation as organic and improvised. That's brilliant! You're well on your way to understanding that the Leverage RPG is more a set of helpful examples in mechanics than a strict set of rules. Let the structure work for you when it can, and break out of it when it doesn't.

as for flirting in Stage Three, with the same opportunity to get the Mark to **Do A Little Something For Me**.

Stage Five: Seal the Deal

If by this point the Grifter still hasn't managed to get an attempt to get the Mark to **Do A Little Something For Me**, she has one last option: give the Mark what he wants. If she chooses to go to bed with the Mark, she automatically gains a chance to make the Mark **Do A Little Something For Me**.

Do a Little Something For Me

For the Grifter, the point of seduction is to use her sexuality to get the Mark to do something for her. After the flirting stage, if she has the Edge, she may ask the Mark to do something for her in return for which she may consider taking their relationship further. The Grifter sets the stakes with a simple **WILLPOWER + GRIFTER** action, including the Edge, against the Mark's opposing Traits. If the Mark fails to raise the stakes, he performs some simple task for her, such as buying her a present, or allowing her access to some place. Otherwise, he makes some excuse for not doing whatever it is the Grifter wants, and this stage ends.

If the Grifter got what she wanted, she may choose to progress to the next stage and then get another opportunity to get the Mark to **Do A Little Something For Me**. However, she may also keep the seduction at the same stage and repeat it.

If she gets Taken Down in the Contested Action the whole seduction ends. The Mark realizes he's being played and he's not going to get what he wants. If she chooses to give up, she may continue the seduction, but only by moving to the next stage.

When Not To Use Seduction Actions

Much of the time you can actually handle this sort of thing with only one or two simple actions or even as a little color to another action that's going on at the same time. Occasionally, seduction is merely how your Crewmember is aiding another Crewmember, and it's just a case of rolling some dice and handing over the highest result.

The other exception to using seduction actions is when there's some awkwardness at the table about characters flirting or carrying on in a seductive manner. Let's face it; some people can't even do this when it matters in real life, let alone at a table with their fellow players. That's a good reason to reduce it to just a simple action or two. On the other hand, this framework of rules can help lessen the awkwardness and make it much more entertaining for all involved, so give it a shot if the occasion presents itself.

Identities and Alter Egos

Before you go grabbing your badge and playing a part, here's a little research for some of the roles you might want to play. It wouldn't kill you to read a little Stanislavsky as well, if you take the craft seriously darling. Many of these are terrible stereotypes, which in a sense play to what some targets expect to see in an identity rather than what is true of that type of person.

Computer Technician

Who you are: The geeks shall inherit the earth, especially in the new age where the computer is king. You are a specialist, the arcane technician who can make the damn machine work again.

What you can do: This identity grants you access to the computer systems of the building. You might play the insider turning up for a Job that has only just been logged, or an outside professional looking to solve a problem (that you may have put there from outside).

What you need: Usually a t-shirt and laptop bag with all manner of tech tools will work. Playing up the nerd angle with a pair of glasses can help. If you fancy making a noise, you could go for wearing a lot of black and possibly sporting a few piercings. Playing the scary weirdo is a good way to get them to leave you alone in the server room a little longer.

How to play it: The main thing here is that you need to sound like you know a lot about computing, so throw in a lot of jargon. If you are going for shy nerd, a little stuttering is good. If you're going for slick, play up the "let me do this complex work for you, it's easy" angle with some casual arrogance.

Employee

Who you are: The corporate drones can be found everywhere, and often the lowest member of the rat race is a useful identity. Being one of the faceless masses as an office worker, janitor, or delivery boy can get you into all manner of places.

What you can do: This identity is usually used to get access and remain invisible. Even the CIA needs to take deliveries sometimes.

What you need: If you're delivering, a simple uniform is all you need. If you're acting like one of the faceless minions, just needs you to wear plain professional clothes. An ID badge might be required if it's a secure building, but creating this false ID should be simple, since you only need the badge to get you through the front door.

How to play it: The key here is quiet and smooth. You are using this identity to get access somewhere, so don't make eye contact or cause a scene. Walk the halls as if anyone you pass has the ability to fire you in an instant.

Local Law Enforcement

Who you are: Cops come in all shapes and sizes, and can be found in every country on earth. They tend to come around arms and have the power to put you away.

What you can do: This identity allows you to stop, search, and question people—all pretty useful for planting evidence or getting the Mark where you want him. You probably won't be able to actually arrest the Mark, but making them believe it'll happen is a good way to force compliance. Be careful, though. If you need the gun, you've done something wrong.

What you need: The uniform's the main thing, and that's not usually too hard to come across. However, if you want to play the role a little deeper, you may want to have an ID set up in the local police system, in case the Mark checks your badge number. You should also bone up on police procedure, so you can play the part right.

How to play it: Here you can be the hard-ass, as cops only stop people when they think they've done something wrong. Cold and professional is your best play, unless you want to play the dirty cop role...which can also be just as useful.

Medical Professional

Who you are: It might be a doctor, nurse, or even consultant, but you are part of one of the caring professions.

What you can do: There are three main uses for this identity. The first is that because people trust doctors and nurses, it's one of the most powerful uniforms you can wear. They also have access, not just to a building but also occasionally to very expensive drugs and equipment. Thirdly, your "expert" opinion carries a lot of weight. You can declare people are dead or take over a patient's care and have them removed from almost

any scene by telling everyone there is something they need "stat."

What you need: You'll notice a pattern: the uniform is the key here. Luckily, it's very easy to get hold of. Credentials are often useful for access in medical buildings, but if you can get past the automated pass cards few people will ask to see your badge. The knowledge is the bit you can't fake, and you can't fake out colleagues who know more than you. However, it's frightening how much the nurses help out the junior doctors in their first year, so a complete inability to perform any procedure or exercise medical judgment (along with a sense of panic) might actually help you fit in!

How to play it: You are the white coat. With anyone but colleagues, you should remain distant and professional. Let the uniform do the talking for you. Only get emotional when you are trying to suggest someone's life might be on the line. Most hospital workers are also pretty tired from long exhausting shifts as well, so you might be able to get away a little short tempered with non-patients. Just try not to be too memorable when you pull that act.

Power Broker

Who you are: The wealthy and the powerful are today's elite. You have corporations at your command, the ability to leverage government, and far more money than you could ever spend.

What you can do: You use this identity to get invitations to places, the sort of places powerful people meet. It is essential to running the big money scam, as people are far happier to let rich people handle their money.

What you need: First, you need a very good suit, and I mean really good. A top quality Rolex wouldn't hurt either. Depending on the con, you'll need a hell of a convincer when it comes to cash. You will also need a lot of credentials in terms of newspaper or website articles about how good you are and sites for the companies you run for when people check up on you.



How to play it: You are a serious moneymaking machine. You are building a legacy and making your Mark by creating a fortune for your heirs. Everything boils down to cost for you and while you might enjoy a good joke, humor and imagination are for dreamers. You are a realist, and that's why you are rich.

Rock Star

Who you are: You are the new thing, the highest grossing chart act since Elvis. Hell, you're going to be bigger than Elvis ever was.

What you can do: This is essentially a twist on the royalty identity below. The advantage is that people will excuse the worst behavior because you are an "artiste" or because they think they can use you. It also lets you bring an entourage—not only your band, but other assorted hangers-on like publicists

and secretaries as well. In this way, you can bring a whole Crew into a building. Given the rock star image, you can also make some pretty outlandish requests without explaining yourself. However, it's not a subtle guise, so no good when you need to go unnoticed.

What you need: Attitude, and lots of it. Depending on your band, you'll need the right clothes, something only the image conscious and those who work in fashion might wear. If you can put together a crowd of screaming fans constantly asking for autographs, that's a bonus.

How to play it: Like royalty, but with more arrogance and attitude. You have just discovered people fall over backwards to do as you say and obey your whims, and you're loving it. You can make demands just to see how far people will accommodate you.

Royalty

Who you are: The high-flying socialite can come in many forms. You might be a grand prince or princess from a foreign nation on a formal visit, or possibly just some privileged creature breezing through the country on an extended holiday.

What you can do: Royalty gets a free pass everywhere. Few people question their wishes and eccentricities. A lot of people will also bend over backwards with obsequious enthusiasm just to get attention. Plenty of royals never deal in cash either, meaning you have a vast line of credit extended to you.

What you need: The convincer here is expensive. You need to appear to be living a very wealthy lifestyle, private planes, penthouse suites, designer clothes, the lot. Luckily these things can be cheaper if you hire them for the day or just steal them, but be careful not to draw too much notice doing so or you'll blow the con. You may also need some form of credentials. But if you can convince, pay, or scam someone in society to vouch for you, the rest will usually believe you. You should also remember that royalty are public figures and many are well known. Don't try and tell people you are part of the British royal family for instance as most people know (or can easily check) who they are. Stick to royalty from obscure (or made up) countries, or lesser royals who are cousins of the kings and queens.

How to play it: You are used to getting what you want when you want it. Money is something other people deal with for you. You need to cultivate the air that you are somehow above everyone else. You need not be arrogant and demanding (although you can be) but bear in mind you have never known any life other than opulence, so you don't quite relate to everyone else.



Secret Agents

Who you are: You are a patriot and an expert in many different skills. However, at this moment you need help and have few options but to call on the Mark for their help.

What you can do: Essentially, anything you like. Spies have the power to make people disappear and that can really motivate. However they can't directly order other agencies around, so this is best played one-on-one.

What you need: It's not like spies carry an ID card or a special uniform, that's kinda the whole point. To convince the Mark you are who you say you are, you'll need some minor con to establish a convincer. You might have information only the CIA could know, or have some official agent working in the agency building to invite them for a meeting and explain who you are. Tricky, but with a bit of imagination and decent research on the Mark it's not as hard as it sounds. A few easily dispatched faux bad guys kidnapping the Mark to interrogate him for what he knows is also pretty good.

How to play it: If you have come to the Mark, you are hurried and rushed. The country needs him and there is no time to play around. This is one identity you can use to rush the Mark.



The Mastermind

THE MASTERMIND

Nothing's more challenging and nerve-wracking than being the guy in charge, the guy with the plan. When the team is in a bind, cons are starting to unravel and the Mark is getting wise, your stress levels can be through the roof.

Well, don't sweat it, Masterminds. We've got you covered. This chapter expands on the Mastermind's description in the LEVERAGE Roleplaying Game and opens up the world of strategic decision-making for you. Take a look, take some notes, and take charge.

First up, though, a little catch-up primer for those of you just getting into the business of being the brains.

What's in this Chapter

Here's a summary of what you're going to find in this chapter of the book.

Mastermind 101: Now You're In Charge So you're the Mastermind in your Crew of ex-cons and former thieves. What's that mean, exactly?

New Mastermind Talents More ways to bring your strategic and leadership skills to the fore.

A Dozen Masterminds An assortment of twelve readymade Masterminds with a variety of backgrounds and motivations. You can grab one as-is when you want a quick Mastermind to play in a pick-up game, or if you're the Fixer they make for excellent Foils.

The Plan: Master Class For those who're diving headlong into the Mastermind Role, a more detailed exploration of the structure and execution of the plan, what to do when it goes wrong, and how to have fun doing it.

Masterminding the Rules A handful of new rules options or expansions to build on the existing Mastermind Role and the systems that go with it in the LEVERAGE RPG. Includes advice and suggestions from the LEVERAGE RPG design community.

Mastermind 101: Now You're In Charge

So you want to be a Mastermind. You've a gift for seizing opportunities. You make critical decisions quickly. You know how to work a team of highly skilled individuals. It's not about nagging a member of the Crew or being bossy. It's about trusting that they're gonna go along with the game plan. Each member of your Crew might be used to doing their own thing, running their own capers their way. It's your job to get them working together, to be den mother as you build rapport among them and to trust in you.

Masterminds tend to be quiet and reserved. We're mysterious, brooding types. While we might seem buttoned-up or like wallflowers, we've got a lot going on under the surface. Our minds are always racing, always turning over possibilities and spinning scenarios. Like artists, musicians, or writers, we live in our own heads. We work every angle and anticipate every contingency, because we have to.

Few folks in this line of work have long Hallmark card lists of folks they keep in contact with. Masterminds are no different, preferring a few close friends rather than a large circle of acquaintances. Our role's to focus on the big picture and future possibilities, sometimes at the expense of personal or social considerations. That can make us come off looking like bastards and maybe even



ruthless sons of bitches. But that's because we have to be careful; relationships are often our undoing.

You need to be the spider at the center of the web. Each strand is an aspect of your machination. Part philosopher, part abstract thinker, we Masterminds work long and hard, dedicated in pursuit of our goals. We won't spare our time, or that of our Crews, frivolously. We're goal driven, and love solving problems or disentangling systems. We keep our eye on the ball, run the Crew, and set the rules. It's our job.

In order to represent those who are powerless and can't represent themselves, each Job gets broken down the same way:

Who's the Mark? Who are they? Where did they come from? How did they gain their money? Where do they keep it?

Next, what's the Mark's situation? How do they have their business set up? How do they exercise their power? What and where are all the pies they have their grubby little hands in?

Since the Mark's victimized someone, it's necessary to break down the nature of the original scam. How did

they manipulate or handle the Client? This tells us how he thinks, what he looks for, and the tools he uses. In other words, it gives us the backdrop to the rules of the game he's used to playing. All of this background is the Hacker's domain, so you need to make good use of him.

The next step is to find the way in. Who are the players around him? Does he have friends, family, or colleagues? Is he tied to the mob, tycoons, or politicians? Does he have the local police in his pockets? Most importantly, what does the Mark want? For this part of the plan, you rely heavily on your Grifter as this is her area of expertise.

Get the lay of the land. Using your Hitter and Thief, you need to assess the strengths and weaknesses of his security. Figure out details like the surveillance, the guards, and the response time of authorities.

Once you have all the pieces, you can put together the plan. This is the hard work of the Mastermind. It doesn't matter how complex the operation; like the journey of a thousand miles, it begins with a single step. Whether

it's the most elegant or outrageous of plans, it all comes down to efficiency—putting right gifted people in right place and at the right time. The plan revolves around the misdirect so the Mark doesn't see the Crew coming... or leaving.

That last bit is really important. The plan is not just about retrieving something. It's about getting in and getting out unseen and untraced (unless, of course, part of your plan involves being seen or traced). And you always need at least a Plan B, if not Plans C through Z.

Now, maybe one percent of the population would be able to do what we Masterminds do. Oh, there are those who think they are or act like they are. But it takes a special mindset to be the nerve center of the operation. We coordinate the many moving parts: the Hacker, the Hitter, the Grifter, and the Thief. Each part is every bit as sharp and capable, but one person has the vision to get those parts not only to work together but also moving toward the true goal. We're the eyes of the group. We keep their eyes on the big picture, on the prize.

Being the leader of this Crew is about teaching a skilled set of individuals how to help people. Vision. Purpose. That's what the Mastermind does. The Job is a means to an end.

Masterminds Through History

In fiction, it's easy to put one's finger on a Mastermind. From Cassius (*Julius Caesar*), Mr. Darcy (*Pride and Prejudice*), Professor Moriarty (Sherlock Holmes' nemesis) and Gandalf the Grey (J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*), all the way to modern characters such as Hannibal Lecter (*Silence of the Lambs*), Keyser Soze (*The Usual Suspects*), and Gregory House (*House, M.D.*).

Commonly when one thinks of Masterminds, they key in on the ever-elusive criminal types, such as Adam Worth, the London-born inspiration for Moriarty, or how Charles "Lucky" Luciano was the architect of the modern mob. But Masterminds have taken a variety of forms over the years. Generals, scientists, writers, Civil Rights leaders, economists, and even politicians, Masterminds have shaped history.



Alexander III of Macedon, aka Alexander the Great (356 – 323 B.C.)

Alexander the Great created one of the largest empires in the ancient world. Inheriting a strong military after the death of his father, he launched a massive military campaign. His sole goal was to reach the “ends of the world and the Great Outer Sea.” He worked toward his goal with a single focus, pursuing strategies that yielded high payoffs. He challenged the might of the Persian Empire, and succeeded in conquering it. By the time he was done, he had diffused the Hellenistic culture, which has so informed him, throughout the known world. His tactical exploits are still taught to this day, and he’s the standard generals measure themselves against.

Alexander never responded well to orders (especially from his father), though he did respond well to reasoned debate and ideas. He was perceptive, logical, and calculating. His love of philosophy, art, and science added up to a man who was both vast and quick of mind.

He was known for his iron will, self-confidence, and determination. Many saw him as impulsive and rash, since he trusted and acted on his instincts. His creative problem-solving skills are literally legendary, as with the story of the Gordian Knot. It was prophesied that whomever untied the Knot would rule all of Asia. When he was presented with this old, intricate puzzle, and couldn’t find either end of the knot, he took out his sword and cut it in two.

Other examples of this kind of Mastermind would include Hannibal and Augustus Caesar.

Sir Isaac Newton (1643 – 1727)

An English physicist, mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, and theologian, Isaac Newton was a man full of ideas. He had a unique way of looking at the universe, through the lens of both science and religion. Ingenious, he rose to the demands of any challenging situation presented.

Like many Masterminds, he was undistinguished as a student. The politics of academia governed his world. Because of his service to science, his ideas usually brought him into conflict. He navigated the dangerous waters between faith and reason, often using one to thwart the principles of the other.

His book, *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687), was considered one of the most influential books in the history of science. He presented the theory of universal gravitation and the three laws of motion that would shape physics for three centuries. And he built the first practical reflecting telescope. He constantly sought new ways to implement his ideas, from optics to mechanics. Newton was able to absorb the ideas of others, no matter how complicated, as well as explain his own complicated theories.

Other examples of this kind of Mastermind would include Leonardo da Vinci and Nikola Tesla.

Pyotr Alexeyevich Romanov, aka Peter the Great (1672 – 1725)

Pyotr Alexeyevich Romanov was the Mastermind behind Russia. His vision, following the policies of modernization and expansion, transformed the Tsardom of Russia into the giant world power known as the Russian Empire.

At the age of ten, he became Tsar, though his half-sister Sophia Alekseyevna ruled as an autocrat in his name. He witnessed friends and family killed due to political violence. Within a few years, he was ready to wrest power from his sister. After a series of political machinations and intrigue, he won the power struggle. Now his true work could begin.

Pyotr used an extensive tour of Europe to follow his unquenchable curiosity. He looked everywhere, asking questions, researching, tinkering, and learning everything he could. When he returned, he reorganized Russia’s army, cities, and social mores. He modeled them

after European wonders and successes he experienced. He even reformed the Russian Orthodox Church.

What made him a Mastermind was how he created and implemented innovative solutions to analytical problems. He was organized and determined to implement the changes he had in mind. Impetuous, stubborn, and relentless, he essentially became the architect of Russian life.

Other Masterminds of this type include Niccolò Machiavelli and Maximilien François Marie Isidore de Robespierre.

Shaka kaSenzangakhona, aka Shaka Zulu (1787 – 1828)

Shaka kaSenzangakhona was the most influential leader of the Zulu Kingdom. He united many of the Northern Nguni people into the Zulu Kingdom and he held sway over most of the southern African continent. The idea of a Zulu state was a unique construction of his particular vision.

He was regarded as a military genius, introducing numerous reforms and innovations. He introduced *iklwa* (short stabbing spears with long, sword-like spearheads) and heavier shields made of cowhide, along with a new fighting method. He taught new encirclement tactics, referred to as “buffalo horns” formations. Coordinated by regimental chiefs, it was an elegant and simple attack strategy.

Shaka seemed to have an uncanny sense for the best strategy for a given situation. He had the ability to give complex orders and give them an elegance and simplicity such that it could even be communicated through hand signals. He relied on his own ability and confidence to force his will on others.

Other Masterminds of this type include Napoleon Bonaparte and Sun-Tzu.

Ulysses S. Grant (1822 – 1885)

Ulysses S. Grant was a proven leader of men, first as a general during the Civil War, and then as a president. He was considered the North’s top general and the Mastermind of the Union’s victory over the Confederacy.

Like all good generals, he had a strategic mind. Tightly controlled, Grant was known for his terse language and clipped way of speaking. In the heat of battle—be it the planning or its execution—he seemed to come to life. Constantly busy, thinking, planning, and writing his instructions, his plans were concise and far-sighted.

He had a big picture view of the war: it had to be won by prolonged pressure on the Confederacy. He knew he had to drain their resources and will. His was a strategy of bloody attrition, grinding, and exhausting his enemy. He would not be deterred by the casualties on his side nor by what people thought about him, his strategy, or his efforts. And he was determined and successful. Such military figures are natural Masterminds, as they see war as a chess game.

Other Masterminds of this type include Dwight D. Eisenhower and Hannibal of Carthage.

Harriet Tubman (1821 – 1913)

Abolitionist, Union spy, and women’s suffragette, Harriet Tubman was one of the Masterminds of the Underground Railroad. She made thirteen missions to rescue more than seventy slaves. She even helped recruit for John Brown and his raid on the Harper Ferry Armory.

The story went that she was hit in the head with a heavy metal weight. It was thrown by an overseer who had lost their temper and the intended target was another slave. While the injury caused debilitating headaches and seizures, it also gave her “visions” and vivid dreams.

As a conductor on the Underground Railroad, she provided specific instructions for what was essentially a heist of people. She also had a streak of a Grifter to

her. She disguised herself on several occasions or through subterfuge, distracted people in order to make her getaways. Her confidence sprang from her faith, consulting with God through her visions. Her faith also served a practical application: it allowed her to send coded instructions through spirituals. She was a woman of tremendous ingenuity with singular purpose and focus.

Other Masterminds of this type include Susan B. Anthony and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Niels Bohr (1885 – 1962)

Theoretical physicist Niels Bohr was a man who lived in a world of ideas and theory. He had a single-minded focus on, as he put it, “the structure of atoms and the radiation emanating from them.” He rarely had a blueprint, but he was confident of finding a pragmatic solution during the design of his experiments. His contribution to the field of physics include the Bohr model of the atom and the principle of complementarity. He went on to found the Institute of Theoretical Physics.

Bohr worked at the top secret Los Alamos lab in New Mexico on the Manhattan Project. Often acting as a knowledgeable consultant and even “father confessor” to the scientific community. His terse way of communicating led to strained encounters between friends, most notably Werner Heisenberg, but also allowed him to navigate the efforts of the intelligence community. He believed that atomic secrets should be shared with the international scientific community. It took Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill to rein him in.

Inquisitive and methodical, he shaped not only the scientific community, but also world events. He ushered in the atomic bomb and nuclear energy, but also realized the long-term implications of his work. He advocated for the responsible use of nuclear energy, with his efforts leading to the formation of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Other Masterminds of this type include Lise Meitner and J. Robert Oppenheimer.

New Mastermind Talents

Absent-Minded Professional

Your mind is constantly running, always generating ideas and working through complex problems. The downside with such a mind is that you miss things like important dates, social cues, and coordinating outfits.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You make a roll that includes your **INTELLIGENCE** die.

Effect: You may add a **D4** to the roll that includes your **INTELLIGENCE** die and then add together the three highest rolling dice, rather than the highest two, for your result.

Brainstorm

You’re always open to new ideas. You’ve got the ability to sift through all of the wacky notions and pick out ideas that suit your goal.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You’re in voice contact with at least one Crewmember. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: A Crewmember that you’re in contact with (including yourself) who’s taking an action may add the **INTELLIGENCE** die of any one other Crewmember who’s also in contact with you.

By The Book

Sure, to some folks you're an obsessive, perfectionist control freak, but these are the exact qualities one needs in order to plan a successful Job. Usually, the degree to which you have control over your circumstances is only revealed later.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You're carrying out or involved in a Flashback Action. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: Choose a Crewmember involved in the Flashback Action (including yourself) and set his Role die to its maximum result. Roll the rest of the dice as normal. This applies only to that roll.

Chess Master

Like all good chess players, you're three steps ahead of your opponent. You can turn his moves against him.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: The Fixer activates a Complication in a roll against a Crewmember you're in contact with. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: Describe how the Complication actually aids you in this moment. Turn the Complication into a **D6** Asset during this scene. The Fixer gets it back as a Complication when the scene is over, stepped down one die. If the Complication would become a **D4**, it is instead removed.

Connect the Dots

You see patterns in clouds of data. What are seemingly random facts to others makes sense as a whole to you.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: Two or more Assets are in play during one scene and you're in contact with your Crew. You may use this Talent only once per scene.

Effect: You may step up a single Asset by one, while stepping back another Asset by one. You can't step up an Asset above a **D12**. An Asset stepped down to **D4** is eliminated.



Attributes and Masterminds

Knowing when to roll in your **MASTERMIND** die isn't something that comes instinctually. In fact, it's the number one question we get about Masterminds from the **LEVERAGE RPG** community. Here are some suggestions for **ATTRIBUTE + MASTERMIND** combos that have actual use during play.

MASTERMIND + AGILITY: Executing a critical piece of a plan that requires grace or precise timing, reacting to a sudden strategic event, or defusing an explosive device that relies on patterns or puzzles.

MASTERMIND + ALERTNESS: Sensing the weak points in a contained environment, system, or situation. Getting a quick read of someone else's plan from discrete cues. Picking out patterns or ciphers in a garbled piece of audio or video.

MASTERMIND + INTELLIGENCE: The classic combo, this covers most analytical or logic-based plan decisions. You roll this when you're explaining a complicated plan

to someone else, deciphering a schematic or blueprint, filling in the blanks in a corporate document or military briefing, or recalling an important historical event relating to an ongoing plan.

MASTERMIND + STRENGTH: Applying or teaching a detailed physical regimen, using force against a previously determined weak point in a structure to achieve a sequence of cascading events, seizing the advantage in the midst of a fistfight.

MASTERMIND + VITALITY: Self-diagnosis of symptoms, staying focused on a stakeout or other strategic objective, clearing your head when gripped with pain or physical trauma, and motivating a room full of exhausted or tired people.

MASTERMIND + WILLPOWER: The flipside of both the Vitality and Intelligence combinations, this is useful for improving the morale of those who're following your lead, asserting your own authority in an organization or structured environment, subtly adjusting a plan or strategy on the spot without being noticed, and reining in a chaotic group or crowd.

Ducks In A Row

You insist on looking at all available data before going ahead with a plan. You're suspicious of anything based on shoddy research. Sometimes this costs you precious minutes, but minutes well spent.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You start a Timed Action.

Effect: You may choose to have one fewer beat to complete your Timed Action. If you do, you may add **D8** to all of your rolls involving your **MASTERMIND** die.

Efficiency Expert

Waste and poor use of resources gives you a headache. Your pragmatic innovation, applied liberally to any operation, is aspirin for that.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: The Fixer activates a Complication on you or one of your Crew during a Contested Action that already includes a Complication. You must be in physical or voice contact with your Crew to use this Talent on them.

Effect: Step up an existing Asset by one (maximum **D12**).

Exit Strategy

Sometimes life doesn't allow you the best-laid plans. You've always got a way out in your back pocket.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You or a Crewmember you're in contact with Gives In during a Contested Action.

Effect: You or the Crewmember may ignore the Complication that Giving In ordinarily creates. You

may only use this Talent once per Job, unless the Fixer gives you an Opportunity in a later scene. You may then refresh this Talent and use it again.

Fortune's Smile

Sometimes you just have to roll the dice. No matter how much time is put into careful planning, things randomly happen that you just can't take into account. With a little luck, the plan will hold.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You make a roll using a Role other than **MASTERMIND** and fail to raise the stakes. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: Reroll all of your dice, adding a d4 to your pool. You must keep the new result. You can reroll the dice again with another Plot Point, but this time you add two d4s. You can continue to retry as long as you continue to spend Plot Points.

Nose For News

You know how to sniff out a story. Corrupt businessman, politician, or cop on the take—if there's a story to be uncovered, you know how to get to the bottom of it.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You spend at least one scene conducting research, beating pavement, or poking about. You may instead spend a Plot Point to flashback to such a scene, right before you roll dice against the Mark or one of his Agents.

Effect: Add a **D8** to your first roll in an Action to set or raise the stakes against the Mark or one of his Agents. If the Fixer gives you an Opportunity, step it up to a **D10**, otherwise drop it to a **D6** for the remainder of your rolls in that Action.

On My Mark

Because some plans demand elegance, punctuality and timing are your hallmark. You're first on-scene, and you use that time to take in the area.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: Spend a Plot Point just before a scene begins.

Effect: You're the first on site for a scene. Everyone else (including Supporting Characters) comes in after you. Create a **D8** Asset that establishes a feature or quality associate with the location.

Renaissance Man/Woman

You're constantly broadening your mind and body with extracurricular activities. Whether it's devouring literature, hiking the Appalachian Trail, or solving a century-old philosophical conundrum, you'll do whatever it takes to get those notches in your belt and the deck stacked against your opposition.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You may activate this Talent at any time, once per Job.

Effect: You may replace one of your existing Specialties with a different one. The change is permanent, or at least until you use this Talent again in a later Job.

Specialty Guru

There's that one particular area you've studied in-depth. For some, it's insurance fraud. For the scientist, it's their particular field. Choose one of your Specialties for this to apply to.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You're rolling your chosen Specialty.

Effect: You may choose to step up your Specialty to a **D8** or roll two **D6s** instead of one. You may make this decision each time you roll. You may only use this Talent once per Job, unless the Fixer gives you an Opportunity in a later scene. You may then refresh this Talent and use it again.



THE GRIFTER

THE MASTERMIND

Think On Your Feet

Sometimes a plan completely falls apart, and you have to work with what you have and what the situation provides.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You or any Crewmember you're in contact with fails a roll in a Timed Action. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: Add your **MASTERMIND** die to the roll and recalculate the result.

What's it Worth to Ya?

Sure, you can tell how much jewelry or art might be worth. Sure, you can tell a counterfeit bill when you see it. But you can also assess the abilities of others and judge the usefulness of different ideas.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You or a Crewmember you're in contact with uses an Asset for the first time, or faces a Complication for the first time.

Effect: Step up the Asset by one (maximum **D12**) or step back the Complication by one (minimum **D4**). If you or your Crew is successful in that roll, the Asset or Complication stays at this modified rating. Otherwise, the Asset steps back by one from its original rating (removed if set to **D4**) or the Complication steps up by one (maximum **D12**).

THE FIXER

A Dozen Masterminds

THE GRIFTER

THE MASTERMIND



Monte Day, Coach

THE FIXER

Monte began his career as a player at Milan High School in Indiana. He was an all-star athlete, lettering in basketball. He went to Indiana University, earning a degree in history and business, but his love for sports was his calling. After graduating, he coached high school junior varsity basketball. He was soon accepted as an assistant coach at a major university, becoming a head coach at age 24.

Loyalty is everything to Monte. He enforces a strict discipline in his players and has an eye for talent, integrating them quickly into a team. He has the charisma to recruit anyone he sets his eyes on. And he can motivate his players not only to play as a team but also to reach their potential.

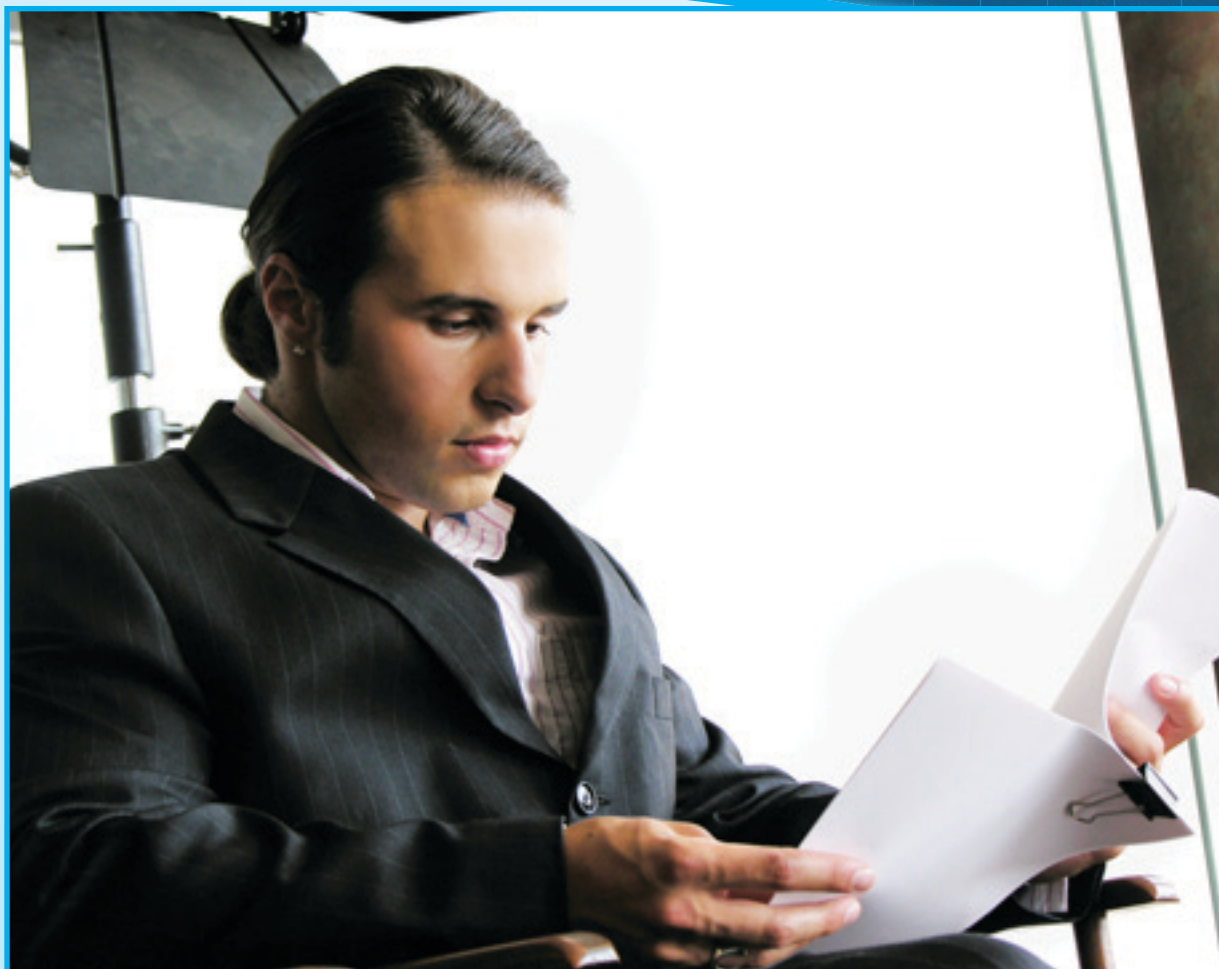
Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D6, INTELLIGENCE D6, STRENGTH D10, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D10

Roles: GRIFTER D6, HACKER D4, HITTER D8 (HARD-NOSED), MASTERMIND D10 (INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKER), THIEF D4

Distinctions: Disciplined, Hard Working, Patient

Talents: By the Book, Stay on Target

Signature Asset: COACH WHISTLE D8: More than just a means of getting people's attention, this relic of Monte's early days as an assistant coach is central to his leadership style. Monte uses it to keep discipline, keep time, and keep his Crew in line. It also helps him pass as a drill sergeant on the Job.



Jackson Shelton, Director

The son of a schoolteacher and a jazz musician, Jackson grew up with a love for the arts. He went to New York University film school, but dropped out after two years to pursue his guerrilla style brand of independent filmmaking. His first film was made for just over one hundred grand, but grossed several million dollars.

Writing, directing, and producing, he stays under budget by always managing to cast the right people for his projects. He's known for being able to manage even the worst of diva actors and actresses. Critics have acclaimed him for the performances he draws out of children.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D8, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D6, WILLPOWER D10

Roles: GRIFTER D8 (WORKING WITH KIDS), HACKER D4, HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D10 (MULTITASKING), THIEF D6

Distinctions: Controlling, Creative, Rake

Talents: Brainstorm, Think On Your Feet

Signature Asset: POCKET CAMERA D8: Jackson keeps this digital camera and video recorder on his person at all times. It's the latest in a series of filmmaking aids that he's used to perform surveillance, collect evidence, and archive his plans in progress. Jackson's got the chops to use the device unobtrusively if he needs to, but some Marks just love to be on camera...



**Nicholas Bebawi,
Academic**

Nicholas studied *literae humaniores* (“the classics”) at Exeter College, Oxford, eventually earning a degree in theology. He went on to teach at Oxford for some time, earning a reputation as a leading New Testament scholar and gaining fame for his new perspectives on the Pauline letters. During interviews, though, few make note of his love of spelunking, as he does not advertise that often.

Though most at home in front of a classroom, where his humility and humor have earned him a steadfast following, he leads quite an exciting life on the side. He’s proficient in nearly a dozen languages, modern and ancient. His expertise in Middle East affairs has led to him being a consultant for a number of Western companies operating in the region. His pursuit for “the truth” has earned several assassination attempts.

Attributes: AGILITY D6, ALERTNESS D8, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D10, WILLPOWER D8

Roles: GRIFTER D6 (OXFORD EDUCATED), HACKER D4, HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D10, THIEF D8 (TOMBS AND OLD TUNNELS)

Distinctions: Earnest, Instructor, Wise

Talents: Ducks In A Row, Specialty Guru (Oxford Educated)

Signature Asset: BRASS COMPASS D8: A parting gift from his fellows at Exeter, this polished piece of fine craftsmanship hasn’t left Nicholas’ pocket on any of his expeditions. It’s engraved with Psalm 121, the Song of Ascents, and has helped Nicholas find his way home many times. It’s at least partly a talisman of good fortune, as he will confess over a fine pilsner, but when on the Job it’s quite utilitarian as well.



Tess Block, Consultant

Tess grew up in a tempestuous household, her parents fighting often. She learned at a young age to find ways to calm the situation. In her teenage years, after her parents had divorced, she kept them from using her in their power struggles. This background inspired her to seek out a double major in business and psychology.

Tess often serves as a process consultant or facilitator. She plays the observer—gathering facts, reading body language, and assessing the lay of the land—then guides her clients toward a solution. She doesn't provide solutions; she influences groups to see solutions on their own.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D8, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D6, WILLPOWER D10

Roles: GRIFTER D6 (THE GENTLE PUSH), HACKER D8 (DATA MINING), HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D10, THIEF D4

Distinctions: Organized, Pragmatic, Soft Voice

Talents: Efficiency Expert, What's it Worth to Ya?

Signature Asset: ELECTRONIC ORGANIZER D8: Most people don't know how to properly use these somewhat outdated devices, but Tess wouldn't be without it. She keeps a lengthy list of contacts indexed by pseudonym with a mnemonic code only she is privy to. She's lost the organizer twice, and each time fought to get it back. It handily enables her to match up potential clients, cross-reference vital statistics, and break down networks of contacts into easily handled groups.



Ivan Varick, Executive Director

The son of a judge, Ivan quit college to get a job as a stockbroker. The job put him on a fast track to success. He earned the nickname “The Milkman” for his ability to buy a company, milk it for everything it was worth, and then sell off the remains.

Having gotten into trouble with the SEC on numerous occasions (the last leading to a year in prison) Ivan’s turned over a new leaf. He now pursues charitable projects, with his foundation funding medical research. He trashed a lot of lives during his Milkman days, but is working hard to make up for it.

Attributes: AGILITY D6, ALERTNESS D8, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D10

Roles: GRIFTER D8, HACKER D4, HITTER D6 (BUILT LIKE A BRICK), MASTERMIND D10 (BREAKING CORPORATIONS), THIEF D4

Distinctions: Business-Minded, Decisive, Smoker

Talents: Sea of Calm, The Bigger They Are

Signature Asset: HEIRLOOM ZIPPO D8: Ivan’s grandfather wore this steel military-issued lighter in World War II, where it stopped a bullet and saved his life. To this day it’s never failed to light, regardless of the weather, and it represents a legacy that Ivan felt he failed to live up to until recently. The story goes that Ivan’s father almost lost it to LBJ in a game of cards but won it back in a rematch at Camp David. It’s a good story, and it’s a great lighter.



Amelie Robichaud, Scientist

Amelie loved science since she was a little girl. She was often discouraged from that pursuit by both her parents, who wanted a lawyer for a daughter. But that didn't stop her; she obtained her Ph.D. in biochemistry at Michigan State University. Dr. Robichaud became a rising star, making a name for herself at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies.

But she's a woman who sees the big picture. With grants and money from patents, she set up a private lab to conduct cross-discipline research. She coordinates departments in several disciplines. Science is her calling and she wants to make the world a better place. She's run afoul of big corporate interests in the past, and even become subject to heavy-handed lawsuits challenging her patents. It's not been pretty and she's had to be somewhat underhanded to dodge the wealthy legal teams, but so far it's not been at the expense of her code of conduct.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D8, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D8

Roles: GRIFTER D6, HACKER D8 (BLEEDING EDGE OF TECH), HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D10 (CROSS-DISCIPLINE), THIEF D4

Distinctions: Theoretical, Curious, Inventor

Talents: Absent-Minded Professional, Specialty Guru (Cross-Discipline)

Signature Asset: LAB COAT D8: Amelie knows well the anonymity and authority that a lab coat brings to any situation involving scientific endeavor. She's had the same one for years, and it's almost a part of her. She wears it whether she's meeting with highbrow professionals or poorly funded startup entrepreneurs, and in each case it's solidified her angle. Amelie doesn't have to work hard to pass herself off as an expert, and the coat is often just icing on the cake.



**Cyrus McCammon,
Engineer**

Very much a button-up engineer, Cyrus has never been comfortable with people. He's a brilliant industrial engineer with several inventions, which have made him a lot of money. Often drifting off into his imagination, he relaxes by reading fantasy novels and playing online roleplaying games, where his identity is concealed behind a virtual mask. This is how he prefers to operate; remote, on his own terms, and in control of the situation.

Despite his quiet demeanor, he's selfless, noble, brave and loyal to his friends. He's seen his creations used by the military in destructive ways, and horrified at the association he's previously had with death. Now he's trying to bring balance to the world by using his inventions for good. He pegs a Crew through online methods and networking software, then puts all of the pieces together like a watchmaker. With his creations and his technical acumen, Cyrus is a true digital mastermind.

Attributes: AGILITY D6, ALERTNESS D8, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D10

Roles: GRIFTER D4, HACKER D8 (SPARK OF INNOVATION), HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D10 (ASCETIC), THIEF D6

Distinctions: Focused, Genius Mechanic, Shy

Talents: Brainstorm, Sea of Calm

Signature Asset: WALL OF AVATARS D8: Cyrus keeps his online persona as secure as he can, veiling his true identity behind a series of fantasy icons, RPG characters, and toons. It's so well established that most Hackers have a hard time connecting one to the other, and with the number of times he's bought and traded off any given avatar to other gamers or social networkers, finding the real Cyrus McCammon is a puzzle unto itself.



Allison Murdoch, The Lawyer

Allison is a young, brash, idealistic public defender. Her friends call her Mrs. Quixote behind her back for her love of tilting at windmills. Picking up impossible cases, she's willing to fight against multinational corporations or government agencies when the little guy's been taken advantage of.

She's a part of the system, but still entirely distrusts it. As a crusader, she has no room or time in her life for friends or a dating life. A disastrous string of relationships have clued her into the fact that she's married to her work. She also attracts enemies like a bugzapper attracts gnats, although sometimes the bugs are a whole lot bigger.

Allison has made use in the past of former clients and even reformed criminals she's personally defended, individuals who make up what amounts to a Crew at any given point. These are people who she trusts, but not for very long. Allison rarely keeps any group of this size going for more than one or two Jobs.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D8, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D6, WILLPOWER D10

Roles: GRIFTER D8, HACKER D4, HITTER D6 (COMBAT READY), MASTERMIND D10 (FIGHTING THE MAN), THIEF D4

Distinctions: Cunning, Deceptive, Play To Win

Talents: Connect the Dots, Fortune's Smile

Signature Asset: STUN GUN D8: Allison's smart enough to know that she's hardly the biggest or baddest person in any confrontation, and if things get violent or physical she's got just the thing to even out the odds. This is a typical hand-held high-voltage stun gun, the kind that looks like something from Star Trek. It's saved her life many times already, and helps keep her reputation as a lawyer who zaps bugs fairly active.



Matt Begala, Political Strategist

Matt “The Carver” Begala is the man behind the scenes. He’s the mover and shaker who moves other movers and shakers. He’s in the Rolodex of every major political figure and businessman. With a background as an attorney and venture capitalist, he’s had a hand in the successful campaigns of three presidents, four governors, and two senators.

Matt has a reputation for being able to dig up a cemetery’s worth of skeletons from anyone’s past and using them to carve up his opponents. He works for either side of the political aisle, as he’s in it for the love of the game. When he’s got a target in his sights, usually between campaign seasons, he likes to put together a Crew of shady characters that owe him money or favors. Matt’s not the kind of guy that you mess with, so these Crews are genuinely loyal to him. Of course, the paper trail is covered up neatly after the Job, ready for his next lobbying circuit or congressman fundraiser.

Attributes: AGILITY D6, ALERTNESS D8, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D8, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D8

Roles: GRIFTER D4, HACKER D8 (DIRTY TRICKS), HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D10 (FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES), THIEF D6

Distinctions: Devious, Good Ol’ Boy, Obfuscation

Talents: Chessmaster, Nose For News

Signature Asset: CLEAN-UP CREW D8: Not a Crew in the standard Leverage sense, this group of efficiency experts, data miners, and researchers are on Matt’s payroll year round. He uses them to help cover up situations he’d prefer stay out of the news, but they’re also very good at spotting other cover-ups. When Matt has had to bring them into the Job midway, it’s usually because the whole plan has gone south. They get to work sweeping up the dirt while Matt’s Crew fixes their eyes back on the prize.



Thaddeus Grant, General

Born into a military family, Thaddeus was destined to enter the family business. He never did develop a taste for violence and bloodshed, though he came to life in strategy meetings. Thinking, planning, and encouraging the men he led was his specialty. He constructs novel and daring plans, even if they seem deceptively simple and brutal. For him, it's all about the endgame.

Thad also never gives up. He'll fight to the bitter end, grinding down the enemy by sheer force of will. It's his almost superstitious belief that whatever he starts, he never turns back until he's finished.

Thad recruits his Crew almost entirely from ex-servicemen and former government contractors, experts who have been burned by the Letter Agencies too many times to find routine work. Under his leadership, they go to work taking down rogue mercenary teams, terrorist cells, and saboteurs, bloodlessly and without attracting the attention of the

authorities. It's a thankless way of life, but Thad feels a sense of national pride when every Job is done.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D6, INTELLIGENCE D8, STRENGTH D8, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D10

Roles: GRIFTER D6, HACKER D4, HITTER D8 (DIRTY SHOT), MASTERMIND D10 (THE BATTLEFIELD), THIEF D4

Distinctions: Dedicated, Field Marshall, Work Ethic

Talents: Archangel, Chessmaster

Signature Asset: THE HORNY TOAD D8: This is a converted Winnebago plated with military grade armor and outfitted with a dozen weapon systems, most of which are designed to incapacitate or stun. It's also kitted out with the usual satellite hookups, a big screen HDTV, and rations for at least a week's worth of stakeouts or rural operations. As mobile headquarters go, this one's a keeper.



**James Earl Spanier,
Forensic Accountant**

From an early age, Jim Spanier loved numbers, finding peace in the order they represented. He graduated New York University summa cum laude in accounting. He's much more comfortable in a windowless cubicle farm so he can be alone with his numbers. Jim works twelve-hour days with only one or two days off every year, but it's his process. You can't throw off a man's process.

Jim's dogged pursuit of balance led him to be fired more than once when he couldn't reconcile figures that clearly revealed corporate malfeasance. He now works for a private consulting firm, often employed by various investigative agencies. Although he has Mastermind talents a strategist would kill for, Jim is rarely the leader of a Crew. Instead, he signs on to Jobs on the understanding that he serves as analyst and process manager, with somebody else handling the personnel management. He's really not a people person.

Attributes: AGILITY D8, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D6

Roles: GRIFTER D4, HACKER D8 (INVESTIGATION), HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D10 (PROBLEM SOLVING), THIEF D6

Distinctions: Analytical, Loner, Persistence

Talents: By The Book, Connect the Dots

Signature Asset: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS D8: It's amazing what secrets Jim has managed to keep. He's had his nose in hundreds and hundreds of top secret spreadsheets and financial contracts, but through all of it he's remained professional and never leaked a word. That doesn't keep him from using this knowledge to help him solve problems, of course. On any given Job, consider Jim to have some kind of nondisclosure agreement in place that may fill in some troubling blanks when he's poking around in other people's numbers.



**Woody Urich,
Investigative Reporter**

An obsessive smoker and jaded cynic, Woody doesn't work well with others. He also has trouble with authority. Luckily, he's good at his job, or he'd have been fired repeatedly. He sniffs out scandal and doggedly follows the story wherever it leads. He doesn't know how to let it go even when it pits him against underworld and political figures.

After a long investigation of trailing bribes, he once wrote a newspaper article exposing corruption that supposedly went all the way to the governor's office. However, the allegations proved to be false and his reputation took a hit.

For a year he became an alcoholic. He cleaned up his act and eventually cleared his name when he found conclusive evidence that he'd been set up by a corrupt cop who thought Woody was getting too close to him. Now, Woody works with groups of other muckrakers and do-gooders, using their investigative talents and creative problem-solving to take down the real corruption and larceny that plagues his city.

Attributes: AGILITY D10, ALERTNESS D8, INTELLIGENCE D10, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D6, WILLPOWER D8

Roles: GRIFTER D8 (OBSERVER), HACKER D6, HITTER D4, MASTERMIND D10 (STREET CONTACTS), THIEF D4

Distinctions: Creative, Tenacious, Writer

Talents: Friends in Low Places, Nose For News

Signature Asset: UNLOADED COLT .45 D8: Woody hasn't a clue how to properly discharge a firearm and he wouldn't want to if he did, but he knows the impact a gun can have in a heated situation. This weapon, chrome-plated and ivory-handled, looks like a collector's piece—and it is—but it's intimidating enough that he keeps it tucked into his belt or in his satchel when he's on the clock. Keeps the thugs off his case. It's not guaranteed to actually fire if it's loaded, since Woody also hasn't a clue how to maintain a gun, either.



The Plan: Master Class

Now that you're in charge and have an idea of what it means to be a Mastermind, it's time to take things to another level. We're gonna delve deeper into what's required to put together a plan.

The Crew trusts the Mastermind to make sure the plan works. No matter what type of Mastermind you are or what your motivations may be, remember that you're on the wrong side of the law. You're a crook—a crook for the little guy, though. That's the kind of mindset you need to have; which is good, because it takes one to catch one.

Con artists make their money through deception. While the old adage goes that “you can't cheat an honest man,” there aren't many honest men around. Anyone can be taken. A lot of cons prey on a person's greed (risk a little bit of money to earn a lot of money), dishonesty (if we skirt the rules, we can short cut our

way to fortune), or vanity (keeping up with the Jones' is a lot easier with a bigger car, house, or boat...and we're certainly entitled to such things). But they can just as easily take advantage of someone's compassion, loneliness, insecurity, ignorance, or poor health.

Where there's desperation, there's vulnerability. Where there's vulnerability, there's a way in. That's how the Mark formulates his plan, so that's how you need to formulate yours against him. His greed is the easiest thing to exploit, if only because one can never have enough money. If not there, then everyone has a dream, or a secret desire, that they wish to protect or attain. Every Mark either wants something or has something to hide, so figuring that out is your way in.

The basic plan of a Job has to keep in mind four elements: **breadth**, **time frame**, **specificity**, and **collaboration**.

- Plans need a thin breadth. While they might be planned with the meticulousness of a battle campaign, its scope can't be to take all of Europe in one swipe. Each plan is about working toward a single goal.

- Plans need enough time for the Mark to bite, yet run long enough to get what you're after and get out. Too little time and you're prone to rush an outcome. There's nothing like too hard of a press to raise someone's suspicion. Too long and you give them too much time to question. That provides too many opportunities for random pieces—other piece, happenstance, etc.—to screw up even the best-laid plans.
- Plans need specificity. Even the simplest of plans have a lot of moving parts—and factors to consider—as each segment of it gets broken down. Each step has components to be worked out in some elaborate detail. The coordination of those details creates a roadmap for the Crew, each step leading to the next in a natural progression.
- Plans need reliable collaboration to pull off. Know how each Crewmember will perform. Rehearsal may be required, especially if it is a Crew who hasn't worked together before. A practice heist—not related to your true end game—allows you to see how well you work together and perform under fire. Better to find out what you can and can't do before the actual Job comes down.

Plan Frameworks

All Jobs breakdown the same way: get close to the Mark, learn everything you can about him and the situation, study the objective, establish escape routes, assign tasks, and get away clean. Some of these might change order or overlap on a given Job, but they're all there.

Map out each phase and know who's gonna play what role.

Get Close to the Mark

Several factors separate your Crew from common criminals. The target's someone or some entity that's used their power, influence, or money in a bad way... you know, a bad guy. And since bad guys are harder to con than normal folk, you have to do more work.

The Client usually thinks they know who the Mark is when they tell their tale. But sometimes there's more to the story than they realize. While maybe a corrupt manager cost your Client his job and intellectual property, someone higher up the chain may be the real Mark behind everything.

Once you know the Mark, it's time to get close. Here's where your Grifter comes in. She knows how to approach a Mark. Let her work her confidence scheme magic, backing her up with other Crewmembers good at Grifting

Learn Everything You Can

At least, as much as possible in the time you have. You need good intelligence to know where to go once you're close to the Mark. That's what your Hacker is for. The more intelligence you have, the easier it is to figure out what's truly important to him. Find out what the Mark does—work, fun, and any shady extracurricular activities beyond what the Client knows. Track down where they do or have done all these things. Discover who they know, and who knows them.

That last bit's especially important for dealing with contingencies. Unknown company, like a mob boss, drug dealer, gunrunner, even an angry ex-lover, makes for unwelcome company at the most inopportune moments.

Study the Objective

There's usually something someone needs, the classic "MacGuffin." It could take a variety of forms—a critical piece of information, bearer bonds, diamonds, a statue, any number of things. What's key is that it matters to the Mark. Often the MacGuffin needs to be stolen, but some Jobs call for one to be planted or used as bait. It's up to you, the Mastermind, figure this out since you see the big picture.

Wrapping Up the Plan

The Wrap-Up Flashback is your big scene, the bit where you're picking up the dice and handing around the Plot Points as your Crew rattles off what they did during the Job, behind the scenes or out of sight of the game's narrative camera. It's your responsibility as Mastermind to give some advice, suggestions, or remind the other Crewmembers of interesting points throughout the Job that they might flashback to, but also to let them hang their own lantern on it. The Wrap-Up is so much more rewarding when your fellow players have a

creative investment in the group's success. When the flashbacks are all taken care of, you've got the last roll of the evening to make. Think back to your plan, consider all of the flashback results, and look at the table with all of the Assets that are in play. Then, before you roll the dice, take a stab at what you're hoping to achieve, something truly excellent. And if the Fixer doesn't do it for you, let him know what you think might happen if the Mark isn't taken down by your Crew's efforts. Failure, as always, doesn't mean you lose, it just means that you've earned a new nemesis for the next Job.

Once the target's been determined, it must be found. Finding out where it is is only the first step. After you know where it is, that place must be cased. Everything about it has to be carefully studied, which goes back to learning everything you can. Enter your Thief, with Hitter as backup. Know the routine of the security guard sweeps and the changing of shifts. Know the number and location of security cameras, plus their blind spots. The response time of security and the police. Floor plans. Other security countermeasures—lasers, thermal imaging, pressure sensors, biometrics, the latest and greatest in tech.

When you know the objective and how to get it or plant it, you're still not done planning.

Establish Escape Routes

Yes sir, this is about getting away. We're still in the playground of the Thief and Hitter, here, though everyone needs to pull his or her weight here. One part of planning is how to get out when everything goes according to plan. What separates the wannabe Masterminds from the real deal is the next part: contingency planning. Should things go awry, you need to be able to cut your losses at a moment's notice. To do this, you need (surprise, surprise) good intel. Floor plans, ventilation plans, original plans for older buildings, sewers, and adjacent buildings, as

well as the major and alternate streets leading away from the vicinity.

Assign Tasks

Any heist requires time to prepare. But once the plan has been prepared, it's time for the Crew to know what everyone needs to do. Everyone needs to understand their zone—the area they will be working—and prepare what they'll need. Uniforms need to be procured. Art needs to be counterfeited. Documents need to be forged.

This is the time to assess if the Crew needs to call in additional help. A specialist may be needed to create a perfect forgery. Or it simply might be a matter of the Job needing an additional set of eyes or hands.

Get Away Clean

The most important part of the heist is the getaway. All the intel, planning, and MacGuffins in the world won't do you good if you get caught.

We're talking about more than a matter of eluding the authorities—though, to be clear, that is the paramount first step. You need to ensure your identities aren't compromised. Nothing should trace back to either you or your Client. There should be little to no evidence that you were there, beyond the paranoid ravings of a duped Mark. The cons that last the longest are the ones that are like ghosts.



Framing the Heist: Retrieval Plans

Clients will give you all sorts of stories, but most of the actual plans you'll need are variations on a couple of games. One of these is “the retrieval,” where you'll find something important and transport them any way possible. This could take the form of securing an object that's been taken, collecting information that has fallen into the wrong hands, or retrieving a person who has been held against their will. No matter what the nature of what needs to be retrieved, the end game remains the same: collect the merchandise by hook or by crook.

Monkey See, Monkey Do

If a plan is an engine, information is its fuel. A reconnaissance team—made up of your Thief, Hitter, Hacker—needs to scout the lay of the land. Plant cameras in buildings, listening devices on people, and trackers on cars. Get access to any computer networks in order to monitor the situation. You need to hear what the Mark and his agents are saying. You need

to see what they're seeing. Just as crucial, you want to control what they see: gain control of their surveillance and leave no trace of your Job.

Into The Breach

Rarely is the target of a breach going to just waltz in and take what you want. Most times, you will have to bypass security measures. The building needs to be broken down into zones of responsibility. Here's where your Thief's specialty of gaining access and bypassing security is paramount. During your reconnaissance, you will have mapped out the level of their security: cameras, lasers, vibration detectors, ventilation shafts, schematics. That's how you arm the Thief so she can get you in.

Lock It Down

You need to channel your inner Hitter to assess the threat level, to determine just how dangerous the situation is that you're entering. Going up against well-armed mercenaries, mobsters, drug cartels, or militias



is a little different than going up against in-house security or an about-to-retire bank guard.

Consider the presence of security a zone to be covered. A key zone would involve monitoring guard chatter, piggy backing on their comms so that you can squelch them if you need. Security is based somewhere, usually where there are cameras you need to keep track of anyway. Security has to be measured and accounted for as you need to know how many there are, how often they do sweeps, when their shift changes, and what their response times are. They need to be either neutralized or avoided. Keep in mind that the Crew is committed to minimal violence (right?).

Help Wanted

The Hitter is a utility player, serving a variety of functions during the course of any particular mission. The Hitter is like your lieutenant, an onsite Mastermind. In emergency situations that happen in

the moment, the Hitter calls the plays. In some ways, he's the personal guardian angel, providing security and dealing with any players who need to be forcibly removed or detained. He clears a zone in order for the rest of the Crew to work freely.

The Hitter can also serve as another set of eyes. Depending on the Job and the amount of zones that need to be monitored (including your exit), the Hitter may be in charge of covering the exits or deployed to monitor security movements. The Hitter remains available to be a part of the hand-offs. In short, the Hitter's role is to generally stay alert for any potential bumps and help out as needed.

A Grifter's Job is Never Done

Consider the Mark a roaming zone that has to be accounted for. That's where your Grifter comes in. She's the Crewmember who keeps track of the Mark, being able to get closest to him and remain in his immediate vicinity. The Grifter is the first line of defense when it comes to alerting the Crew of the Mark's change in demeanor. Like the Hitter, the Grifter is available for

hand-offs, pick pocketing people, and being an extra set of hands and eyes to cover a zone.

Don't Let The Door Hit You

Assuming things go according to Hoyle and you don't need to switch to a contingency plan, once the item is acquired the Crew needs to get out. The key is to vanish without a trace, by either blending in with the crowd or sneaking out. To completely cover your tracks, get a hold of or compromise any camera footage you may have been caught on. Bottom line is to get out and disappear. The exit door is the final zone. This not only includes knowing where the exits are, but also includes knowing the escape routes and the meet up spots afterwards.

Framing the Foul-Up: Disruption Plans

Sometimes the kind of plan that's called for doesn't call for the Crew to steal anything, per se, but involves disrupting the Mark's plans. Say, for example, the Mark's big ploy involves a press conference or the timed announcement of their stock launch. The Mark depends on an orderly flow of business, so the Crew's role is to gum up the works and grind things to a halt. In these types of scenarios, there's no time to start with a long con. The Crew has to get in, hit hard (perhaps indirectly) in order to stall or buy enough time to switch over to a longer con down the road.

Disrupting With a Stunt

Pulling some sort of stunt will get the Mark's attention. This could be anything from swapping out a real art item for a counterfeit, planting false incriminating information, or transferring money from one account to another. Basically, do something with the MacGuffin the Mark is fixated on. Depending on the nature of the stunt, the Crew may have to call in a specialist to complete the Job. If the Crew doesn't have a counterfeiter or lacks someone with the skill set to

construct a passable fake, the Mastermind may have to go outside.

Publicity

Maximum exposure brings maximum impact and damage. The Mark needs to stand revealed, exposed if you will before the public for the cheat that he is. Barring that, occupying the Mark's attention with dealing with the press and the inquiring spotlight it brings still throws a wrench in the works.

What They Don't Know Won't Hurt Them

Keep both the Client and the Mark in the dark. For safety's sake, it's often best the Client have no idea what you're up to. They may feel obligated to stop you. It's also a safeguard against being called as a witness for the prosecution later. The less the Client knows, the better off—and safer—everyone is.

What to Disrupt

The hardest part may be choosing what exactly to disrupt. Choose the object to disrupt: shareholders meeting, product launch, shipping, media event, political rally, money flow, drug flow, gun flow—whatever the business of the Mark is, or whatever it is they truly desire, that's what gets disrupted.

When Plans Go South

No matter how perfect your plan is you can't take into account everything that could possibly go wrong. You can try to plan for contingencies, sure. Situations are always fluid, but you need to keep your eye on some basic problems if you want to come out of a plan that's failing on you.



Where it Goes Wrong

Moving Target: There are some disruptions brought about when the target changes. Things like last minute security changes because the Mark gets suspicious can complicate matters. So can bad intel. What if the safe you were prepared to crack has been upgraded? What if where you thought you were supposed to rob has changed?

Never Trust People: The most unpredictable element to any plan is the people. No matter how much game theory you employ, no matter how intuitive you are, no matter how well you think you can read people, you can never 100% predict their behavior. So you never know when, say, someone working for the Mark decides to double cross them while you're working the con, throwing a huge monkey wrench into your carefully laid web. You never know when an employee might gain a conscience or randomly stumble over you at the wrong time.

Scorned soon-to-be-exes, greedy partners, and ambitious underlings are all sources of chaos. This is why having an extra set of eyes comes in handy, so that there are no blind spots or zones uncovered. And frankly, the Mark probably has other enemies or people he's trampled along the way that also seek payback.

Big Brother Is Always Watching: Government agencies, bureaucratic red tape, regulators, or inspectors--few things can get in the way of things like The Man. Where there's government or money, politics usually aren't far behind. Sometimes the Mark is tied up with local politics, giving him unpredictable allies. Undercover police officers may have infiltrated the organization you seek to take down. And nothing complicates matters like the FBI or Interpol sticking their noses into that Mark's business while you're on the Job. Cops of any stripe mean too many variables.

Bad Guys, Bad Guys Everywhere, and not a Bunch to Score: Sometimes it's a rival group of thieves setting up their own heist, throwing a monkeywrench in yours or, worse, beating you to the target. Objects of value draw all sorts of interest. Don't assume you're the

only ones. Plenty of people tread outside the law when getting things they want.

Acts of God: Sometimes things happen that you just can't take into account. These so-called "black swan" events—things that have high impact, are hard to predict, and are rare—can't be reasonably planned for. You never know when there'll be a massive power outage or any of a host of calamitous events. Environmental issues, like earthquakes, floods, storms, blizzards, cause devastating setbacks. No one plans for bank robbery or even a terrorist attack occurring while you're on the Job. These things just happen sometimes.

Tech Fail: Sometimes equipment fails, especially if you had to jury-rig something mid-plan.

Bigger the Better: Sometimes a bigger target or opportunity presents itself, and you have a tough choice to make.

Screw Ups: Sometimes a Crewmember simply just fails at his portion of the plan.

Managing the Risk

When plans go south, treat it like a good chess player; play your way out of a bad scenario. A Mastermind deals with foreseeable operational errors, such as shortages of personnel, materials, and contingency plans. So it's important to prepare alternatives for when things go south. Contingency plans are if-then scenarios: "if the Mark recognizes a Crewmember from a previous encounter, then..." It also takes into account a type of game theory, as you try to guess a person's reaction in different situations.

It's about risk management. You need to employ an overall strategy. You identify your most crucial element to your plan and figure out what the effect of putting them out of play might have on your desired outcome. For something like avoiding a tech failure, it might mean having a redundant IT system that could be used to start immediate processing from a different location. Here are some simple things to minimize many disruptions.

Cross-train: Train Crewmembers in areas outside of their specialties. Not everyone has to become a jack-of-all-trades, but there's no reason why in down time a Hitter can't learn a few tricks from the Hacker. Or why the Grifter can't school the Thief in some of the finer arts of sidling up next to a Mark.

Over Comm-pensate: While it is nice to have the Mastermind in constant communication with everyone, like a guardian angel in your ear, there will be times when the comms go down. When a vault is too thick, the elevator shaft blocks signals, or the team strays out of range, folks need to have a crisis communication plan. They need to know either how to communicate, where to go, otherwise how to keep doing their jobs.

Rehearse the Worst: There were times in school when folks had to huddle under their desks for nuclear war drills. An extreme scenario, but some people thought it would be advantageous to have a plan just in





case. During the best of times, finding the time to rehearse is often a luxury that a team doesn't always have. That's why it is important to pick experienced folks for your Crew in the first place. Rehearsal allows the team to gel under the best circumstances. Worst case scenario rehearsal allows people to play test the operational plan, find flaws or potential holes in it. It is important to make the scenarios as real as possible, elicit as real of emotions as possible so that the Mastermind can learn how folks deal with pressure. This is especially important with a new Crew.

Always Do Better: A Mastermind is never satisfied. Now this might be the perfectionist in them holding court, but there's no task that can't be done faster or more efficiently. Plans and procedures for emergencies or disruptions should always be assessed and tested.

Regardless, not everything can be planned. The most important thing the Mastermind and the rest of

the Crew can do is to stay calm. You're all professionals. Remain cool under pressure; a clear, calm head is your primary weapon. In the end, sometimes all you can do is trust in the resourcefulness of your team, their skills of improvisation, and the adaptability of the plan.

Regroup: You may have to scrap what you're doing and pull out. Weigh that against whether this is your only shot to acquire the MacGuffin. If you're compromised, simply getting out unapprehended is a victory. It is important to have safe houses or drop spots—places to retreat to should things go bad.

Reassess: Pause to examine what's still in play. The Mark's state of mind needs to be determined, whether or not they are suspicious or still oblivious. Figuring that out tells you a lot about how to play them moving forward.

Re-Strategize: Things change. The stakes have been raised, and you're now deeper into the game. The Mark may have grown more suspicious or guarded.

Maybe you've been made or someone knows your faces that shouldn't, so you have to bring in new faces.

Masterminding the Rules

The **LEVERAGE** RPG includes five Roles, four of which typically make a ton of sense to players. Everyone knows what the Grifter, Hacker, Hitter, and Thief do in the context of skills and expertise. Grifters con people, Hackers break into computer systems, Hitters take people out, and Thieves steal stuff. Obviously there's more to them than that, but they're all familiar ideas for gamers. Some tropes are just universal.

Masterminds, on the other hand, occasionally get the short end of the concept stick. It's a no-brainer to know what the Mastermind is on the Crew for. He's the brains of the operation, the planner, the strategist. However, it's also the one Role that people struggle to find a use for when the action is hot and the caper is underway.

This section's all about clearing that up for you.

The Fixer's Right Hand

*The following suggestion comes from Rob Wieland and Jack Norris, who used it to great effect in their ongoing **LEVERAGE** game.*

One approach to playing the Mastermind in your game is to engage with the Fixer before the game even starts, and be part of the situation prep for the upcoming Job. A good Mastermind's already got half a dozen plans in his head at any one time, ready to drop into the table when the information is laid out before him. To represent this in the game, ask the Fixer if you can bounce ideas back and forth apart from the rest of the Crew, or be present when he writes up the Job's sketchy outline.

If the Fixer is using the Situation Generator in the **Toolbox** chapter of the **LEVERAGE** RPG, you can help him out with the process. Come up with some names, suggest some elements of the plot, even talk over the Mark's weaknesses and vulnerabilities. This may seem like it's a big cheat, but it's not; the Job is much more than

Play to your Shtick

If you're a Mastermind, you most likely have some area of expertise that is your "thing," the area that you've picked most of your strategic planning and leadership skills from. Nate's definitely got a handle on the criminal mind from his years at the insurance company, but another Mastermind could be ex-military, or ex-academia. When recruiting a new Mastermind, get to the heart of what makes them a Mastermind in the first place. Pick an appropriate Specialty, or use your Secondary Role to give your Mastermind die some context. Talk it over with the Fixer, and make sure that he knows this is your shtick. During play, it's much easier for him to know what to use your **MASTERMIND** die for if it has some bearing on your background.

With thanks to Rob Donoghue for this suggestion!

knowing what the Mark is all about. If the Mastermind knows this information ahead of time, he can roleplay this knowledge with some flair, get into the role more fully, and engage with the rest of the Crew.

Remember, too, that the Fixer always has the option of steering the whole Job off on a twist. In fact, it's best that this part be completely out of your hands, so that you're as surprised by it as anyone else at the table. Then you can rely on your existing plan, the skills of your Crew, and a healthy amount of improv to get things going again. And the Wrap-up Flashback is always there at the end to smooth over any rough spots.

Quick Plan Generation

*Just as the Fixer has at his disposal a handy tool to generate situations on the spot, which makes any Leverage session that much more exciting, the following tool (courtesy of **LEVERAGE** RPG editor Ryan Macklin) gives the Mastermind of the Crew something to get the strategic juices flowing.*

So you're the brains behind the operation, the Mastermind of the Crew's big plan to take down the Mark. That's what you do, right? But you've gotta think on your feet and come up with loose, flexible plans, because you never know what Assets will come into play, what Complications will arise, or what Opportunities will present themselves. And you don't want to bog down play by coming up with a detailed plan that'll go to hell in 30 seconds. So when you're not sure what to do next, here's a formula:

"We need to [ACTIVITY] [ACTIVITY or CONDITION] [CONDITION]"

Easy, right? Now let's break this down so you know what we're talking about.

Activities

These are the elements of the quick plan that help inform what you have to do in order to execute the plan properly. It's the verb in the plan's big sentence. Here's a list of possible activities. You're gonna fill in the blanks in a minute.

- Pose as _____
- Convince _____
- Access _____
- Get _____
- Plant _____
- Gather _____
- Track _____

You can come up with others, too, if you think of them, such as "Unlock" or "Rescue" or "Intimidate."

Conditions

These are specific conditions within the plan that modify or give context to the Activities. Think of them as the qualifying elements of the plan. Again, don't worry about the blanks.

- At _____
- Before _____

- While _____
- Without Alerting _____
- Until _____
- After _____
- Outside of _____

You get the idea. You're probably able to think up more of these on your own too.

Fill in the Blanks

So what do you do with these things? Simple. Combine two Activities and a Condition or an Activity and two Conditions. Drop in some nouns where the blanks are, such as the Mark or his Agents, notable locations of importance in your part of the Crime World, objects or equipment you've got on hand. That's it. You've got a plan.

Incentivizing the Plan

So it's one thing for your Mastermind to come up with a clever plan on the spot using Activities and Conditions, but what's the appeal for the other Crewmembers? First of all, they get to have you pretend like you know what you're doing, which is a big plus. But, if you're looking for some kind of game mechanic to sweeten the plot and keep the Crew on board with your plan, here's the way that could work.

If anyone on the team, including you, is acting on your plan, they can spend a Plot Point to roll in their own **MASTERMIND** die (representing their understanding of the plan). Alternately, providing you're in voice contact with them, you can spend one of your own Plot Points to loan your **MASTERMIND** die to the Crewmember carrying out the Action.

If the plan you've come up with gets derailed during the Job, never fear. When the time comes for the Wrap-Up Flashback, you can incorporate your original plan, work in some of the new stuff that crops up during the Job, and synthesize something in hindsight that works seamlessly together. That's one of your most significant moments too—just when it looked like your plan was a bust, it turns out the whole time you were playing to it. That's what makes you the Mastermind.



The Fixer

THE FIXER

Big-scale operations, cunning plans, clever cons... the Crew's Mastermind and Grifter are responsible for the lion's share of these activities. But in the LEVERAGE Roleplaying Game, the Fixer's responsible for providing the opposition and the opportunity. He needs to know the rules well enough to keep up with the players and story, grasp the importance of all of the Roles and Traits in the game, and keep an eye on the pacing of the Job. It's a lot of fun and hard work at times, so we'll help expand the Fixer's toolkit of resources and ideas.

What's in this Chapter

Here's a summary of what you're going to find in this chapter of the book.

Fixer 101: Crime World, I Am In You You're the Fixer? Here's some more supportive coaching and advice for you if you're just getting into it, or even if you're not.

Running the Game: Master Class You've got the basics nailed for being a Fixer, so before we head off into variant rule land, this section kicks it up a notch with some discussion on bringing out the best in your players and making life hell for them at the same time.

Complicating Complications Speaking of making life hell... here are more ideas and suggestions for Complications, the Fixer's best story mechanic.

More Plot Twists Every Job goes wrong if it's being played right. Adding to your already substantial repertoire of Fixer tricks, this section presents a few more Twists to subject the Crew to midway through the action.

Season by Season: Handling Story Arcs If you've noticed, sometimes one story idea can last over multiple Jobs. So whether you're gunning for Damien Moreau or you're missing your favorite Grifter, this section talks about managing the meta for your metaplot.

Variations on a Theme The Crime World's not limited to the 21st century, and neither is your LEVERAGE RPG. Set a campaign in outer space, the Wild West, or in some fantasy universe of your own. Good stuff, and familiar territory for some gamers.

Games Without A Fixer: Collaborative Episodes We're only scratching the surface here, but this section introduces the idea of running a game without a Fixer. What? Put you out of work? Not at all. This way, everyone chips in and everyone plays a Crewmember. It might put a new spin on it for you, or it might be good for a one-shot.



THE GRIFTER

THE MASTERMIND

THE FIXER

Fixer 101: Crime World, I Am In You

So you've either bought the game and your friends are keen to play a dysfunctional Crew of ex-cons and thieves, or it's just your turn at the helm after some time as a player. It could be that you're always the one in the "game master" seat, but that doesn't always mean that with a new game you're as confident or prepared as you'd like.

The *LEVERAGE* RPG book goes into a lot of extensive detail about being a Fixer, running the Supporting Characters, and handling the pace of the plot. There's a whole chapter devoted to being the Fixer, and another one for the Toolbox. Even so, we figure you might want a little more information and review, being as the Grifters and Masterminds got one earlier.

Fixers and Style

Not everybody plays the role of Fixer in the same way. You obviously need to understand the rules of the game and know how to manage the players and their

expectations, but personality and experience mean as much to a fun game as rules know-how. That gets into talking about Fixer styles.

Here're a few common ones:

- **The Actor** revels in playing the parts of the Supporting Characters to the hilt.
- **The Puppetmaster** creates an intricate web of intrigue and challenges the players to figure it all out.
- **The Director** likes a game where players have some say in the direction of the story, and expects the players to be active in contributing to and advancing the plot.
- **The Builder** spends a great deal of time creating the details of the world, down to the tiniest bodega or street corner food-cart.
- **The Competitor** enjoys the conflict aspects of game play, whether in combat-oriented stories or in throwing challenges in the path of the Crew and making life difficult for them.

There's plenty of scope in the **LEVERAGE** RPG for the Actor to work, considering the potential for the Crew to interact with many different Supporting Characters. The Puppetmaster also finds more than adequate grist for the mill of plot and intrigue. The best Fixers combine characteristics from several of these styles; they don't rely too heavily on just one to set the mood and tell the story.

Different situations call for different approaches. Resist the urge to be all things at all times. Being the Competitor at times can give the players a sense of accomplishment defeating challenges presented. But being the Competitor constantly will alienate some players and pretty much shut down the game. Find the mix of styles that fit most comfortably. When you're comfortable running the game, everyone involved has more fun.

This Is Your Game

Any game is as individual as the Fixer and players playing it. As Fixer, it's your job to come up with interesting challenges for the Crew. Put your own personal quirks or signature touches on each Job. If you really like monkeys, have a monkey show up in one, or even have an entire plot revolve around a stolen pet monkey. Little details like that add touches that make a game memorable and fun.

Speaking of memorable details, also look for ways to incorporate players' ideas into your game. If somebody blurts out a wickedly appropriate Complication for another player or offers a brilliant idea for a future plot—fantastic! Write it down, run with it. There's a



reason Nate runs with a Crew of five: five people are sharper and smarter than one.

Talk with the players, before the first Job, about their general expectations for the game. Do your best to keep things interesting, challenging (but not overwhelming) and most of all, enjoyable.

Make Characters Distinct

Part of making the **LEVERAGE RPG** your own is how you play everyone the Crew deals with. There are a few tricks to help make each Supporting Character distinct, useful whether you have an Actor style or not. Try adopting a specific gesture for anyone the Crew meets. One bank teller could have a nervous habit of jerking his head to one side to crack his neck or to free his collar-length hair from catching in his shirt. Another might constantly check her glasses for imaginary specks of dirt. Clever Fixers can even work a Trait of the person, or a hint about some knowledge they possess, into such habits.

You can make the game special by having your Marks be quality villains. Using cookie-cutter bad guys who twirl their mustaches and laugh menacingly is fine, but real-world villains are rarely like that. They're human beings, they have motivations, and many of them believe that what they are doing is the right thing. Or, at the very least, is either not really hurting anyone or will earn them enough money to do the right thing later. Villains with believable motivations and attitudes are more likely to earn grudging respect from your players and their Crewmembers. Professor Moriarty and Sherlock Holmes admired each other tremendously, but both did their level best to bring the other down.

A Mark with depth is perfect for a long-term arc. They're interesting and possibly even sympathetic. Maybe he takes the Crew's attack personally, maybe not. Some Marks have violent tempers while others seem to have no emotions at all. Varieties of personality types reap rich rewards for players and for you. The players will still want to win, but they may ease up a bit out of respect or admiration for their opponent, unwittingly allowing the Mark to escape.



A Little Light Reading

Be sure to review the Fixer and Toolbox chapters of the **LEVERAGE RPG** from time to time. It's packed with information and advice that you might not digest in one sitting. Even the designers of the game have found it helpful to flip through those sections between games, sometimes to spur new ideas and other times to remind them of useful caper structure and sequences.

As the Fixer, it's your job to communicate the Crime World to the other players, to make sure they all understand how the rules work and how they're used. So take a second, third, and fourth look at those chapters, throw in the things you find in this chapter that look like they might be fun, and have at it.

Running the Game: Master Class

THE GRIFTER

Like most anything else, being a good Fixer takes practice. Here are some tips to help you bring your A-game to the session.

Welcome player suggestions. The **LEVERAGE RPG** is a collaborative game; from time to time players may come up with interesting Twists or other useful aspects that the Fixer hadn't thought of. Don't be annoyed or upset by their suggestions.

Watch your Fixer style. Being able to switch from Actor to Puppetmaster, for example, may be useful to keep the action from bogging down in little details. Don't be afraid to switch modes to help keep the episode moving.

Build a rough timeline of events for each episode. Let things happen on schedule whether the Crew reacts or not. They'll have a greater sense of time pressure when events they were preparing for too slowly happen without them, and they have to scramble to catch up.

Be flexible and creative. The Crew will sometimes go off in directions you hadn't planned for, or latch onto a minor detail like it's a major plot point and worry it to death like frenzied dogs. Relax. You're directing this story, and you can let them go off for a little bit if they want to; it adds color and lets the Crew get some exercise. Just don't let them go too far on their wild goose chase—reel them back in and set their feet on the path again when it's time. Remind them of what they had been doing prior to the tangent, or perhaps have one or more of the Crew make an **INTELLIGENCE** action to “recall” a detail that will get them back on track.

Be patient. Players may struggle with how to finish the Job successfully. Do what you can to guide them,

but let them make their own mistakes and the game in at their own pace.

Don't force the Crew to succeed. It's okay if the Crew loses to the bad guys from time to time. It helps build camaraderie and keeps the team from getting too cocky. We learn more from our mistakes, and a defeat now and then can provide motivation for the Crew to go after ‘the one that got away,’ providing for a terrific future story arc.

Keep a sense of humor. The **LEVERAGE RPG** draws from both dramatic and comedic sources. Nathan Ford's Crew trades barbs and flashes the occasional double take. Let that sense of humor infect your game. The characters from the series laugh at themselves regularly—don't be afraid to do the same. After all, you're here to have fun too.

Play in other games. Playing in other games—having the chance to watch how others do it—is an invaluable experience. You need a degree of removal from the action, acting as impartial arbitrator and the catalyst that keeps the story interesting and keeps it moving, and these things take time to master.

Keep the action moving. Pacing is critical to your **LEVERAGE RPG** session. If it's all action or all investigation, players will get bored. Mix the two up, and include both short and longer scenes of both types.

Keep things changing. Predictable patterns are your enemy. If things have been running fast and intense for a while, slow it down. Shift the focus to a less tense situation, like a data search by the Hacker, or a meeting with the Client to discuss progress.

Keep it simple. Trying to get too fancy with a plot can leave the Fixer just as confused as the Crew. Embellishing a basic plan is better than having to streamline a complicated plan. Simple plans tend to lead to great plots down the road anyway, setting up future story arcs. Keeping Marks simple doesn't mean making them cardboard cutouts. Simple characters and still have real-life desires and schemes. Simple does not mean stupid, though; the Mark should still be clever or interesting.

THE MASTERMIND

THE FIXER

The Devil's in the Job's Details

Whether you take the time to create the Job from scratch or use the situation generator from the Toolbox chapter in the **LEVERAGE** RPG, you'll want to put some thought into how the Job plays out.

Anyone with power who has the ability to make the lives of innocent people miserable is a perfect candidate for the Crew's attention. Powerful people make for powerful enemies; not everyone goes down without a fight. In fact, not everyone goes down at all; some Marks are just too tough, too mean, or too connected to take the rap for their own crimes, and those types of people will most definitely harbor a grudge.

The occasional job, though perfectly legit in other ways, may—completely coincidentally—have the Feds involved in surveillance, by chance setting up the Crew for a fall later on. It's never a good thing to be brought to the attention of law-enforcement officials, particularly considering the Crew's line of work. Even discovering the Crew by accident, the Crew will do things to send up red flags—flags that indicate they deserve further surveillance.

How does the Crew find jobs? Sometimes, the job will find them. Former Clients of the Crew may refer people in need; people the Crew works with -- even non-criminal types -- may pass the word to someone who could use their help. Every once in a great while, competitors or opponents may decide they can't get personally involved in a job for any number of reasons, and may refer the person(s) in question to the Crew out of respect. No higher compliment can be paid to a Crew than having brothers and sisters in crime recommend them. Maybe those same referring individuals will become allies in the future; maybe they're still bitter enemies but for the brief truce while the Crew helps out their friends.

On the other hand, the other Crew may also smell a rat, and be passing the job along in the hopes that their rivals may get caught in a trap. Not all jobs or Clients

are legit, as the Crew themselves should know all too well: some jobs may be a set-up by former Marks intent on revenge; some may be stings arranged by various law-enforcement agencies, and some may just simply not feel right. Once in a while the Crew will be hired by bad guys to take down the good guys, forcing the Crew to face some difficult choices—if they learn the truth in time to change their minds. Those same competitors may be offering the Crew a job as direct a set-up, feeding them to the Feds or a former Mark in exchange for some juicy bit of looking-the-other-way or immunity from prosecution for specific actions or for a particular period of time; in the end, there is no honor among thieves.

Cohesion and Clarity: Keeping the Crew Together

With different goals and agendas at work, it can be tough to keep a Crew focused and together as a team. One way to do this is to lay some groundwork when making the Crew and during each Job you play out. Interweaving Crewmember backstories builds common ground and a strong *esprit de corps*. Having Marks from previous Jobs show up looking for revenge can bring a Crew together. Spending a Plot Point now and again to give the characters Complications to help set the scene or to give the Crew a reason for taking a job is well worth it. Motivation makes all the difference in keeping players interested.

Keeping all the players focused on the job at hand can be just as challenging; in-game and out-of-game distractions can make the action confusing or cause a player's attention to wander. Sometimes, a player may not understand what his Crewmember is supposed to be doing. If you're sensing some confusion, ask the Mastermind for a run-down of what everyone should be doing during the next beat for clarity's sake.

Rotating the center of attention from one Job to the next helps the cohesion. At least one Crewmember needs to have a connection or personal interest in the current Job to keep the game interesting. Spreading the focus around will not only help keep the game fresh, but be a perfect opportunity for a player whose character currently occupies a less active role to be given greater spotlight.

Confidence in a fellow Crewmember's ability is important. If the Hacker routinely complicates simple tasks because of poor die rolls, the others may waver in their willingness to put themselves in his hands. But if that same Hacker recovers from bad luck by coming up with practical solutions to problems and Complications, turning these minor dice failures into a positive result for the Crew, that trust will probably be restored. Unlucky dice rolling hits everyone from time to time, but clever ideas and good role-playing go a long way towards smoothing out the wrinkles caused by bad luck.

Complicating Complications

Sometimes coming up with a Complication is, well, *complicated*. To help with that, we have some ideas you can apply to refine Complications you come up with down to more specific roles—Job Complications, Location Complications, and Personal Complications.

Keep in mind that these Complications are very general, and these categories aren't exhaustive. It may take a bit of tweaking to make one fit a given situation. These ideas are optional; use them if you need them.

Job Complications

Every Job has its own thematic or situational elements. Some are straight-out heists; others are capers with twists and turns built into the plan even before things go south. One Job might be heavily oriented towards technology and information gathering, while another might have a lot of physical action and muscle. With this in mind, Job Complications are those that tie into the overall scope and tone of the Job and represent obstacles or twists that wouldn't be so problematic on another Job.

Some good examples include: the Client being injured or killed; the Mark's motivation changing without warning; revelations that the window of time available is actually much smaller than thought; communication between key people outside of the Crew being lost; and the arrival of a Foil from a previous Job, looking for revenge or competition.

Job Complications also include most of the on-the-spot Complications that are created by the Fixer during the Job, in response to the choices made by the Crew. In a way, they're the easiest to drop in, but the hardest to prepare in advance. It's best to keep a few basic ideas in the back of your mind but leave a lot of the meat and potatoes of Job Complications to improv.

Location Complications

Places with high levels of security always present problems for a Crew. Whether there are tons of guards, a surveillance camera every two feet, or just lots of witnesses around who'll notice something odd happening, high security can be one of the most difficult complications for a Crew to overcome. Likewise, if a location has very limited access—a bank vault, for example—the Crew must either spend time finding an alternate way in that might take more time than the Crew can spare, or bluff their way in and hope for the best. If other hostile individuals share the building—the Mark is renting warehouse space from mobsters, for instance—those are also sources of expected Complication.



Personal Complications

People always complicate otherwise ordinary situations. The bank teller you're scamming to get access to the bank vault becomes a more difficult obstacle if she's naturally suspicious. An untrustworthy ally may bolt at the first hint of trouble, leaving the Crew high and dry. If the Client is talkative or boastful, they may spill the beans about the Job, unknowingly within earshot of the Mark's cronies.

Short attention spans and compulsive behavior (like pyromania, gambling, kleptomania, obsessive-compulsion, etc.) can all be sources of Complications from Clients, Marks, other Supporting Characters, and even the Crew. Having a soft spot for kids or being absent-minded can lead to all sorts of problems in the middle of a job. If the Client forgot where she left a critical piece of evidence against the Mark, the Crew may have to stop everything to search for it or go on without it, possibly weakening their position or changing their strategy.

Addiction of any kind can change anyone's personality, subtly or dramatically, depending on the level of addiction. It can cause erratic behavior as the addict does whatever he has to do to get his fix—even abandoning the Crew at a crucial moment, or ratting them out in exchange for a hit of what they need.

Illness or disability can also add serious complications: if the Client is being extracted from a burning building and is confined to a wheelchair or on crutches, getting the person out safely may present a significant challenge. If the Client is too ill to be moved, the Crew is in a tough spot if the Client needs protection from goons coming to clean up loose ends.

Dealing with Complications

Job & Location Complications generally become unimportant when the Job is finished or the Crew done with the Location. Personal Complications can

stick with the Crewmember from one Job to the next, if everyone would like to play a game where character drama between the Crewmembers is an ongoing issue.

Regardless, the Crew will eventually want to take action against a Complication. To do so, when you roll an Opportunity and your roll involves a Complication, the player rolling against you can spend a Plot Point to reduce your Complication down a die, from **D12** to **D10**, **D10** to **D8**, or **D8** to **D6**. If it's already a **D6**, the Complication is removed (**D4** Complications are weak sauce). The player has to describe how the Crewmember is tackling that Complication.

This only works for Complications that stick around. The Crew can't buy off Complications until the scene after they're introduced.

If you roll more than one Opportunity, they get to bump your Complication down one step further for each additional Opportunity without spending additional Plot Points. If they want to use other Opportunities you roll to knock more than one Complication down at the same time, that'll take more Plot Points.

It's really important, too, for the players to spice up this game mechanic with some narration of their own. Have them explain what they did to make the Complication become less complicated or to go away. If they're stuck, you can nudge them with an idea or two. But a table full of **LEVERAGE** players should be up to the task.

We're telling you this, Fixer, so you can point out when Opportunities come up on your dice. The players will probably be watching your dice like a hawk, anyway, since they get other benefits from your Opportunities, but help them out.

Example

Sophie's chatting up a security guard at the Mark's building, buying time for Hardison and Parker to break into the Mark's office. The Crew's dealing with a **D8 SECURITY KNOWS SOMETHING'S WEIRD** Complication. Sophie's player rolls a quick Face Action to buy time, and the Fixer rolls **D8 + D6 + D8** for the building and Complication. He comes up with 1, 1, and 4: that's two Opportunities. Sophie's player hands over a Plot Point to remove the **SECURITY KNOWS SOMETHING'S WEIRD** Complication. She describes how her charming, flirtatious self puts the security guards at ease, and they have something else to talk about now, other than some paranoid Mark's phone call.

If the Fixer rolled in another Complication, Sophie's player could have stepped down both Complications by one die, at the cost of two Plot Points.

Of course, sometimes more Complications can arise. Dousing flames from an electrical fire with a bucket of water, or turning a flashlight or the lights on to avoid falling down the stairs in the dark are both great examples of taking action to remove a Complication. The trouble is, dumping water leaves evidence of the Crew's passing; turning on lights makes the Crew more visible, both of which could cause problems for the Crew later in the form of new Complications. The Fixer can still hand over Plot Points to the players to introduce new Complications.

But, the Crew can also buy Complications as Assets. If the building's on fire, in the middle of a power failure, flooded, or some other catastrophe, those can complicate the Crew's task, but they may also be helpful. Fires and floods cover evidence.



THE GRIFTER

THE MASTERMIND

Power failures might release the mechanisms on auto-locking doors. While no lights make it harder to see what you're doing, it also makes it more difficult for others to even notice that you're there. They're still Complications the Fixer can use while they're Assets the Crew can.

Example

Eliot's fighting a bunch of the Mark's thugs in a warehouse. The Fixer previously bought the **D8 ALL SORTS OF BLUNT INSTRUMENTS JUST LYING AROUND** Complication. Eliot won't be outdone, so he spends a Plot Point to create the Asset **ALL SORTS OF BLUNT INSTRUMENTS JUST LYING AROUND**. Since it's an Asset, it's a **D6**. But that won't matter long, since this is Eliot we're talking about.

This is no different from the normal Asset rules. It's just a way of letting you know you can have Assets and Complications with the same name, as a fun thing to play with.

Changing the Difficulty with Complications

The whole purpose of the Complication mechanic in **LEVERAGE** is to drive the currency of Plot Points toward the players and, at the same time, represent how things just get more and more complicated as the Job goes on. In many ways, they replace such things as hit points or damage tracks or difficulty modifiers in other RPGs. So with this in mind, it's actually easy to use Complications as your tool for making the gameplay more intense or to relax it.

For a more challenging game, Complications start out as a **D8** instead of a **D6**. Think of them as the Fixer's Distinctions, a counter for those parts of the Rap

THE FIXER

Sheet rather than necessarily the flip side of player-created Assets. If a player rolls a bunch of 1s on his dice, that's suddenly a game-changing moment, with several **D8s** cropping up to get in the Crew's way.

For an easier game, players might let Opportunities serve as a means of reducing Complications in play. If the Fixer's dice come up with 1s, players can volunteer to spend a Plot Point to step back a Complication by one. If it's a **D6**, the Complication can either go away, or allow Complications to be stepped back to **D4** and thus make it even more likely for the Fixer to create more Opportunities in future.

You can even mix and match this stuff in the same game. If you want to highlight some scenes as being pivotal or significant (like the cliffhanger scenes before the end of an act), declare that to be so and have all Complications that crop up in the scene start as **D8**. This lets the players know that the tension's rising and the challenge is greater, without impairing them unfairly.

More Plot Twists

Plot twists can turn a simple situation into a raging inferno of complexity. Below are some specific ideas for plot twists to add to the ones from page 100 in the *LEVERAGE RPG*.

The Mark figures out he's being played and offers a deal. Help him with another Job and he'll make things right for the Client. Maybe the Mark isn't too concerned about the issues he has with the Client, but has a more pressing problem and the Crew are just the people to take care of it. The Mark could be honorable and keep his word, or he could be a scoundrel and try to get the best of both situations.

There is potential for significant collateral damage affecting innocent bystanders. The Mark's fall will put hundreds out of work, or people will be

killed without the Mark's protection. Robbing the Mark without destroying him can be just as satisfying if the Crew can also get the Client out of the Mark's reach forever, say by relocating the Client and family to a different state or country.

The Mark has a child working for him who is trapped in the situation or endangered in some way. The child could be serving as an apprentice to a skilled member of a criminal group, or it could be outright slavery, with the child having no options but to do what he or she is told. Freeing the child—and finding a safe home for the kid out of reach—will add complications galore, especially if the child doesn't want to leave.

The Mark is holding someone dear to the Client as a hostage. This has been a classic tactic for thousands of years, and also insures the Client won't go to the police—making it that much more likely the Crew will be pulled in to handle the Job. The threat of serious harm to the hostage is real, and the Crew will have to tread cautiously to both free the hostage and take down the Mark. Since the Mark has no reservations about taking hostages, the Client and his close connections will definitely be in danger if the Mark's able to retaliate.

A close friend or relative of the Client is helping the Mark. It could be the Client's lover, feeling spurned, looking to leave, and hurt the Client doing it. It might be someone innocent—a child or well-meaning relative—thinking that they are helping the situation by talking or working with the Mark. Sometimes that relative is actually why the Client's in trouble in the first place, from gambling, loan, or drug debts.

The Mark is a mole with protection. He's fed information to a powerful organization (FBI, CIA, NSA, organized crime, etc.). Not only is there someone watching the Mark's back, but also it's someone who might take an unfortunate interest in the Crew. Whether the Mark's feeding false information, or he may be legit; either way, the Crew could mess him up by leading his handlers to believe that he's lying or a double agent.

The Mark is preparing to flee the country. This adds major time issues, as the Crew must complete the Job before the Mark leaves. Or the Mark is preparing to move money or information the Crew needs offshore, making it out of their reach once he does. The Crew will either need to prevent or hijack the transaction.

The Mark is terrified of someone. It could be a boss, rival, or government official or agency. The Crew can take advantage of this by pretending to be that person or his agents. This works great, until the real person appears and shakes things up for everyone.

The Client is planning to remove the Crew once they complete the Job. He's with the government or some shadowy organization—either openly or secretly—and wants operatives outside of his own outfit, so whatever happens can't be traced back to him or his people. For this dangerous job, the Crew fits the bill perfectly. While the Crew is preparing for this Job, the Client is preparing a “clean solution” for the Crew once they're done. Can the Crew discover these plans and take down the Client before he neutralizes them...permanently?

Season by Season: Handling Story Arcs

Seasons—a series of Jobs with the same Crew—can work a number of ways. A common way is to build a large story arc stretching from beginning to end, setting the tone and theme for the whole season. Within this arc, Jobs are single-story episodes, some that tie closely to the theme for the story arc, and some that are only loosely related. An arc's theme can be as cryptic and vague as “Running in Circles” or as precise as “The Crew runs afoul of the CIA and must stay off the radar for a while.”

Don't worry about coming up with season's theme right away. Events and what the Crew does will inspire you, and those first two or three Jobs will give you

some great fuel for your themes. Come up with a few good episodes to start, and you'll be golden.

The Fixer has work to do to build the season, but it shouldn't feel overwhelming. Once you've got your theme figured out, take a few moments to work up a rough outline of how the events of the Season should progress. Come up with a few basic Job ideas and build on those before trying to prepare for everything. The world is yours to direct. Keep it simple at first, and ideas will present themselves.

Use what the Crew does, or what particularly interesting Assets & Complications come up, to develop the later episodes of the season. Making a dire enemy in one episode will almost surely lead to that enemy nurturing thoughts of revenge. If the Crew causes a small-time Thief to be caught by the authorities in first season, she could be out of jail shortly into season two and has hooked up with a Mastermind, telling her all about the Crew that sent her away. Payback can catch any Crew flat-footed if it comes out of nowhere. It can be particularly tricky for the Crew to detect if their enemies sabotage a Job in progress, making it more likely that the Crew will get caught.

On the other hand, if every two-bit hood makes a return appearance, that will start getting ridiculous. Try to target only the most likely candidates for a return visit. Not every Mark realizes who pulled a fast one on them. Near brushes with death or the authorities can send less criminally minded individuals scurrying for redemption and the legit life.

Season Openers and Big Finishes

Opening a new season is a fun challenge. On one hand, you want a big splash in order to excite the players about the game, but if you use up the biggest moment of the season on the first episode, then it's all downhill from there. The most important thing, as



always, is to tell a good story. If you can build a long-term storyline that keeps the players interested and advances toward a firm conclusion, you should feel very accomplished indeed.

When thinking about a season, it's important to consider when the major events—those with repercussions that will have an effect on the rest of the season—will take place in the timeline. Introduce them early, and you have plenty of time to work them into later episodes. Add them later, and you're setting things up for next season. Sometimes multiple story arcs can be in play at the same time, overlapping chronologically (if not thematically). A story arc doesn't have to begin and end within a single season, but they do require a bit of finesse to carry them through more than one season successfully.

On occasion, the Crew will suffer a defeat. Perhaps the Mark was too slippery or got tipped off that he was being set up. Whatever the situation, cherish those moments. You as the Fixer have been handed

a golden opportunity, as several more episodes—and perhaps a story arc or two—having practically just written themselves.

Sometimes you'll find great future Marks in a previous Job. One possibility, if the Mark was part of an organized group, is to have one of the Mark's lieutenants take over when the Mark is caught. It's almost a rule that the new Number One is always worse than the old. Then the Crew will get to deal with a familiar face in the future, one that knows them as well.

There is no better villain than one that is an even match for the Crew. A talented adversary may force a choice: get the money for the Client or bring down the Mark. If they truly have their Client's best interests at heart, they may have to let the Mark escape. Knowing he'll be back, either to plague the Client or the Crew should give them something to think about in the middle of the night. This works great both as a season opener and finish.

It's important to remember that what the Crew does is illegal. Adding law enforcement Complications

makes perfect sense, but can be overused, so keep it from happening in every single Job. Remember that since they're on the wrong side of the law, many of their Clients might be too. There are Clients who can't afford to be nickel-and-dimed by the legal system, and there are those who need to avoid the police—hostage situations, ex-cons, and blackmail victims to name a few. And there are always those Clients that see “cop” as a dirty word. Whether they are trustworthy as Clients remains up to the Fixer.

Whether it's bringing a story arc to a close or a season to its conclusion, having a big showdown at the end can provide immense satisfaction. But you don't always have to end like that; having the players waiting for the other shoe to drop can build anticipation and tension for the coming season.

Showdowns can run the gamut from fistfights to chess match, and everything in between. The sense of drama is important; even if the Crew is more than a match for the bad guys, it shouldn't feel like a cake walk every time. There should always be a chance that the Crew could lose, and a chance that the Mark could escape. After all, if the Crew's willing to stick to their guns, the Mark escaping is not the end of the Job.

It's a good idea to have several threads dangling at the end—things and people that need to be dealt with—to keep the Crew from becoming too complacent or too impressed with their own abilities. With Jobs and enemies waiting in the wings, spending a lot of time celebrating a victory will be a luxury the Crew can't afford. Loose ends can also help segue into the next season as the Crew tries to wrap up those stray details while still avoiding detection.

Changing the Focus: From Job to Arc

Story arcs by their definition are not entirely solved after one successful outcome. One way to look at a story arc is like a ladder reaching up, with each rung leading further into the sky. A Fixer planning a story arc should begin at the top, detailing the major

situation at the heart of it all, then work backwards toward the beginning, adding episodes that easily lead to the next step, as well as allies, foils and agents.

You could also think of it like a tree, with branches leading to other episodes. Each branch provides players an opportunity to make choices, rather than feeling led by the nose from one rung to the next. Players may miss important clues that their characters wouldn't, so it's good to have other opportunities for the players to catch on and jump back into the story. The arc can be complex or simple, but it helps everyone if you can see a clear path from beginning to end—even if it wanders back and forth a little.

If they are in a position to anticipate the outcome, the Crew might want to invest time and effort in addressing story arcs between Jobs. Planning sessions between players about that are a great way to feel like you're playing the game between sessions, but there are occasions where it is appropriate to stop for a few moments to discuss recent developments. After all, those things might have a direct effect on the Job at hand, and it's important for the Crew to be on the same page when the chips fall.

If you're planning for a story arc to occupy the entire season, you'll need to keep finding new ways to play with the same theme. The players can grow weary of facing the same nemesis or her agents week after week—particularly if they don't see any progress, or if there's no clear indication of when things will end. Some light at the end of the tunnel needs to be evident to give everyone a concrete goal, even if that goal changes from time to time. Otherwise the players may lose focus and interest.

The Fixer needs to lay the groundwork for the arc to unfold. Some story arcs may take up an entire season due to their complexity. Some arcs will pop up during a season from time to time but effectively be background noise on the whole. There is no single, right way to structure a story arc, but the bottom line



is what everyone will have fun with and can bring to a satisfying conclusion.

Unless the story arc is all encompassing, or your season is going to be short, you'll want to insert a few unrelated episodes in between arc episodes to break things up. The unrelated, one-off episodes serve as ways to take a breather from an arc. Being a breather episode doesn't necessarily make them bad things; it merely indicates that the arc is more important than some individual episodes. And pacing is an important skill to learn.

Dropping hints relating to the arc is another great way to keep players' interest active. The Hacker may stumble across a reference to a group they've dealt with before during a data search in a completely unrelated episode. The Hitter may overhear something in a bar about that same group making moves to control crime syndicates in the city. The discovery that this group has their fingers in more than just insurance fraud and money laundering might lead the Crew to conclude

they're up against a bigger outfit than they first suspected. Suddenly, when that group makes another appearance, the threat looms a bit larger, tension rises, and the Crew grows a bit more wary.

Story Arc Example

Let's say that the Fixer's got a great idea for the Crew to deal with a Grifter in the second Job of a ten-episode season. He figures this Grifter will get caught, thanks to the Crew's efforts, and will do some time. Then he'll and hook up with a Hitter and Hacker once he gets out of prison, so there's a bit more work in the mean time to set that up.

JOB ONE is an introduction to the season, where the Crew has an episode to gel before the Fixer kicks the story arc into gear. It involves the Crew in an insurance scam where the Client had an accident and the Mark is denying the claim. The Crew moves fast to get the money back and sees that the shady agents are brought to justice. Short and sweet, with no real loose ends.

JOB TWO is where the Crew meets the nemesis of the arc, though they don't know that yet. This Grifter is put away, and the Crew and the players don't think any more of it. Just one more Job done. Meanwhile, the Fixer has a lot to things to set up.

JOB THREE sees the Crew hired to investigate a phony child adoption agency and retrieve the money of a couple whose hopes of raising a child were dashed while their bank account was cleaned out. Nothing connected to the story arc overall, so a breather episode. Still, as with any breather episode, something might happen that's worth noting down to bring back in the future, like an interesting Supporting Character.

JOB FOUR has a small-time hood shaking down a neighborhood for protection money, and one of the residents is a beloved aunt of one of the Crew. The hood has connections that will likely come back to haunt the Crew later.

JOB FIVE involves a Hacker swindling the elderly out of their savings by posing as a bank official to obtain their account numbers. Does the Crew want to recruit the Hacker to work for them? Maybe this is a side job while waiting for a job from *his* Crew, giving the players' Crew a new set of enemies to worry about. Maybe the Hacker joins them, only to be providing information to someone else—his other Crew, the Feds, or the Mob.

JOB SIX sees a loan shark or banker driving away customers from Clients who owe him money so he can take possession of their businesses.

JOB SEVEN is a crooked contractor foreclosing on a home he built with sub-standard materials. When the Client couldn't pay due to extensive repairs eating up all her savings, the contractor put a lien on the house and is threatening to take possession. The only loose ends here come into play if the contractor is clever enough to have built in plausible deniability—he has a patsy inside his organization set up to take the fall. The contractor may also have organized crime ties, having disposed of evidence (or a body) inside a recently poured cement foundation.

JOB EIGHT sees the return of the rival Grifter and his growing crew. Do they interfere with one of the Crew's Jobs to cause the Crew to get caught? Does the Crew stumble upon the rivals' undertaking their own con job? Was the Hacker from **Job Five** actually the same Hacker working for the Rival Grifter?

JOB NINE is a tricky one. The Crew is hired to break into a bank to put something back—a letter stolen previously from a safe deposit box, implicating someone in a crime. Maybe the Client is framing someone innocent to take her own heat, or is the Mark really the vicious, rotten bastard the Client says he is. One of the Crew learns in this Job that the Hitter from Job Eight has ties to another of the Crew, possibly knowing more details about that Crewmember than is healthy.

JOB TEN rolls around after a lot of downtime. The Crew hasn't had much work lately—why is that? Rival crew is stealing their business, the Rival Hacker having hacked the Crew's phones to intercept their calls. Maybe they're trying to muscle the Crew out of the business, or maybe the Rivals are framing them to take a really big fall. This is a great place to end a season, as it provides great opportunities for cliffhangers and will leave the Crew with unfinished business to take care of, and some payback owed.

The key to a story arc is to have it make appearances from time to time, even if the arc itself isn't the focal point of that Job. The Rival Grifter from the second episode shows up again in the eighth and tenth. Part of his Crew show up in the fifth and information about one of them is learned in the ninth episode as well. We now have a strong set of enemies ready and waiting in the wings whenever they're needed—to be the focus of a story arc or just to pop in and cause trouble for the Crew.

Remember that the story arc is just that—a story. In the Grifter's first appearance, he's a solo act. Next time he shows up, he has a Hacker and Hitter with him,

and they're looking for trouble. After that, they make it their business to interfere with the Crew if possible, even going so far as to poach their Clients. The Grifter is holding that grudge pretty close to his heart, but that isn't totally foreign behavior for a human being, is it?

Variations on a Theme

Once you've run a few games, you'll have a feel for the rhythm of playing out a Job. Plan. Con. Hack. Steal. Punch. Repeat as necessary. Mix them up with a little creativity and you've got a limitless number of capers, but the creativity is key. Otherwise, every Job starts to feel the same. With repetitive bad guys, familiar locations, and predictable twists, your players start to sleepwalk through the game. You've got to introduce an unexpected element to snap them out of it. Toss your players a curve ball every now and then to keep them on their toes.

In most episodes of **LEVERAGE**, there's a point where the con goes off the rails. Through no fault of the Crew, the situation changes and they have to scramble and pick up the pieces. The action picks up. The risks get bigger. Chaos breeds creativity. You're sure they'll come out on top, but for a second there everyone will be a little worried.

Once you've got that down, you'll want to change how everything plays. Luckily, there're lots of ways to spice up a job. This section goes over a few possibilities, but there's no wrong way to do it. As long as your players are actively engaged and having a good time, you're doing your job as the Fixer. So don't be afraid to toss in an experiment. You might be surprised at what comes of it.

Changing the Roles

The Hitter takes out the guards, the Thief cracks the safe, and the Hacker stays in the van and shuts down the security systems. When everyone has a set role on the Crew, it's easy to fall into a routine. These are skilled professionals, but that **D10** next to your players' Primary Roles can turn into a story crutch if you're not careful. As the Fixer, you need to pull people out of their comfort zones. It's time to mix up some Roles.

It may be as simple as putting someone else in charge for the day. When Sophie ran the play in *The Three Days of the Hunter Job*, it had a trickle-down effect that had everyone scrambling to fill in the gap. Parker and Hardison ran the grift, and Eliot even got a chance to try out hacking and pickpocketing, while Nate—well Nate was forced to be a backseat Mastermind. The Job might not have gone as smoothly, but it was anything but boring. The same method can work for your Crew. Sticking someone else in the driver's seat can introduce a fresh style, and with a vacant spot, force players to take on one of their **D6** Roles.

This type of Role switching can come in very handy if one of the players can't make it to the session, especially if you know ahead of time and can plan. Instead of having to reschedule around six people's schedules, or having someone else double up characters to fill in for the missing player, you can integrate the absence into the storyline. Try this on for size: the last Job seemed to go smoothly. As far as they could tell, the Crew got away clean and the cops got the incriminating care package they sent. The gang did everything but gift-wrap that crooked developer for the authorities. And that's when the phone rings—your Grifter is in the hospital. Apparently the developer had some “business partners” that are none too happy about how things went down, and as the public face of the Job, the Grifter paid the price. He'll recover, but he's gonna be out of commission for at least a couple weeks. Time to teach these bastards what happens to people who mess with the Crew.



THE GRIFTER

THE MASTERMIND

Using Different Roles

It's one thing to create opportunities to have Crewmembers work outside of their comfort zone, but what about introducing entirely new Roles? The classic five used in the Leverage RPG map directly to the ones demonstrated on the show, but not all modern action stories are the same. If you're hoping to tweak your game in a slightly different direction, you could replace one or more of the Roles during Crew recruitment with new ones. Here are some popular suggestions:

The Wheelman: The guy with the car, the boat, the jet... you get the idea. One part mechanic, two parts stunt driver.

The Aristocrat: She's got money, power, and influence, but unlike the Mastermind or Grifter the Aristocrat is all about resources. She doesn't even have to be actually descended from royalty, either. Any young upstart from a powerful corporate family works, too.

The Agent: He's trained in espionage, sabotage, even decoupage—the classic spy. Maybe he's come out of

the cold, maybe he's just been burned, or maybe he's just trying to get into the private sector. He probably replaces either the Hitter or the Thief, but it's distinct enough that you could still use those, too.

The Reporter: She's got a nose for news, pushy and determined, and knows media and the psychology of the media consumer. Often she's on the Crew because she likes the embedded correspondent lifestyle, but it's also possible her show was canned and now she's trying to fight the bad guys in a whole new way.

Any way you choose to go, you need to make sure there's enough juice in a Role that every one of the players can have a die rating in it, and that there are enough Talents to go with the Role. Optionally, you can have more than five Roles available and just have the players pick the five they want on their Rap Sheet, leaving the rest as no rating at all. But tightening up the options is usually the best way to do this.

THE FIXER

In a perfect world, every Job would require exactly one of each Role, but the crime world is far from perfect. Every Job has its own unique requirements, and that sometimes means doubling or tripling up on Roles. Maybe there's nothing that needs a Hitter, but you need two people acting as a Grifter to work. Or your Thief is crawling around in the air vents on the twelfth floor, but you need to snake a badge from one of the security guards at the front desk to access the elevators. Time for the Mastermind to practice his pickpocketing. The characters aren't going to have the same finesse playing the Role that a specialist would, but in a pinch you have to make do with what you've got.

If a chance for a Role swap comes up naturally in your game's story, that's great, but there's no reason to force it. Carefully using twists to introduce obstacles that a character wouldn't normally face, you can integrate Role switching in a natural fashion. After all, nothing ever goes 100% according to plan. Maybe a water main blows and cuts off your basement access, so the Thief has to talk her way into the secure building. Working a grift may not be her specialty, but she probably won't pull a Parker and stab a guy with a fork. Or maybe the new IT guy plugs the security hole you were using to access their systems, and your Hacker has to get physical access to the network... by climbing a fire escape and jimmying open a third-story window without getting caught. You'll want to dole these change-ups out sparingly, but they're great for keeping everyone on their toes and introduce them to play styles they might not have considered trying before.

Alternate Job Structures

The three- and five-act structures are powerful tools, and they make for great episodes and great games, but a wild card every now and then can really spice

things up. A break from the norm goes a long way toward getting everyone reenergized in your season.

Here's an example of a different stripe, something a little grittier: Theresa Miller's the new Client. Six years ago, her son, Chris, was convicted of a double homicide. His mother says he didn't do it, and from the Mastermind's quick once-over of the court records, she's believable—his case looked like a total snow job. With mishandled evidence, anonymous tipsters, and a reasonably solid alibi for Chris, any half-decent public defender should have been able to get this thing thrown out of court. Someone with powerful ties wanted Chris to take the rap for these killings, and are getting away with it. If the Crew's gonna fix this, you've got to work fast. The Client is running out of time. Word just came in—the court is denying Miller's final appeal. He's scheduled for execution Monday night at 9. They've got four days to find the people responsible and clear Chris's name.

A ticking clock is a great motivator. When the Crew's working against a tight schedule, plans often go out the window. The looming threat of the deadline forces everyone to improvise and take risks that they might not otherwise. Given enough time, the Grifter could probably talk his way into the precinct's evidence locker, but that could take hours, and you need it in 30 minutes. Time for the Crew to send the Thief in... in broad daylight. And sure, it would be great if the Mastermind could figure out a way to get the Crew in and out of the warehouse without being seen, but time is a luxury you don't have. The Hitter's just gonna have to kick in the door and start swinging. It's a messier style of play, but the thrill of racing the clock and never quite knowing what happens next makes for a dynamic and exciting experience.

Everything's been going according to plan. They cracked the security, took out the guards, and made it into the office. Your Thief's got her hands on that hard drive, and discovered the man responsible, Lenny Spielman. He'll going away for a long time.

Until they discover Spielman face-down on his desk, two bullet holes in his back. Suddenly the Crew's

full of thoughts: what the hell is going on? Spielman was a jerk, but who wanted him dead? What did we miss? Have we been going after the wrong guy this whole time? And...crap, are those sirens?

Nothing wakes the Crew (and the players) up quite like dropping them into the deep end. When the unexpected happens, there's no time for preparation; they have to act on instinct. In *The Bank Shot Job*, when bank robbers take Nate and Sophie hostage, the Crew has to improvise a new plan on the spot. They have to save the hostages, help their new Clients (the bank robbers, who are dealing with a hostage situation of their own), escape the scene before the feds show up, and still somehow frame the corrupt judge they were after in the first place. Sure, it all comes together—after all, it wouldn't be much of a show if the Crew got caught—but the journey to that point is a string of the “now what are they gonna do” moments that make for a great story.

They don't always have to search for a Job. A Die Hard-style Job comes to them, delivering the Mark right to their door. The Crew is minding their own business when the bad guys show up and start causing trouble. It's up to them to improvise a battle plan using whatever they've got on hand to take down the Mark. In *The Bottle Job*, a loan shark shows up at John McRory's wake to collect on his debt by taking the bar. Nate and his Crew not only run the Wire on the guy, winning back the bar, but they get him to confess to a crime in a room full of cops. And all without ever needing to leave the building. Yippee-ki-yay.

Capers and Heists in Other Worlds: Fantasy, Sci-Fi, and Alternate History

The modern-world setting of **LEVERAGE** may not be for everybody. That's not a problem! There's no reason you have to set your game in the modern world. Break the boundaries of time, space, and reality. Set the Crew against a guild of thieves and cutthroats hiding in the primeval forests of a magical kingdom, or gas up the

hogs and roam the highways of a post-apocalyptic America in search of your next Client. Set up shop in the noir-drenched streets of 1930s Los Angeles, or under the diamond domes of the Sagan Colony on Mars. At its core, **LEVERAGE** is about fighting injustice, a theme that's universal. The powerful and corrupt have always preyed on the weak, so any setting where the villains would gladly step on the little guy's neck for a quick buck is fair game.

The Original Crew

If the **LEVERAGE** team has a family tree, Robin Hood and his Merry Men are at the root. With a few tweaks to the characters and their “rob from the rich and give to the poor” formula, Robin and his Crew fit right into the **LEVERAGE** world. **Robin of Loxley** (**MASTERMIND D10/THIEF D8**), hero of the peasantry, leads his Merry Men, a band of cutpurses, brigands, and outlaws seeking justice for the crimes of the nobility. The aristocracy has grown fat off the labor of the working man. It's up to Robin and his men to set the balance right.

His second in command, **Little John** (**HITTER D10/MASTERMIND D8**) is a giant of a man, a famed brawler, and master of the quarterstaff. It's not uncommon to see him take out half a score of the Sheriff's men with a single swing of his mighty rod.

Confession may be good for the soul, but it's even better for gathering intelligence. **Friar Tuck** (**HACKER D10/GRIFTER D8**) is a collector and distributor of this information. Using a flock of trained carrier pigeons, and messenger arrows of custom design, the Friar is able to maintain communication between Robin and the Merry Men during a job.

Abandoned as a child, **Will Scarlet** (**THIEF D10/HITTER D8**) learned that stealing and fighting were tools of survival. Whether a locked door or an armed

foe, Will's deft hands will make short work of any opponent.

Finally, the lovely **Maid Marian** (**GRIFTER D10/HACKER D8**) isn't half as innocent as she pretends. She's a Grifter extraordinaire; a master of disguise able to blend seamlessly with members of any social station, and not above using her parentage to gain access to the very members of nobility she intends to rob blind. Together, this motley crew of scoundrels has hounded the aristocracy of Nottingham for years, keeping just out of the Sherriff's grasp.

Fantasy Settings and Rethinking the Hacker

Sure, **LEVERAGE** works well in the heavily romanticized medieval world of Robin Hood, but what about the role-playing mainstay of a swords-and-sorcery world? It might seem like an odd fit, but take a closer look.

In your typical fantasy world you've got a feudal monarchy where the working classes are oppressed by the landowners. The rich are very rich and the poor are incredibly poor. Bandits and highwaymen prey on unsuspecting travellers. Sure, there are monsters and magic and roving bands of adventurers, but a Mark's a Mark, whether that Mark's a CEO, small-town sheriff, sorcerer, or dragon.

Most of the Primary Roles will fit nicely into any setting. Every culture, even fictional ones, has equivalents to Grifters, Thieves, Masterminds, and Hitters. But dealing with Hackers, especially in pre-technological or fantastical societies, may seem daunting. Sure, a Hacker fits right into a modern-day or sci-fi Job no problem, but what about a Job set during the French Revolution, or in an epic fantasy realm? What's a Hacker without a computer?

The key is to remember that Hackers aren't just about controlling computers, but about the flow of information. The Hacker is the one who gathers intelligence on the Mark, who scouts the security of a



target location, and maintains communication between Crewmembers during a Job. There are elements of the Grifter and the Thief in a computer-less Hacker, but the Roles are distinct. The Grifter may collect information on a Mark, but she does so in a close-up manner, integrating herself into the Mark's life. The Pre-industrial Hacker's information is gathered through more covert means, via eavesdropping and spies and go-betweens. And while the Fantasy Hacker may know how to render the Eye of the Basilisk inert, she'd prefer to leave the job of actually entering the treasure chamber and doing it to the Thief.

There's also a creative aspect to the Hacker that can come into play in low-tech settings. Any successful Crew is going to need gadgets, and those are a specialty of the Hacker. Or consider the Hacker as a forger, providing false documents for your Crew's fake IDs, or copying famous works of art and certificates of provenance to run a scam on Mark. These mainstays of the modern Hacker work in any time period.

Still doesn't feel quite right? Having trouble wrapping your head around the computer-less Hacker? If you're playing in a fantasy setting, there's a way to have all the powers and abilities of a modern day Hacker without breaking the rules: just conjure yourself up a computer. Sure, you'll have to call it something different, to keep the feel of the game. Instead of a laptop, GPS tracker, and Comms link, your Technomancer uses a scrying glass, divination runes, and a speaking stone. Just remember the game you're playing. This is **LEVERAGE**, not a dungeon crawl. If you think of something your fantasy Hacker can do that Hardison couldn't today with a computer, ask yourself why your fantasy Hacker should do that.

Oh, and before you start getting excited and ponder turning the Hacker into full-blown war mage throwing around fireballs, remember that that's about controlling force. If anyone's going to throw around magical fire, that's your Hitter. All of the roles can easily be rethought with magic, not just the Hacker, if you want to play in a story with lots of fantasy magic.

Jobs and Crew in Alternate Histories

Alternate History bridges the gap between fantasy and realism. It's a genre of what-ifs. What if the Cold War never ended? What if the transistor was never invented...or was invented a century earlier? What if the Aztec Empire had been the conqueror rather than the conquered, or mankind fought off an alien invasion in the late 19th century?

At some point in history, the timeline splits off from ours in some significant way, and the resulting world is familiar, but skewed. But as cool as that skewed part might be, the setting is just window dressing. The Job should be more important than just exploring a setting. The Mark or the Client may have some sort of importance to the culture at large, the gadgetry may be more or less advanced than what we're used to, but those are just details, and it's easy to get bogged down in them. Regardless of what's going on around your crewmembers, you're still just a gang of thieves taking down the bad guys.

Alternate History: Victorian Steampunk

Grab your top hat and strap on your goggles. The gas-lit streets of Victorian London set the stage for a steampunk game of **LEVERAGE**. From their airship headquarters high above the rooftops, **Miss Quade** (**MASTERMIND D10/GRIFTER D8**) and her crew make their final preparations for tonight's bit of subterfuge at Cumberland Manor. Quade's crew has already dealt with the crooked banker who forged the papers of ownership, but somewhere in that house Sir Reginald Cumberland has stashed the deeds to every home in the Whateley Township. He intends to foreclose on the entire village to create a private airfield and hunting

reserve, but he'll have a hard time doing that if those deeds go missing.

Smilin' Jack (**GRIFTER D10/THIEF D8**), playing the part of an American weapons manufacturer, has procured an invitation to a party being held at the manor this evening. The role isn't much of a stretch; at one time Jack was a manufacturer of weapons, albeit broken ones. He's also been a carnival barker, a revival preacher, and a patent medicine salesman. Plus he managed to sell the Brooklyn Bridge on five separate occasions before he wore out his welcome across the Atlantic.

While Jack keeps Sir Reginald distracted, **Lord Blakely** (**THIEF D10/HACKER D8**) will toss the house. Quade still isn't sure why a man of Lord Blakely's peerage would live a double life as a cat burglar. All she knows is that he's the best in the business, and he's promised that as long as she keeps his life interesting, he will remain in Miss Quade's employ. Lord Blakely will make his ingress through the servants' entrance.

A pair of sentry automata guard the door, but the **Major** (**HITTER D10/MASTERMIND D8**) will make short work of them. The military may not have a use for him anymore, but Quade has found his regimental training and raw strength to be a brutal and invaluable combination. Once called into action, the Major is unstoppable against any foe, man or machine. With how he moves, you'd never guess that a Zulu spearhead was still embedded in his thigh.

Meanwhile, **Little Ada** (**HACKER D10/HITTER D8**) will gain access to the tunnels beneath the manor. The modifications she's made to the processing stack of the Royal Mail's analytical engines back in town should pop the autolatch on the access corridor at exactly eight o'clock. It's a tight squeeze, but her small stature is just one of the factors that make Ada a master of the engines (or, as some of her youthful cohorts call her, a "clacker"). Once inside, Ada will install a redirect trap on the pneumatic messaging

tubes and divert the telegraph cables through her aetheric transcommunicator. Should anyone in the house attempt to contact the local police, Miss Quade will intercept the message at the safe house, where she waits, disguised as a constable. Chances are, she won't be needed tonight, but one must prepare for every eventuality.

Alternate History: Science Fiction

LEVERAGE slides into a science fiction setting with very little effort. Based on the tech tools the team employs from time to time, it's already set about five minutes in the future—that tiny jump in time that makes possible pocket-sized EMP devices and comms that work from half a world away. Sci-fi generally means the security systems get better, and the gadgets get cooler, but the people aren't likely to change very much. Despite what Star Trek told us, mankind isn't likely to evolve beyond the desire for material wealth. And as long as you've got some form of money, you'll have people willing to amass it at any cost.

Sixty years into its interstellar journey to colonize a new world, the generation ship *Conestoga* has become a microcosm of the corrupted world it left behind. The aging Earthling population has begun to dwindle, but they still maintain a stranglehold on the shipboard's indifferent and ineffective bureaucracy. Meanwhile, a thriving black market controls the distribution of basic needs, driving up the prices. Star-born laborers work twelve hour days down in maintenance, under the constant threat of being replaced by a Mek, and their children toil under artificial sunlight on the *AgroDeck*, but they still barely manage to make ends meet.

Vic Cooper (**MASTERMIND D10/THIEF D8**) intends to change things. He's gathered his crew in a little-used storage room under the engineering decks to decide how to deal with the Jong cartel's interest in the *Oxygen Farm*.

Winston (**HACKER D10/MASTERMIND D8**) has been hitchhiking on their system and monitoring their network traffic, disguising himself as a rogue spambot. Nobody else can crack a system like Winston does—

from the inside. As a sentient AI system designed by Coop, and there's not a computer onboard that he can't control. He's usually just a voice in the crew's ear, but he just manifested himself on their retinal HUDs—as a cartoon duck (he's got a weird sense of humor)—to announce that the Jongs just set up a meeting with the Governor General. Must be time for his annual kickback.

Gibson (GRIFTER D10/HITTER D8) has already managed to build up a working relationship with the Governor—he thinks she's the representative for the sex workers union, and he's a big “supporter” of their cause—so she'll get him out of his office while **Lanks** (THIEF D10/HACKER D8) plants some bugs. He'll have to crawl through two clicks of conduit to get there, but Lanks is the man for the job. The atrophied, sickly looking guy is the most flexible little bastard you've ever seen. He can zip through the wiring-choked maintenance tubes faster than most people can travel through the corridors. Of course to get into the conduit in the first place he'll need to gain access to the heavily guarded power substation.

Terri (HITTER D10/GRIFTER D8) will take care of distracting the guards. She may be a tiny little thing, but after that plasma explosion took her arms, Terri traded up. Her biomech prosthetics pack a hell of a wallop, and she's recently made a few unlicensed modifications that she's been itching to try out. Poor guards don't stand a chance. If all goes as planned, the top story tonight will be a video of the Governor accepting bribes from the cartel to privatize oxygen production. Let's see the slippery bastard talk his way out of that one.

With the advance of technology, the Hacker threatens to overshadow the importance of the other Roles in a sci-fi setting. Even today, scammers can steal thousands of dollars from people without ever meeting anyone in person, so imagine what a Hacker of Hardison's caliber would be able to do ten, fifty, or a hundred years in the future. You'll want to make sure to introduce twists and Complications that get your characters away from the computer. The files use a

quantum encryption scheme, so they're uncrackable without the Mark's password. The Mark's network requires a biometric ID, so unless you can get your hands on his eyeball, you're not getting in. Pile on enough technojargon and you should be able to come up with a legitimate-sounding obstacle for the Hacker.

Past, present, or future; fantasy utopia or sci-fi dystopia—regardless of the setting, there's one factor that determines whether the world will work in the game: you. It's up to the Fixer to sell this world to the players, to make it seem real. If you don't understand the world, how do you expect your players to? If your players have questions, will you be able to answer them? We're not saying you need to write a treatise on the fictional history of your world, but you need to understand enough to fill in the gaps in your players' understanding. Who is in charge of law enforcement in this world? What sort of weaponry could your crew find themselves up against? If you're prepared for these sorts of questions, your players will buy what you're selling.

Of course, if you're all comfortable with it, those are also questions the group can come with as a whole. Some Fixers will be happy to let everyone collaborate in building a setting, since several minds are typically smarter and cleverer than just one.

Playing the Other Side: Being Bad

Okay, we admit it; this whole “thief with a heart of gold” shtick isn't for everyone. Chances are you didn't devote years of your life to the criminal arts with the intention of helping people. You did it to get rich! So why not cut out this vigilante justice nonsense and get down to the good stuff? You're thieves, go steal something!

Playing as the bad guys can be a nice way for the group to reset—a palate cleanser between capers. The Crew has probably built up a pretty positive reputation.

It would be a shame to sully their good names, so it's probably best to start with a fresh set of characters to go with a looser moral code.

Setting up a straight heist or con isn't much different than planning a normal Job. In fact, it's a little easier. You don't have to worry about exposing corruption or taking down the bad guys. You've just got to get the Job done without getting caught. It opens up a range of possible Marks that you might not consider otherwise. We're not suggesting you raid the Toys for Tots bin—you're thieves, not monsters—but you might be more inclined to hit a museum or rob a bank when you're not doing it to help someone. Go crazy—steal a Van Gogh, break into Fort Knox, or knock over a casino! There's no pesky conscience holding you back.

But maybe your players like the characters they've already got. They'd like to try a Job as villains, but they don't want to create a whole new Crew to take it on. Well they may be working on the side of the angels these days, but that wasn't always the case. In *The Rashomon Job* (a brilliant bit of Alternate Job Structure, by the way) we got a peek at the **LEVERAGE** gang before they were good guys, as they each told their version of stealing the same antique dagger. A Nostalgia Job allows your players to reminisce about a simpler time, when they stole for personal gain, not any sort of greater good. *Rashomon* shows us an intertwining set of solo jobs, but who's to say your Crew hadn't worked together before that crippling case of morality set in?

Or take things in a different direction. Your Crew just got a new Client, a former CEO of Bering Aerospace named Victor Dubenich. A few years ago, Dubenich was targeted by another Crew. They framed him for taking bribes, sent him to jail, and destroyed his company. Hundreds of people lost their jobs, while this guy Ford and his gang walked away with millions. Now Dubenich is out of jail, with an eye towards revenge. He's hiring your team to take down Ford and as many of his people as you can drag down with him.

In this scenario, your Crew would work to take down the **LEVERAGE** team, using their own methods against them. Whether knowingly or not, your Crewmembers are the bad guys. Nate's Crew may be skilled, but yours is more morally flexible, leaving you with options the **LEVERAGE** team would never consider—and when you consider that they've partnered with an insane woman to get a Job done, that's kind of scary. You may want to save this one until your Crew is a little more experienced. After all, taking down the best in the business isn't for amateurs.

However you go about it, remember that for the professional criminal, the Job is all about the score. The payout's gonna be split several ways, so the prize had better be pretty damn valuable. You're after the big haul, the showier the better. Break into the Louvre and replace the paintings with expert forgeries. Rig the tables in Vegas and have a nice, long lucky streak. Flip the script on the "Prince of Nigeria" and help yourself to his ill-gotten gains. Get away with a big enough haul, and this might just be your last Job. Time to retire to your private island, you've earned it. Well, someone earned it—but you took it.

Games Without A Fixer: Collaborative Episodes

Occasionally you'll find yourselves without someone to act as the Fixer for your **LEVERAGE** game. Or you might want to try playing the game collaboratively without one person solely running the show. In order to play without a Fixer, here are a few guidelines to help direct the action.

First, you need to generate the Job's major plot points using the Situation Generator from **Chapter Six: The Toolbox** of the **LEVERAGE RPG**. Players then draw lots to pick another Crewmember. They each



take turns assigning a **d6** Complication to that other player that directly ties in with plot points (yes, the lowercase kind) of that episode, until each player has one new Complication.

Players should keep the five-act format of **LEVERAGE** clearly in mind (see page 81 of the **LEVERAGE RPG**), and attempt to adhere as closely as possible to the general progression of each act. This helps provide direction and offers a good framework for the Crew to use in building their episode. You can randomly assign who's in what scene, or just collaborate and decide by consensus. One player essentially grabs the spotlight, becoming the scene's primary actor, and the others chime in as needed.

Players can decide how they wish to handle the Fixer's role within the game. When it comes to rolling the dice for opposition, something that the Fixer generally does, have it be the responsibility of the person to the player's left, or the player sitting across the table. Put a big pool of Plot Points in the middle of the table and grab one whenever you roll a

1 on your dice; the rest of the table comes up with the Complication, something that's fun and interesting.

The Mark, the Agents, and even the Foils and Extras are all fair game for players to bring into the story when the spotlight is on them. If you're not involved in a specific scene, maybe you step into the role of an Agent or even the Mark. But it's also just as valid to have these Supporting Characters, even the ones that oppose the Crew, simply form a part of each Crewmember's narrative.

Example

For example, the Crew's Hitter has the spotlight, and pulls in the Thief as his support. The Job's about a hijack ring in a major urban center, so the Hitter's player suggests that this scene is about him taking on a bunch of heavies in order to find out where the hijackers are located. The Thief says she'll be getting in the way while trying to steal the heavies' car. The other players at the table volunteer to roll the dice for the heavies. Says the Hitter's player, "Oh, it's on!"

One player may have more ideas for the episode than the others; this is only natural. That doesn't make the game any less a collaborative effort. But if one player finds they are contributing the most ideas, look at shaping some of those ideas with an eye towards giving their fellow players' characters more to do in the episode. Keeping everyone involved in the game can be difficult when it seems like one player is directing play and getting all the attention.

The most important aspect of the game—after having fun—is telling a good story. Players should discuss options and possibilities before deciding which is the best fit for the story. Even games with a Fixer are a collaborative process, so players should let their opinions be known.

Discussion is important, but it can also cripple the game if an argument is allowed to run for too long. Consider using a method to limit the time to argue a decision—for example, giving each person in a discussion the span of a typical egg timer, two or three minutes, to make their case. If they wish to add something further after others have spoken, they may do so at the cost of one Plot Point per minute. Once the group decides on a course of action, it should be understood that, though possibly not everyone agrees with the decision completely, it is the decision they will stick with and that it can be discussed after the game, with the benefit of hindsight.

Voting on an outcome or on adding a new element should be straightforward. In the case of ties, allow

everyone an additional minute to make their case to sway the other players to vote with them unless it's clear no one will change their mind. If the resulting vote is still a tie, players can either agree to spend as many Plot Points from their personal pools as they wish as if they were additional votes, or they can totally drop the issue in question and propose some alternative option.

There is a strong temptation when operating without a Fixer to offer up to each other a juicy situation that's easily resolved, and there's no reason the players can't opt for this. This is a game, and the point is to have fun. Many people find overcoming a difficult challenge to be an enjoyable and rewarding experience; sometimes, it's also fun to be the unstoppable death machine. Bear in mind that if things are too easy all the time, the players will get bored, and if they're too difficult, the players will grow frustrated. Both situations go against everything the game is trying to do.

No Fixer? That's just weird!

Actually, there are a lot of games out there that don't have one person taking on the role of a Fixer or Gamemaster. The key to their success is good communication, some kind of impartial element (dice are always good for this) and a shared interest in having a good time. Sharing the responsibility for the things the Fixer normally handles is the hardest part of this; also, keeping in mind that without a Fixer, there should be a sense that it's not "every player for himself" and rather, "all for one and one for all."