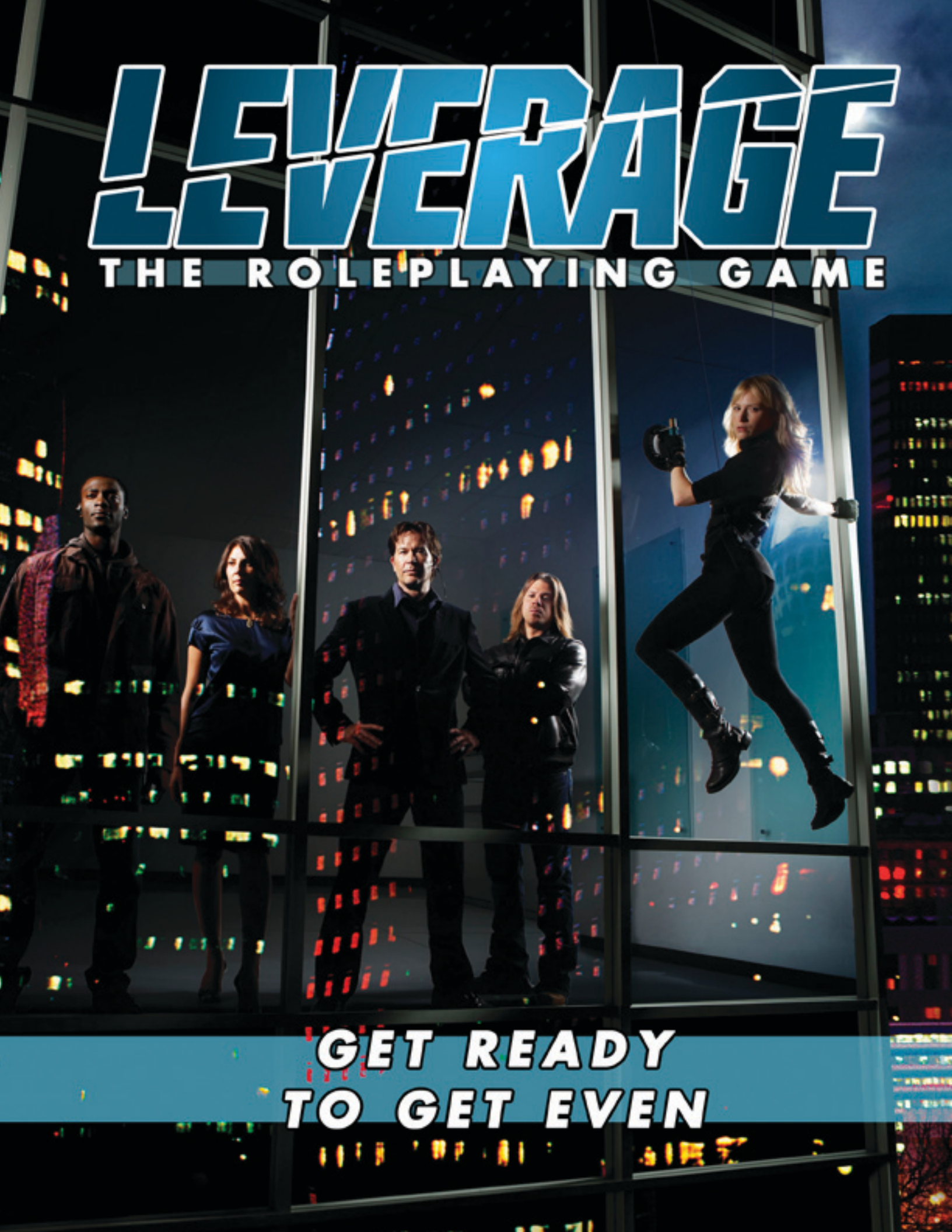
LEVERAGE

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME



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LEVERAGE
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

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FOREWORD

All we want to do is set the world right.

I mean, think about it. We roleplayers get together in living rooms and classrooms and garages all around the world, and we tell these infinite stories set in infinite worlds, and they all have one thing in common. Your sword-swinging barbarian and your lightning-throwing steampunker and your neuro-cyborg all have the same job: they fight injustice. Sometimes they do it for a pocketful of money, don't get me wrong, but in the end, the world's a better place for your hero's presence.

Sometimes I think that roleplaying is an echo of the old morality plays. In the end, we crave an ordered universe. A universe where good deeds help you and bad deeds don't go unpunished. And what happens, really? Good deeds go unremarked, and bad deeds are scarcely noticed. We live in a world that continually confounds our sense of decency. Even more so, our sense of control.

When Chris Downey and I were drinking in my garage in 2007—it's not as sad as it sounds, it's a very nice garage—we were talking about the latest run of heist and con shows. They were gritty and serialized, and they were failing. We thought that they'd missed the point of the con show: to show the magic trick, and to screw the bad guy. They got all the thief stuff right, but left out the most important part—the Robin Hood factor.

The world economy hadn't collapsed quite yet when we were creating the show, but we decided to go after the bad guys nobody else was tackling on television. Oh, they were rounding up serial killers by the dozen on the procedurals; the market on foiling scraggly white loners with a penchant for baroque clue construction was already cornered. We decided to go after fresh game. The Big Game, the Bad Guys who used the system to screw you.

So we set out to find bad guys. Not just jerks, but BAD guys. Men and women who, because they'd put profits ahead of humanity, left a wake of misery behind them. This was, sadly, frighteningly easy. Pharmaceutical companies that sold you poisoned drugs? Check. Food companies distributing salmonella-laden frozen dinners? Check. Coal mining companies who'd rather lose men than pay a fine? Check and double-check. Real honest-to-God villains. There's an unending parade of sinners in suits. We knew we had a bad guy for the show whenever we'd read a profile on one of these guys, shudder, and yell: "I HATE this guy!"

Running Leverage has, of all things, given us more of a sense of control over the world around us. Now, when we read a story about some corporate malfeasance, and we mutter to ourselves "I wish I could do something about that..." the left side of our brain will chime in "We can! We're the people who run that TV show!" And voila, we con the bad guy, and we get catharsis.

Now you can do the same. Take our band of Grifters, Hitters, Hackers, Thieves, and tell your own stories about setting the modern world right. The ability to do con and heist material in an RPG has been the Holy Grail for years, and I really think these folks have licked the problem. To paraphrase our situation from earlier—other people have the whole "killing orcs" thing down. You have new villains—villains who actually exist. Take 'em down a peg, at least in your story. Live in the world where, when you're going up against the rich and powerful, bad guys are sometimes the only good guys you get. Set the world right.

John Rogers

Co-Creator & Executive Producer



The Pitch

By Way of Introduction

The Pitch

So, here we are. You and me, sitting down and talking about making something of yourself. Getting involved. Using your talents to do the right thing. This is the LEVERAGE *Roleplaying Game*, and that's what it's all about—helping others to get even. This book brings you up to speed on how a Crew works, what the dice are for, the usual. You want to hang on a suspension harness over a room filled with lasers like Parker, or take on a room filled with losers using only your fists, like Eliot? That's fine; we've got you covered. You have an idea for a whole new Crew operating somewhere other than Los Angeles or Boston? No problem; there are plenty of jerks out there that need taking down a peg or two. The LEVERAGE *RPG* is here to let you do all of that and more.

But we need to clear up a few things first. Get them out of the way before we get down to business.

What is Leverage?

LEVERAGE is the story of a group of thieves and confidence men who choose to use their expertise to take down bad guys the authorities can't—or won't—take down themselves. It's at times light-hearted and comical, other times intense and tragic. Every Job the LEVERAGE Crew takes on brings to light more of their criminal backgrounds, their unparalleled skills, and their need to trust one another in a very untrusting world. As their Clients are avenged and the Marks brought to justice, one way or another, we see more and more of the shadowy world of crime that exists alongside ours. And we can celebrate the fact that, sometimes, the bad guys make the best good guys.

So you're wondering, who are these people? And what is this world of crime? And why don't I just let the game tell me? I'm glad we're on the same page here.

The Cast of Characters

Nathan Ford is a former insurance investigator whose employers failed to provide the life-saving care his son needed. Driven by revenge and a need to fill the emptiness in his life, he's found renewed purpose in taking down the corrupt and crooked on behalf of their victims. Years of chasing down criminals and con artists gives Nate the experience and skill he needs to lead his Crew. As the Mastermind, he's the brains behind their operation—and a Grifter and Thief in his own right. While his battle with the bottle and his own temper frequently complicates matters, Nate's sense of justice and irony keeps him on the side of angels.

Sophie Devereaux isn't her real name. Onstage, she's a terrible actress. And I mean *painfully* terrible. But when she's in the middle of a con and playing a character opposite real people, there are few who can match her as a Grifter. Charming and cosmopolitan, Sophie is something of a den mother for the Crew and a peerless match for Nate. Although she was absent for a while, she's returned to lend the team her assistance and keep a closer eye on their success. Her looks can turn heads; her wits can loosen tongues and break hearts.

Eliot Spencer has spent more time in dangerous situations and hostile countries than anybody cares to count. He can clear a room of thugs in moments and can identify the make and model of a handgun simply by the sound it makes. Even with his extensive combat experience, Eliot refuses to use guns, and frequently disposes of ammunition after disarming his opponents. As the Crew's Hitter, Eliot supplements his "retrieval specialist" duties with a mastery of haute cuisine and a disarming talent of blending in with his surroundings. He is much smarter than he looks, which he often works to his advantage.

Parker—it's the only name she uses—is the product of years of foster homes and petty crime. While her social skills are definitely a work in progress, Parker is a world-class burglar, safecracker, and Thief. She can fit into a small space, hang by her fingers from a narrow



ledge, or skydive from a roof without fear or hesitation. Trained by a master burglar named Archie Leech and honed through hundreds of break-ins and heists, Parker is a major asset to the Crew, but also one of the most unpredictable.

Alec Hardison is a wizard of technology and a citizen of the Age of the Geek. He credits his grandmother for raising him right, grounding him in certain moral principles that he sticks to despite his Hacker methods. Hardison doesn't have the Grifter background or the knife-edge experience of his fellow Crewmembers, but his ability to secure and liberate information borders on the miraculous. In the short space of time that he's been associated with Leverage Consulting & Associates, he's revealed even more diverse talent and potential—and a growing affection for Parker.

A World of Crime

The world of LEVERAGE is one that, on the face of it, seems just like the one we see outside our doors. People go to work, get married, have kids, buy lottery tickets, and shop in malls. But behind this façade of thinning middle-class values and forward-marching progress is another world, a world filled with corrupt executives, vicious smugglers, and mob bosses scrambling for power. It's bigger, more dangerous, and more lucrative than any normal person would imagine. But this isn't the kind of work normal people get into, so we've already taken care of that. And I'm sure you can imagine quite a lot.

In this Crime World, everything scales upwards. You might find you're operating on one level of intrigue, secrets, and schemes, and then you pull back the curtain to find that there's a whole other level above the one you're on. There's always somebody out there who knows more than you, hiding in the dark, waiting for you to step into the light. The good news is, sooner or later you're gonna be turning that light on them, and the innocent victims will finally catch a break.

What is a Roleplaying Game?

So now we're all straight on what LEVERAGE is. But what's this about a roleplaying game? Do you play it on a computer or sign up to an online server? Is it a kind of therapy or a board game with cardboard bits and pieces? No, the LEVERAGE *RPG* isn't anything like that. Not really. It's a game that you play with a group of friends, either around a table or via the Internet and a suitable chat feature. You get into character, you roll dice, and you tell stories, just like you'd see on TV.

How does this work? What kind of stories are we talking about, here? Questions, questions. Here's your answers.

The Cortex Plus System

Like any game, there are rules, and while you don't need to know them all to begin with, it's a pretty easy game to master. The rules as a whole are known as the **Cortex Plus System**, and they're a variation on a set of rules used in other games published by Margaret Weis Productions. Cortex uses dice of various sizes, from four-sides to twelve-sides, with an attention toward using the rules to help players tell dramatic and interesting stories. It's called Cortex Plus because with this game there are even more twists and tweaks than before, all in an effort to really capture the slick action and cool tone of LEVERAGE. And it's a system because it all works together like an engine, with the players keeping it running smoothly.

A Team of Experts

LEVERAGE stories revolve around a Crew of individuals who are, let's be clear, each extremely competent. In fact, you could almost say they're the best there is at what they do, if it wasn't for the occasional reminder that there are even more skilled experts out there to foil them. Regardless, each of them fills an essential Role on the team and, when they're performing within that Role, they rarely fail. The LEVERAGE *RPG* makes showing off your expertise a feature of the rules,



but also makes stepping out of your comfort zone both interesting and rewarding. It makes it clear that you can't do everything by yourself, so if you want to pull off a successful heist or trick that bad guy into revealing his corrupt schemes, you're going to need your fellow Crewmembers.

Bad Guys Make The Best Good Guys

This isn't a game about playing a guy on the straight and narrow. Even Nate Ford, who started out as the honest man, has to come to terms with the fact that he's a thief, even if it takes him a while to admit it. Every character has a shady background, a criminal record, or a desire to pull the big con and make the score. The only innocent characters are the clients, and even they sometimes have a terrible secret they have to atone for. But the LEVERAGE *RPG* isn't so much about being bad as it is about, ah, turning that leaf. Using your larcenous talents to protect those innocents. The road to redemption is a twisty one, all right. You gotta bring your own moral compass.

Flashbacks and Fail-safes

They say that no plan survives its own execution, and they're right. Your briefing hits all the key points; your Crew knows where they've gotta be; your earbuds are all working. It's pitch-perfect timing, and then, yeah, everything kind of goes to hell. But don't worry. Things have a habit of working themselves out, with a little lateral thinking and some cunning reveals. The LEVERAGE *RPG* highlights the fact that, even when the Job jumps the rails, a contingency plan helps to get things back on track. Flashbacks and other clever rules supporting them are an integral part of making this work. Don't know how you're gonna get out of the mess you're in? Don't sweat it. You'll figure it out later. Wait—you *do* have a Mastermind, right?



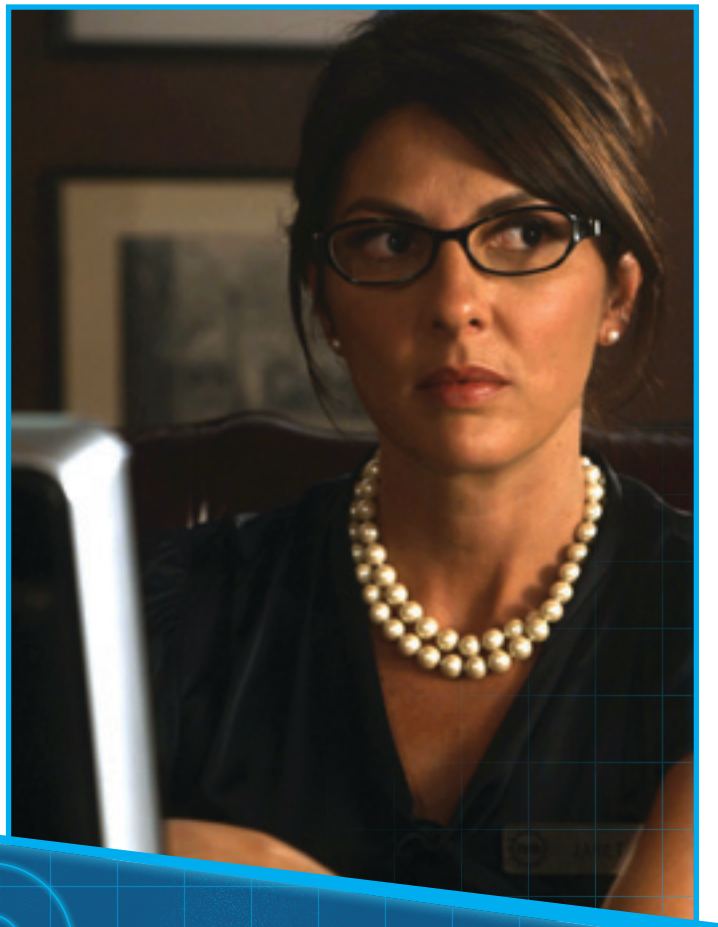
Seriously?

Although the stakes are always high and the problems that Clients bring to the Crew are always dire, LEVERAGE is not a serious and gritty drama. The Crewmembers are quirky, the schemes at times darkly humorous, and the action is fun and entertaining. So while you could play the LEVERAGE *RPG* with a straight face and zero sense of humor, we don't advise it. Don't go down that path. It's just gonna make you sad and worked up and hey, it can drive you to drink. So crack a smile when you're cracking that safe. If you can't have a good time catching the crooked Chairman of the Board with his pants down, what's the point?

What's in this Book?

Now that you're up to speed on what the LEVERAGE *RPG* is and why you'd want to recruit a Crew of your own, I'm sure you're wondering how to start. What's next? What's in the book? Here's a convenient summary, reference, what-have-you.

1. **The Pitch:** *By Way of Introduction*—That's this chapter, the one you just read.
2. **The Briefing:** *The Basic Rules*—An introduction to the core mechanics of the **Cortex Plus System**, what dice are for, who the players are, and what the Fixer does.
3. **The Crew:** *Recruiting Your Team*—The rules for creating and putting together your own gang of highly-specialized misfits, including descriptions of the Roles, Attributes, Talents, and other statistics on your Crewmember's Rap Sheet.
4. **The Job:** *Playing the Game*—Expanding on the rules presented in **The Briefing**, this chapter explains how to resolve all of the dramatic action that takes place throughout the Job, from fights to flashbacks.
5. **The Fixer:** *Running the Game*—This chapter introduces the Fixer to the preparation and management of each Job, including the key elements of any plan and how to keep things moving along.
6. **The Toolbox:** *People, Places, and Plans*—The Fixer's own smorgasbord of Supporting Characters and setting locations, and tables of random ideas to help make any Job more memorable and interesting.
7. **The Crime World:** *Where It All Happens*—This chapter is a brief guide to portraying the world of thieves and grifters where the LEVERAGE *RPG* takes place.
8. **The Record:** *Guide to Seasons One and Two*—Episode summaries and a good source of inspiration for your own LEVERAGE Jobs.



You should go to **Chapter Two: The Briefing** next, since that's your introduction to the rules of the game, or you could catch up on the story so far by going to **Chapter Eight: The Record**. What are you waiting for? It's your game now.



The Briefing

The Basic Rules

The Briefing

The LEVERAGE *Roleplaying Game* is all about capers and cons that are carried out by a **Crew.** You and your associates get together and work as a team to tell those stories. Your Crew's activities—we call them **Jobs**—are well intentioned, if not strictly legal, and everybody has a good time. With us so far?

The rules of the game help make all of this happen. As each Job progresses, you add more and more details to the story, based on the outcome of the dice or your own decisions. This chapter gives you a quick overview of how all that works.

Who's Who of the Game

First up, let's take a look at who does what, both in the world of the game and at the table where the game's being played.

The Crew and the Supporting Characters

Every Job features a whole cast of characters, from devious corporate bigwigs to square-jawed FBI agents and, of course, the Crew themselves. All of these people belong to one of the following categories within the game.

Crewmembers are the protagonists of any LEVERAGE Job, people who were—or still are—criminals of some stripe. They're not quite good guys, but sometimes you gotta go with what you've got. A different player usually controls each Crewmember, making decisions for them as the Crew works the Mark, rolling dice, and providing clever dialogue. Each Crewmember has a **Rap Sheet**, a record of their important game statistics, backgrounds, and abilities.

Marks are the bad guys the Crew needs to bring down. They're the reason the **Client** comes to the Crew in the first place. The Mark often makes use of **Agents**, people the Crew have to deal with before they can get to him.

Foils are the characters who make life difficult for the Crew, usually independently of the Mark. Everybody else is just an **Extra**, one step up above scene decoration.

Together, the Marks, Clients, Agents, Foils, and Extras are known as **Supporting Characters**. They're not controlled by the players; they're controlled by…

The Fixer

One player doesn't play a Crewmember. Instead, this player, the **Fixer,** takes responsibility for the Supporting Characters. He's responsible for coming up with the opposition for the Crew, and for helping see to it that they take this opposition down. Generally, the Fixer knows the rules better than anybody else, and probably bought this book in the first place. But that's not always true. You might even switch out the Fixer every once in a while. Give those other players a shot. Speaking of which…



The Players

This is everybody else at the table, those quick-witted and eager individuals who've decided to form a LEVERAGE Crew of their own and take on the responsibility of playing a Crewmember. They drive the action, come up with the clever plan, and then try to execute it as best they can. With each Job, their Crewmembers grow, refine their expert talents, and leave a trail of bad guys behind them. If you're a player, it falls to you to make sure you don't just sell your own success but that of the others on your Crew. That's teamwork, right there.

Traits

Each Crewmember's Rap Sheet is mostly a list of **Traits** and related game statistics. The three main categories of Traits belonging to Crewmembers are **Attributes**, **Roles**, and **Distinctions**. There's also space on the Rap Sheet for **Talents**, which cover special tricks and techniques the Crewmember's picked up in his line of work, and **Plot Points**, which are a game currency you can spend to grease the wheels in your favor. We'll take a closer look at each category in a little bit. This book calls out most specific Traits by using small caps, LIKE THIS.

Each Trait has a **die rating**. When that Trait comes into play, you'll roll that die. Bigger dice tend to roll higher, but no die is safe from rolling a 1 (rolling a 1 is significant—we'll get to this later).

Attributes

When it comes to describing raw physical and mental ability, **Attributes** are the yardstick. Every time your Crewmember does something where the outcome's uncertain, you're going to be rolling an Attribute that relates to it. Each Attribute's die rating represents how significant that Attribute is to your Crewmember's performance. Every Crewmember has the same six Attributes: AGILITY, ALERTNESS, INTELLIGENCE, STRENGTH, VITALITY, and WILLPOWER.



Roles

Your Crewmember's place on the team is decided by where his skill and expertise is most obvious. There are five broad Traits that encompass these skills, and we call them **Roles**. Your Crewmember has a die rating in each of the five: GRIFTER, HACKER, HITTER, MASTERMIND, and THIEF. The Role with the largest die rating is called your **Primary Role**, and that determines which Talents you're likely to pick up. You're going to be rolling one of these Traits with your Attribute whenever you do something in the game.

Roles are also associated with **Specialties**, specific and narrow fields of training. A Specialty can arguably fall under multiple Roles, but you'll decide to go with one in particular when you recruit your Crewmember. This covers things like *driving*, *explosives*, and *cooking*. Specialties add an extra d6 along with your Role die when you're using it for that kind of thing.



Distinctions

Is your Crewmember a DRUNK? Is he SMARTER THAN HE LOOKS? Maybe he's a GEEK, or a JOCK, or a CONTROL FREAK? These are all examples of **Distinctions**, descriptive Traits that fall outside of the area of Attributes and Roles. You're gonna have three of them, maybe more. They can either help you out or make life difficult for you—or both—but you decide which is which, and when. Distinctions don't have a specific die rating; how good or bad their influence is depends on the circumstances. They exist to make playing your Crewmember more interesting and, at times, get you into all sorts of trouble.

Talents

Not every Grifter or Hacker is the same, and this is reflected in your Crewmember's choice of **Talents**. These are the things your Crewmember keeps up his sleeve or relies upon to get the job done, and they frequently take the form of exceptions to the normal rules. Most can only be used on certain occasions or when some condition is met. They don't have a die rating, but they do influence Traits that have dice, or change dice that are already in play.

Assets and Complications

Not all Traits belong to Crewmembers or get marked down on your Rap Sheet. Some are temporary, reflecting things that help the Crew out (**Assets**) or make things difficult for them (**Complications**). These Traits often start out with only a minor influence on the Job, but as more and more twists and turns take place they can become game-changers.

Assets are included in the role with a Crewmember's other dice when they're applicable. You might have an Asset like REALLY BIG STICK, which could help you fend off guard dogs, or 16 OZ ENERGY DRINK, which makes staying alert a cinch. They can be environmental, too: SHADOWY is an Asset that would help you sneak around. You can create them yourself by spending Plot Points. We'll get to that shortly.

The Fixer rolls **Complications** as part of your opposition's dice and they make it harder for you to get the results you want. Complications can include things like EXTRA-ALERT SECURITY or SLIPPERY FLOORS. A Complication comes up as a result of rolling a 1 on your dice, which is why the smaller your dice the more likely things are going to get…complicated.

Other Traits

As well as the Crewmember's Traits and any Assets or Complications that might crop up in the course of a Job, many Supporting Characters are described by Traits that are both descriptive and functional. In fact, an Extra is not much more than a single Trait, like CLUB HOPPER, CLOWN, or BANK TELLER. Locations are also given Traits, too, when they might be useful as opposition to your Crewmembers: VAULT, ALARM SYSTEM, and LASER-FILLED HALLWAY OF DEATH are similar to fixed Assets or Complications that help the Fixer describe where the action takes place.

Dice

This game uses five different kinds of **dice**: d4, d6, d8, d10, and d12. The number tells you how many sides the die has, and the more sides, the bigger the numbers. If you see a number in front of the d—such as 2d6—it means you roll that many dice of that type. We assume that if there's no number there, it's just a singleton.

Die Rating	Icon
D4	
D6	
D8	
D10	
D12	

When To Roll Dice

Dice are used to determine how things shake out in situations where the outcome's not certain. You don't have to roll dice if everybody at the table agrees something's going to turn out one way or the other. But when there's a dispute, or your Crew doesn't have total control over the results, it's time to pick up the dice.

When you roll dice, you're taking action, so we use the term **Action** to describe any occasion where you're trying to achieve something and you're rolling dice to do it. An Action can be initiated by a player, or called for by the Fixer, depending on the situation.

How To Roll Dice

So let's say you're working a Job. When you want your Crewmember to do something that might not go well, you pick up a few dice and roll them. You always roll at least **two dice**: one for the Attribute and one for the Role most appropriate to the situation. Depending on the situation, you might have some other dice to roll. Here's some examples of situations where you might be rolling dice and what Attributes and Roles would factor in.

- You're trying to clear the room of hired goons? STRENGTH + HITTER
- You're leaping from a fire escape to escape the notice of security? AGILITY + THIEF
- You're scanning the lobby of a five star hotel for a potential Mark? ALERTNESS + GRIFTER
- You're going over the latest internal memo from a crooked CEO? INTELLIGENCE + MASTERMIND
- You're trying to decipher an encrypted database well after 3am? VITALITY + HACKER

You take the two highest results of all the dice and add them together to get your **result**. You've just **set the stakes**. If any of your dice comes up a 1, don't add it into

the result; set it aside for the moment. If all of your dice come up a 1, your result is a big zero.

The Fixer now wants to **raise the stakes** by rolling at least two dice based on what you're up against: one die for the **complexity** of the task, and one that reflects an **opposing character** or a **situation**. The Fixer might also be rolling a few more dice, depending on the situation; like you, he takes the two highest and adds them up. If his result is greater than the current stakes, they're considered raised. The Fixer now has the edge!

If a side succeeds at raising the stakes, it goes back to the other side. At any time, one side can simply decide to **Give In** instead of trying to roll the dice again, allowing that side to end the Action on their terms; otherwise, the side that fails to raise the stakes has lost, and whoever last set the stakes gets to decide what happens. This is called being **Taken Down**. If you raise the stakes by 5 or more (the Fixer rolls a 12 and you get a 17 or higher) then you've got an **Extraordinary Success** and you take down the opposition right then and there.

Sometimes, the Action's not about raising the stakes or getting some kind of advantage. It's just a simple check to see if a Crewmember can do something or not. In that case, the Fixer usually sets the stakes first with a roll of dice, and if the player manages to raise the stakes with his own roll, he succeeds in whatever it was he wanted to do. In this case, an Extraordinary Success means you did even better than you figured you would.

Complications and Opportunities

However, other things can happen with the dice as well. Every time you roll a 1 on any of your dice, it allows the Fixer to introduce a Complication—some way in which the situation gets worse. When you roll a 1, you might still succeed with your other dice, but that doesn't mean everything goes as planned.

On the other hand, if the Fixer rolls a 1, that creates an **Opportunity**, a break that cuts your way. Many Talents are based on taking advantage of these Opportunities.



Plot Points

Plot Points are a game currency that you spend to affect the plot over the course of your Job. Plot Points give you more dice, make the dice you have more powerful, and let you use some of your special Talents. You need to keep track of your Plot Points somehow. One way is to write them on your Rap Sheet as tally marks. Another option is to use poker chips or some other kind of token (pennies, paperclips, bottle caps … you get the idea).

Everybody gets 1 Plot Point to start the Job. Don't worry, you'll get more.

Spending Plot Points

Plot Points can be spent to include more dice into your result, to activate some Talents, and to create new Assets.

Including More Dice: After any roll, you may spend a Plot Point to include more dice out of those you just rolled in your result. In this way, your result may be three, four, or five dice added together. The only limit to how many dice you may add to your result is how many dice you rolled to begin with and how many Plot Points you have available.

Activating Talents: Some of your Talents may have effects that must be activated by spending a Plot Point. Any effect that's activated like this lasts for the duration of the Action you're using it on; once you start a new Action, the effect must be activated again.

Creating New Assets: You can create your own Assets by spending a Plot Point. Your new Asset starts out as a d6 and lasts for the rest of the scene. If you spend two Plot Points, you can keep it for the rest of the Job—assuming something doesn't happen to remove or eliminate it. This allows you to give some dramatic weight to an item (LENGTH OF PIPE D6), part of the scenery (UNLOCKED DOOR D6), or even effectively create a new Extra (HANDYMAN D6), as if to say, "this thing's important to the story."

The Fixer and Plot Points

Typically, spent Plot Points go into the big pile in the middle of the table, in front of the Fixer. The Fixer may spend Plot Points on his rolls, too, but he doesn't have his own private supply the way players do. Instead, when he spends Plot Points in a roll against you, he picks up a Plot Point from the pile and slides it over to you. Whenever you get Plot Points like this, keep them separate from the Plot Points you already have. You can't use these until the current Action has been resolved and the dice are set aside.

Earning Plot Points

So, Plot Points are useful—but you only start the Job with one of them. How do you get more? We've already mentioned that when the Fixer wants to spend a Plot Point on one of his Supporting Characters, he has to hand one over, but there are other, more painful ways to get them.

We've talked about Complications as Traits that the Fixer adds in. Well, whenever you roll a 1, the Fixer might hand you a Plot Point to activate that Complication. So, while you might not have rolled so well and the situation's just got a little more complicated, at least it gets you a Plot Point. Complications start as a d6, but the Fixer can use any additional 1s that you or others roll to step up the Complication to d8 or more.

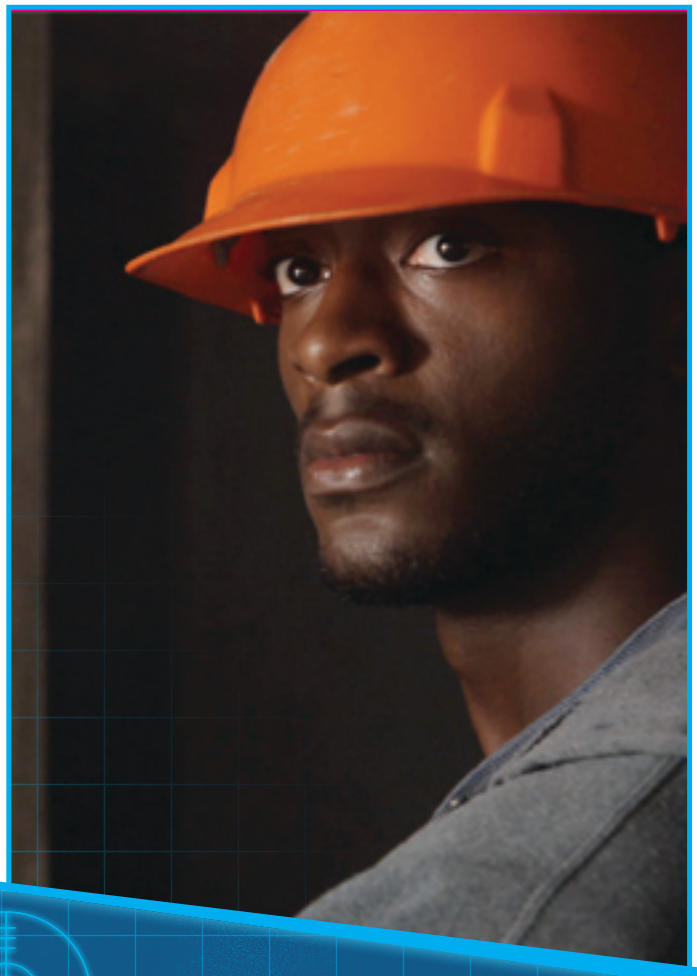
Collaboration and Responsibility

When you play the LEVERAGE *RPG*, you're playing part of a team of experts. A lot of decisions are made throughout the game, and most of those decisions you make together. Sometimes you discuss what to do on the Job and how to course correct when things go wrong. Other times, you build up a vibe at the table and you won't need to discuss what happens next because it will be obvious—everyone will know. That's where a lot

of the magic is: working together and getting into that groove with your friends.

The thing is, none of this hangs together if *you're* not together. And that's the trick, folks. You have to go into the game knowing what you're responsible for and aiming to make good on those responsibilities. Sure, everybody else at the table is going to give you one suggestion or another. Or push you into some action you're not sure about. At the end of the day, you gotta decide how to step up. Which suggestion do you take? Is now a good time for this choice, or will the Job work out better if you hold off for a few scenes? Juggling all these decisions—well, that's the rest of the magic.

Here are three short lists of what everybody is responsible for. These aren't exhaustive, but they're pretty concise summaries of who does what.



Players are responsible for:

- Deciding what their Crewmembers do
- Deciding whether their Crewmembers stand up and fight or Give In
- Confronting the problems the Fixer throws in front of them
- Pointing their Crewmembers in directions that make for good stories
- Supporting other Crewmembers and giving them a shot at what they're good at
- Deciding how their Crewmembers change and grow over time
- *In general, telling the story of their Crewmembers*

Fixer is responsible for:

- Presenting problems (or apparent problems) for the Crew to confront
- Deciding how Supporting Characters can give the Crew exciting challenges
- Presenting the Client, the Mark, and the Problem
- Managing Complications and structuring the scenes
- *In general, stirring up trouble*

Everyone is responsible for:

- Looking out for openings in which to later frame Flashbacks
- Offering suggestions to other players, but respecting the decisions they make in the end
- *In general, making everybody else at the table look awesome*



The Crew

Recruiting Your Team

The Crew

The core of the LEVERAGE *Roleplaying Game* is the Crew, that dysfunctional family of expert criminals, thieves, and rogues that fights the good fight and takes down the bad guys. This chapter lays out the steps to recruit the right Crewmembers, taking them from an initial idea for a character to an actual completed Rap Sheet filled with Traits and other elements. Here, you'll also find what Talents, Distinctions, and Attributes are for.

Please note that, yes, we go over some things in this chapter that we already introduced in **The Pitch**. Repetition is good. And odds are, you're going to come back here more often than the front of the book, right? Moving on.

Recruiting the Crew

Once you start to recruit your Crewmember in a mechanical sense, you should have a good idea of what type of guy this person is, what Role he's best suited for on the team, and in general what he's good at. So here's something really important about putting your own concept of who you are into mechanical language: this is very much a collaborative process. You can't do it by yourself. (Well, you can. That's an option. But it's not one we recommend.)

LEVERAGE Crews are recruited with a close eye toward how well the members work together. If you do this process in isolation, you get Crews that don't mesh together. Crews that aren't together turn into what we in the business call "prison inmates." Let's try to avoid that, shall we?



Before You Start

It's a good idea to do all of this at the table with all players and the Fixer present. You can create Crewmembers independently, using the steps provided in this chapter and the Fast Recruitment option, but let's put it this way: the best Crews are the ones that work well together, even if they've been thrown together by fate. You're going to want to establish that working relationship right up front.

So let's get blank Rap Sheets, scratch paper for writing down notes, and some dice. It's recruitment time.

Creating a Crewmember

Here's a step-by-step presentation of how to get ready for action as a Crewmember on a LEVERAGE Crew. Each step is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, so if you have more specific questions they're probably addressed there. From here on out, I'm going to use "you" to mean "you the player." Recruitment's very much in the hands of the players. The Fixer only needs to step in when you're lost.

Crewmember Recruitment Steps

1. Get a blank **Rap Sheet**.
2. Consider your **Background**.
3. Assign your **Primary Role**.
4. Assign your **Secondary Role**.
5. Assign your **Attributes**.
6. Compose one **Distinction**.
7. Play through *The Recruitment Job*.

Step 1. Get a Blank Rap Sheet

Your **Rap Sheet** is the central clearinghouse for all the details you need to run your Crewmember through a LEVERAGE Job. Compiled by the great minds at Interpol—or at least, everybody at your gaming table—it represents all the essential knowledge about you. It requires you to add your own notes to it, though, which is what we're doing here.

Step 2. Consider Your Background

Think about where you came from. Your childhood, your previous career—life of crime or something more respectable—and what got you recruited into a LEVERAGE Crew.

Step 3. Assign Your Primary Role

You need to know where you fit in with the others on your Crew. Each of the five Roles is rated with a die, d4 through d10. Your primary Role is the one at d10.

Step 4. Assign Your Secondary Role

This is what you're next best at doing. It's important, and it helps define who you are on the Crew, but it isn't *as* important as your primary Role.

And you're done assigning Roles for now. Yes, this leaves three of your Roles blank. That's by design; they'll get filled in later.

Step 5. Assign Your Attributes

Next, assign die ratings to your six **Attributes**: AGILITY, ALERTNESS, INTELLIGENCE, STRENGTH, VITALITY, and WILLPOWER. You're prioritizing here, so make sure you look carefully at what each Attribute is used for.

Step 6. Compose One Distinction

Distinctions are words or short phrases that describe you in softer, less quantifiable terms. Just choose one now; two more are chosen in the next step.

Step 7. Play Through The Recruitment Job

This is where most of the remaining blanks are filled in. This is also where you should pick your starting Talents and Specialties. It's a group process, but if you're short on time or want to create Crewmembers ahead of the game, you can use the optional Fast Recruitment on page 50.

Leaving Blanks

If you get through all your recruitment steps and still have blanks on your Rap Sheet, don't fret—this is okay. You can fill in this stuff as you play.

The Rap Sheet

Curious about how the authorities summarize you, your background, and your abilities? Take a look at your Rap Sheet. Recently stolen from the impenetrable databases of Interpol and other law enforcement agencies around the world, your Rap Sheet contains all the information you'll need during a Job that's unique for your character—Attribute and Role ratings, Specialties, Distinctions, Talents, any Signature Assets you have, and a bit about your personal background.

But I've never been arrested, you say. The cops don't know about me, you protest. Think again—you're good at what you do, that is why you're being recruited. The authorities know it too and they've had their eyes on you.

A Work in Progress

Your Rap Sheet is a work in progress, so it's useful to have it in easily modifiable electronic format or in pencil. As your career progresses you can learn new tricks, pick up new Specialties, and the like. You might even reveal new details of your background. All of this adds or changes details on your Rap Sheet.

Background

This section of the Rap Sheet contains a short narrative about your background — childhood, education, criminal record, outstanding warrants. These are useful details for any recruiter.

It discusses your upbringing, or at least what's known about it: did you grow up in a broken home; in a stable family with 2.4 kids, a dog, and a station wagon; or as a war orphan from a Cold War era brushfire? Your education, if you have any—School of Hard Knocks, or Harvard MBA?

It details your career as a criminal. Are you on the wanted lists of the American FBI, the British SOCA or Serious Fraud Office, or the Chinese Ministry of Public Security? Does Interpol have your portrait with crosshairs superimposed atop it? Don't forget any little stuff that's widely known—if you're wanted in Bolivia on four thousand counts of petty larceny, it'll be here. (And seriously, if that last one's true, take a long, hard look at your priorities in life.)

Then again, this is just stuff that's publicly known. Maybe some parts of your background are still secret. Maybe they'll be revealed later, as your career progresses. The police don't know everything—and neither do your Crewmembers. *Neither do you*, for that matter. Remember that sealed arrest warrant that's out for you in Texas? Oh, right, you don't. It's sealed.

Roles

Roles are Traits rated by dice. They're broad skills, applicable in any situation that might come up in the game. The dice you assign to the Roles determine what you do to help the Crew. So you have MASTERMIND D8, or THIEF D10? That's great, but what do you do with that exactly? Let's cover this in detail.

Primary Roles

Your primary Role is the one you've rated at d10. You're often referred to by that Role—Parker's a Thief, Eliot's a Hitter, etc. This Role defines your main job

within the Crew, and the sorts of activities you'll be attempting most often. When the Fixer calls for a roll to decide the outcome of a given action, he'll usually call for a player to roll Attribute plus Role. But which Role?

Here's a recap on Roles; see more details on page 20.

Grifters deal in trust. They gain it, and then use it against the people who've entrusted it to them. They're at their best in social situations and are good at acting, lying, and manipulating people. Pretending to be a businesswoman from Germany, convincing a Mark to buy a fake Rolex, or distracting a guard so the Hitter can knock him out would all be rolls made on GRIFTER.

Hackers deal in information. They get it for the Crew, deny it to the Mark, use it to help the Crew, or manipulate it to take the Mark down. They usually do this by cracking computer networks and security systems, but Hackers are also often good with physical tools and obtaining items the Crew needs. Hacking a network firewall, eavesdropping on the Mark's cell phone, and "airbrushing" a photo ID would all be rolls made on HACKER.

Hitters deal in force. They engage in direct combat to put force on bad guys, getting them out of the way. Engaging in combat, sizing up a tactical situation, and intimidating a guard would all be rolls made on HITTER.

Masterminds deal in plans. They formulate the plan at the start of the Job and coordinate the team's efforts to stay on track. They deal with the unexpected events that threaten to blow every plan. Figuring out where the Mark might have hidden the money, noticing that three unexpected guards are coming in the front door, and guessing what sort of bribe would best win the Mark's confidence would all be rolls made on MASTERMIND.

Thieves deal in access. They get themselves and the Crew access by breaking through security systems, and they use access to steal items or information. Sneaking past a guard, cartwheeling through a room of laser sensors, and picking the Mark's pocket would all be rolls made on THIEF.

What Do the Dice Mean?

Dice do more than help you randomly come up with numbers, roll off the table, or get lost behind the couch cushions. Not only do dice with more sides tend to result in higher numbers, but they are also less likely to roll a 1. This lends itself to a scale of how important that Trait is to the Crewmember.

d12: Anything rated at d12 outshines everything else. It's some aspect of the action that probably dominates the exchange it's being rolled in. Roles and Attributes aren't generally rated at this level, but other Traits (Complications, Assets, Scene Traits, etc.) might be.

d10, d8: These ratings indicate a high degree of competence. They represent aspects of your Crewmember that are solid and dependable.

d6: This is kind of ho-hum and dull. It's unlikely to add to the final total of the roll, but also unlikely to generate an Opportunity or Complication. A Role or Attribute rated at d6 is one you find uninteresting, one that you don't want to play a big part of who you are.

d4: This is a counterintuitive case. You might think it means "I'm terrible at this," and sometimes that's exactly what it means, but sometimes it means, "This is interesting to me." It's much more likely to generate Complications than other die types, so the plot often thickens when one of these comes into play—and with that comes Plot Points for the Crewmember.

Secondary Roles

Your secondary Role is the Role you choose to put your d8 rating in. This decision says a lot about what sort of (fill in primary Role here) you are. You might tend to solve problems related to your primary Role with a bias toward solutions your secondary Role would be good at. Or maybe you used to serve in your secondary Role on a different Crew, and you've decided to change your professional focus. You'll find ideas for what these combos actually mean in the next section.



Role Descriptions

When recruiting a new Crew, you've got to cover as many bases as possible. That's why we're going to go through each of the classic Roles for you, one at a time, in alphabetical order. To give you a feeling for what you should be looking for. Each of the following sections includes vital data on who these people are, what they do, and how this works to your advantage in the game. Trust me, you're going to be coming back to this chapter a lot, even after you've got your Crew together.

The Grifter

The Grifter is the consummate confidence trickster. Her main weapon is trust, earned with a level of empathy and deceit that must appear flawless. She can make people believe she's a businesswoman from Pretoria, an actress from London, or a wedding planner from Staten Island. She can sell a raincoat to someone in the Sahara, talk a drowning man out of his life vest, and convince a corrupt banker to spill his secrets for little more than a drink and a sympathetic ear.

What Grifters Do

Wielding the trust she inspires like a surgeon wields a scalpel, a Grifter aids the Crew by gaining information and access for herself or other Crewmembers. Unlike the Hacker, she does this on a purely personal level. Sometimes she manipulates the Mark into acting against his own interest, usually by convincing him that his true interest is her own…or that of her alter ego.

Grifters think quickly. Sometimes the Crew's Mastermind sees a transient opportunity he didn't anticipate; sometimes circumstances aren't like the Crew expected in the briefing room. Either way, plans change—sometimes without warning. Grifters have to roll with it while maintaining their characters.

Grifters manipulate people. Everyone has a button (most more than one), some aspect of their personality

that can be pushed on to achieve any desired outcome. It's the Grifter's job to find and push that button. So very much of this is reading people—research can only tell you so much about a Mark, and sometimes you just need to talk to him. Once you do, a Grifter figures out how the Mark's going to respond to get the reaction she's looking for—will flattery get her somewhere? Flirtatious chit-chat? Hints of business opportunities and profit? She needs to be ready for all of them.

Grifters pretend to be people they're not. This means they are good at a lot of skills often found among people with careers in theater and acting: disguise and costuming, languages and accents, consistently affecting the mannerisms, gait, and dynamic physical traits of the identity they're taking on. Good Grifters are careful not to overdo it; chewing the scenery in a community theater performance will get her bad reviews, but doing it in a con could get her killed.

Grifters lie. When it comes right down to it, Grifters are professional liars. They tell the Mark whatever he needs to hear in order for the Crew to get the reaction the con needs, whether by false flattery, making promises she never intends to keep, or just spreading misinformation. They're usually very good at this—be careful playing poker against a good Grifter—but for some, a life of lies can wear on the soul. Sometimes, she keeps the truth of who she is even from her own Crew.

Who Becomes a Grifter

Let's be honest, here. Most Grifters started their careers as simple criminals and con men. Some used to take tourists' money playing three-card-monte on the street. Others started in fake injury frauds, robbed traveler scams, or other common cons. Some worked as fences for stolen goods or sold cheap merchandise out of the back of trucks—any con where a likable personality, fast talking, and a willingness to lie to anyone can be put to use.

Some Grifters started out as actors. Most of them were obscure character actors or never got beyond the local community theater—a Grifter with a famous face is not going to have a long career in crime. "You look an awful lot like that woman from that TV show…" is not a helpful reaction when the Grifter makes contact with the Mark. Falling on hard times is the typical motivation for an actor to move to the criminal con.

The rest of the Grifter population comes from the business and legal world. Salespeople, charismatic managers, stock brokers, insurance agents, trial lawyers, and dozens of other sorts like them make great Grifters; arguably what they do is legal grifting anyway, so it's not exactly a big leap.

Mechanical Options for Grifters

Attributes

Grifters are terribly well rounded people; sooner or later, they need to use every Attribute they possess. INTELLIGENCE and AGILITY are perhaps the most useful, helping them with fast talk and lies. VITALITY is useful in keeping a Mark's attention during a grift, especially if he has reason for his attention to go elsewhere. ALERTNESS is helpful for making disguises believable.

Secondary Roles

Grifting is a variable and personalized skill; every Grifter has her own style. These differing styles are modeled by the choice of secondary Role. The following interpretations are descriptions of particular Grifters—one can only marvel at the potential breadth of styles and specializations.

The Swashbuckler: This GRIFTER D10/HITTER D8 is a verbal jouster. She uses language aggressively, challenging and sparring with the Mark. When necessary she backs up her words with muscle, and she does it with some panache—lots of quips and misdirection, as if a fight is

just a grift by other means. *Suggested Talents:* Takes One to Know One, How YOU Doin'?

The Phisher: While as good face-to-face as others in her Role, this GRIFTER D10/HACKER D8 prefers to do her grifting remotely. She engages the Mark via computer or telephone, convinces him that she's an officer from his bank, or that she's the police, or she's his ex-wife, and before he knows it she's installed a rootkit or talked him out of his broker's login and password. *Suggested Talents:* Over the Shoulder Hacker, Slip of the Tongue

The Actress: A master of being someone she's not, this GRIFTER D10/THIEF D8 passes as the Crown Princess of San Marino one day and a housewife from Tuscaloosa the next. San Marino doesn't have royalty, you say? *That's the point.* She makes the Mark believe that it does. *Suggested Talents:* Social Center, Slip of the Tongue

The Confidence Woman: This GRIFTER D10/MASTERMIND D8 belongs to the traditional Grifter community. Not only does she know all the classic cons (and has pulled most of them at one time or another), she can make up new ones on the fly to salvage a plan that's crashing and burning. *Suggested Talents:* Wanna Buy a Watch, Johnny On-The-Spot.



The Hacker

The Hacker's main weapon is info, pure and simple. He's either providing it to the Crew or he's keeping it from the opposition. Sometimes it's straightforward—a vital bit of information or misinformation, the password to the Mark's computer database, or the Mark's Swiss bank account number. Other times, it's actually a physical object—an electronic lock pick, a radio jammer, or even a forged sculpture that you can't tell from the real deal.

What Hackers Do

You can't pull cons or heists without info, and there's a lot of ways Hackers can get and use that information to the Crew's advantage. See, Hackers are research people. When the Crew identifies a potential Mark, it's often the Hacker's job to find out everything he can about that Mark—not just where he lives and where he works, but what his personality's like, who all his business and personal contacts are, and where he keeps his money. The Hacker needs to find out if the Mark's got vulnerable investments, owns shady shell companies, or makes illegal deposits into offshore accounts.

Hackers identify the security—physical and electronic—at any building or installation that's gotta be infiltrated, and how to disable it. Hackers sometimes need to intercept or eavesdrop on phone calls, break through network firewalls, or spoof security cameras. The Hacker might have to call or send emails that the Mark thinks are coming from someone and somewhere else. Hackers provide their Crew's internal comms, and protect the secrecy of that communication from the bad guys.

Some Hackers have other skills you might not consider. Like, you've got your experienced engineers who can build or modify useful devices for the rest of the Crew

like vehicles, sensors, or electronic code breakers. Then there are artists who use their skills to forge convincing identity cards, documents, or even counterfeit artwork or currency. Other Hackers are savvy accountants and financial experts who can sort out the most convoluted electronic money trail. And of course there's experts in photography, videography, and visual effects equipment and software, pulling off these illusions both onscreen and off. You name it, there's a guy who can hack it.

Who Becomes a Hacker

Hackers come from many walks of life, but the one thing they've all got in common is technical expertise. A whole lotta technical expertise.

Many come from the field of computer security. You've got your corporate, government, or military computer security experts; they're real familiar with how large institutions protect their data and systems. These dudes are often highly professional and thorough—they understand the value of research, process, and doing their homework. Others come from the world of malware authors, cybercriminals, and hacktivists. Don't let the nerdity fool you, though, man. These are some bad, bad people. Anyplace you want to hack, it's even money they've already hacked it at one time or another. The most successful are methodical and deliberate, but don't let that fool you either—they're daring risk-takers; "in over their heads" is well inside their comfort zone.

Some Hackers come from a background of engineering, communication systems, or media technology. They're full-on wizards of video feeds and communication networks. Also, they're great at improvising their own gear, which sure is nice to have when you're a little short of cash or in an unexpected tight spot.

A small number of Hackers get their start as artists. While most use modern tools for their trade these days, these guys are the original Hackers—the counterfeiters and forgery experts that're there for you when you need a doctored photograph, a fake ID, a forged signature, or a hundred grand in counterfeit currency, and you need it *right now.*

Don't forget the world of finance and accounting. That industry's full of sharp mathematical minds and computer experts without peer, and they have lots of experience in banking, both global and domestic. You need somebody to trace financial transactions and figure out where the money's going, right? Then look no further. It's right here, man. It's right here.

Mechanical Options for Hackers

Attributes

INTELLIGENCE is gonna be a Hacker's number one Attribute—nothing else comes close. ALERTNESS is often a good runner-up, as a Hacker's gotta keep his eyes on a lot of rapidly changing information at once. The Hacker's secondary Role should determine the rest of his Attributes' ratings.

Secondary Roles

The Role the Hacker takes as his secondary? That decision's guided by both his overall skill set and his personality. Here's a few interpretations of what each choice might mean; the same decision might just as well lead to other types of Hacker, so don't feel as though you're limited by this list.

Netzilla: This HACKER D10/HITTER D8 was absent the day they taught discretion at Hacker School. He stomps through network defenses like a giant monster through Tokyo. Dude takes no prisoners and leaves a smoking ruin in his wake. Why use a key when you can use a hammer? Many Marks need to replace their *hardware* when he gets through with them.

Suggested Talents: Shut Down All the Garbage Mashers on the Detention Level, Are You Gonna Log In or Whistle Dixie?

The Gadgeteer: This HACKER D10/THIEF D8 is obsessed with building hand-held gadgets and portable gizmos. He's armed with robotic lock picks, wireless sensor jammers, and weapons-grade chemical solvents—just the things to get him past the guard shack, through the locked door, and into the safe. *Suggested Talents:* Do You Have That Thing I Gave You?, Safecracker

The Spoofer: A master of network deception and misinformation, this HACKER D10/GRIFTER D8 is the flip-side of Netzilla. It's pretty rare that people notice his online activity, but when they do, he's all up and messin' with the server logs so he's seen as a trusted peer network, an innocent wrong number, or some harmless kid—anybody but who he really is. *Suggested Talents:* Can You Hear Me Now, I Just Work Here

The Completist: This HACKER D10/MASTERMIND D8 does his homework. He knows every server's strength and vulnerability. He knows the wiring diagrams of every security system on the market, and some that ain't. He never moves without a Plan B, and usually a Plan C. *Suggested Talents:* Do You Have That Thing I Gave You?, Opportunist.

The Hitter

Listen up. The Hitter's main weapon is force. The Hitter's the one you call in when subtlety's failed you and when being gentle isn't going to help. Consequently, most people think of physical fighting when they think "Hitter," and yes, that's certainly something Hitters are good at. But you can't recruit any old knuckle-dragging cement head for your Crew and expect things to work out. Choose your Hitter wisely.

What Hitters Do

So Hitters come in all shapes and sizes, exercising different skill sets to solve the problems they find before them. Even so, there's some generalizations you can make about them.

Hitters need to understand the role of violence. You don't want a loose cannon, some guy who just likes to hurt people. That's bad news. Violence is inherently chaotic and introduces an element of chance into the plan—can't avoid it. Your Hitter needs to know when it's worth taking that chance.

Hitters deal in direct application of force. Usually this is fighting—a good Hitter is going to be experienced in



at least one if not several styles of hand-to-hand combat, both armed and unarmed. Some may be good with firearms, although that has its own set of considerations. Many are also good at applying social force, usually expressed as intimidation, forceful persuasion, or motivating his comrades.

Hitters adapt. Most good cons don't rely too heavily on violence—until something goes wrong. So until that happens, the Hitter is your Free Safety, lending a hand to other Crewmembers as needed. You know what they say—once the Hitter has to get involved, that plan's all kinds of no good.

Hitters are good at threat assessment. Hitters have a good tactical eye and can evaluate when the Crew is copacetic, when it's in over its head, or when it's time to throw down and fight. Hitters often know local laws, especially regarding when the cops can stop and search and what weapons will get you arrested.

Who Becomes a Hitter

Recruiting a good Hitter requires you to look in a lot of different places. Lots of Hitters start their careers as bodyguards and security, some from highly trained backgrounds such as law enforcement, national or corporate intelligence, or government security like the Secret Service. These guys are trained to put people down fast and move on—an ideal quality in a Hitter.

Some possess unique skills such as combat driving, explosives expertise, or counter surveillance training. Other Hitters are former military or paramilitary. Former soldiers have been all over the world and might have extensive combat experience. They don't scare easily, are in excellent physical condition, and are generally reliable and highly disciplined. Some have very specialized knowledge—piloting or linguistics or wilderness survival, for example.

Some Hitters come from the ranks of criminals: gang thugs, outlaw bikers, mob leg breakers, those types. These guys tend to be brawlers, so make sure you don't recruit some reckless moron. The upside is that they almost always have a good intuitive understanding of tense social situations that are on the brink of violence, and when it comes down to it there are few people more intimidating.

A few Hitters start out as athletes, usually from a combat sport like boxing or mixed martial arts. Athletes are going to be in great physical condition, which has some advantages if strength or acrobatics is a plus in the sorts of Jobs you have in mind.

Mechanical Options for Hitters

Attributes

Obviously, your Hitter tends to emphasize the physical scores. STRENGTH is most Hitters' main Attribute—lets them pack a good punch, carry a heavy load, and perform feats of athletics. AGILITY is possibly his second highest. Alternately, placing AGILITY highest could be a good choice for a quick, wiry kinda guy who knows how to use opponents' size advantage against him. In any event, VITALITY is important so he can take a punch and keep going. The Hitter's secondary Role determines how important you want to assess the other Attributes.

Secondary Roles

These are some interpretations of what the choice of a secondary Role might say about a Hitter. This is by no means an exclusive list; there are many ways to play each choice other than the ones presented here.

The Wheelman: This is a HITTER D10/HACKER D8 who always has exactly the right vehicle for the job; sometimes he builds it, sometimes he steals it. And he can drive it better than anybody, both offensively and defensively. *Suggested Talents:* Everything is a Weapon, I Can Kill You With My Mind

The Ninja: This HITTER D10/THIEF D8 can sneak past locked doors, dodge motion sensors, and pass by cameras like a ghost. Unlucky security guards in his way usually fall before they even know he's there. *Suggested Talents:* Aerialist, Only Suckers Fight Fair

The Duelist: This HITTER D10/GRIFTER D8 is a quick and deceptive combatant who baits his opponents with feints and distraction before putting them out of the fight. *Suggested Talents:* Threat Assessment, Put That Gun Away

The Platoon Sergeant: This HITTER D10/MASTERMIND D8 is the team leader's right-hand-man. He's good at helping come up with a plan, motivating his Crewmembers to execute it, and cracking skulls to keep it on track. *Suggested Talents:* Threat Assessment, Badass

Firearms

Eventually somebody's going to shoot at you, and while returning fire is the customary response, strongly consider not packing heat. There's a lot of reasons for this, not the least of which is that loud gunfire and dead people make cops really curious. You want to avoid curious cops. Second, guns amplify unpredictability. While flashing a gun can open doors for you, you run the risk that once one gun comes out, others follow, and suddenly you're not in control. Third, guns can magnify the consequences of unexpected problems. In some jurisdictions, a simple traffic stop becomes a 10-year sentence if you have a gun in the car. Finally, remember that you're supposed to be on the side of the angels here. Try not to kill anyone.

The Mastermind

Most people think of the Mastermind as the brains of the operation, but it's more accurate to say that he's the planner of the operation. Everyone on the team needs to *think*. You understand? But the Mastermind doesn't have to be smarter than everyone; he just has to see the big picture. It's his job to coordinate the Crew's actions and make sure they're all working together, executing his main weapon—the plan. Pick your metaphor: the Mastermind is the conductor to the Crew's orchestra, the director to the Crew's cast, the captain to the Crew's…uh…crew.

What Masterminds Do

I'll lay it bare for you, here. The plan is the blueprint for the whole Job—if it succeeds, the Job does. Everything the Mastermind does is directed toward making sure the plan works. Everything.

Masterminds coordinate research. Usually with the Hacker's help, he identifies the Mark's weaknesses and the best way to attack them. He consults the Thief and Hitter about physical security and the Grifter about personal vulnerabilities and "soft" avenues of attack.

Masterminds plan ahead. Once the research is complete, the Mastermind devises the plan—again, with input from the rest of the Crew. Will the Crew use the template of a classic con? Will the team need material support, like fake IDs or specialized tools? Who is making initial contact with the Mark, and how will they do it?

Masterminds coordinate the Crew once the Job is underway. Most Crews have reliable communication devices so that the members can talk to one another; this is especially important for the Mastermind. He has to keep track of where everyone is and what they're doing. If someone needs a hand, he needs to direct backup to them. If someone gets distracted or runs into a roadblock, he needs to get them back on task.



Masterminds need to be flexible and think quickly. Almost no plan goes flawlessly, and the Mastermind's most important job is arguably to deal with the hiccups and curve balls that inevitably come up. A good Mastermind knows when to rearrange resources to salvage a damaged plan—and when to toss the plan and come up with a new one on the fly.



Who Becomes a Mastermind

Masterminds are organized, detail-oriented people, and most come from backgrounds that encourage that.

Many Masterminds come from a background of law enforcement—usually police detectives or FBI—or insurance investigation. Not only are these Masterminds excellent researchers (knowing all the tricks of investigation), but they have the experience to know what works and what doesn't in terms of a con. Additionally, they know the techniques that the authorities are most likely to use to catch them.

Some Masterminds come from the world of business, investment banking, and finance. Given their education and experience, they're great at following the money trail and identifying illegal and/or vulnerable investments and businesses. They're highly detail-oriented and meticulous planners. Many, especially ones with experience trading in the stock and commodities markets, are very good at dealing with highly dynamic situations and unexpected changes in plan.

The flipside of people from the business and financial worlds, a few Masterminds started their careers as financial regulators. These include officials from federal and state banking and securities regulatory agencies, as well as insurance officials. Much like law enforcement personnel, they're detail oriented, are good at investigation and research, and know the tricks that are hard for the authorities to track.

An unusual source of Masterminds is academia, especially fields dealing with commonly stolen items like art or antiquities. These Masterminds may have once helmed outfits of art thieves; they get plenty of real-world experience before their conscience drives them to a more enlightened sort of thievery.

Mechanical Options for Masterminds

Attributes

INTELLIGENCE is hands-down the most important Attribute for a Mastermind, but don't discount the importance of ALERTNESS. WILLPOWER can be important to motivate fellow Crewmembers. The other Attributes are dependent on the Mastermind's secondary Role.

Secondary Roles

While this is by no means an exhaustive list, here are some ways that secondary Roles might affect a Mastermind.

The Field General: This MASTERMIND D10/HITTER D8 plans a con like he's Patton charging across France. He's aggressive and daring, and he quotes Sun Tzu a lot. His plans tend to rely on the application of violence, more so than the plans of most other Masterminds. *Suggested Talents:* Stay On Target, Sea of Calm.

The Quartermaster: Much like the grumpy gadgeteer from those movies about a certain British secret agent, this MASTERMIND D10/HACKER D8 ensures that the Crew is outfitted with all the gear that they could ever find useful—and his plans rely on it. Additionally, he's especially creative at coming up with novel uses for computer and communications gear. Did you know you can jam a wireless closed-circuit TV system by reversing the antenna of a common sleeve transmitter? He did. *Suggested Talents:* Do You Have That Thing I Gave You?, Master Plan

The Director: This MASTERMIND D10/GRIFTER D8 is a good actor, but what he really wants to do is direct. He and his Crew play the Mark like a trained theater company plays an audience, and he occasionally takes on a role for himself. His plans are heavy on grifting, and every Crewmember plays a role in fooling the Mark, even those that don't focus on that particular skill. *Suggested Talents:* Archangel, Master Plan

The Merry Old Gentleman: This MASTERMIND D10/THIEF D8 manages his little band of thieves as adeptly as Dickens' character Fagin in *Oliver Twist*. A wily veteran a bit past his prime, he now takes pride in helping the Crew learn and improve their own skill, especially skills of physical theft: pickpocketing, larceny of all sorts, breaking & entering. *Suggested Talents:* Master of Disguise, Chewing the Scenery.

The Thief

The Thief's main weapon is access. Getting into places. Breaking in. Sometimes through the roof. Thieves, like Hitters, can't usually work remotely—they need to be right there, in the line of fire. Thieves use direct physical access to people, places, and things to get the job done, whether that job is removing a million dollars in hard currency from the Mark's safe—nice!—or setting up a hidden recording device in the Mark's living room. That one's sneaky, but boring.

What Thieves Do

Thieves use their access in a variety of ways to achieve the Crew's goals.

Thieves obtain items. This is usually the Thief's main job description: gain access to someplace that she's not otherwise entitled to be, and take things that are not hers. Yet. "Someplace" could be a locked office, a bank vault, or the Mark's pocket. The item's as varied as the Jobs you pull: a computer hard drive, a secret document, or the Mark's wallet.

Thieves know their opposition. She's good at identifying security systems (electronic and otherwise) and knows the best ways to get 'round them, sometimes working in concert with the Crew's Hacker.

Thieves are often highly athletic. They're one part acrobat to dodge laser motion sensors, one part contortionist to crawl through tiny ventilation systems,



and one part rock climber to scale the exterior of a skyscraper using nothing but suction cups and sheer guts. Oh yeah. Being a good sprinter never hurts, because sometimes running away is the best tactic.

Given their extra-important talents—gaining access that is denied to others—Thieves are good at working independently. Where other Roles can often count on backup, a Thief cracking a safe deposit lock inside a bank vault is probably on her own. This Trait can also manifest as a high degree of personal courage and the ability to stay cool under pressure. It can also manifest as a few boats shy of a regatta. Oh well. Moving on.



Who Becomes a Thief

While their personal stories are as varied as anyone else's, the source of a Thief's skill is perhaps not quite as varied as other Roles.

Most Thieves get into the profession as a natural outcome of a misspent youth. Very sad. Maybe they start in petty crime: shoplifting, nicking wallets, boosting cars, small-time burglary, that sort of thing. They gain the sort of skills in evaluating security, casing buildings, picking locks, and stealthy maneuvering that will serve them well later in their careers. An important note: violent crime—home invasions, abductions—doesn't tend to produce many Thieves that will be successful on our sort of Crew. The temperament just isn't right. Blow things up? Yes. Kidnapping people and holding their kids hostage? No, no, no.

Some Thieves are former law enforcement or private security personnel who originally learned the trade in order to catch thieves. Imagine! There are as many reasons why a cop turns from that path as there are cops who do it—some for better pay, others for more personal reasons. Former cops who join the ranks of Crews like ours are often frustrated working within the system, and they want to make a difference any way they can.

A few Thieves are former military or paramilitary members. These Thieves are most often trained as rapid entry or special operations troops, and are very, very good at obtaining entry to even the most heavily guarded buildings. Used to having a team of highly trained soldiers working with them, these Thieves sometimes have a harder time adjusting to working alone. Very strange. However, once this difference is overcome her extensive experience works well in her favor.

Mechanical Options for Thieves

Attributes

AGILITY is almost always the most important Attribute for a Thief. You need to be very very bendy. Good AGILITY allows the Thief to expertly open locks, pick pockets, balance on a tightrope, or sneak past the guards that pay attention. Good ALERTNESS is almost as vital, helping the Thief keep tabs on the security systems she's attempting to bypass. WILLPOWER is important to help the Thief concentrate in high-pressure situations. Really, just try to be good at everything.

Secondary Roles

Here are some ideas for what the choice of a secondary Role might say about a Thief.

The Daredevil: This THIEF D10/HITTER D8 has had her self-preservation surgically removed. Cling to the hood of a moving car? Lay in ambush clinging to a sixth-story windowsill? Jump from the roof of a skyscraper with nothing but a thin safety line holding her up? No problem! All in a day's work. *Suggested Talents:* Aerialist, Perfect Timing

The Safecracker: No physical lock can stop this THIEF D10/HACKER D8. Whether using sound and feel to open a mechanical lock, or sophisticated code breaking techniques and devices to defeat an electronic lock, if you need what's behind that locked door she can get it for you. *Suggested Talents:* Safecracker, Steady Hands

The Pickpocket: This THIEF D10/GRIFTER D8'S specialty is relieving the Mark of items that he's currently carrying on his person. She can get wallets and mobile phones in her sleep; the proof of real talent is a wristwatch or necklace. That takes some distraction skills, and lucky for her she's got the gift of gab in addition to light fingers. *Suggested Talents:* Pickpocket, Silent Entry

The Consultant: This former security expert is a THIEF D10/MASTERMIND D8 who used to catch thieves for a living. There isn't a break-in plan she hasn't seen before, and she knows the advantages and pitfalls of them all—and now, she's kinda working for the other side. Want someone to poke holes in your plan before you put it into action? Give her a call. *Suggested Talents:* Steady Hands, Master Plan

Specialties

So you're flying a stolen helicopter through a city at night during a snowstorm, and suddenly the shadow of a skyscraper looms out of the billowing blizzard, much closer than you thought it was—the Fixer wants you to make a roll to avoid clipping the top of building. What do you roll?

Not everything a Crewmember might want to do during a Job maps neatly to one of the five Roles. Specialties are the way to represent these narrow skills that don't quite fall under any Role. They indicate that when it comes to Specialty X, you want it to fall under Role Y. They add a d6, much like an Asset, when you use them together with their associated Role. They also signal to the Fixer that the Specialties you designate are things that are interesting about you, and things that you'd like to have the opportunity to exercise in the Job.

Assigning Specialties

There are no hard and fast rules mapping any particular Specialties to particular Roles, nor is there a definitive list of Specialties available. You should be able to justify why your skill falls under a certain Role, and it should be suitably narrow in scope that you won't be using it every scene. Note that two Crewmembers can have the same Specialty but assign it to different Roles. The Role simply describes how you express the Specialty. For instance, if you have Driving (Hacker), perhaps you drive with an awareness of the capabilities

of your car, and how to exploit them. But someone with Driving (Hitter) is more of a combat driver, knowing how to use his vehicle as a weapon to escape ambushes and cut other cars off. Whatever Role you choose, it's gonna stay associated with that Specialty.

You start with two Specialties, but you can add more as the game goes on. Like Distinctions, Specialties don't have a die rating associated, but they do provide a bonus die when used. A d6 isn't anything spectacular, but it can act as good back up for a d8 or d10 Role, and represent a better focus for a d4 Role. Consider this when making your assignments.

Examples: Explosives (Thief), Driving (Hitter), Piloting (Hacker), Cooking (Mastermind), Singing (Grifter), Trauma Surgery (Hacker), Cardsharp (Grifter), Sports Trivia (Mastermind), Bartending (Hitter), Snowboarding/Skiing (Thief)

Attributes

Attributes define your natural gifts, the raw level of talent that you start with before you begin adding experience and skill gained through your life.

Attributes are vitally important to the mechanics of the game; typically, when you make a roll to determine the outcome of some action you attempt, you include one Attribute with your roll.

Assigning Attributes

Attributes, like most other concepts in LEVERAGE, are rated by dice, from d4 to d10. When you create your Crewmember's Rap Sheet, you assign all six of your Attribute's dice ratings. The available die types are defined by choosing one of several standard arrays of die types. If you need to, take another look at "What Do Dice Mean?" (page 19).

Focused: Two dice each at d10, d8, and d6. Choose this array if your Crewmember specializes in certain areas over others.

Versatile: One die at d10, four at d8, one at d6. Choose this array if your Crewmember is more well-rounded.

Arrange the available dice in whichever manner makes sense to represent your natural abilities.

The Six Attributes and Their Uses

There are six Attributes: AGILITY, ALERTNESS, INTELLIGENCE, STRENGTH, VITALITY, and WILLPOWER. Read over the descriptions; you'll see that every Attribute has a social aspect. That's important, especially if you're someone who feels safe ignoring one side or the other. On a LEVERAGE Crew, everyone has to step up and con someone at one time or another. So it's important to consider how your Attributes affect how you perform that sort of task.

Sometimes there's overlap between things two different Attributes encompass. During a Job, the Attribute that gets rolled in those cases depends on how you describe what you're doing. Are you listening carefully to the tumblers clicking over in the safe's lock? That's ALERTNESS. Have you memorized all of the standard safe codes for major models, and try those first? That's INTELLIGENCE. Same task, different Attributes.

Physically, **Agility** represents your grace and quickness, your kinesthetic sense. If you have a high AGILITY, you might be really good at throwing and catching, climbing and leaping, balancing and running. This also encompasses fine motor control, so delicate lock opening, pocket picking, stage magic, and defusing a bomb might be done with AGILITY. Physically agile people are good sculptors, athletes, and mechanics.

AGILITY's social component also deals with grace and quickness, but of language rather than hands. Talking in circles to confuse the Mark, distracting someone with

a joke, the flim-flam fast-talking misdirection. Socially agile people are often good salespeople, politicians, and stand-up comics. It's about 90% body language and non-verbal cues.

Alertness is how good you are at noticing things that are hard to see; in this sense, its social and physical components blend together. Alert people have keen senses and a good intuitive understanding of the way things should be. So much so that they can tell when things are *not* as they should be. Used in reverse, the insight it gives helps inform efforts at illusion, disguise, and misdirection—making things and people appear to be something they're not. Alert people make good night watchmen, computer network analysts, and stage magicians.

Intelligence is related to knowledge, memory, logic, and facts. Knowing the facts and being able to recall them without hesitation informs how to alter those facts convincingly, so (in this business, anyway) being smart helps you with lying. Intelligent people make good computer security experts, technical salespeople, and Job planners.

Strength is several things. It measures your ability to apply brute force, true, but more than that it measures natural ability at throwing a punch or finding the right handhold for a long climb. Physically strong people are often good athletes, soldiers, and piano movers. (What? They are!)

STRENGTH has a social and mental aspect to it, as well. Use it socially for aggressive presence and intimidation. Mentally, it can represent an athlete's or mechanic's intuitive understanding of the more subtle points of applying force, such as using leverage and imbalance to your advantage. Many socially strong people are bodyguards, law enforcement officers, and organized crime figures.

Vitality measures your health and fitness. Expanding from that, it's your endurance (how many flights of stairs can you climb before collapsing from exhaustion?), your toughness (can you take a punch and keep going?), and your resilience (how long can you go without a good night's sleep?). Physically vivacious people make good long distance runners, boxers, and outdoorsmen.

Socially, VITALITY can indicate enthusiasm (real or manufactured), patience, and determination. It measures your ability to hold people's attention and seem interesting to them. Socially vivacious people often make good motivational speakers, politicians, and coaches.

Willpower encompasses your self-esteem, force of personality, and determination. This can represent a social presence or "soft" intimidation ability, how well you appear to be confident and in control. It can also impact your ability to be sincere and persuasive. When you lie for a career, telling the truth takes some work sometimes. People with good WILLPOWER can make good preachers, politicians, and other leaders.

No Charisma Attribute?

That's right. You've played those other games and you're wondering why there's no Charisma Attribute. Well, no single one anyway. The trappings of what those games call Charisma are found in INTELLIGENCE, VITALITY, and WILLPOWER, and a bit in STRENGTH. It all depends what aspect of your personality you're exercising, and how the other person perceives what you're doing.



Distinctions

Every Crewmember has qualities that aren't really skills or natural abilities. These are expressed as **Distinctions**, words or short phrases that describe things that are important about your character. Like Specialties, there's no definitive list of possibilities to choose from. Just think about how other people describe you, and there you are.

How Distinctions Work

A Distinction simply adds dice to the player's roll. There are two circumstances when they do: when it works to the Crewmember's advantage, and when it works to his disadvantage.

Example

Nathan Ford's DRUNK Distinction obviously comes into play most often as a negative. All of this experience, however, means Nate can pull off a really convincing drunk, even when he's not had much to drink.

When a Distinction works to the Crewmember's advantage, the Crewmember may add a d8 to his roll. When the Distinction works to the Crewmember's disadvantage, the Crewmember may add a d4 to his roll—and collect a Plot Point for his trouble.

Note that it says *may*. That's important. Distinctions are always within player control. The Fixer plays no role in deciding when a Distinction is brought into play, except to veto abusive use of an overbroad or incorrectly applied Distinction.

This might seem a bit counterintuitive—wait, it works against me and I gain a die? Yes, that's right. Let's talk a bit about the dice that come into play.

A d8 is a good, strong die, one that has a decent chance of improving your final result and is unlikely (1 chance in 8) to create a Complication for you. On the other hand, if a d4 improves your result then you have a really crummy result anyway, but a d4 has a relatively good chance (1 in 4) of manifesting as a Complication.

Why would you ever choose to complicate your own life like that? It's how you generate Plot Points. You want



as many Plot Points as you can get your greedy little hands on, since they make it much easier to succeed at the things you're doing, and so you can be unstoppable when you need to be. Using a Distinction to your disadvantage gains you a Plot Point right off the bat, as well as the possibility of gaining another one if you roll a Complication that the Fixer decides to activate.

Choosing Distinctions

You want Distinctions that cut both ways. When you choose one, think about how you'd use it both to your advantage and to your disadvantage. If you can think of one but not the other, try to change it up a bit so it can both help and hurt—because even when it hurts, it helps. Plot Points are one of the most powerful ways you can affect the outcome of the Job. It bears repeating—you want Plot Points.

Be careful not to get too broad with Distinctions. If they get used too often, they lose their uniqueness; if you can imagine using a Distinction at almost any time, it's too broad. Think of a way to narrow it. The Fixer can step in if he thinks that a Distinction is broad to the point of abuse or silliness.

When you first recruit your Crewmember, you only choose one Distinction. The others are selected in either Fast Recruitment or *The Recruitment Job*.

Example Distinctions

GORGEOUS; ACTRESS; DECEITFUL; BAD BOY; MYSTERIOUS HISTORY; SMARTER THAN HE LOOKS; HONEST; CONTROLLING; DRUNK; COCKY; GEEK; CRAZY; NO, REALLY CRAZY; COOL UNDER PRESSURE; HOLDS A GRUDGE; STUBBORN; TALL; NO FEAR; ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL; OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE; MADLY IN LOVE; LADIES' MAN

Talents

Characters are more than just their Roles and Attributes, and simply listing them out doesn't give you a full picture of what the characters are capable of. Everyone in this business has one or two unique aspects that set him or her apart from the rest, and reducing someone to a "smart Grifter" or "strong Hitter" doesn't

capture that kind of nuance. When the Mark makes a mistake, Hardison always makes him pay. Eliot doesn't let being outnumbered stop him. Sophie has a way of making the Mark give up information he otherwise wouldn't. These abilities are represented by **Talents**. Talents are tricks a character knows—special knowledge or a knack for something that not everyone has.

How Talents Work

Mechanically, Talents grant you advantages in particular situations. Every player character starts play with two Talents; he might pick up more and change existing ones as his career progresses. Most are directly related to your character's primary Role and enhance your abilities under it, but some act regardless of your Role on the Crew. Talents have three important aspects to them: Primary Role, Activation, and Effect.

Primary Role

Most Talents are related to specific Roles. At any given time, at least half your Talents must be associated with the Role that you have a d10 rating in. Some Talents have "Open" as their associated primary Role. These are called Open Talents (creative, no?) and they are associated with no particular Role. Open Talents count as non-associated Talents, for purposes of needing half associated with your primary Role.

Activating a Talent

Before you use a Talent, it must be **activated**—which is really just a fancy way of saying that there are only specific occasions, or sets of circumstances, that make using the Talent possible.

Some Talents are activated by narrative details. Examples of these details might include: other characters are in the same scene as you are; the action you're undertaking depends on precise timing; you're in direct and uninterrupted communication with the Crew.

Narrative Activation Criteria

Sometimes, whether or not a narrative activation criterion's satisfied can get a little fuzzy. The Fixer needs to exercise some judgment on whether these criteria are met. Fixers, suppress the urge to get your rules lawyer on; Talents are there to be used. If the player makes a good case, give it to him, especially if he's made an effort to arrange for the Talent to be useable.

Some Talents are activated by using a certain Role die in an action or by taking a certain type of action (such as a Notice action). These are very cut-and-dried, so it should be crystal clear when they're in play. Some Talents are activated by an Opportunity, which is when the Fixer rolls a 1 on his own dice. And finally, some of the more powerful Talents require spending a Plot Point to activate. Many of these have other requirements, too.

Effect

The effects of Talents vary, but they fall into a few general categories. Some allow dice manipulation: adding dice to the player's hand, subtracting them from the Fixer's, or negating rolled 1s. Some allow (or force) rerolls. Others allow Crewmembers to spend Plot Points on another Crewmember's behalf. Some change or add to the effects of particular actions. Some allow substituting one Role or Attribute for another in certain situations.

A lot of the effects tell you that you can add a die to your roll or include another die in your result. It's important to see the difference between **adding** an extra die to your roll (which means add another die to the pool but you still only add the top two to get the result),

and **including** an extra die in your result (which means including a third die when adding up your result, but keeping the size of your pool the same).

Note: Any time you get to add or include dice to your roll, this remains in effect for the whole of your action—including rerolls and escalating reactions. Once you've determined success or failure, the effect ends.

Grifter Talents

Here's a list of example Grifter Talents. You can use them as-is or as inspiration for others. For guidelines on creating your own, see "Constructing Your Own Talents" on page 43.



How YOU Doin'?

You're really good at seduction, but be careful—you never know how someone's going to react. Flirting can backfire.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're trying a Face Action against someone who's attracted to your gender in a flirtatious or seductive manner.

Effect: If you wish, add an extra d10 to your roll—but if you do, you must also add a d4.

Master of Disguise

Role: Grifter

Activation: You've interacted with a character (either the Mark or a Supporting Character) in the past, possibly while wearing a disguise, posing as one identity. You then interact with him again, posing as a different identity.

Effect: First, you always gain an extra d6 to your roll to pass as someone you're not when wearing a disguise. Second, provided you were disguised one time or the other (or both), the Fixer may not invoke any Complications or other bonuses against you to see through the disguise the second time.

Slip of the Tongue

You use the Mark's words against him like a judo master.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're rolling your GRIFTER die in a Face Action that involves speaking to the Mark or Supporting Character, and the Fixer gives you one or more Opportunities.

Effect: You may ask the Fixer a question about the character you're rolling against, which the Fixer must answer truthfully. The Fixer may answer vaguely, especially if the question requests finely detailed information ("What's his Swiss bank account number?").

Social Center

In social situations, things always seem to revolve around you. You know how to play that to your advantage.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're in the same scene as another Crewmember.

Effect: You may share (give or accept) Plot Points with that other Crewmember. No more than 3 Plot Points may change hands through the use of this Talent per scene.

Takes One to Know One

You can spot a liar better than anyone. Mostly because you're pretty good at lying yourself.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're trying a Notice Action to judge whether someone is lying to you.

Effect: Add a d8 to your Notice Action to sense a lie.

Wanna Buy a Watch?

You're good at crude, street-level cons. Inelegant, but petty criminals pull this stuff for a reason—it works.

Role: Grifter

Activation: You're pulling a basic scam on someone: false-injury, 3-card-monte, pig-in-a-poke type cons. Pulling the functional equivalent as part of a more elaborate Job on a Mark counts.

Effect: You gain an extra d6 on the roll, assuming you're targeting an allegedly sophisticated and savvy Mark not in a street setting. If it is a straight-up street con, it's a d8 rather than d6.

Hacker Talents

Here's a list of example Hacker Talents. You can use them as-is or as inspiration for others. For guidelines on creating your own, see "Constructing Your Own Talents" on page 43.

Are You Gonna Log In or Whistle Dixie?

You're a 104-key-slingin' cowboy, and it's high noon. Draw.

Role: Hacker

Activation: You're making a roll including your HACKER die, and your opposition is another human computer expert rather than an automated security system or computer network.

Effect: Your expertise at real-time dueling with other Hackers gives you an additional d8 in your roll.

Can You Hear Me Now?

You're an expert at cracking communication systems.

Role: Hacker

Activation: You're making a roll including your HACKER die, and the roll involves hacking the Mark's communications: eavesdropping on phone calls and encrypted radio traffic, intercepting emails, etc.

Effect: You gain an extra d8 on the roll.

Do You Have That Thing I Gave You?

You're a gadgeteer, and you share the wealth.

Role: Hacker

Activation: Spend a Plot Point

Effect: Give another member of the team an extra d8 on any roll by reminding them of the sweet piece of gadgetry you gave them. You must describe how the gadget will help in the current situation. If you use this for somebody during their Flashback Action (see Flashbacks, page 76), increase the die to a d10.

Over-The-Shoulder Hacker

You have a knack for learning phone numbers, PINs, and passwords just by casually watching someone manipulate a phone or keyboard.

Role: Hacker

Activation: You're in the same scene as the Mark or a Supporting Character when he dials a phone, logs into a computer terminal, uses an ATM, or anything like that.

Effect: You automatically succeed when you attempt to access the same system that you watched the Mark or Supporting Character access (unless they change their password, of course). If they dialed a phone, you memorize the number and can easily look it up next time you get the chance. Either way, the Mark doesn't notice you observe him.

PDQ Rembrandt

You have an artist's eye, and you're quick about it.

Role: Hacker

Activation: Use your HACKER die in a roll involving creation of forged artwork, documents, or photographs, including ID cards.

Effect: You complete the task in a fraction of the usual time: hours rather than days, or minutes rather than hours.

Shut Down All The Garbage Mashers on the Detention Level

You're an ace at manipulating the physical environment.

Role: Hacker

Activation: The Fixer includes a Location Trait die in his roll against a Crewmember you're in contact with. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: You permanently negate that Location Trait, removing it from play for the remainder of the Job.

Hitter Talents

Here's a list of example Hitter Talents. You can use them as-is or as inspiration for others. For guidelines on creating your own, see "Constructing Your Own Talents" on page 43.

Badass

No help? No problem—you know how to fight when you're outnumbered.

Role: Hitter

Activation: You're engaging in a Fight Action, you're outnumbered, and the Fixer gives you an Opportunity.

Effect: Remove one of the dice the Fixer gains from outnumbering you.

Everything is a Weapon

You can use anything that isn't bolted down, and some things that are, as weapons.

Role: Hitter

Activation: You're engaged in a Fight Action, and you've spent a Plot Point to gain an improvised weapon Asset.

Effect: Step up the Asset die rating by one (d12 maximum).

Haymaker

You drop your guard and swing for the fences. Be careful—even if you connect, you might be off balance.

Role: Hitter

Activation: You're engaged in a Fight Action. You need to announce that you're activating the Talent before you roll dice to set or raise the stakes.

Effect: For the next beat in this Fight Action, step back your HITTER die rating by one and add a d4 to your roll. If you successfully raise the stakes, it counts as an Extraordinary Success even if you didn't raise the stakes by 5 or more.



I Can Kill You With My Mind

You're not just tough; you're smart, and you fight that way.

Role: Hitter

Activation: You're in a Fight Action, rolling HITTER as one of your dice. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: Add your INTELLIGENCE die to your roll, and include a third die in your result.

Only Suckers Fight Fair

You're not above launching ambushes, throwing sucker punches, and kicking guys when they're down.

Role: Hitter

Activation: It's the first roll in a Fight Action. Spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: Add a d8 to your roll. If the Fixer gives you an Opportunity when he tries to raise the stakes, step the die up to a d10 on your next roll; otherwise, step it down to a d6 for the rest of the Fight Action.

Put That Gun Away

Heavily armed opponents don't scare you.

Role: Hitter

Activation: You're in a Fight Action where the Fixer is rolling a Complication die related to the opposition being armed with guns. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: You disarm your opponent(s), removing the Complication die. This Complication remains out of play for the remainder of this scene, and possibly longer if there's no narrative justification for the opposition re-arming themselves.

Tactical Eye

You're a good one to have around in a fight, even if you're not the one doing the fighting.

Role: Hitter

Activation: You're in the same scene as another Crewmember, and one of you is in a Fight Action.

Effect: When the opposition gives you or another Crewmember an Opportunity, whichever of you is not in the fight may lend his HITTER die to the one in the fight, who immediately adds it to the current roll, recalculating the result if necessary.

Threat Assessment

You can size 'em up.

Role: Hitter

Activation: You successfully use a Notice Action against a Supporting Character; spend a Plot Point for extra effect.

Effect: You identify any of the Supporting Character's Traits rated at d10. If you spend a Plot Point and have a bit of time to study the Supporting Character, you also identify any Traits at d4.

Mastermind Talents

Here's a list of example Mastermind Talents. You can use them as-is or as inspiration for others. For guidelines on creating your own, see "Constructing Your Own Talents" on page 43.

Archangel

You keep tabs on the activity of the Crew, and like an unseen guardian angel you make sure people who need a hand get one.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: You're in voice contact (face-to-face or electronically) with members of the Crew.

Effect: Any Crewmember you're in contact with (including yourself) can spend Plot Points to give a die to any other member of the Crew you're in contact with (also including yourself).



Master Plan

Unexpected problem? Think you didn't plan for that? Think again.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: MASTERMIND is one of the dice in your roll, and the Fixer gives you an Opportunity.

Effect: For each Opportunity the Fixer gives you, you may turn a 1 of your own into a 2.

Sea of Calm

When everything goes to hell, that's when you step up and pull the team together.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: Any Crewmember that you're in contact with fails a roll that's part of a Contested Action or a Timed Action.

Effect: The next Crewmember (that you're in contact with) to make a roll may add your MASTERMIND die to the roll.

Stay On Target

You encourage your Crew to ignore distractions and keep their goal in mind.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: The Fixer rolls a Complication die as part of a roll against a Crewmember you're in contact (verbal or electronic) with. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: You nullify that Complication, eliminating it for the duration of the Job.

The Bigger They Are

Your favorite technique for getting things done is to get the Mark to do himself in, using his own strengths against him.

Role: Mastermind

Activation: The Fixer uses a Complication die in a roll against you. You must spend a Plot Point to activate this Talent.

Effect: You take that Complication die and add it to your own roll as an Asset. Step it up by one if your description of how it helps you rather than hurts you involves a quick flashback scene.

Thief Talents

Here's a list of example Thief Talents. You can use them as-is or as inspiration for others. For guidelines on creating your own, see "Constructing Your Own Talents" on page 43.

Aerialist

You can work several stories above anything you can easily stand on without breaking a sweat.

Role: Thief

Activation: You're hanging from a windowsill, repelling from a helicopter, walking a high wire, suspended upside-down six stories over a concrete parking lot, etc. Spend a Plot Point for additional effect.

Effect: Add a d8 to any roll made under such circumstances. Also, spending a Plot Point nullifies Location-based Traits related to being up high, swinging from a rope, etc., that work against you for the duration of the scene.

Perfect Timing

Folks set their watches to you.

Role: Thief

Activation: You're doing something according to precise timing (this is different than "as fast as possible!"), or attempting to assess how long it will take to do something.

Effect: Gain an extra d8 to your roll. Oh, and you never need a watch to know what time it is.

Pickpocket

No wallet, keycard, or mobile phone is safe from you.

Role: Thief

Activation: You're making a roll including your THIEF die attempting to pick someone's pocket or otherwise relieve someone of an item in their possession without their knowledge.

Effect: Add a d8 to your roll.

Safecracker

You're aces at opening locks and cracking safes.

Role: Thief

Activation: You're making a roll including your THIEF die to open a safe, locked door, key-driven engine ignition, or similar.

Effect: You gain an extra d8 on the roll.

Silent Entry

Whether it's because you're a contortionist, or you're little, or both, you have a knack for squeezing into tiny spaces in complete silence and without leaving a trace.

Role: Thief

Activation: You're making a roll including your THIEF die, and the roll involves crawling through an HVAC duct, squeezing between bars, squirming through a tiny window, or the like.

Effect: Turn every d4 in your pool into a d6, for this roll only. For each Opportunity the Fixer gives you, convert a 1 in your own roll into a 2.

Steady Hands

Unexpected trouble doesn't rattle you.

Role: Thief

Activation: THIEF is one of the dice in your roll, and the Fixer gives you an Opportunity.

Effect: You may reroll one of your own dice for each Opportunity the Fixer gives you.

Open Talents

Here's a list of example Open Talents that are not affiliated with any particular Role. You can use them as-is or as inspiration for others. For guidelines on creating your own, see "Constructing Your Own Talents" on page 43.

Chewing the Scenery

Role: Any

Activation: GRIFTER is a die in your roll, the roll represents your attempt to pose as someone you're not, and GRIFTER is not your primary Role.

Effect: You may add your primary Role die to your roll.

Hawkeye

You have the eyes of a hawk and the ears of a fox.

Role: Any

Activation: You're making a Notice Action. Spend a Plot Point for extra effect.

Effect: Gain an extra d8 to your roll. Spend a Plot Point to make it a d10.

I Just Work Here

You're good at pretending to be a faceless worker bee, deflecting attention from yourself.

Role: Any

Activation: You're posing as someone of no consequence in a scene where the Mark or a Supporting Character connected to the Mark might see you; examples include posing as wait staff at a party, a random guest at a wedding, or a customer in a bank or a shop.

Effect: If you later need to pose as someone else or try a Face Action, the Mark (or anybody connected to him) won't remember your face. If, in the original scene, something happened to remove your veil of anonymity (you're introduced to him, you noisily spill a tray of drinks, or you, I dunno, stab him with a fork) then all bets are off.

Johnny (or Jenny) On-The-Spot

You have a knack for being where you need to be, and bringing your A-game when you get there.

Role: Any

Activation: Spend a Plot Point to activate this.

Effect: You can place yourself in any scene that didn't already have you there, and you give an extra d6



to the next roll that you or your Crew makes in that scene. You can't activate this Talent if you're heavily engaged elsewhere.

Opportunist

Role: Any

Activation: Your primary Role is one of the dice in your roll, and the Fixer gives you an Opportunity.

Effect: When the Fixer gives you an Opportunity, you gain an additional d6 on your roll. Recalculate your result if appropriate.

Constructing Your Own Talents

To build your own Talents, think about the four main aspects of Talents. It's probably most useful to consider them in this order.

Effect

This is what the Talent does. Effects fall into a few broad categories.

Manipulate Dice: Allow a reroll, allow nullifying player-rolled 1s, etc.

Adding Dice to a Roll: If the effect happens frequently, make it a d6. Less frequently, a d8. Rarely, a d10 or even a d12. It might allow the addition of another Role's die or another Attribute's die to the roll. In rare cases, allow adding a third die to the total.

Manipulate Plot Points: Allow sharing of Plot Points among Crewmembers under certain circumstances.

Manipulate Complications: Remove or suppress Complications.

Allow Extra Benefits From Certain Actions: See the benefits of Threat Assessment, Badass, or PDQ Rembrandt as examples.

Make the effect meaningful without being overpowering; Talents with effects that make you say "You'd be crazy not to take this!" should be toned down.

Activation

This is the set of circumstances that allows the Talent to be used. It should be narrow enough that it won't come up every time a player makes a roll on a given Role, but not so narrow that it will only come up once every few Jobs. Talents are meant to be used. The sweet spot is that players should be able to break out one of their Talents two, maybe three times per Job. Similar to effects, activation criteria fall into some broad categories.

Narrative: Someone is in the same scene as you, you're talking with the Mark about a certain subject, you're outnumbered, etc. Anything that depends on the circumstances of the story rather than the mechanics is a narrative criterion.

Mechanical: Mechanical criteria involve the player rolling particular dice ("The player is making a roll involving their GRIFTER die," etc.), a type of action ("You're in a Fight Action") or the Fixer giving the player an Opportunity (rolling a 1).

Plot Point Spend: If the effect is a particularly powerful one that the Fixer thinks the player should not be doing over and over, requiring the expenditure of a Plot Point is a good way to limit it. Restricting the Talent to be activated only once per scene can accomplish the same thing. Talents activated by things like Fixer granting Opportunities can limit the Talent's activation, but not as reliably as a Plot Point.

Role

The Role should reflect the type of character that tends to do this sort of thing. Some Talents are appropriate for almost any character type (see Opportunist), and a few might be appropriate for two Roles. Resist the urge to make a bunch of generic Talents; characters take on their Roles for a reason, and it's not as much fun when someone else can do your job almost as well as you can.

Name

Finally, the Talent's name is more important than it might appear on the surface. The name should be evocative and memorable. Cool names beg to be used, and Talents are created to be used.

The Recruitment Job

The Recruitment Job is the first Job you'll work with your Crew. It will help you get to know the rest of the Crew a little better, and yourself as well.

Generally *The Recruitment Job* is a simple, straightforward Job that guarantees that each Crewmember gets a chance to show off what they're good at—and what they're not. We'll present a condensed, cookbook version of Caper Creation here so that the Fixer won't have to do much prep work. The Fixer should read ahead and at least be familiar with **Chapter 4: The Job** if not **Chapter 5: The Fixer.**

At this point of recruitment, you still have to record: three Role dice, two Distinctions, two Talents, and two Specialties. Most of those are determined in *The Recruitment Job*.

Creating The Recruitment Job

The point of this Job is to get the Crew to discover their own, and one another's, strengths and weaknesses. It's not going to be a fully fleshed-out Job; the details of the Mark, the Client, and the problem aren't all that important. We just need to generate some scenes and some situations for Crewmembers to be awesome—and to goof up.

Running a Full Caper

If you'd like to run a full caper for *The Recruitment Job*, you can certainly do that. It will take a bit more preparation for the Fixer, but you'll get a longer, more detailed Job for your trouble. It works either way.

What's the Problem? Who's the Mark?

Choose one of the following problems, or make up your own.

Stolen Goods: The Mark has possession of an item—a family heirloom, a piece of art, or computer data—that rightfully belongs to the Client. The Client wants his stuff back.

Hurt Client: The Client, or a relative of the Client, was hurt by the Mark's corporate negligence. The Client wants to expose the Mark.

Fraud Victim: The Client lost his family business due to the Mark's underhanded business dealings. The Client wants compensation, or the business back if the Crew can swing it.

Choose a Mark and write a brief description. Assign a couple of Traits to him. Check out **Chapter 6: The Toolbox** for more ideas.

How Can The Crew Get What the Client Wants?

Now just come up with ways that the Crew can get what the Client needs to be made right (or as close as you can get) again. Here are some examples, choose one or make up your own. (When we speak of a **MacGuffin**, we mean an item that's important simply because the Crew needs to get it. Substitute whatever makes sense in your scenario.)

Steal the MacGuffin from the Mark: The Crew needs to get into the Mark's office, home, or some other place and get your Client's item back.

Con the Mark out of the MacGuffin: The Crew needs to convince the Mark to sign over, sell, or otherwise part with what the Client wants. Preferably without the Mark realizing that's what he's doing.

Get the Mark to Self-Incriminate: The Crew needs to get the Mark talking and get him to admit to wrongdoing. They need to record that statement and forward it to the appropriate authorities.

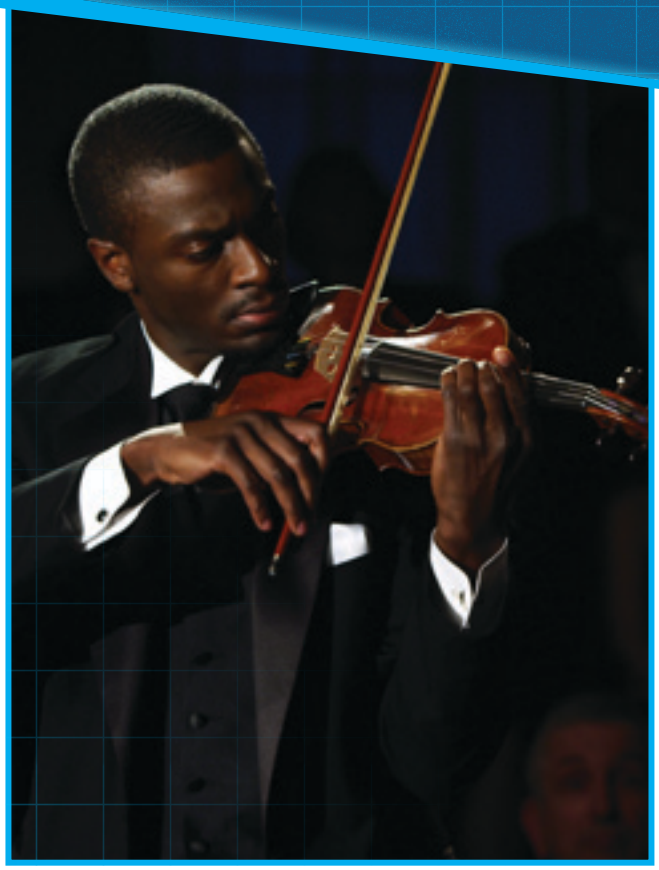
What's The Plan?

The Job is going to be pretty simple to pull off. Like we said, the goal here is to show what the Crewmembers are really good at, and get them to know one another a bit better. The exact details of the Job aren't as vital, and if the scenes you play through don't fit together like pieces from a jigsaw puzzle, that's okay.

The main elements of the Job will be **Spotlight Scenes** and **Establishment Flashbacks**.

Spotlight Scenes are scenes within the Job that feature a Crewmember filling some important aspect of their Role. In doing so, they serve two purposes. First, they allow one Crewmember to really shine, thereby not only showing off their crazy skills to one another, but also defining a mechanical Talent (see page 34). Second, if another Crewmember is present, it allows him to define one of his unassigned Role dice. Sometimes, a Specialty can be defined in a Spotlight Scene. Spotlight Scenes are discussed in detail below.

Establishment Flashbacks accomplish goals similar to Spotlight Scenes, but in a different way. These mini-scenes not only establish background and motivation, but also showcase interesting skills and personality Traits. They can establish Specialties and Distinctions. They do so by running through flashbacks—the Crewmember's memories of an event that was important or formative in their past. Could be from childhood, could be from last week. Either one works, as long as it gives insight into what makes them tick.



Spotlight Scenes

Spotlight Scenes are scenes in *The Recruitment Job* specifically designed for a particular Crewmember to prove just how competent he is. This is his chance to show off, hog the spotlight, and prove that he belongs on a LEVERAGE Crew.

By this time the Fixer has figured out who the Mark is, what rotten, dastardly, and evil thing he's done to the Client, and what the Crew has to do to make things right. Next the Crew creates a roadmap to get there—this roadmap is made up of Spotlight Scenes.

Creating Spotlight Scenes

Creating five scenes? More, if you have more Crewmembers? Ugh, you're thinking. You're thinking, we're running this seat-of-the-pants, I don't want to grind things to a halt to create five entire scenes from scratch.

Don't sweat it; there's good news for the Fixer, and better news for the Fixer. Here's the good news: the general outline of what needs to happen should be fairly obvious, and remember that the details don't matter here so much as giving each Crewmember a stage for rocking out and some scenery to chew on. If the narrative details don't all flow into one another, that's okay for *The Recruitment Job*. This is, as has been observed, seat-of-the-pants.

Here's the better news: the Fixer doesn't have to do a damned thing. Here's how it works: *let each Crewmember design their own scene*. They just put their heads together and come up with five (or however many) scenes that feel like they'd generally lead from one scene to the next, and give each of them an opportunity to take the spotlight.

It's the Fixer's role in *The Recruitment Job* to make sure that (barring outright failure by the Crew) the Mark acts like the Crew expects him to. Remember the goal here. The Fixer shouldn't get cute and throw a huge wrench in the works, he shouldn't exploit holes in the Crew's plan, and he shouldn't twist the plot beyond recognition. (Unless he really wants to—more on that later.)

The Crewmembers should feel free to make all sorts of declarations and assumptions about how things will work, as long as they're reasonable and make a good Job. Need some papers to be in the desk drawer? There they are. Need the Mark to have an estranged son willing to dish some dirt about him? There he is.

Example

Let's say the Mark is a corrupt city councilman who accepted a truly staggering bribe to change the zoning designation of a neighborhood and condemned the Client's house, seizing it through eminent domain. It's a done deal, the house has been bulldozed and the block of expensive condos is under construction. The Client just wants the Mark's corruption exposed and, if possible, some monetary compensation.

Hacker: "I'll locate his bank records and learn that he just bought a house in the Hamptons. On a city councilman's salary? Riiiight."

Thief: "House? I'll break in and plant a bug. To transmit what he says to you." (Points at Hacker) "He'll be visiting there, right?"

Grifter: "I can make sure he does. I'll meet with him in his city office and convince him that…I don't know, someone wants to meet him there?"

Mastermind: "That'd be me. I'm president of the homeowner's association, and we're interested in talking to him, as a new and obviously wealthy resident, about a real estate investment in the area. I'll get him to spill everything with the bug right there."

Hitter: "That leaves me. Hm… What if you—" (points to Grifter) "—get jumped by a couple of mob thugs when you're leaving the initial meeting and I help you fight them off?"

Grifter: "Mob thugs? Where'd the mob come from?"

Hitter: "Muggers, then. Doesn't matter."

Fixer: "Right, the important thing is a fight, and we can make that work. So the scenes are: a bank computer hack for the Hacker, a house break & enter for the Thief, a persuasion scene for the Grifter, a fight for the Hitter, and another persuasion scene for the Mastermind. Right? OK, let's do it."

Running a Spotlight Scene

Start the first Spotlight Scene by declaring who's there. The primary Crewmember is the person the Spotlight Scene's intended to spotlight, and they're obviously going to be there, but is anyone else? The primary Crewmember's player can invite one other Crewmember to be there in the scene—this is a secondary Crewmember. (Yes, the secondary can refuse if he really wants to. But don't outright refuse without talking about it.)

Secondary Crewmembers are important, because this gives players a chance to assign one of their unassigned Role dice. At least once in the scene, the secondary Crewmember's player should try to make a roll on one of these unassigned Roles. This player chooses which die to use: a d4 or a d6. If he chooses a d4, he gains a Plot Point for his trouble. If the roll succeeds, he places the chosen die in that Role. If it fails, he places the other. (Note that if he places the d6, this necessarily determines the other Role dice, so he might as well fill them in too.)

The primary Crewmember in the scene should have ample opportunity to exercise his primary Role. In fact, this is his chance to declare that he has a particular Talent (see page 34), and use it. He may declare one or both his Talents this way. (Unassigned Talents may be assigned later, so don't feel pressure to do it now.) Also, any Crewmember in the scene may declare a Specialty (see page 30) if that Specialty is relevant. If the Crewmember accompanies his declaration of a Specialty or Talent through an Establishment Flashback, he gains a Plot Point.

Crewmembers *not* in the scene may declare a Talent if that Talent is relevant to someone in the scene—for example, the Mastermind's Archangel Talent (see page 34) may get the Thief out of a jam in the second Spotlight Scene even though the Mastermind isn't there. If he wishes, the Mastermind could declare that Talent during the Thief's scene to help her out.

The Hacker decides to claim the Talent; Are You Gonna Log In or Whistle Dixie? which helps when he's facing



off against another human on a computer system. With this Talent, he easily trounces his opposition and they gain the information they need.

What Happens If Someone Fails?

If the dice gods frown upon you and one of the Crewmembers strikes out completely, it's time for the Mastermind (or someone with a decent MASTERMIND die, if the Mastermind is the one who dropped the ball) to step in and save the day. The Fixer and Mastermind should, together, create a quick scene describing how the pieces get picked up with the Mastermind rolling his primary Role and picking up the pieces. It's unlikely that a second failure will result, but if it does just wash, rinse, and repeat. Keep the object of *The Recruitment Job* in mind—the Fixer's job is not to beat the Crewmembers on this one.

Example

Let's imagine the Hacker declares that the Mastermind is with him, looking over his shoulder as he breaks in and traverses the Mark's financial transactions. The Hacker needs to make several rolls on HACKER + INTELLIGENCE in a faceoff vs. the bank's security system. Meanwhile, the Fixer calls for the Mastermind to make a HACKER + ALERTNESS roll. HACKER is one of his unassigned Roles, so he chooses his die—a d4. He collects his Plot Point and makes his roll vs. the bank's security system. He succeeds (writing a "d4" next to "HACKER") and the Fixer tells him that he realizes that a bank security agent is on the same system, tracking the Crew's movements and trying to cut them off. Things just got a little more interesting.

Establishment Flashbacks

Establishment Flashbacks are mini-scenes involving only one Crewmember. They happened at some point in the past—possibly the distant past during the Crewmember's childhood, possibly as late as earlier this morning. These flashback scenes aren't just fun ways of exploring a Crewmember's background, they're also incredibly useful—you want to trigger them for others, and want them to trigger them for you.

Establishment Flashbacks have three aspects: a **Trigger** (a circumstance that can justify an Establishment Flashback), a **Scene Description**, and an **Effect**. Keep in mind that a Trigger simply justifies the flashback, it doesn't require it; it's up to the Crewmember that would have the flashback.

Establishing Distinctions

Trigger: A question or comment from another Crewmember that would trigger introspective reflection on your part. It should be somewhat prying, like "So where'd you grow up?" or "What made you want to join this Crew?" or "You'd have to be crazy to try something like that."

Scene Description: You describe a brief flashback scene from your background that would answer the question or reflect on the comment. The idea is to establish a Distinction.

Effect: If you already have three Distinctions, there's no effect whatsoever. Otherwise, you gain a Plot Point. The rest of the Crew collaboratively composes one Distinction for you based on their interpretation of the flashback. Yes, that's right—you don't get control over how other people see you. If you really hate your new Distinction, you can spend *two* Plot Points (the one you just gained plus one more) to ignore the suggestion and compose your own, based on the flashback.



Establishing Talents and Specialties

Trigger: You claim a Talent or Specialty during a Spotlight Scene.

Scene Description: You describe a brief flashback scene detailing how you learned what you're showing off, or when you exercised it—either with spectacular success or with impressive failure.

Effect: If you already have two Talents or two Specialties, there's no effect whatsoever. Otherwise, you gain a Plot Point plus the Specialty or Talent you just showed off, which you can use immediately in the Spotlight Scene.

Finishing the Job

Wrap up *The Recruitment Job* with a description of how the Mark gets taken down: the recordings of him bragging about how he got the money for his house in the Hamptons is forwarded to the FBI, who arrests him the next day; the Crew is wearing fake FBI jackets and carrying boxes of data out of the Mark's office; the Mark checks his bank account to find it drained of money, and the Client rides off into the sunset with his rightful compensation.

Once the Job is done, the Crew's Rap Sheets should be complete. A few things may remain blank, however. It's okay to leave these blank for now. You can fill them in, on the fly, as your "real" Jobs proceed. Having a blank Specialty up your sleeve is especially useful when knowing how to pilot a tugboat, or fight a house fire, or tune a piano, is just what you need to get you out of a jam. When you need to, just declare your Talent, or Specialty, or Role die, and move on.

Distinctions are a little different. You get to define one Distinction yourself for free, but the way other people see you is really what Distinctions define. At the end of your next "real" Job, if you have any blank Distinction slots, the rest of the Crew should compose one Distinction for you. Like in Establishment Flashbacks, if you hate it, you can ignore it and compose your own, but you start the next Job with one fewer Plot Point than normal.

What's Next?

Congratulations, you're a cohesive and skilled Crew. The Marks have all the money, they have all the power, and they use it to make people like your Clients go away. They are living under an immense weight.

Get out there and provide some Leverage.

The Double Cross?

If the Fixer wants *The Recruitment Job* to lead directly into the first "real" Job of the Crew's career, he can make it a double cross. The first job of the LEVERAGE Crew turned out like this; *The Nigerian Job* is not one they'll soon forget. The Client playing the Crew like a fiddle and using them to attack his own enemies is a wonderful way to make it personal. No Crew worth their salt will walk away from it. And so the Client becomes the Mark, the circle of life continues, and the relationships among the Crew are forged in a mutual longing for revenge.

Fast Recruitment

If you want to get right into playing and want to skip *The Recruitment Job*, the following rules help you do that. At this point, you still need to record three Role dice, two Distinctions, two Talents, and two Specialties. Much like in *The Recruitment Job*, there are circumstances that allow other people to have some control over how you're seen by others.

Establishing Your Remaining Roles

You have three more dice to assign to your Roles: a d6 and two d4s. The best way to do this is to think about what Roles you want to be problematic for you, the ones that really complicate your life. Those are the ones you make d4. The remaining Role just isn't as significant, so it gets a d6, the same as any Asset would start out.

Establishing Your Remaining Talents and Specialties

This one's fairly straightforward—just select Specialties and Talents that you'd like to have. If you'd like to describe a flashback scene justifying it, you may, but you don't gain a mechanical advantage from it. You may leave as many of these blank, to be declared on the fly while you're playing. See "Finishing the Job" on page 49.

Establishing Your Remaining Distinctions

Describe a brief flashback scene either establishing a defining moment in your childhood, or exemplifying why you decided to join a LEVERAGE Crew. Based on that flashback scene, the rest of the Crew composes one Distinction for you. As before, if you really hate it you can ignore it and compose your own, but you begin the next Job with one fewer Plot Point than usual.

Leave the third Distinction blank; you have the option to fill it in at the end of the next Job as described in "Finishing the Job."

Benefits of Experience

As you've no doubt seen, a LEVERAGE Crew isn't made up of a cunning mob of farmboys and lowlifes slowly working their way up to the lowest echelon of competence. A starting Crewmember's an accomplished criminal (or not-quite-criminal) with a wealth of experience and skills to bring to bear. What's this mean? It means the kind of dramatic improvement that can take a character from zero to hero doesn't have a place in a game of LEVERAGE.

However, that's not to say that characters don't change or grow. For all their expertise, they're still people, and the experiences they have will leave an impact on them. These changes may be as subtle as achieving a better understanding of humanity or a firmer grasp of one's own weaknesses or as blatant as giving up your fight against the bottle. Certainly, characters may find room to refine their skills and improve themselves, but those improvements are just part of the process that characters go through as they grow.



The Record

Every time a character completes a Job, he makes a note of it on his Rap Sheet. This is his **Record**, and over time it provides history of the character's accomplishments.

Example

After the first few Jobs, Parker's Record looks like this:

- *The Nigerian Job*
- *The Homecoming Job*
- *The Two Horse Job*
- *The Miracle Job*
- *The Bank Shot Job*

The Record is a potent resource for a Crewmember, and is the most important part of tracking how the character changes and grows over time.

Callbacks

The player may use the Record to make **callbacks**, references to things done in other Jobs that may be useful in the current Job. To make a callback, the player makes reference to a Job in his Record while performing a task. While the player might mention the Job name explicitly, it's vastly more stylish for his Crewmember to refer to it a little more obliquely, giving it a clear nod (and only explicitly calling it out if the Fixer is slow on the uptake and misses it). The character then gains a benefit in the scene as if he'd just spent a Plot Point.

Example

Parker is about to rappel down the side of a building at high speed with Hardison in tow. Parker's player wants to make a callback to the similar descent from *The Nigerian Job*, but doesn't want to be so crass as to state that outright, so instead she gives the episode a nod and tells Hardison: "Sheesh, Sophie wasn't this big a sissy about it, and we went ten more stories, easily!"

You can only make a callback to a specific Job once per session, and it might save you headaches to mark Jobs you've already called back to with pencil. Still, even with that limitation, this means that a full Record is, effectively, a free grab bag of Plot Points that represents the general experience the Crewmember has gained. A player is free to sit on this bounty, but there is also another option—this experience can also be used to improve the Crewmember in specific ways.

Training Up

A Crewmember can "spend" Jobs to make permanent improvements, such as adding a new Specialty or Talent or improving an Attribute or Role by one step. A spent Job stays on the Record, but it can no longer be used for callbacks.

The number of Jobs required to make an improvement depends on the improvement, but it breaks down as follows:

IMPROVEMENT	JOBS
Add a Signature Asset	1
Add a new Specialty	2
Add a new Talent	4
Step up an Attribute	8
Step up a Role	8

If the Crewmember has enough Jobs to spend, he may simply spend them during the downtime between Jobs and make the improvement.

Getting an Advance on Advancement

If a Crewmember is one Job short of training up, he can tell the Fixer what he intends to buy before the Job starts and, with the Fixer's permission, make the purchase "on credit," with the agreement that this Job will also go towards paying the piper. This has the benefit of getting the Crewmember his improvement a little early, and it also lets the Fixer make sure the Job includes some way for the Crewmember to showcase how much he has improved.

Signature Assets

For the cost of a single Job, a character can introduce a permanent **Signature Asset**, something strongly associated with the Crewmember that can potentially come up in almost any Job (though there's no guarantee it will). These include locations (like the LEVERAGE CONSULTING & ASSOCIATES office in Los Angeles or JOHN MCRORY'S BAR in Boston) or resources (RESPECT THE VAN). The first such Asset that a character introduces is a d8, with subsequent Assets being valued at d6.

Moving, Changing and Destroying Assets

These Assets can be lost, stolen, or destroyed (and, in fact, that often seems to be their fate) in which case the Crewmember can replace it with a new Asset at the same die rating. Alternately, a Crewmember may decide between Jobs that one Asset has become more important, and swap a d8 and a d6. This is done as many times as the player wants, but once something stops being d8, it can never be d8 again.

Example

Hardison's computer setup in the Los Angeles offices was a Signature Asset AWESOME COMPUTER D8. Along the line, Hardison's player also realized he was spending a lot of time in his van, so he spent another job to buy LUCILLE D6. After the Los Angeles offices were destroyed, Hardison built a new awesome computer, but decided Lucille was more important, and now has LUCILLE D8 and AWESOME COMPUTER D6.

Changing Distinctions

Distinctions are a little bit different than other elements on the Rap Sheets, and it's possible that they may need to change over time. Sometimes the player will just decide that the Distinction is no longer a good fit for the character or isn't as much fun to play any longer. When a player wants to change a Distinction, he just needs to let the Fixer know before the Job begins, ideally before the Fixer starts planning the new Job. This gives the Fixer time to make preparations to bring up the old and new Distinctions over the course of the new Job. Sometimes this means an opportunity for the Crewmember to make an important choice that reflects this new priority, or it might be as simple as giving the Crewmember a chance to make a little speech. Whatever happens, the player may make the change at the end of the Job.



Course Corrections

If the Crewmember has a Talent or Specialty that the player feels is proving useless, he should also tell the Fixer before a Job. The Fixer can discuss with the player how much they have or haven't used the Talent or Specialty in question, and if the Fixer agrees that it hasn't seen any use, then the player can swap it out in favor of a new one. If the Fixer is less certain, such as he thinks the player has gotten more use out of the Talent or Specialty than the player thinks, he can defer the decision to the end of the current Job. The Fixer and the player should just keep an eye on what the Crewmember does, and make a decision at the end of the Job whether or not the change is reasonable.

The Fixer may very well introduce opportunities for that particular Talent or Specialty to come up during the Job. This is not something to be sneaky about—it should be pretty bald faced, and when it comes up, the Fixer is basically giving the player a choice: use the Talent or Specialty and acknowledge it's part of the character, or choose not to do so, making it clear that it's not. If the player decides to refuse, he should be free to remove and replace the Talent or Specialty at the end of the scene, provided he can make the change quickly. If the player needs to think about it and spend time looking through the book for options, then it can wait until the end of the Job.

Breaks

After a decent number of Jobs (anywhere after 8), it's time to start considering a **Break**. Breaks might occur naturally as a result of dramatic events in the game, or they might just be a result of the Fixer opting to move the clock forward. Breaks correspond to periods between major story arcs where we gloss over things like the Crew breaking up or Nate going to jail.

When a Break occurs, players must spend all the Jobs on their Records, effectively beginning a new Record on the far side of the Break.

Optional Rule: Growing the Crew with Trust

The level of trust within the Crew is a very important thing. A certain amount of trust is absolutely necessary if they're just going to get from one day to the next. Establishing that trust and letting it grow is how a group of strangers becomes a Crew, or practically family.

Crewmembers may spend a Job to invest trust in another Crewmember. They choose which one when they spend—preferably a Crewmember they spent a fair amount of time with in the Job being spent. Jobs invested as trust in other Crewmembers can always be withdrawn and spent on other things, but what's important is that as long as the character has any trust invested in other Crewmembers, the spending Crewmember may invoke it much like Distinctions.

Trust is a very peculiar Trait that indicates that the Crewmember has tied himself to these other folks. By and large it can only be used for d4s any time another member of the Crew makes your job harder. The only time it can be used as a d8 is to take action in conflict with another Crewmember who has also invested trust.

If at any point, every member of the Crew has invested in every other member of the Crew, the Crew is identified as Solid. Anybody in a Solid Crew may use this like a Distinction: d4s and d8s any time being a member of the Crew hurts or hinders things. However, if any Crewmember withdraws trust (or if, for example, a new Crewmember enters the picture), the Crew stops being Solid until everyone is invested in everyone else again.



"I'm the one with a plan. Now, I know you children don't play well with others but I need you to hold it together for exactly seven more minutes."

NAME

NATHAN FORD

DISTINCTIONS

HONEST

CONTROLLING

DRUNK

ATTRIBUTES

	4	6	8	10	12
AGILITY		**6**			
ALERTNESS			**8**		
INTELLIGENCE				**10**	
STRENGTH		**6**			
VITALITY			**8**		
WILLPOWER				**10**	

ROLES

	4	6	8	10	12
GRIFTER			**8**		
HACKER	**4**				
HITTER	**4**				
MASTERMIND				**10**	
THIEF		**6**			

Dirty Shot (Hitter), Drinking (Mastermind)

TALENTS

Archangel: Any Crewmember you're in voice contact with (including yourself) can spend Plot Points to give a die to any other member of the Crew you're in voice contact with (also including yourself).

Master Plan: You've already covered the angles. When Mastermind is one of the dice in your roll, every Opportunity the Fixer gives you (rolls a 1 on his dice) lets you turn one of your 1s into a 2 (and avoid gaining a Complication).

SIGNATURE ASSETS

NATE'S LOFT D8 This is Nate's apartment above John McRory's Bar, and while he'd like it to be his alone, it's where the briefings usually happen. It comes in handy when pulling off some con or another on site.



"Looks like Parker's gonna have to crawl through the air duct again. God forbid anyone else would have to learn how to crawl on their stomach through a tiny space. It's not rocket science, people."

NAME

PARKER

DISTINCTIONS

CRAZY

NO – REALLY CRAZY

COOL UNDER PRESSURE

ATTRIBUTES

	4	6	8	10	12
AGILITY				**10**	
ALERTNESS				**10**	
INTELLIGENCE		**6**			
STRENGTH			**8**		
VITALITY			**8**		
WILLPOWER		**6**			

TALENTS

Steady Hands: When THIEF is one of the dice in your roll, you may re-roll one of your dice for every Opportunity the Fixer gives you (rolls a 1 on his dice).

Perfect Timing: Gain an extra d8 to your roll when you need to do something according to precise timing, or to assess how long it would take to do something. Also, you don't need a watch.

ROLES

	4	6	8	10	12
GRIFTER		**6**			
HACKER	**4**				
HITTER			**8**		
MASTERMIND	**4**				
THIEF				**10**	

Floor Plans (Thief), Disturbingly Strong Grip (Thief)

SIGNATURE ASSETS

REPELLING RIG D8 Parker has several of these, used to drop down into locations, stairwells, the sides of buildings, etc.

"You know, I had to re-task two satellites just to get a lousy internet connection. Took more than an hour to torrent the last episode of Doctor Who."



NAME

ALEC HARDISON

DISTINCTIONS

COCKY

GEEK

COMPUTER

ATTRIBUTES

	4	6	8	10	12
AGILITY			8		
ALERTNESS			8		
INTELLIGENCE				10	
STRENGTH			8		
VITALITY			8		
WILLPOWER		6			

TALENTS

"Do You Have That Thing I Gave You?": You can spend a Plot Point to give another member of the team an extra d8 on any roll by reminding them of the sweet piece of gadgetry you gave them. If you use this for another Crewmember's Flashback Action, the die is a d10.

Opportunist: When you're rolling Hacker, sometimes things that look like setbacks are actually opportunities. If the Fixer gives you an Opportunity (rolls a 1 on a die) you may add an additional d6 to your roll, and if appropriate, recalculate your result.

ROLES

	4	6	8	10	12
GRIFTER	4				
HACKER				10	
HITTER	4				
MASTERMIND			8		
THIEF		6			

Terrible Accents (Grifter), Corporatespeak (Hacker)

SIGNATURE ASSETS

LUCILLE D8 This is Hardison's van full of tech. It was blown up during "The Maltese Falcon Job" but he's since acquired Lucille 2.0. Eventually he's gonna need a 3.0, too...



"Villains, con men, wolves in sheep's clothing. Felt right at home."

NAME

SOPHIE DEVERAUX

DISTINCTIONS

GORGEOUS

ACTRESS

DECEITFUL

ATTRIBUTES

	4	6	8	10	12
AGILITY			8		
ALERTNESS			8		
INTELLIGENCE				10	
STRENGTH		6			
VITALITY			8		
WILLPOWER			8		

ROLES

	4	6	8	10	12
GRIFTER				10	
HACKER	4				
HITTER	4				
MASTERMIND		6			
THIEF			8		

Hiding in Plain Sight (Grifter),
Get Out of the Way Gracefully (Hitter)

TALENTS

Social Center: You may share (give or take) up to 3 Plot Points with any team member you are in the same scene with. No more than 3 Plot Points may be given, taken, or distributed among team members per scene.

Slip of the Tongue: Whenever you're rolling your Grifter against a Supporting Character and the Fixer gives you an Opportunity (rolls a 1 on his dice), you may ask him a question about the Supporting Character, which the Fixer must answer at least vaguely.

"Look, pull a knife like this, it cuts through an onion, a knife like this, cuts through, like, eight Yakuza in four seconds. Carnage, screams. People are like knives. Everything's in context."



NAME

ELIOT SPENCER

DISTINCTIONS

BAD BOY

MYSTERIOUS HISTORY

SMARTER THAN HE LOOKS

ATTRIBUTES

	4	6	8	10	12
AGILITY			8		
ALERTNESS			8		
INTELLIGENCE		6			
STRENGTH				10	
VITALITY			8		
WILLPOWER			8		

TALENTS

Badass: When you're in a fight, you're outnumbered, and the Fixer gives you an Opportunity (rolls a 1 on his dice) you may remove one of the dice the Fixer gains from outnumbering you.

Threat Assessment: When you successfully use a Notice action against a Supporting Character, you may identify any of the Supporting Character's Traits rated at d10 (they're very distinctive). If you spend a Plot Point and have a bit of time to study the Supporting Character, you also identify any Traits at d4.

ROLES

	4	6	8	10	12
GRIFTER		6			
HACKER	4				
HITTER				10	
MASTERMIND			8		
THIEF	4				

Cooking (Hitter), Country Music (Hitter)



"What's our angle here?"

NAME

TARA COLE

DISTINCTIONS

ALL BUSINESS

CHAMELEON

NO SUCH AGENCY

ATTRIBUTES

	4	6	8	10	12
AGILITY			**8**		
ALERTNESS				**10**	
INTELLIGENCE				**10**	
STRENGTH		**6**			
VITALITY		**6**			
WILLPOWER			**8**		

ROLES

	4	6	8	10	12
GRIFTER				**10**	
HACKER			**8**		
HITTER		**6**			
MASTERMIND	**4**				
THIEF	**4**				

Spot the Spy (Mastermind), Pickpocket (Thief)

TALENTS

How YOU Doin'?: When you're using a flirtatious or seductive manner against someone who's attracted to your gender, you may add an extra d10 to your roll—but if you do, you must also add a d4.

Jenny-On-The-Spot: You can spend a Plot Point to place yourself in any scene that didn't already have you there. You add an extra d6 to the next roll that you or your Crew makes in that scene. You can't activate this Talent this if you're heavily engaged elsewhere.



The Job

Playing the Game

The Job

This chapter covers the rules of the game, the nuts and bolts of the Cortex Plus System that directly influence the outcome of the Job. If you're one of those gearhead types, this might be one of the first chapters you turned to. That's fine. Every team needs a Hacker, after all. But make sure you've already digested the material in **Chapter Two: The Briefing**, because we're not going to repeat it unless we have to.

If you've played other games, you're probably used to a chapter on combat, and maybe you'd look for that chapter right about here. Fighting's covered, sure. But if you're at all familiar with how a Job plays out, you're also aware that going toe-to-toe is only about a fifth of the action. Not coincidentally, that's the Hitter's representation in the Crew. So don't despair, the rest of you; we have your areas of expertise in hand, too.

First, we're going to talk about Traits, the things on your Rap Sheet that have dice ratings after them. Then we'll discuss Assets and Complications, which are kind of like dynamic or temporary Traits you can add to a roll. Finally, we talk about how Actions, Scenes, and Beats help you structure the Job and make sense of the flow of the action.

Managing Traits

One of the first things you need to get a handle on when playing a Job is how to handle your Crewmember's Traits, including Attributes and Roles, and the Traits on other people and places. Since they're the main source of dice, and therefore the core of any action that takes place, it's best to become familiar with them.

When it comes time to roll the bones and see what happens—whether you're the Fixer or a player—you roll dice associated with the Traits on your Rap Sheet and, sometimes, on some part of the scene or even another character. That's a lot of possible Traits, though, and you can't roll them all. So which Traits do you choose?

Choosing Crew Traits

In many cases it's obvious which Traits a Crewmember should be rolling. Hitter needs to punch a guy in the head? Pretty clear he's using STRENGTH + HITTER. Thief needs to climb over a fence? That's AGILITY + THIEF. It won't always be crystal clear which Traits are most appropriate. For example, which Role do you use when the Crew needs to blow something up? THIEF makes sense because you need to be able to blow up safes, right? Or how about HITTER? Bombs are weapons after all. HACKER? A bomb is just a gadget that explodes, right?

There's no one right answer (and if you want to clarify these issues, Specialties are the right tool for the job) but context offers some clues. If you're blowing open a safe, THIEF is probably right. If you're using grenades, dynamite, or military ordinance then HITTER is probably it. If you're using something with lots of wires and at least one digital counter, it sounds like HACKER.

If it's a crapshoot, the Fixer has to make a judgment call, and this is one of those situations where *speed trumps fidelity*. Better to just come up with an answer on the spot, roll the dice, and settle on an outcome than it is to spend five minutes dickering over the right answer.

Choosing Opposition Traits

When the Fixer decides what dice to roll against the Crew, he should look at the Traits in play. Consider the Traits of the characters in action, any Traits of the location or situation, and add in any applicable Complications. Even just rolling the Traits applicable to the situation should give the Fixer enough dice, and if he ever has too few dice to total up, he can just add in enough d6s to bring up the total. The Fixer can choose to not roll larger dice, if appropriate, but he should always roll any appropriate d4s.



Traits for People

Other people—the Mark, the Client, various Extras, Agents, and Foils—can usually be summed up in one or two Traits. An uninteresting security guard might just be SECURITY GUARD D6 but if the Crew is going to end up actually talking to him or otherwise interacting with him, it might be worth adding in a little characterization. He might be a LAZY D4 SECURITY GUARD D6 or an EARNEST D8 SECURITY GUARD D6. For characters who are just color, a single Trait is usually enough; for more important characters, you rarely need more than two or three Traits. Some characters are going to get whole Rap Sheets of their own. See **Chapter Six: Toolbox** for more on the different kinds of characters.

Traits for Locations

Locations can also have Traits. These Traits might describe something about the place, or something about the situation. For example, one office building might have PROFESSIONAL SECURITY D8 while another might have RENT-A-COPS D4. That short notation reveals a lot about both buildings. In addition to telling you what dice to roll, the difference in Traits helps the Fixer when he needs to describe a situation to the player.

It's also possible for Traits to reflect temporary qualities, like the mood of a room (COLD ROOM D8) or abrupt problems (ON FIRE D10).



Traits on the Fly

When in doubt, the *default Trait for anything is d6*. This is important anytime the Fixer needs to make a roll and doesn't have two Traits to use for it: he can fill in any missing Traits with a d6, and in situations where there's no apparent Trait in opposition, the Fixer just rolls 2d6.

Reading Traits

Because higher dice mean a better chance of success, it's easy to assume that the only meaning to them is numeric. A d6 is better than a d4 and so on. And, yes, that's true as far as it goes, but there's more to it than that. Dice have a meaning that goes a bit deeper than the straight numbers. The trick is that a d4 may be the lowest value, but it actually means that the Trait is more important than if it was a d6. While a d6 just means that something is interesting, a d4 is a flag for something that's likely to go wrong. This is why the Fixer is always happy to give you extra d4s to roll—they're unlikely to raise the total of the roll, but they greatly increase the odds of rolling a Complication. Similarly, any time you can get the Fixer to roll some d4s, it increases your chance of getting an Opportunity. In plain English, when you see the Trait values, they really read like this:

Die Rating	Level of Story Impact
4	Something Interesting
6	Mundane
8	Noteworthy
10	Scary
12	Aw, *Hell* No!

Picking Up Dice

There's never any obligation to pick up extra dice, and sometimes (especially in the case of d4s) there's no incentive to do so. If both sides could pick up a particular die, then where that die came from matters—players get to use their Assets, and the Fixer gets to use Complications and any Traits on his people and places.

But see, sometimes a Trait cuts both ways. That is to say, even if a Trait seems like it should support the opposition, it's possible the Crewmember can end up rolling it. Take, for example, an Agent with HONEST D8 and COP D8. When the Crew tries to pull things over on him, that HONEST Trait works in his favor most of the time. But when a Crewmember has that big talk with him, pointing out the dirty stuff he's looking the other way for, his honesty isn't going to help him. In fact, if the Crewmember knows the cop has that Trait, *he* might pick up that die and use it as part of his roll—the cop's honesty helps that Crewmember accomplish his goals. The bottom line is this: it matters less who brings a Trait into a roll than how appropriate it is.

The flipside of this is that the Fixer's not gonna poach the dice on the Crew's Rap Sheet. Attributes and Roles aren't the sort of Traits to get poached. Distinctions might be, but they're under the player's control—if the Distinction's a problem, the player decides to roll it as a d4. The only time the Fixer might be able to poach a die from the players is in the case of the occasional Asset.

Traits and Scale

Even though we rate things in terms of dice, that's not all you need to consider. You might have FREIGHT TRAIN D6 and MOTORCYCLE D6, but just because they're both rated at d6 doesn't mean it's a fair fight when they collide. The Fixer needs to make judgment calls in situations like this. The good news is that most of these situations are a piece of cake to adjudicate. When a train hits a motorcycle, you just don't worry about rolling the dice; it ends badly for the motorcycle. Most situations are sufficiently clear-cut that you don't even need to worry about the dice. Most, but not all. Some situations are a little more muddled.

Rules-wise, these are pretty easy to handle. A simple advantage usually gets handled by **adding** more dice to the roll, but more dramatic advantages may allow the advantaged party to **include** more dice from his roll to his result beyond the two he gets for free. One additional included die represents a pretty profound advantage, and two additional included dice is almost overwhelming. If you're ever tempted to go to three additional included dice (assuming the pool was 5 dice or more to start with), that's probably time to just set aside the dice. As a rule of thumb, when the mismatch is so unfair that it would never work for a normal person, but someone as exceptional as a Crewmember *might* be able to pull it off, that's the cue to go to the extra dice.

Example

Let's look at cars, as they're a pretty common example of this sort of problem. Let's say you have a Crewmember chasing a bad guy, and they both hop into cars, but the bad guy jumps into a suped-up ride while the Crewmember hops into an old junker. In the strictest sense, the bad guy's car is faster, but the race doesn't always go to the swift. This discrepancy can be handled by giving the bad guy a SPORTS CAR D8 and the Crewmember an OLD JUNKER D4. The difference in cars is an advantage, but since both sides are in cars, it's still a reasonably fair conflict.

In contrast, imagine the bad guy hops into his car and peels away and the Crewmember is left with nothing but his own two feet. What happens next depends on the situation. Let's say the Crewmember knows where the bad guy's going. If it's a few miles away then, well, he's pretty much hosed. There's no way he's going to get there first, there's no point in even rolling the dice.

Suppose the destination is only just across town, through traffic. Sure, the bad guy's got an advantage, but it's not impossible that the Crewmember could pull off some sort of crazy parkour-style montage, cutting down back alleys and running across rooftops to try to get there first (that's parkour, or free-running, not Parker…just to be clear). It's doable, but pretty darn hard, so the bad guy gets a bonus. He's a SLEAZY D8 SLEAZEBAG D6 in a FAST CAR D8. Normally the Fixer rolls those three dice and adds the two highest together, but for this roll the Fixer totals up all three. For the math-heads among you, this means he gets an average result of 12.5 and might roll as high as 22. Even if the Crewmember has 2d10 to roll, there's no guarantee this goes well for him.

Assets and Complications

Most Traits are reasonably static, but sometimes they reflect temporary situations, such as when a Crewmember has the right tool for the job or when a security guard's a little more suspicious than usual. These Traits are handled with **Assets** and **Complications**.

You can find more specifics about handling Assets and Complications on page 115 of **Chapter Five: The Fixer**. The details here cover the most important game details that everyone at the table needs to know.

Assets

Assets cover anything going in the Crew's favor. This might be as concrete as a SCREWDRIVER, or as abstract as their MOJO. Most often, Assets enter play when a player spends a Plot Point to create one. For a single Plot Point, you can create a d6 Asset that's useful for the duration of a scene, and for 2 Plot Points it remains useful for the duration of the Job. Some Talents improve this ability—Hackers, for example, are often at an advantage when coming up with new gadgets—but the basics are pretty straightforward. There's no such thing as a generic Asset. If you create an Asset, you need to name it.

Assets can't just be used on every roll—the Asset needs to be applicable in some way or worked into your description of what your Crewmember is doing. This can be a little fast and loose, especially when players are creative, but that's a good thing. It does, however, point out an important guideline about Assets: there should be situations where they're not useful. For SCREWDRIVERS and other physical objects, this is rarely a problem; but for more abstract Assets, there needs to be a clear sense of what it is and isn't useful for. If MOJO is going to help with every roll, it's too vague, and it makes for a bad Asset. If the Asset specifically helps with, say, engaging the opposite sex, then that's much more specific and usable.

It's also worth noting that Assets can go away, and there should be some reason why. Again, with tools, it's pretty simple, but with more abstract Assets, it's worth thinking about the logic of it. To come back to the MOJO example, that might be lost when the character fails to impress a member of the opposite sex.

This idea of transience is important because, even if a Crewmember has bought an Asset for the duration of the Job, it's still possible something might happen to it. Suppose, for example, a character has a BIG KNIFE D6. That's handy for a number of things, but if it comes time to search the characters for weapons, the Fixer may pick up that die (for a casual search) or just take it away (for a thorough search, such as in prison). The Crewmember can recover the Asset later (without spending Plot Points) but that requires time and effort he can't spare.

The Logic of Assets

If the Hitter picks up a golf club to beat up some thugs but doesn't spend a Plot Point, should he still get an Asset? After all, he's still got a weapon, right?

Well, no. Here's the thing—the Hitter's a badass. If he gets into a fight, he uses whatever's on hand to his best advantage—that's just a given. Picking up the golf club, going after the weakest guy, or looking scary, this is all assumed to be part of kicking ass and taking names. Spending the Plot Point doesn't magically make the candelabra he picked up into something that's more dangerous than some other weapon. Instead, spending that Plot Point *makes a statement*. That statement is, "this candelabra matters." When he tells the story of the fight, it's "that time I beat up a guy with a candelabra" rather than just another fight where he picked up whatever was on hand. This is why Eliot's HORS D'OUEVRES D6 Asset made his fight in *The Wedding Job* so memorable.

Complications

Whenever a player rolls a 1, the Fixer can hand over a Plot Point to the player and add a Complication to the Job. The Complication's represented by a d6 Trait, with each additional 1 rolled by the player stepping up the die to a larger size. So, with three 1s, the Complication's a d10 (d6 to d8 to d10). The Fixer gets to roll this Trait into his pool whenever it's appropriate, in opposition to the Crew.

Notice that doesn't mean the Complication needs to come up right then, or even has to apply to the Crewmember who rolled the 1. The Fixer has pretty free rein to be creative with this, and no reason not to be creative. Consider the fight in *The Homecoming Job*—Eliot fights the guys, but the Client gives the defibrillator to Nate, who shocks one of the guys (and looks cool doing it). All cool, but that's actually a great example of a Complication coming up—Eliot rolled a pair of 1s, and the Fixer brought Nate into the fight (by using the Client in this case), and adds HAS SEEN NATE'S FACE D8 to the goon as a Complication, something that very nearly ends up causing a great deal of trouble later on during the Job.

Complications can add new things, but they can also be used to raise the stakes or add a beat (we'll talk about these in a moment) to an existing scene—let's say that the Hitter mixes it up with a couple thugs and picks up a Complication. The Fixer might decide someone knocked over a lamp and adds an ON FIRE D8 Trait to the scene. The thugs have already been dealt with, so that die is probably not going to see much use, but the room being on fire complicates the situation. Maybe the Hitter has trouble getting out, or even worse (better?), maybe the Hitter needs to decide what to do with the unconscious guards—is he going to leave them to die?

Like Assets, Complications have limits—they shouldn't apply to every roll, and there should be some way for them to go away, even if it's not necessarily obvious.



Changing Complications in Play

Sometimes the Crew doesn't want a particular Complication to hang around too long. If the guards are ON ALERT D8, that's going to make a lot of things more difficult. It may be worth the Crew's time to do something to put them at ease. Exactly what the Crewmember needs to do depends on the Complication in question, but normally it means they need to act—usually taking a beat within a scene—and roll the dice. If they succeed, the Complication is removed; if they fail, then it either steps up (going from d8 to d10, or d10 to d12) or a new Complication is introduced.



Actions, Scenes, & Beats

Crewmembers take lots of actions over the course of a Job, and they roll the dice a lot, so it's incredibly important to get a sense of what those die-rolls mean so you know when to roll and when not to.

The flow of the story can be broken down into **scenes**, as anyone who's taken high school English and read some Shakespeare knows. Scenes can be further broken down into chunks called **beats**, and an **Action** is a character's attempt to do something (usually involving rolling some dice), typically over the course of a single beat. These concepts are the basic building blocks for creating a narrative from scratch; they also provide us with tools to take apart a narrative and see what makes it tick.

Let's start by talking about beats.

Beats

A **beat** is basically the smallest dramatic unit of the story. If two characters exchange a password, that's a beat. If a Crewmember picks a lock, that's a beat. If a Crewmember hides behind a dumpster as thugs run past, that's a beat. If a Crewmember spends hours researching a problem, that's a beat. The trick is that it doesn't matter how long or short the activity is, but how simple it is.

Hardison may spend all night hacking a system, but it's a single beat because it can be boiled down to "Hardison hacks the system." In contrast, within the span of thirty seconds, Parker's scaled a wall, picked a lock, and evaded a laser tripwire—three separate beats. **Scenes** are composed of several beats and represent a complete event, like a meeting or an attempt at breaking and entering. There's no real way to say how many beats make up a scene since that can depend a lot on the dice, but it may be as few as one and as many as, well, a lot.

The important part is this: each beat corresponds with an opportunity to roll the dice, or take an **Action**. This

gives you a gut sense of the scope of the outcome, and hopefully that comes across clearly in the breakdown. The Hacker takes an Action to spot the thugs (success), then takes one to try to slip away unseen (failure), attempts to hide for a moment (success), then hacks the cars (success).

What types of Action you're taking, however, can vary based on the nature of the beat and what the Crewmember is trying to do. Which leads us to the next section.

Example

Hardison sees thugs approaching on the monitor and slips out the window. One of the thugs spots him, and they chase him through the parking garage. He hides behind a dumpster as the thugs rush past. He then decides to trigger every car alarm in the garage, forcing the thugs to flee to avoid the unwanted attention. This is a pretty good scene, and it's composed of four beats:

1. Hardison spots trouble and flees
2. Thugs spot Hardison and pursue
3. Hardison hides behind dumpster
4. Hardison triggers car alarms

Do you see how each beat is a single event or exchange of events? If the chase had to cover other locations, there might have been more beats, and if the thugs hadn't spotted him, it would have been only a single beat. It's hard to predict exactly how many beats there will be in a given scene, and you don't need to stress yourself trying to do so—that's not why they're important.

Taking Action

As you learned back in **Chapter One: The Pitch**, an Action is resolved by rolling dice. Most of the time, these actions are **Basic Actions** rather than **Contested Actions**. A Basic Action is two rolls: the Fixer, to set the stakes, and the player, to try to beat it. A Contested Action is one where both sides keep rolling to raise the stakes until one side gives in or is taken down.

There are other types of Actions that are frequently used in a Job: the **Timed Action**, which is really multiple Basic Actions in a row against the clock; and the **Flashback Action**, which is a variation of the Basic Action that reveals useful Assets in the present. But more on them later.

Basic Actions

When it comes to making Basic Actions, you describe what your Crewmember is doing, the Fixer says which Traits you roll, and he decides which dice he's rolling in opposition. The Fixer rolls his dice to **set the stakes**. You make the decision to use any Distinctions or Talents, maybe you pick up the dice for an Asset or two, and roll the dice. If you win (getting **greater than** the stakes), things go as you might expect; but if the Fixer wins (you roll **less than or equal to** the stakes), he describes how things go wrong—or rather, not as you expected. As ties go to the active party, Basic Actions like this require you to raise the stakes, not get a tie.

Some examples of commonly used Basic Actions include the **Notice Action** and the **Face Action**, but anything you can imagine taking place in one beat with a specific end-goal counts. Lifting a wallet, cracking a code, knocking a guard unconscious, or scaling a wall might all be suitable Basic Actions. Most of the time, the Fixer is the one who calls for these Actions, which is why he rolls his dice first to set the stakes.

Example

Basic Action: Parker is trying to jimmy a lock with a paper clip. The Fixer calls for Parker to roll AGILITY + THIEF to spring the lock quickly. He rolls 2d6 for the simple lock, getting a 9. Parker rolls 2d10 (AGILITY D10 + THIEF D10), also getting a 9. The Fixer tells Parker that she's almost got it when the cheap doorknob breaks right off in her hand and jams the latch in place. *Now* what?

Notice Actions

Anytime you want to get a read on somebody, case a scene, spot something out of the ordinary, or generally just use your senses, you're rolling a **Notice Action**. Generally, these are based on ALERTNESS, but you could make a case for INTELLIGENCE or WILLPOWER if the situation is more about putting two and two together (INTELLIGENCE) or ignoring a lot of distractions and remaining focused (WILLPOWER). The situation also tells you which Role to roll in. For instance, if it's sizing up a bad guy, it's HITTER. If it's computer-based, it's HACKER. The Fixer usually calls for a Notice Action, though it's just as valid for a player to ask for it. The stakes for a Notice Action are set by rolling a straight 2d6—unless the Fixer decides otherwise.

With a successful Notice Action (you roll higher than the Fixer), you gain some crucial information or gather some useful intelligence. Most of the time you can use this as justification for a cool Asset in a later scene. If you spend a Plot Point after you succeed at your Notice Action, you can bank the Asset until you need it, rather than using it in the scene you're in. For instance, if you see that the Mark's second security thug is a twitchy kind of guy, you could bring in NERVOUS NUMBER TWO D6 in the next scene, once you confront him.

With a failed Notice Action, you're not standing there staring out into space, but you won't be able to get anything useful for later. If you don't beat the stakes set by the Fixer, it's business as normal, essentially.

Some Talents specifically work with Notice Actions. They're described in **Chapter Three: The Crew**.

Example

Notice Action: Nate is surveying a busy city sidewalk, looking for a man trying to slip away in the crowd. The Fixer calls for a roll on ALERTNESS + MASTERMIND. The Fixer sets the stakes, rolling a 10. Nate rolls his d8 plus d10 and gets a 13. He spots the man and, using the earbud radio, directs Eliot to intercept him.

Face Actions

Like other Basic Actions, the **Face Action** is a single roll of the dice. In this case, though, the Crewmember using a Face Action is setting the stakes, as opposed to trying to beat the stakes the Fixer sets. With a Face Action, the opposition's a Supporting Character—an Agent of the Mark, the Crew's Foil, or perhaps an Extra. Face Actions create first impressions, whether it's to flirt or to frighten.

A Face Action starts with WILLPOWER (for forcing your impression on the opposition), ALERTNESS (for sensing the right moment or exploiting the opposition's tells), or INTELLIGENCE (for a display of knowledge, facts, or logic). Then, add whatever Role seems most appropriate, though it's very often GRIFTER or MASTERMIND. Roll the dice, spend any Plot Points, and when you're done, you've set the stakes. The Fixer has to roll higher than this to win.

The opposition to a Face Action is a character, who the Fixer usually rolls for with an appropriate Trait based on resisting what the Crewmember is trying to do, plus a die for how difficult it is for the Crewmember to impress the Supporting Character. If the Fixer doesn't raise the stakes set by the Crewmember, the Face Action

works. If the Fixer does raise the stakes, it just means you didn't make a particularly strong impression.

Like a Notice Action, when you succeed at a Face Action you can spend a Plot Point to bank an Asset for a later scene. This means that not only is the opposing character going to have some opinion of you (good, bad, whatever), but you get to bring it in next time you cross paths.

Because a Face Action is only about making an impression, actually convincing, seducing, confusing, or getting a reaction out of a Supporting Character usually requires a Contested Action.

Example

Face Action: Sophie is at a technology conference posing as a venture capitalist looking to invest in the Mark's business. She tries to convince a salesman that she's worth talking to. The Fixer calls for a WILLPOWER + GRIFTER Face Action. Sophie sets the stakes, rolling d10 plus d10 and getting an 11. The Fixer rolls and gets a 9; the salesman believes she is who she says she is.

Contested Actions

Sometimes another character actively opposes what you're trying to achieve, to the extent that the purpose of the Action is about seizing advantage or getting an edge over the opposition. Contested Actions go back and forth, each side trying to raise the stakes higher until only one side can come out on top.

A Contested Action takes place over a single beat, but it's a struggle, not a single maneuver. You can string multiple Contested Actions together to represent multiple beats in a scene; each time one side might Give In, losing ground. Of course, as soon as one side is taken down, the scene is probably over—unless more opposition comes out of the woodwork.

The best example of a Contested Action is the **Fight Action**, though it's easily expanded to cover everything from dueling with laptops to engaging in a furious argument. See "Contested Action Variations," later in this section.



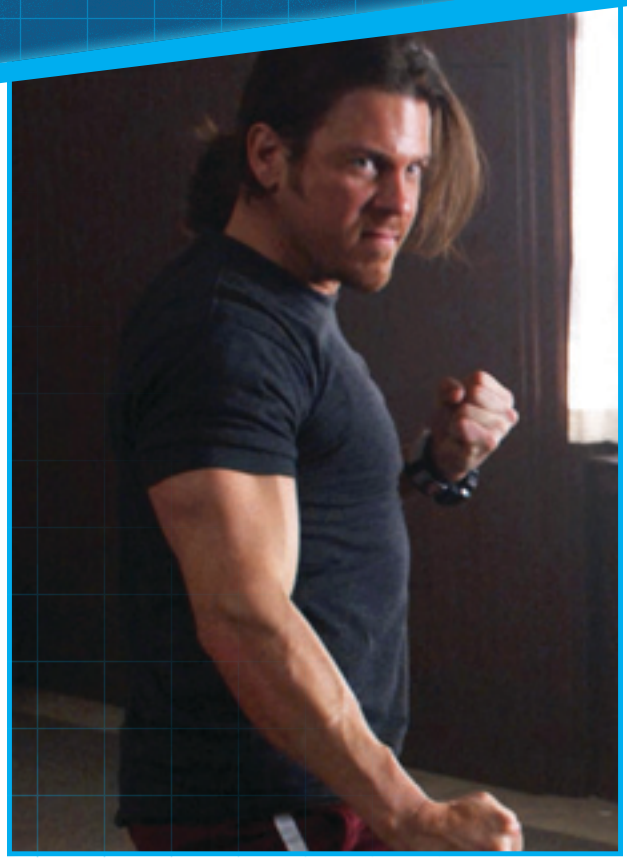
Fight Actions

Many fights are resolved quickly with a Basic Action—one side rolls the dice and sets the stakes, the other rolls to beat them, and a winner is determined. Not necessarily dramatic, but for criminals, this is serious business and best dealt with in a serious fashion. Still, every now and again you'll face a situation where the conflict's a little too intense to just cruise through it. Sometimes this is an actual fight scene, such as the one between Eliot and Mr. Quinn in *The First David Job*, or it might be a more abstract throwdown, like Hardison and Chaos attempting to hack each other's systems in *The Two Live Crew Job*. In these cases, you'll want to jazz up the scene a little bit by making it a **Fight Action**.

Fight Actions use whatever Attribute and Role combination seems appropriate, as well as any Assets, Complications, Distinctions, and benefits from Talents that apply. Most brawls are gonna be STRENGTH + HITTER, for instance, while a firewall-smashing duel would be INTELLIGENCE + HACKER.

Complications that come up in the course of a Fight Action reflect the slip-ups, injuries, and other twists of fate in any face-off. Most last until the end of the Fight Action, getting in the way, but some might stick around longer. See "Giving In," below, for other uses of Complications.

A Fight Action always starts with one side picking up dice because they think it's time to throw down. If it's unclear which side is initiating the Fight, or if more than two sides are involved, all sides roll their dice and the one that gets the highest result has set the stakes. The other sides can then choose to either Give In right away ("This ain't the fight for me!") or roll to raise the stakes.



Example

Fight Action: Eliot's about had it with these TWO THUGS D6 who have him at GUNPOINT D8. He sets the stakes by rolling STRENGTH D10 + HITTER D10, getting a 9. The Fixer rolls d8 plus 2d6 (one for outnumbering Eliot, see below) and gets a 13, successfully raising the stakes. Eliot decides to fight on and spends a Plot Point to declare he picks up a STICK D6. He rolls three dice this time (STRENGTH D10 + HITTER D10 + STICK D6), and gets a 12 on his 2d10. He spends another Plot Point to add the 3 from the STICK D6, which pushes him up to 15, a successful raising of the stakes. The Fixer rolls again and can't get to 16, so Eliot wins the fight, and his player describes how he does it (a little narration always seals the deal).

Winning the Fight

As soon as you've raised the stakes high enough that your opponent isn't able to beat it with his own result, you've come out on top. Your opponent's been **Taken Down**—knocked out, incapacitated, tied up, buried under a mound of furniture, deeply embarrassed, whatever—and he's out of the action for the remainder of the scene.

If you're the one who lost, your Crewmember's at the mercy of the Fixer and the bad guys who won. Generally, this leads to a scene where your Crewmember's stuffed in a locker, strapped to a chair in the bad guy's warehouse by the docks, or some other nasty situation.

Either way, there aren't any long-lasting game effects for losing a Fight Action, unless you came up with some Complications during the course of it. As far as the Job goes, however, things may have gone completely south if you're out of the picture and your Crew has to come and rescue you.

You can automatically take down somebody by raising the stakes by 5 or more (an Extraordinary Success). This only works with a single opponent, however; if there's a mob, this translates to taking down multiple goons in one go. See "Ganging Up," later in this section.

Giving In

After any beat in a Fight Action, if you think you're gonna lose the next beat and you don't want to be taken down, you can instead choose to **Give In**. You have to decide this before you roll dice to raise the stakes—you need to make the decision before the dice leave your hand. When you Give In, the other side wins the fight, but you get to walk (or jump, or fall) from the scene, taking only a d6 Complication as a consequence (like BLOODIED D6 or EXHAUSTED D6). That Complication lasts until the end of the next scene, unless you take care of it earlier, and the Fixer decides what the Complication is. You get a Plot Point for Giving In, though, so it's not all bad.

You can, if you like, choose not to leave the scene but shift to somewhere else within it, in which case Giving In was more like giving ground to the opposition. Say you spent one beat going at it with the Mark's hired muscle in the stairwell, but he kept the advantage and you chose to Give In. You take that d6 Complication and move the fight to the parking structure, starting another Fight Action in the next beat. Of course, now the hired muscle has an extra die to roll thanks to your Complication. You sure you want to keep this up?

Ganging Up

Supporting Characters often gang up in the desperately misguided belief that more thugs are somehow more dangerous. You'd think they'd learn, but no amount of evidence seems to be able to persuade them. So, as long as they keep doing it, here's how you handle it.

Each additional opponent adds a single die to the opposition's dice pool equal to the highest Trait they could use in the fight. This doesn't change the number of dice added together to set or raise the stakes (it's still two), just the number of dice rolled. The most common example of this is a gang of six THUGS D6, which amounts to a roll of 6d6 (first thug is d6, each additional thug adds another d6, so it's 6d6). An Agent or a Foil can bring in a number of thugs as well to make life interesting, in which case it's the Agent or Foil's own dice plus those 6 extra dice. Good times.

Every time you raise the stakes against a side that's got multiple assisting characters, you also knock one of their dice away and they don't provide any more help. This represents whittling away the opposition, one ugly mook at a time. If you happen to raise the stakes by 5 or more with an Extraordinary Success, you take out two of the extra mooks instead of taking down the whole mob. Once you get down to a single opponent, though, no more dice get knocked off.

Example

Suppose Eliot's got an Irish mob problem in the form of a LEGBREAKER D8 MOBSTER D6 named McGinnis. If McGinnis grabs three of his IRISH MOBSTER D6 heavies to help him out, Eliot would be facing off against a roll of d8 + 4d6. Not so good. However, all Eliot has to do is raise the stakes three times in the fight and our boy's dropped the opposing dice to d8 + d6…and more and more likely to lose. If Eliot raises the stakes by 5 or more, he can knock off two of the heavies at once. Not bad.

You and your Crew can gang up in the same fashion, handing over a single die of the appropriate type to the player whose Crewmember is leading the charge. This is risky because if the opponent raises the stakes, that die gets removed, and the Crewmember is Taken Down (as if he had lost the fight). Most Crews find this risk is a good argument for letting the professionals do their jobs. Even if you help a Crewmember out on one roll, however, you can always choose to drop out before the dice are rolled to raise the stakes next time.

Contested Action Variations

Using the Fight Action rules above, you can also model other kinds of conflict. The only things you need to change are the Attributes and Roles involved, and what the Complications and consequences are for giving in. Remember, each time you're rolling those dice to raise the stakes you're doing something to swing the contest in your favor. You can even switch out the Attribute and Role you're using if you think the next move you make's a different tack.

Examples of other Contested Actions include seizing control of a computer network from a rival Hacker, outsmarting a rival Mastermind's tactics, successfully being the one to lift a wallet or security pass from a guy that another Thief is trying to pickpocket, or even getting another Grifter to slip up and out herself in front of a room full of cops.



Timed Actions

Parker's trying to break into a safe before the Mark's goons show up. Hardison's got a narrow window of time to override a building's security functions before Eliot and Sophie are trapped in the elevator. Nate's working a classic con at breakneck speed before the Mark figures out he's being played. These are all examples of **Timed Actions**, and they can involve the whole Crew if you want them to. Hey, many hands make light work, right?

When you do a Timed Action, the Fixer determines the opposition you're facing and how much time you have. Timed Actions use a series of Basic Actions, either several of the same kind (INTELLIGENCE + HACKER, for instance) or a series of different Basic Actions based on attempting something that has different steps (AGILITY + THIEF, then ALERTNESS + THIEF, then INTELLIGENCE + GRIFTER). The number of Basic Actions (the Fixer setting the stakes and you trying to roll higher) depends on the time limit the Fixer puts into place.

The time's measured in beats—the more beats, the longer you have. Each time you roll the dice, you lose one beat. Use checkboxes or tokens to keep track of beats. It's a countdown, because you've only got a finite amount of time; once that's gone, you're done.

If you **raise the stakes**, that means it only costs you the time you spent. An Extraordinary Success means you found a shortcut and don't lose any time at all. Don't lose a beat for that roll.

If you **fail to raise the stakes**, that means that part of the action took too long, and an additional beat is lost. Move on to the next stage of the Timed Action.

Running Out Of Time: If you run out of beats—zero or less—you're out of time, and probably caught in the act. You might have a chance to escape, depending on the situation, but you aren't able to finish your objective. The Fixer should have something in mind for when this happens, but if he doesn't, feel free to suggest something to the group and see what happens next.

Failing Doesn't Mean Game Over

Notice that I haven't said that you didn't succeed at completing your intended action. LEVERAGE is a game about people who are really good at what they do, and the Timed Action is a pacing mechanic. Of course Parker's going to break into that safe. Question is, can she do it before somebody comes in? How many Complications does she trigger by rolling 1s? Does she grab any Opportunities from the Fixer? Those are the places where major twists and turns happen, not in failing to roll higher than the opposition's dice.

Completing the Action: When the Fixer finishes with the obstacles planned for that Action and you succeed with time left, you've achieved your objectives (including a clean getaway, if that's what you're looking to do). If you succeed but have zero beats left, you have to choose between a clean getaway and achieving your objective.

Buying Time: If you're running dangerously low on time, the rest of the Crew might be able to help you out. They can make a Basic Action of their own—causing a diversion, trying to delay the Mark with conversation, eliminating some security guards—and with a success, they give you back one of the beats you've lost. If they get an Extraordinary Success, it's two beats. Failure means that Crewmember can't help any more for the rest of the Timed Action. No matter what, only one attempt at buying time can happen in between each step of the Timed Action.



Flashbacks

Flashbacks are one of your best tools in successfully completing a Job. They're a more advanced form of dramatic editing than using Plot Points to create Assets, because they essentially rewrite some of the story so far to make things turn in your favor. Flashbacks come in two varieties, the **Establishment Flashback** and the **Wrap-Up Flashback**. Here's how they work.

Establishment Flashbacks

The Establishment Flashback was introduced in *The Recruitment Job* on page 48 of **Chapter Three: The Crew** as a way to reveal backstory for your Crew, but it's a great technique to use on the Job as well. The key difference is that when it's used outside of Crew creation, an Establishment Flashback creates an Asset and fills in some of the story, thereby changing what is true about past events.

To use an Establishment Flashback, somebody has to trigger it, either one of the Fixer's Supporting Characters ("How do you plan to get out of this one?") or another Crewmember who's in the scene with you ("I sure hope you did that thing earlier.") You can then describe a brief monochromatic flashback moment of your Crewmember doing something, hand a Plot Point over to the Fixer or the player who triggered the flashback, and you've got a d6 Asset you can roll into your next action.

If you don't have anybody around to trigger the flashback for you, you can still make use of an Establishment Flashback. You hand over a Plot Point to the Fixer, like normal. In this case, however, you also have to roll for it. Describe the scene, but now roll dice appropriate to the Action you took in the past. The Fixer rolls his own dice to set the stakes, based on the situation (usually it's D6 +D6, but it could be more than that). If you raise the stakes, you get the Asset to use in the current scene. If you fail, you don't, but you've still introduced that reveal. It's up to the Fixer to explain why it doesn't necessarily help you out, even though it happened.

Example

Parker's in a desperate standoff and the Mark's holding the Client at gunpoint, threatening to kill him. Parker's player spends a Plot Point to flashback to Parker's earlier break-in to his office where she finds his gun in the drawer, removes the bullets and puts it back. The Fixer rolls D8 + D8 (hey, it was a locked drawer). She rolls her ALERTNESS + THIEF. If she rolls less than or equal to the Fixer's result, the Fixer describes a flashback to the Mark checking his gun, frowning, and reloading it. If she rolls higher, the Mark's gun isn't loaded and Parker now has an Asset like YOU'RE FIRING BLANKS D6.

Wrap-Up Flashbacks

A **Wrap-Up Flashback** is a series of Basic Actions played around the table by all the Crewmembers at the end of a Job or at some critical point. The Crew's Mastermind usually initiates it, because it uses the MASTERMIND Role and sets up a final blow against the Mark's own plans. Before you run one of these, make sure you've read over **Chapter Five: The Fixer** for advice and suggestions. Here's how it goes down.

Each Crewmember participating in the wrap-up plays out his own individual Establishment Flashback, setting up some cool thing he did that's gonna help the Mastermind out or tilt the odds in the Crew's favor. The Mastermind player can suggest an idea, but it's best if the other player uses what's already happened on the Job to think of the scene on his own. Going around the table, each player describes his flashback. They each spend a Plot Point in order to take part; the Mastermind can spend the Plot Point for the player, in which case he also gives the player his MASTERMIND die to add to the pool of dice.

In almost every case, the Crewmember is the active party and rolls dice first, setting the stakes. Then the Fixer rolls an appropriate response.

If the Fixer raises the stakes (rolling higher than the player) the Crewmember's efforts didn't have any real effect on the wrap-up. The Fixer can describe why it didn't help, but it's better to let the player do that. Own that screw-up! It'll make you a better person afterward. Trust me.

If the Fixer fails to raise the stakes (the player's roll remains the highest) the Crewmember gives the Mastermind a d6 Asset or may step up an existing Asset by one. No Asset can ever be stepped up higher than d12.

Don't worry about Complications on any of these Flashback scenes. If you roll a 1 when you're taking your turn in a Wrap-Up Flashback, it just gets left out of the result.

Once everybody but the Mastermind has had a shot at setting up the big reveal, it's the Mastermind's turn. His player rolls an appropriate Attribute (usually INTELLIGENCE or ALERTNESS, but exceptions might present themselves) + MASTERMIND, also adding in all of the Assets his Crew produced for him (and any

that were already out there). The Fixer then rolls for the Mark, throwing in as many Complications and other things that weigh in the Mark's favor as currently are in play; this is no time to be timid.

If the Fixer doesn't raise the stakes above the Mastermind's player, then that's usually it for the Mark. His plans unravel, he flees the coop, or his Agents and Extras turn on him. The details are generally contingent on the Job itself, the story so far, and so on. **Chapter Five: The Fixer** has more on how this connects to the Job, but if you're looking for the big showdown, this is it.

If the Fixer raises the stakes, the Mark's gonna get away with it… almost. See, the Crew has done enough to blow the lid off the Mark's plans, exposed the Client's grievances, or spoiled the whole arrangement. The rub is that the Mark's not going to face his accuser. Luckily, there's always the next Job, where the Crew goes up against the Mark in a different location with a new caper. Bottom line is, the Client should end up with some good news, even if it's not the outcome the Crew wanted. Again, manage this sort of thing with the help of **Chapter Five: The Fixer**.

Wrap-Up Flashbacks in the Middle of the Job

Sometimes there's good reason to run a Wrap-Up Flashback after the second act, especially if it's to take care of some initial plot that's suddenly going to twist into a whole new mess. If that's the case, maybe the Mark in question is revealed to be a proxy, and the Foil the Crew met earlier is the real Mark. Or maybe the Client is the Mark, and the Mark was just an innocent dupe. Either way, if you're going to keep the story going after one of these wrap-ups, the Crew gets an Asset equal to the highest-rated Asset they produced in the Wrap-Up Flashback, for use later in the Job against the "real" Mark. Even if it's just I THOUGHT I SMELLED A RAT D6, it's still a bonus.

The Next Steps

So now you, the players, have all the basic information you need to play the game. We talked about Traits and when to roll which ones. We talked about Assets and Complications, and how they're used to throw curveballs into the caper. Finally, we talked a lot about how beats and scenes compose the flow of the narrative, and how actions determine the direction the narrative takes.

The Fixer, on the other hand, still needs a bit more training. That's what's coming next, in **Chapter Five: The Fixer** and **Chapter Six: The Toolbox**. Those chapters talk about how to create capers for the players to run through, and give advice and examples of non-player characters, locations, and situations for the players to encounter. Under no circumstances should the players read those chapters.

And if you, as a player, don't immediately disobey that last advice and go read those chapters, you've not yet adopted the correct mindset for the LEVERAGE *RPG*. Go steal yourself a roleplaying game!



The Fixer

Running the Game

The Fixer

So at this point your players have recruited the Crew, they know how to do those things they do, and you've got a reasonable understanding of the nature of the Job. Let's go steal us a… a what? They need a problem to solve.

In this chapter, first we'll talk a bit about the heist and caper story genre. Then we'll get into specifics: creating Jobs and what you need to take care of, planning-wise. We'll also talk about Assets and Complications from the Fixer's point of view, and discuss some tips and tricks of the trade of being a Fixer.

Crooks and Capers: The Heist Genre

LEVERAGE is all about crooks and the crimes they commit, whether they're doing it for justice or profit. Criminals commit crimes, by definition, but any thug with a gun can manage such low feats. Members of the Crew are better than that. They aspire to get away with the greatest crimes in the world, to make an art of their craft. They want to pull off the highest—and most fun—form of crime: a caper.

The real difference between the Crew and even the most talented criminals, though, is that a Crew commits those crimes for a purpose much higher than anything as petty as money or power or prestige. The Crew pulls capers for justice.

Justice has precious little to do with the law. They're regular bedmates, but just because they're nominally shacking up with each other doesn't mean they're the same thing or even kissing cousins. We've all seen crooks use the law to their advantage, whether it's as simple as getting off on a technicality or as complex as lobbying for deregulation to bring down the walls between banks and investments firms to secure larger funding for developing and trading risky and unproven stock market derivatives.

Justice doesn't need the law, though. It just needs people who care enough to make it happen, to do what's necessary to ensure that those who deserve a fair shake get it. To not turn aside from those in need.

That's where the Crew comes in. It's the Crew's job to ignore the law—even to flaunt it—to help fill that ever-increasing gap between what's legal and what's right.

Discussion of Genre

A caper is a crime or series of crimes that require skill, daring, and most off all ambition to pull off. Without that, a Crew is just a gang, a group of people who rely on each other for brute force or intimidation and little else. That's no way for a talented tribe of thieves to live.

Stealing things is easy. Getting away with it is hard.

Smart thieves want to make the big score, but they don't want to suffer any unwanted repercussions from the crime. It's no good stealing the Hope Diamond and fencing it for enough cash to while away the rest of your years on a beach in Monaco if Interpol shows up a week later to ruin your party.

Making sure that a Crew can manage to enjoy the ill-gotten fruits of a theft often requires a caper. Most capers involve nonviolent crimes perpetrated for profit, revenge, or both. They usually include theft, robbery, swindles, and the occasional kidnapping.

The Three-Act Structure

Most capers use the classic three-act structure. LEVERAGE is a bit of an exception for a couple reasons, but let's cover the standard caper first.

In the first act, the Crew learns of an opportunity for a caper. Often this involves a clear-set goal like, "Knock over the Federal Reserve" or "Make sure that the target can never hurt someone in this way again." The best capers involve not just a tempting target but



also a personal reason for the Crew to want to take it down. Stealing Michelangelo's prototypes for the David is fantastic, but doing it as part of a plan to take down an evil insurance company executive is far better.

The Crew then evaluates the situation and comes up with a plan for how to pull off the caper. With some capers, this can also involve assembling a team capable of handling the plan. While most Crews have a core team composed of members with essential tasks, sometimes they need to bring in someone with specialized skills—or just to have an extra set of trusted hands available.

In the second act, once the plan is set, the Crew executes the crime. This is a tense part of any caper and usually includes encountering and resolving unanticipated wrinkles in the plan. Few schemes survive contact with reality intact, and it's up to the Crew to amend the plan on the fly.

In traditional capers, the second act ends when the Crew successfully pulls off the crime. In LEVERAGE and other modern capers, the actual success is often delayed until the end of the show, mixing the second and third acts.

In the final act, the Crew must then get away with its ill-gotten gains. In traditional caper stories, this often involves internal complications as members of the Crew turn on each other now that they no longer have an immediate need for each other. That's far more rare with a Crew with hearts of gold.

Structure the Leverage Way

LEVERAGE uses a five-act structure. For those scholars out there, this has nothing at all to do with the traditional five-act dramatic structure cribbed from Shakespeare and ancient Greek dramas. It's based around commercials.

LEVERAGE is shown on TV. That means that the show needs an act break—or at least a decent don't-go-away break of some sort—before every set of commercials.

Like most hour-long TV dramas, LEVERAGE works with five acts of roughly eight minutes each because of this. Some have even moved up to six acts.

A roleplaying game doesn't have to deal with these sorts of concerns, of course. In theory, you have all the time in the world for your games and no commercial concerns to bother with. However to keep things moving along, it's helpful to think of your game as an ongoing series of acts with solid breaks between them. At the very least, these breaks offer good places for players to take a minute to stretch their legs or even to end the game for the night.

LEVERAGE actually works with the three-act structure, but it adds in the extra two acts by complicating things. It breaks down something like this:

1. Something horrible happens and the innocents affected approach the Crew for help.
2. The Crew researches the caper, and the Mastermind pitches a solution to the Crew.
3. The Crew sets the caper into motion but stumbles into a complication that they can't ignore.
4. The Crew overcomes the first complication but encounters a much bigger complication. By this time, they're in too deep to consider walking away.
5. The Crew overcomes the largest complication and gets away with the caper. This is often capped with restitution given to the innocents who were introduced in the first act.

To keep your game feeling as close to a LEVERAGE story as possible, you'll want to stick to this rough structure.

A Sense of Humor

LEVERAGE sometimes deals with serious issues—horrific things, even—but the atmosphere of the show helps keep things light. The heroes tease each other. They laugh at their own expense. At the end of the day, they're friends, maybe even a surrogate family.

Keeping a sense of humor running through a caper is what separates it from a standard heist story. We need to root for the thieves, and if they're a bunch of murderous, cold-hearted baby-stompers, that's impossible to do. This is especially true in a roleplaying game in which the players are those thieves. Keeping it fun and light gives the players the distance they need to enjoy the caper rather than endure it.

Creating a Job

Now, we're getting to the real planning stages, the part of this operation that requires the Fixer to make those big decisions and lay the whole thing out.

To create a good Job, you have to know where to start, how to answer the big questions, settle the endgame, and present the briefing. Once you've done this a time or two, you can do it all on the fly. But when you're stuck, you're short of ideas, or you're a stickler for procedure, just come on back here and do it by the numbers.

Instant Caper Creation—Just Add Dice

Sitting down at the table having done no preparation, having no idea what to run, and having no time to plan it out in detail? Relax, we've got you covered. Skip this section and go straight to the Situation Generator in **Chapter Six: The Toolbox** (page 138).

Make sure you come back and read this when you get a chance, of course—you don't want to miss out on this chapter's information.

Knowing Where to Start

When you first sit down to think up a compelling Job for your Crew, it can seem like there are so many options that you get paralyzed. Thankfully, every Job boils down to three things, and if you can answer a few questions about those, the pieces tend to just fall into place.



Those three essential parts are a Client, a Mark and a problem. These things are all, well, they're all *intertwined*—the Client has a problem which leads back to the Mark—but it's easier to start with one of them and build out from there.

Starting with the Client

The Client's both the most and least important member of the trio—he's essential to drawing in the Crew and getting things started, but he rarely has any direct impact on the Job. There're exceptions, such as Jobs where the Crew needs to work with the Client, but even then the Client is a means to an end, and in this case, the end is getting the Crew into position to take the Job. It's hard to plan a Job from the Client first because a Client without a problem isn't a Client at all.

Starting with the Problem

It's much easier to start with a problem. For that you'll need some inspiration, and the best possible option for that is the evening news. Bad things happening to people—that's the basis for almost any news story that doesn't involve pet tricks. Keep an eye out for those stories that revolve around bad things done by one person to another. If you're lucky, they also involve court cases or the threat of going to court. Once you find a juicy topic, you can start turning it into a Job.

Starting with the Mark

If you want to start with the Mark, then pay attention to your own gut. You see someone speak on TV, maybe a pundit, a politician, or pseudo-celebrity. They can get under your skin, huh? Consider what it would mean if they're really as bad as you think they are.

Once you've found an inspiration, the first thing to do is to look at them through a dramatic eye. Most of these real world situations are complex and nuanced, often with no clear good or bad guy. You need to twist the situation. Make it more black and white. Thankfully,

the media itself often helps with that—news networks like to zero in on "the human angle" every now and again. When a hedge fund goes bad, they don't focus on the guy whose net worth just dropped from $700 million to $500 million. No, they focus on a pension plan for some teachers in a small town somewhere.

The Big Questions

Once you've got an initial idea, the trick is filling in the rest of the Job. Now, if you're lucky, your initial inspiration has already given you all the ideas you need. If so, great. You're ready to start planning the Job itself. But if you're not so lucky as that, then there are a lot of patterns among the problems, Marks, and Clients that you can use to your advantage.

We've broken these down into a few questions and provided a number of answers for each one. Starting from your seed idea, ask yourself these questions and build a Job out of the answers. The sample answers should provide guidelines, but they're far from gospel. No, no, sometimes the answer's some combo of sample answers and sometimes it's another idea entirely. Look to the answers as inspiration, but don't feel shackled by them.

> Sharp eyes will notice that each of these questions has a list of sample answers that are fairly general. If you're in a hurry looking for inspiration for your Job, just run through the questions and pick one answer for each question and see what that suggests to you.

What Is the Problem?

Most problems come back to the same basic injustice—the Client's got a right to something; the Mark's taken it. The something might be their home, their health, their money, nearly anything else they value. Whatever the problem, there's a direct line between it and the Mark.



Contested Ownership—The Mark's claiming ownership of something of the Client's and the Client lacks the resources to fight him off.

Harm Inflicted—The Client (or someone close to him) has been hurt or killed by the Mark. It might be as direct as a violent act or as abstract as a disease brought on by the Mark's illegal dumping practices.

Loss—The Client's lost something valuable to the Mark and wants it back.

Crushed Underfoot—The Client was harmed by the side effects of the Mark's action. When the Mark bribed the city inspector to condemn a city block, he wasn't even thinking about the people he was forcing out—his priority was the mixed-use residential center his company was gonna put up.

Why Come to the Crew?

One important thing you need to decide about the problem is why it can't be resolved through legal channels. While the courts may not be perfect, they do exist to protect people from the worst sort of exploitation. If the courts aren't an option, then it's usually for one of the following reasons:

The Mark and the Problem

There's usually a direct connection between the Mark and the problem (though not necessarily to the *Client*). If a company has done something bad, that doesn't automatically make the CEO the Mark—in a large company, it's quite possible that bad action can be legitimately hidden. In this sort of case, the Mark's the person who made the actual decisions. The rest of the company might come down with him, but if the Mark's unaware of the *reason* justice has come for him, then its impact is blunted.

Time and Resources—Trials take time and money, and sometimes the Client has neither. Often, even if they win the case, the Clients end up losing everything important because it takes too long or they have to sell everything they own to pay the lawyers.

No Legal Recourse—Sometimes the problem's wrong, but not illegal. It may be that the Mark's exploiting a loophole in the law, or it might be that the Client signed an agreement without understanding what it entailed.

Miscarriage of Justice—The courts don't always work, especially if someone has his thumb on the scales of justice. The Client has already turned to legal options and failed. Their case may not have been strong enough, but more likely, the Mark bribed or intimidated key witnesses or falsified evidence.

Vulnerability—The Client may simply be afraid. The Mark may be a dangerous man, or the Client might be unwilling to put his loved ones through the problems that come of attracting the ire of the Mark.

Notice that all the reasons why someone might come to the Crew involve the possibility that the Mark did something underhanded, like threaten witnesses or intentionally use lawyers to bleed the Clients dry. While this isn't mandatory, unless you have some specific reason not to, the Mark should absolutely be up to those sorts of shenanigans, either directly or indirectly.

What's the Mark's Angle?

Very few people actually spend their time twirling their mustaches and rubbing their hands in glee at the evil they've accomplished. Everyone's the hero of his own story, and the Mark's no different. To his eyes, everything he does is necessary, if not outright beneficial.

It's Just Business—This rationalization's probably more common than any other. Maybe the Mark was a decent sort once, but he's cut enough corners and made

enough dark compromises along the way to think that it's the only way to do things, and anyone who thinks otherwise is hopelessly naïve He may regret what he does—or more likely pretend to regret it—but he wouldn't change it.

I Deserve It—Entitlement's a powerful motivation, and an especially poignant one in the context of the Job, since it's only a little bit different than the Client, who also feels he deserves something. A Mark like this can seem especially reprehensible, but he also can cast a twisted reflection of the Crew and what they do.

It's For Their Own Good—Sometimes the Mark's burning the village to save the village. As is usually the case with such things, what's really going on is that the Mark has a particular vision of how things should be, and he has convinced himself that that vision's so much better than all alternatives that the cost of pursuing it doesn't matter.

To Hell With Them—So, every now and again the Mark's a genuinely bad guy, the kind who doesn't flinch at hurting or even killing people. He might be a violent criminal or a shameless exploiter of the misfortunate. Such a Mark thinks that's just the way the world works, and usually thinks he gets away with it because most people aren't "strong" or "clear-sighted" enough to do the same.

Why's the Mark Untouchable?

Every Mark has one thing in common: there's some reason why his actions haven't come back to bite him on his ass. If there is any justice in the world, the Mark has managed to avoid it…until now, that is.

Rich—The Mark's most often protected from the consequences of his actions by a thick layer of wealth. Money can buy many things—some legal and some not—and most often he can simply spend problems into submission.

Connected—The Mark has friends in high places. While he himself may have some wealth or power, the people he knows have much, much more. He plays golf with the judge who rules in his favor, or he's got blackmail material on the scientist who's proven his product's killing people. His problems tend to go away with a single phone call.

Powerful—The Mark's a person of authority. This doesn't necessarily mean he's a national figure—the big fish in a small pond can be as hard to touch as any US Senator or judge because everything he cares about (and the problems he causes) are within the domain where he exercises maximum control.

Smart—Sometimes the Mark's just a slippery weasel who stays one step ahead of his own problems. Maybe he's a con man running a scam, maybe he's just very, very thorough about covering his tracks. Whatever the case, these are the ones to look out for.

Scary—It's hard to pursue justice against someone who will respond with a handgun or a severe beating. If the Mark's a dangerous person, that alone is enough to keep him safe from most retribution.

What's the Mark's Weakness?

Everyone has flaws, and the Mark's no different than the rest of us. In fact, by virtue of the kind of person he is, he's probably a bit worse. In and of themselves, these character flaws aren't a problem for the Mark—in fact, they probably help him do whatever it is that he does—but they provide useful points where one might be able to get a little, ah, leverage.

Arrogant—The Mark's certain that he's just that much better than anyone he deals with. He appreciates the company of people who fit his criteria of what constitutes worthwhile, especially if they recognize his obvious genius or talent.

Obsessed—Something's important enough to the Mark that he's willing to make bad decisions to pursue it. He might be a collector, or be seeking revenge, but whatever the subject of his obsession, it clouds his

judgment. He's not gonna be outright stupid in this pursuit, but he's likely to be a bit more sloppy than usual.

Tyrannical—The Mark needs to be in charge. Whether this means he's an obsessive micromanager or a bellowing drill sergeant, he must be in control. This means he's constantly suspicious of the loyalty of his people and the accuracy of his information.

Fearful—The Mark's terrified of something, and what he does is in an effort to stave that off. Maybe he has a secret that can't see the light of day, maybe he has old enemies, maybe he's a fraud. It's possible the fear is the thing that could take down the Mark, but more often the fear merely provides a route to the real heart of the matter.

Needy—The Mark needs acknowledgement for what he's done. This may mean the acclaim of his peers, elevation into a different social group, or simply the recognition of his family.

Loyal—The Mark's loyal to someone or something who is probably unaware of what he's up to. That loyalty's profound enough that the Mark's willing to go to great lengths in its service, and he might even be a true believer, especially in cases where the Mark thinks his actions are helping the person or group who has his loyalty.

Facade—The Mark's not what he appears. Maybe his identity's forged, maybe he's on the run, maybe his whole business exists solely on paper. Something about him is fake.

Where's the Mark Vulnerable?

Every Mark has a weakness. This isn't limited to character flaws: almost every Mark's arrogant, misanthropic, or otherwise possessed of profound character flaws that result in him being the kind of person that needs to be taken down. No, this is deeper than that. Every Mark has a path to failure that he works to avoid. It's the team's job to put the Mark squarely on that path.





Reputation—Public officials and celebrities need to be very careful of their reputations because a breakdown of their public façade can destroy them utterly. Unfortunately, this can be hard to make stick—people have a bad habit of bouncing back from scandal and reinventing themselves. The good news is that people who depend on reputation to a bad end also tend to be ambitious, and there's usually some next thing they are striving for (a nomination, a bigger audience, the chance to direct) which they are sure to lose if unpleasant truths are revealed. This reveals the trick: reputation seems like the biggest vulnerability because it's so easy to just find (or create) something bad and let it out into the wild, but that simply doesn't work. Unless the reveal is clear, timely, and more than a little bit poetic, then it's gonna vanish by the end of the next news cycle.

Superiors—Whether it's a boss in a bigger office, shareholders, or a board of directors, most people are accountable to somebody, and that somebody has the power to bring down the hammer if they're given a big enough push. The Crew's just the right tool to give that push.

Criminal Activity—On paper, this is pretty clear-cut. The Mark's doing something illegal, and bringing it to light in the right way is enough to bring him down. Unfortunately, this tends to be much more complicated in practice because, much to everyone's surprise, criminals are a sneaky and troublesome bunch. Even if the Mark's not a danger alone, his associates might well be.

House of Cards—If the Mark's running a scam of his own, odds are good he's overextended (or can be persuaded to become overextended). So long as he can keep all the balls in the air then everything's good, but if someone were to knock that out of whack…

Timeline—The Mark's sometimes on a timeline of his own. Maybe an investigation's about to begin. He might be due to make a payout he can't afford. There could be a big vote coming. Whatever it is, the Mark needs to have his ducks in a row for something coming in the very near future.

Enemies—The Mark has enemies who are waiting for an opportunity to strike.

Who Else Is In Play?

No man is an island, and for Marks that's even more true. Most Marks surround themselves with subordinates, supporters, or sycophants. Most of those aren't really worth noticing as anything other than background color, but there are often a few exceptions. Trained bodyguards, skilled advisors, or even determined enemies all can play an important part in the Job, for better or for worse. Those who support the Mark might potentially change sides (flip), while those who don't can complicate the situation.

The Enforcer—If the Mark's no great shakes with the violence and crime (or even if he is), the Enforcer's a specialist in this domain. He might be a leg breaker or a bodyguard, but he represents a physical threat to anyone who crosses the Mark.

The Guilty Conscience—An advisor or employee of the Mark, he's uncomfortable with the things he's seen. He's not yet ready to turn against his boss, but with a bit of persuading or the appropriate opportunity, he might change sides.

The Loose End—Someone knows more than he should. This person represents a threat to the Mark, though the loose end may be unaware of the importance of what he knows. Depending on how much of a threat he is, the Mark may be *very* interested in his fate.

The Vizier—The flipside of the enforcer, this is the brains behind the operation. Serving as the Marks majordomo, he's one smart cookie whose self-interest is strongly tied to the Mark's. He's unlikely to flip out of any moral consideration, but practical concerns (like protecting his own skin) may be persuasive enough. If he does flip, he can be a treasure trove of useful information.

The Innocent—This is the person the Mark hides his nature from, usually a family member or a loved one. To the innocent, the Mark's a loving, generous patron, and they'd be appalled if the truth ever came out. The innocent might have important information on the Mark without realizing it (and thus might share it without understanding its importance). Alternately, the innocent might be hurt or appalled if the truth is revealed. While this almost certainly hurts the Mark, its practical benefit is highly situational.

The Wildcard—This is someone with another agenda entirely that just happens to intersect with the Mark and the Job. An old enemy looking for revenge, a thief looking to make a quick buck, or the guy sleeping with the Mark's wife might all be good wildcards. Whatever his goals, the wildcard has a bad habit of messing things up at just the wrong time.

The Inspector—The Mark needs to impress or otherwise gain the approval of this guy. Maybe it's the SEC investigator he's hiding his paper trail from or the Hollywood agent reviewing his proposal for a new reality show. He's got the Mark's fate in his hands and, as a result, he makes an excellent center point for a Job. The classic con is to take the inspector out of play and take his place, but even if the inspector's in play, he makes a great Foil.

The Dupe—The Mark has completely pulled the wool over this guy's eyes. He's not a bad guy, but he may seem that way due to his support of the Mark—it's even possible that this guy may be the original Mark, but in reality the Crew should be after someone else. The dupe's sure to flip at some point, but there's a good chance that event will do nothing more than add to the confusion.

The Holdout—This is the last honest man in a small town, or the lawyer fighting a desperate holding action against a legal team whose Italian suits are worth more than he sees in a month. He's positioned himself firmly against the Mark, but he doesn't have the means to take him down. If he's enough of a gadfly, the Mark might take some action against him, but mostly he's just pounding his head against the wall. He might be an ally for the Crew if approached correctly, but this can be tricky because the same principles that allow him

to stand against the Mark may mean he's unwilling to countenance the Crew's methods. Alternately, he may be the means of taking down the Mark, if the right information can make it into his hands.

Supporting Cast and the Client

Sometimes one of these characters turns out to be the Client, or more aptly, the Client may turn out to be one of these characters. As an example, in *The Homecoming Job*, the Client turns out to be the loose end.

Changing It Up

In most situations, the framework of the Job is roughly the same: the Client lays out his problem to the Crew, the Crew looks into the Mark, plans a Job, and resolves the problem. The Job itself will be sufficiently full of twists and challenges to keep the Crew plenty busy, so it's a good formula, but every now and again, something messes up that comfortable familiarity and puts a spin on things. As the Fixer, you're not obliged to mix things up like this, but once you feel like you've really gotten the hang of coming up with Jobs, you may find that these curveballs make the planning process go more smoothly.

A few solid tricks you can bring to bear:

It's Personal—A member of the Crew may know the Client or the Mark. If he knows the Client, he might push the Crew to make riskier decisions than normal because it's important to him. Alternately, if the Crewmember dislikes the Client, he may find himself in the position of doing the Job for someone he despises. If the Crewmember knows the Mark it can be good or bad. If they're old enemies, it makes things more complicated (because the Crewmember's face is probably known) but it makes it all the sweeter when the Mark goes down. But what if the Mark is (or was) a friend? That can muddle things a great deal. *Examples: The Two Horse Job*, *The Two Live Crew Job*.

Playing Defense—One of the defining elements of the Job is that the Crew's on offense. They make the plans, take action, and keep the Mark off balance and on the defensive. But every now and again the situation demands that the Crew act *now*, without the benefit of planning or preparation. Often this sort of complication occurs in the middle of a Job, but sometimes it's the whole of the Job, either as a result of the Crew stepping into a bad situation or because they're operating under a time constraint. *Example: The Bottle Job.*

Press a Button—Even if the Crew's not personally involved in a situation, it's possible that it speaks to them in a personal way. When a Job pushes their buttons, it can raise the stakes, but it can also lead to bad decisions. *Example: The Stork Job.*

Missing Piece—One of the pieces of the Job is missing or wrong. Usually the Crew has a pretty complete picture of the situation when they make their plan, but that's not guaranteed. Sometimes, the Client's not who he appears to be. Sometimes the apparent Mark's not the real source of the problem. *Example: The Inside Job.*

Interested Party—A third party, like the FBI or a criminal organization, has an interest in the Mark or the Client, and makes that interest known. *Examples: The Wedding Job, The Maltese Falcon Job.*

Settling on the Endgame

Once you have a firm idea of the Client, Mark, and problem, then you've laid a foundation to build the Job around. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the next step to consider is the endgame. The expectation is that you can fill in the intervening space once you know where it's going. As an architectural metaphor, building the foundation, then the roof, and then the house may seem a little unsound. As a means of creating a caper, it's rock-solid.



Odds are good that you already have a sense of the endgame that's been suggested by the Mark's weakness and vulnerability—the Crew takes advantage of the Mark's weakness to get an in, and then exposes his Achilles' Heel. If he's arrogant but has superiors, they convince him that he can usurp his bosses, then leave him out to dry. If he's obsessed but sitting on a house of cards, they tempt him with the thing he wants, get him to overextend himself, then let it all fall down. The exact details are gonna be fuzzy, but the general shape of the Mark's downfall should be pretty clear in your mind.

Once you can see that, you can start filling in those details to make it a possibility.

The Fix

First, look at the problem and make sure that the Mark's fall actually fixes it. If the Mark's taken a direct hand in the problem then this should happen pretty much automatically, but sometimes the Mark's far enough removed that his fall won't directly impact the Client. In that case, plan ahead a bit—think of insurance payouts or funds in escrow that might come loose when the Mark falls. It probably won't require anything very complicated to arrange, but it's better to plan for this now than scramble to figure it out at the end of the Job.

Create Openings

Next, figure out how *people* figure into the plan. This is an important but sometimes non-obvious step to the process. The Crew (or at least some of them) are gonna have to insert themselves into the Mark's world, and they'll need some sort of opening to do this. It's easiest if the Mark has a concrete need that the Crew can step in to fill (as in *The Wedding Job*) but it's possible that the Crew might be able to create a need (as in *The Miracle Job*). Whatever the case, you need to think about this now because the caper's not likely to work without some access to the Mark.

Obviously, getting close to the Mark and establishing trust with him is the Crew's responsibility, and you don't want to hand that to them on a silver platter. Instead, you want to make sure the opportunity's there for them to pursue. One good trick for this is to think about what the Mark does to establish the trustworthiness of the people he deals with, usually in the form of some manner of test, either of identity or commitment. He might ask a leading question or make a factual misstatement to test the Crewmember, or he might do something as drastic as handing him a gun and demanding that he use it. This test's an intricate dance, because the Mark feels like he's establishing dominance here, but in reality the Crewmember's pulling the wool over his eyes. This exchange is less important for the specifics of the test than it is for establishing the rapport between the Crewmember and the Mark.

The Point of Leverage

To this point, we've got a general idea of the Mark's weakness and problems, but you now need to figure out the exact form they take. This is typically a thing or an opportunity.

A thing (sometimes called a MacGuffin) is easier to plan for and makes a good crutch for a new Fixer, but it's easy to depend on too much, so be careful not to overuse this approach. The thing may be something concrete (like a flash drive, a file, or a pile of dirty money) or abstract but discrete (like a password or the location of a toxic waste dump), but whatever form it takes, it represents the endgame of the Job. If the MacGuffin's acquired and put in the right hands, then that's enough to bring down the Mark.

An opportunity's a little bit trickier to pull off and depends a lot more heavily on the creativity of the Crew. While the Crew just needs to identify a thing and come up with a plan to acquire it, opportunities require a little reading of the tealeaves. This is the classic con—the Crew needs to convince the Mark that something's true that requires him to take action, and that action leads to his downfall. *The Nigerian Job* is a great example of this—by convincing Dubenich that he's been conned by the "fake" Nigerians, the LEVERAGE Crew gets Dubenich to do exactly what they need him to do—call the FBI in to investigate the situation. Because they know that's the endgame, they know what sort of preparations to make, like turning the Nigerian's bribe into cash, hiding it, and using the cover of the raid to get the hard drive they need. While it's more complicated to pull off, an opportunity tends to be a great deal more rewarding for everyone involved.

So which way should you go? The real metric for this is the Crew. If they're hesitant and not yet comfortable making the kind of audacious plans that an opportunity requires, then you fall back to a thing, but you might be surprised what happens if you give them the benefit of the doubt. If you're not entirely sure, then prepare a possible thing, but don't introduce it immediately. If the Crew seems like they'll come up with a working plan, then just leave it in your back pocket. If they find themselves frustrated, pull it out as something they can discover as part of their work.

Build the Stage

The biggest and most open-ended question you need to ask is *where*'s this Job taking place. The good news? There are usually only a handful of important locations for any Job. If there's enough time for events to wander all over the map then something has gone very wrong. The Crew should be working hard to control the tempo of events—giving the Mark less time to stop and think about things—and that tends to mean that things are fairly limited in terms of time and space. Figure out a few important locations like the Mark's base of operations and perhaps a location tied to the problem, then sketch them up. You don't need more than a few notes about each location, just enough to be able to use them when they come up in play. For more ideas about what you can do with locations, check out "Places" in **Chapter Six: The Toolbox** on page 127.

> One thing that may make your life a little bit easier is to build a library of "stock" locations for when you need, say, a bank or post office in a pinch. The trick for doing this is simple: keep your eyes open when you're running errands, and when you find yourself in a place, take a moment to think about how you'd use it in a game. Look around your bank, take a picture of it in your mind, and the next time you need a bank for your game, use that one. Having that clear image in your mind makes running the scene much easier.



What Can Go Wrong?

At this point you should have enough in place that your players can construct the basics of a plan. You know the Mark's strengths and weaknesses, you know how he can be taken down. You know how players are gonna be able to work themselves into the situation and where they're gonna be able to apply leverage to change the situation. You have a roadmap for the success of the Job, and that's fantastic.

Now comes time to think about where things can go off the rails. What unexpected twists could come up over the course of the Job to throw things into disarray and force the players to improvise madly?

To answer this, first consider that the plan should always be a good one. If the plan's profoundly flawed, that should be sorted out during the briefing. Once things start rolling, the plan should work. But that doesn't mean it *will* work.

This might seem a bit counterintuitive, so step back for a second and consider it from this perspective. The plan's good enough and the Crew are skilled enough that everything should unfold by the numbers. When something goes wrong, it should not be because the plan is bad or because the Crew's inept, but because the *situation* has changed.

When the situation changes, the plan may stop being useful. If this happens while the plan's in action, that can get pretty messy. That's good and bad—on one hand it means the players are gonna have to think fast and play hard to adapt, but on the other hand it can upset players who will either beat themselves up for not seeing it coming or beat you up for cheating them with a bait and switch.

Both of these are bad outcomes, so make sure that the reveal or twist's one that the *players* find satisfying, even if the Crew might hate it. That means you either need to drop hints in advance (little inconsistencies go a long way towards this) or the twist needs to be so big and so blatant that the players can't possibly kick themselves for not seeing it coming. Consider *The Bank Job*—the bank robbery complicates the Job a great deal but it's not like the Crew made a mistake in not planning for the possibility that someone would try to rob the bank while they were there. It was unreasonably unlikely to occur—no one thinks Nate's

less smart for having failed to consider it. Your players will feel the same way.

However, that kind of event depends on coincidence to pull off well. If you plan it well, it ties into events so that it makes sense in retrospect that it happened just then, but you can only have so many coincidences before they start to stretch credulity. Thankfully, there are other tricks to pull.

One's to pull the twist on the Mark. If things go wrong and the situation changes, but it doesn't directly impact the Crew, players will be much more forgiving, especially since that kind of twist might require a response, but it doesn't put them on the defensive the way a problem with the plan might.

Even better? Twist that success. Plan goes off exactly as it should, everyone gets to rock out in their particular role, but the outcome of the success isn't what was expected. The safe with the old lady's deed also contains a human head in ice. The Mark crumples like tissue paper but reveals someone's been pulling his strings. Whatever it is, it demands some new course of action.

But after you've put all that thought into this, take a moment, step back, and think of how you want to use these twists. Sometimes you'll want to base a Job on a twist—give the Crew a Job that they can pull off easily, but then reveal a big twist to throw them into a new mess. More often you just want to keep these options on hand in case you need them. A lot of unexpected events are gonna happen over the course of any given game, and if you go in expecting to be able to use all the twists you've planned then you're likely to be disappointed (or you're gonna be jamming a square peg in a round hole). Hang onto the ideas and wait for the opportunity to use them. Your players (or their bad dice luck) will give you opportunities and they'll feel much more natural than if you'd tried to shoehorn them in.

The Briefing

Once you've got all this settled into your own mind, it's gonna be time to communicate this to your players. In many games, you would be sharing only a fraction of the information you've put together with the players, expecting them to investigate and gather the rest on their own, but we're gonna abbreviate that process in the interest of getting to the good parts.

Structurally, the briefing phase of a game's composed of three parts: the pitch, the presentation, and the plan.

The Pitch

The pitch is the hook into the Job for the team and often takes the form of an interview with the Client who tells his story and asks for help. This should be a short scene, and it may not involve the whole group. The novelty can wear off these interviews very quickly—you can only play so many people with sad stories before they start running together—and they stay fresh only as long as your players enjoy them. These are excellent opportunities for characters to play around, but don't force it.



If the Client's going to take an active role in the Job, this interview's a good idea, but otherwise you can always fold the pitch into the presentation with a single line of "This is our Client, and this is what happened to him" but only do that when the Mark's enough of a jerk to make his fall satisfying in its own right, since removing the Client from the picture also removes their gratitude at the end, or at least renders it kind of hollow.

The pitch isn't always an interview. Sometimes events draw the Crew in more directly, like the car crash at the outset of *The Beantown Job* or an old friend walking into the bar in *The Zanzibar Marketplace Job*. These scenes are a lot of fun to play, but you do need to make sure that they hook in the Crew. When the old friend makes a proposition, it needs to be a compelling one, otherwise there's no need to say yes.

The Presentation

This is the point at which you give the players the information they need for the Job. There are three main ways you can do this—direct, handoff, or contested.

A direct briefing's from you to the players. Before you begin, you'll want to consider if there's any information you don't want to give them. Obviously, you won't reveal the potential twists (though you may hint at them) but beyond that you'll want to have a good reason to withhold any information. Most often, you may be inclined to withhold the Mark's flaw or the potential points of leverage, and that's fine, but only if you give the players a clear course of action for finding those things. Consider, for example, *The Homecoming Job*; at the outset, the Crew doesn't know what the situation is, but a round of party-crashing and breaking and entering later and they have most of what they need to know.

The direct briefing can be a little bit on the dry side since it's a pure infodump, and you can't even really jazz it up with roleplaying because the Fixer isn't really in the game delivering this information to the characters.

The handoff takes a little more work, but it also is a lot more fun. It requires that you write up your notes for the presentation beforehand and give them to the Mastermind (or whichever Crewmember will be giving the presentation). Let them review it and then communicate it to the rest of the Crew. This can be a fun scene to play out, especially because it introduces the opportunity for some hidden information. Since you've done up the presentation in advance, you can include some information the Mastermind might know that he might not choose to share in the briefing. You can even provide packets for other Crewmembers if it's appropriate for the Job.

The downside is that this requires some preparation in advance of the game, and as much as that's a good habit, it's not always gonna happen. Still, can't hurt to try.

Dialing Up the Presentation to Eleven

If you (or the Mastermind) are feeling very ambitious, there's no reason you can't turn the presentation into a full multimedia presentation using slideshow software like PowerPoint and (properly licensed) photographs from the Internet. Hook a computer up to a TV, maybe get one of those clicker things. As long as you're putting the work into making this an interesting Job, consider going a step further and jazzing up the presentation, too.

The contested presentation's mostly useful for nights when you intend to improvise wildly. It's an excellent stunt, but it can turn a rough idea in a caper in very short order. Run through the list of Big Questions from page 84 in this chapter and write each

one on the back of an index card, with the answer on the opposite side. Separate out the questions about the Client and reveal them to the players. Mix the rest of them together into a pile, and then ask them what the Crew's doing to look into this. For each description of an action, let that player roll appropriate dice against your 2d8. If they succeed, reveal the top card to the players. If they generate a Complication, remove a card at random from the stack. If they fail, remove any card you choose from the pile.

At the end there should be a pile of cards revealed to the players and a smaller number of cards in your hand that the players haven't seen. Look them over and think about why they're obscure—these are the potential twists in your game, and the fact that the Crew's uncertain about them is an open door to trouble. You may then complete the briefing by telling the Crew the answers on your cards, or rather, telling them some of the answers. For at least half the cards, you should make something up (this is why you tell your players, but don't show them the cards). Over the course of the Job, you can flip your cards over at dramatic moments to reveal that the Crew's on track, or to reveal a twist.

This isn't a trivial exercise. It demands that you be willing to improvise hard and really take advantage of player-generated Complications to generate the plot, but if you're comfortable enough to try it (and have a group of players you trust) it can be pretty thrilling.

Planning

Once the players have all the information they need, they'll need some time to come up with a plan. Every group handles this differently—sometimes a single creative player takes up the leadership role in the discussion, sometimes the group's comfortably collaborative, sometimes it's outright contentious. At this point, your job's to stand back and let them hash it out, and be on hand to answer questions.

When you get a question, don't be stingy with the answer, even if it's something open-ended like "If we do *this*, how will they respond?" Remember that this Crew's full of exceptionally skilled folks who are damned good at what they do—don't wait for the player to think to ask just the right question to give them useful information. Be helpful and factual—remember, the plan should be successful (if nothing else goes wrong) so you really *want* the Crew to come up with a good plan. Plus, every question you answer now makes your life easier later; when the topic comes up later, you'll already know how to handle it.

You may be tempted to offer advice or direction, but stifle that instinct. Your players are going to have a lot of ideas, data, and course corrections, and they don't need to feel like someone has to hold their hands. Stick to facts in your responses and everyone will be happier.

That said, you absolutely want to look for red flags that the plan's gonna go down a bad path. If the players are making a bad assumption or have built their action on faulty logic, you should question the underlying point as best you can—but before you do, consider this: what if they're right? Before you squash a plan, consider that it's making enough sense to engage the players, so maybe it has more merit than might be immediately apparent. Check your assumptions, and see if maybe they can be stretched to treat the player's plan as a reasonable one. If it's utterly impossible, then fine, ask them a pointed question or two. But more likely, you'll find that your player's creativity and assumptions are making the Job *more* interesting than you originally conceived it. Tap that resource! Half the point of having the players plan in front of you is so you can steal their good ideas.

There's no hard and fast rule for how long's "too long" for a planning session, but if you see signs that boredom's setting in (watch everyone, not just the players who are excitedly talking about the plan) then give a warning that in a few minutes you're gonna start with whatever plan exists at that time, done or not. Stick to your guns and, if necessary, remind your players that a good plan now's better than a great plan sometime after you've all gone to bed.



The Presentation/Planning Cycle

When you're running a Job where the players' course of action isn't immediately clear, the first plan's usually to get enough information to proceed with the rest of the Job. At various points in the Job, the Crew may find themselves back at the drawing board, needing a new plan.

These secondary plans should not be as involved as the initial plan, and should be addressable in a very short scene. To do that, you have a responsibility to make sure that whatever information the players acquire points them in a clear direction.

The trick behind this is pretty simple: it doesn't matter much how obscure the answer to something is so long as the *question*'s clear. As long as the Crew knows what question they should be asking, it's easy to take action in pursuit of an answer. If the question's muddled, the answer will be as well.

Getting On to the Action

Everything's in place. You've got the Job and the twists firmly in mind and the Crew has a plan in mind—it's time to get on the clock. This may be the most important moment in the Job, and what you do at this point makes all the difference between a Job that starts out full of energy and one that sort of lumbers into action. To really do this right, remember this one trick:

Skip Right to the First Cool Thing

The plan may call for some elaborate preparation, and there may be some temptation to go into the details of that, or to call for some dice rolls for the fiddly bits of it. Resist that temptation. Nobody cares where Eliot got his cooking ingredients for *The Wedding Job*, or how the Crew manages to blend in with the wait staff at secure events. Unless there's some mitigating circumstances, playing out any kind of scene for that sort of activity's



gonna be dull. Just assume the Crew succeeds at the dull stuff, and start the next scene where the first interesting thing in the plan happens.

Just like we'll do now.

The Job In Action

When you run a Job, the most important thing you need to remember is that the plan should work. Not that it *will* work, just that it *should* work. This may seem incredibly generous, but like many things, there's a trick to it. If the plan is unreliable, then you need to prepare for *everything* that might go wrong, but if the plan is reliable, then you know where the break points are, and you can plan for them. Rather than letting things bog down at random and uninteresting points, you make sure that when things go wrong, they go wrong very well indeed.

With that in mind, the real balancing act is to keep things from being too easy for the Crew. If at first glance it seems like the plan should be as good as all that, then the characters are due for a cakewalk, and if you're not careful, it could certainly turn out that way. Thankfully, you have a few tricks to keep up your sleeve.

First, the advice for starting the Job continues to hold true for the rest of the game as well—always be willing to skip the boring stuff. The Crewmembers are competent and skilled, and there's no need to make every step of the Job into something that needs the dice to come out. Give the players the leeway to describe what their Crewmembers are doing, and wait for opportunities to step in.

You'll know when to step in because it's the moment that your mind flashes to interesting things that could happen if this goes wrong. This is trickier than it sounds, because you're not waiting for *reasons* it could go wrong, or *how* it could go wrong, you're looking for ideas of *what happens* when it goes wrong. The simple truth is this—it's very easy to come up with explanations for failure or potential problems, but those just aren't useful if they're dead ends in play. In short, the best time to roll the dice is when you have a really good idea of what you would do if the player rolls a fistful of ones.

Handling Failure

Failure is a lot less common in LEVERAGE than Complications are, but that doesn't mean it never happens. When the Crew fails at something, there's a risk that it can disrupt the whole plan, so you need to keep a tight rein on what failure means. It does *not* mean that the whole Job is ruined, or that the Crewmember has screwed the proverbial pooch; it means that whatever's being tried *didn't work* and that the Crew needs to try something else.

Think about the show, and it's easy to see what I mean. When something doesn't work, it's time to go to plan B (or C, or D, or H if necessary), not the end of everything. If your players enjoy the challenge of thinking on their feet, a failure is a great opportunity to really turn things up a notch, especially if the failure might raise the stakes or just generally make things harder for the Crew.

Failure is not a punishment for bad luck; it's just a different direction for the game to go. Remember that you want failure to be just as interesting and fun to your players as any other direction you would take the game. Failure might frustrate the Crew, but it should never frustrate your players.

Spread the Focus

Depending on the plan, you can end up in a situation where one Crewmember (often the Grifter or Thief) is carrying the lion's share of the burden of the Job. That might be okay from time to time, if you've decided to give that Crewmember a bit of time in the spotlight, but otherwise it's a problem. It's fun to be doing stuff, so it's important to make sure everyone in the Crew has something to do.

If you think in terms of the TV show, the camera doesn't stay on any one Crewmember too long—they do their thing, and it moves onto someone else. As you run the Job, you should be doing the same thing. Every time a Crewmember finishes something, think to yourself "Who haven't we heard from in a while?" and turn to that player.

One great trick for this is to use any complications from the scene you just finished to introduce a problem for the next Crewmember. This works especially well for bringing in members of the Crew who are in more of a backup role (like the Hitter or the Hacker) because they are in a better position to spot and deal with new problems as they emerge.

Timed Actions and Spreading the Focus

Timed Actions (see page 75 of **Chapter Four: The Job**) are particularly tricky because they can either make a situation more difficult (you get three chances to fail!) or easier (you get three chances to succeed!) but both of those are actually really bad reasons to use a Timed Action. If you want to make something easier or harder, just adjust the dice you use. What the Timed Action should really be used for is to tie in the actions of the rest of the Crew. This is the archetypal scene where part of the team is breaking and entering and part are at a party. The B&E team encounters a problem (like a voice lock or missing key) that directs the party team to take action. Passing this ball back and forth (and engaging the whole Crew) is exactly what you'll want to accomplish with a Timed Action.

The Working Plan

So what does a working plan actually look like? It's pretty simple: start from the thing the Crew needs to do to resolve the problem, like "reveal the Mark's insider trading" or "find the missing will" and ask "Why can't they just do that?" The answer is something like "Because they have no proof" or "Because it's in the locked room." That's fine. Now ask why they can't just overcome that. Repeat this a few times and you'll see that there are really only a few problems to overcome to reach the desired outcome.

With that roadmap in mind, think of a few scenes to let the Crew accomplish these tasks, spread out among the whole Crew. If everything goes well, it might all be resolved in a dozen scenes or less, and if you're looking for a speedy evening of play, then that might be all that's necessary. The Crew identifies the problem, comes up with a plan, executes the plan, deals with any complications that come up along the way, and resolves the matter. Nice. Tidy. Efficient.

It's a shame it never goes that way.

The Twist: The Plot Thickens

The twist is the moment the whole situation changes. Assumptions are undercut, the goalposts are moved, and it's time for a whole new plan. You probably gave some thought to potential twists when you were planning this Job, but sometimes the Job itself can surprise you. An odd run of luck, a surprising player choice or even a sudden inspiration can all provide fodder for a twist.

Twists may occur in the middle of a Job, or they may occur at the end when the plan seems to have succeeded. Whenever the twist happens, it throws the plan into disarray. Bits and pieces might be salvageable, but a new plan is needed, and it's gotta be fast.

What Makes a Twist?

To see where you can introduce a twist, look over the elements of the caper. Were there any pieces that you kept hidden from the players? If so, then you're already prepared to unleash a twist by revealing that key piece of information at just the right moment. If you introduce it in the middle of the Job, it might disrupt the Job entirely, but more likely it introduces a speed bump, some new set of problems that the Crew needs to overcome to move forward on the larger Job.

The Homecoming Job is a great example of this. The Crew starts out simply looking for evidence of malfeasance; they run an excellent Job and get the information they need from the Mark. But in a twist, it's revealed the Client is also the loose end, and the Crew needs to go deal with that before getting back onto the Job.

The twist need not always be a reveal—sometimes the situation actually changes. It's unlikely it'll change as drastically as, say, *The Bank Job* (unless you planned that from the get go, you sneaky bastard), but new elements may appear or existing ones may change.

Dangerous Twists

Okay, so there are a few classic twists you might be tempted to take advantage of in your game that tend to create big problems later. Some of them are so problematic you never want to use them—they might be great in a movie or TV show but don't translate well to the tabletop for one reason or another. Others might be usable once, but you don't want to keep using them.

Most successful twists hinge on two important principles: don't make the players feel stupid, and don't demand they do boring things to be able to play. Here we discuss some twists that can be problematic and mention some variants that might work better.

Betrayed by the Client—this classic, from the very first episode of LEVERAGE, is the perfect example of something that works *exactly once*. After it's happened, of course the Crew is careful to keep it from happening again, and if you introduce the possibility, then you can expect every game to begin with twenty minutes wasted on the numerous thorough ways the Crew investigates the Client's background and the preparations they make in anticipation of this betrayal. This runs counter to the slick, fast-paced action we expect. Don't let it happen to you; and if you do, you might need to resort to some sort of out-of-game assurance that you won't pull it again. **Instead:** *The Client is Not What He Appears To Be*. The Client may have secrets or a hidden agenda, and if so, part of the caper (probably a twist) will be the group finding this out *before* they get played for suckers.

It Was a Trap—The Client may not have been in on it, but the whole situation was contrived to draw the



Crew into an enemy's clever trap (mwahaha!). This one works a lot better on TV than it does at the game table; if you think betrayal by a Client is going to result in meticulously boring preparation, you ain't seen nothing yet. **Instead:** Consider either *The Hunter Hunted*, where the Crew spots the trap and needs to turn the tables on it, or *The Opportunistic Bad Guy*, where the bad guy is taking **advantage** of the situation, but didn't arrange it all.

Old Friend Gone Bad—Bringing in characters that are tied to Crewmembers is fun. It fleshes them out, gives them interesting things to do and talk about. There's just something richer and more interesting when the person asking for help or being approached for a favor is something other than a complete stranger. Players open up to that, and there's a temptation to take advantage of that trust to betray the Crewmember because it has such impact. And you're right, it will have a lot of impact, but it can also poison the well and make characters gun shy about playing with any other old friends. That doesn't mean this is something you should never do, but you need to exercise extreme caution when you pull it out. (A similar limitation is in place on killing old friends for dramatic effect). **Instead:** Try *The Right Choice*, where a friend ends up choosing to distance himself from the Crewmember without malice, but because it's what he needs to do. It can be painful, but doesn't jerk the player around.

It Was SO OBVIOUS—This one gets rolled out in conjunction with some other twist. You drop hints and foreshadow everything in expectation that your players will catch on and make preparations, but they don't, and they're utterly blindsided by something that, to them, comes out of left field. There's a temptation to blame your players for missing it and let them hang, but the fault here is yours. There's never a guarantee that what you think is obvious will be obvious to the players. If there's that big a blindside coming, you need to give better warning. **Instead:** Actually make it obvious. By, y'know, telling people.

En Passant—This is related to some of the other dangerous twists, and it serves as something of a catch all for bad situations, specifically any situations where it turns out that the Crewmembers are merely unwitting pawns in a bigger game. This is the quintessential "Make the players feel stupid and the Crewmembers feel inept"

situation, and it can have poisonous repercussions for subsequent play. Like betrayal, you might be able to get away with it once, early on, but never twice. **Instead:** There are a couple options. First, you can make them *knowing* pawns. While they might not be tricked into doing something, they might be coerced or blackmailed. Alternately, while it's inadvisable to have someone manipulate the Crew from the shadows without giving them a shot at getting at the manipulator, it's not unreasonable for someone to merely take advantage of the situation. Sterling is a great example of this: he's opportunistic, and many Jobs end up working out in his favor because of that, but there's no sense that he planned that all along. Or at least no evidence of it.

Why Twist?

Whatever form the twist takes, it's important to remember what the twist really is: it's a pacing mechanism.

What does that mean? All right, so your game has a certain window you need to play in. Maybe you're squeezed for time and have only an hour or two. Maybe you have all day and are ready for an eight-hour marathon session. Maybe it's something in between. Whatever the case, that timeline has a profound impact on your game. Combined with how quickly or well your players handle the challenges you throw at them, it's a real challenge to try to make sure your plan for the game fits neatly in the time available. Sure, there are tricks you can pull—hurrying your players up or stretching things out with unnecessary die rolls—but they tend to detract from the fun of play.

Twists let you look at how the game is going, how much time you have left, and decide if things need to go a little bit further. They let you be as aggressive as you need to be with the pacing of the game to keep players engaged without fear of wrapping up an hour early.

It's important that you remember this, because one critical but non-intuitive point rests on this: not every twist you plan needs to happen. It's very easy to build



a story in your mind of **how** things should go and get attached to that, or to feel it's somehow necessary for things to "make sense." Remember that your players can't see into your head, and they won't miss whatever ideas you have that don't see the light of day.

If, despite all this, you're worried about a hole in the plot if you don't use a particular twist, then you have two options. First, listen to your players—if there's a plot hole, they'll notice, and they'll poke at the edges of it. If that happens, then you'll know what questions you need to answer. Second, well, you can just go ahead and shoehorn it in. But if you do, just make it quick, okay?

Clear Direction

When you introduce the twist, you're putting the players at a disadvantage. For the initial situation, they had fairly complete information and the time to put together a plan. With the twist, everything's up in the air. The Crew and players are in the dark, and they need to think fast. Because of this, when you introduce the twist, you need to take steps to make sure your *players* know what to do next. By the time you introduce the twist, the game should be rocking along at a good clip, and the last thing you want is for it all to grind to a halt as your players look at each other and ask, "Well, what do we do now?"

Tangential Twists

The first and easiest way to do this is to introduce a twist that doesn't actually change the end goal. Consider the arrival of the Russians in *The Wedding Job*—that's an unpleasant twist that introduces numerous new problems, but it doesn't change the objective of the mission. It **does** raise the question of whether or not to walk away, but that's just indicative of how high the stakes are, not a point of confusion.

Problematic Twists

If the twist genuinely changes the direction of the Job, then that makes things a little more complicated, but still manageable. The good news is that the twist usually includes the new problem as part of the twist. In *The Homecoming Job*, one twist includes the reveal that there are guys en route to kill the Client. It's safe to say that offers some pretty clear direction: save the Client! If possible, the twist should *be* the problem and demand a solution.

The Knowledge Twist

When the barrier to solving the problem is information, this whole pattern changes subtly. If the Crew doesn't know how to solve the problem, then they need to find a solution first. This guarantees that the Job's going to have at least one twist, but it won't come as a surprise.

Informational Twists

Still, you can't always make the twist the problem—it's necessary to mix it up a little to keep things interesting and surprising. A guy coming through the door with a gun is a great way to jumpstart things, but if a guy comes through the door with a gun every time things slow down, it becomes something of a joke. With that in mind, the twist should sometimes complicate the situation in a way that requires reconsideration. Thankfully, as with a problematic twist, the solution here is baked right in. A twist that complicates things should usually take the form of new information. That is to say, the Crew should come out of the twist better informed than they went in.

If the Crew didn't have all the information they needed, an informational twist is actually the desired outcome; they should now have the information

they need to get onto the next step. But if this new information is disruptive, that's a whole other matter.

The new information usually reflects on the elements that went into constructing the Job. The Mark may have an unexpected asset. The nebbish clerk may actually be a skilled assassin. Whatever it is, it calls into question the plan that was based on the previous information. This may be enough to disrupt the plan entirely, or it may be something the Crew thinks it can muscle past. Those are the kinds of decisions a Crew should be making under pressure, so that's a good thing.

It's possible this information won't actually change *what* the Crew needs to do, but instead changes the why or the how. If the twist reveals the Client has been lying because what he really needs to do is save his daughter's life, the stakes have just changed. If the twist reveals the MacGuffin has been moved, that doesn't change the goal; but it definitely changes how to go about getting it. Note that in both cases the direction is still pretty clear—keep doing the Job—but the surrounding details have changed.

Back to Square One

Whatever your intentions, the twist will occasionally force the Crew to regroup and reconsider their plan. This is especially likely if you have an early twist or a big informational twist (or both), so be ready for it. You don't want this to take the same kind of time and effort that the original briefing did, and hopefully that won't be a problem. After all, the next step's crystal clear, right?

Or maybe not. Sometimes what seems incredibly clear to you is going to be complicated to your players because of a difference in perspective. Try not to get frustrated or hold it against them; it's perfectly normal, and it's not hard to get them out of the brambles.

When your players don't know what to do next, odds are good they'll want to investigate something. That's good. You can work with that. The trick here is that you don't want investigation to become the focus of play, but you also don't want to just hand the information over to the Crew. To strike a balance with this, you need to jump right to the point where the investigation becomes fruitful. If they need to check a dozen addresses, they're knocking on the right door. If they need to talk to twenty people, jump to the one who's telling them something useful. There's a great example of this in *The Wedding Job* when the group begins surveillance—the FBI van is one of the first things they see, not something they have to spend time searching for.

New Twists

So after you've introduced your first twist, should you introduce another? There's no hard and fast answer for that, and you're going to have to look at your group and the clock to make that decision.

The Solution: When The Mark Goes Down

If all has gone well so far, the inertia of play has been pushing the Crew towards concluding the Job successfully and it's only been your deft use of Complications and twists that has kept them from their goal. If that's the case, all you need to do is ease up on the throttle a little bit and everything will fall into place like you planned it all along.

Unfortunately, you're not always going to get that lucky. Sometimes things are *close* to successful, but are not quite there. Most of the time, the Crew has the means to bridge this gap through the use of Wrap-Up Flashbacks or the clever application of Talents, and your job is to stand back and let them do that. You don't have to just roll over and let them get away with everything, but if the solution is in sight, then that's your cue to stop introducing new problems. If the dice introduce any Complications, save them for the resolution or dénouement; don't use them to muddy the waters.

If things still don't look like they're coming together, then you may need to do something. Yes, as the Fixer

you can introduce a lot of crazy things to the Job, change things up, and generally muck around to force things to a conclusion, but that's going to be satisfying to no one. Instead, you should turn to one of the more subtle tools in your arsenal: timing.

It's All In The Timing

As the Fixer, one of your most important decisions is how long things take. That may not seem like much of a big deal compared to creating Supporting Characters, playing nefarious Marks, and generally coming up with something challenging each week, but in some ways it's more important than anything else. When you create something new or make a decision about a large matter in the game, you are exercising your power as the Fixer. That's a necessary thing, but your players will be wary of it because, when you're acting in that capacity, you are free to cheat by changing things on them without warning. Even if your intentions are entirely reasonable, some players will simply be wary of this sort of thing and uncomfortable when you use that authority to direct things.

In contrast, you are obliged to make judgment calls about timing all the time. It's a point of *responsibility*, not authority, and it works with the pieces that are already in play, so to speak. It's easily abused (in the form of incredible coincidences) but short of that, you have a lot of leeway with timing before your players are going to call foul.

This becomes really important when things are coming to a conclusion because a good ending tends to depend on things happening at the right time. The press (or police) shows up at just the right moment, or the board vote happens at just the right time. You control when people show up, when they leave, and what they do in between. In short, that means you control the potential scenes presented to the Crew.

The trick is that you don't want to use this to *solve* the problem for your players, but if the Crew creates a *chance* for a resolution, you can use this to seize it. Ideally, you'll only need to do this to cement the conclusion. Consider the resolution to *The Homecoming Job*—the



clincher was the press arriving just in time to be able to seize on the situation. A more realistic sense of timing might have had them arriving too soon or too late, but they arrive just in time and the story is more satisfying as a result.

Resolution

The actual resolution may or may not involve the Crew. In many cases (especially when the police are involved) they will set things in motion and fade out of sight before things finish. Even if no one is actually in the scene, you'll still want to play that scene out rather than simply resolve it off screen. This may introduce some issues, most notably in handling conversations.

Puppet Shows

There is almost nothing more frustrating for the players and Fixer alike than when the Fixer talks to himself. This can end up happening in any scene where two Supporting Characters are interacting, but it's most likely to happen during a resolution when the Crew has withdrawn but the situation still needs to play out. If the Fixer is playing both the Mark and the arresting officer, it ends up looking like a puppet show without any puppets—it's unclear and often unfun.

In this situation, one of the characters is usually just there for color and is no deeper than his role in the scene (arresting officer, investigating reporter, etc.) and rather than do a puppet show, you should offer your players the chance to play the character for the scene. Given that your players are (hopefully) invested in taking down the Mark at this point, they should take to it with a vengeance. The opportunity to ask the questions to make the Mark squirm or to slap the cuffs on him can be intensely satisfying, and it lets the **players** continue to feel invested in the resolution, even if the Crewmembers aren't there.

Dénouement: Wrapping It Up

After the Job's been resolved, there's time for one more scene. Usually, this will involve the Client (who will, of course, be amazed and grateful) but it's also an opportunity for the Crew to talk among themselves without the Job hanging over their heads. The exact tone of this scene depends on the Crew in question—it might be a sober debriefing or a raucous celebration, but it's a chance for the players to celebrate their victory. Give them a few minutes to enjoy it.

Leftover Complications

If you have any leftover Complications, specifically ones that the Crewmembers rolled as things were coming to a conclusion, you can put them to a specific use here. Each unused Complication allows you to ask each player one question about their Crewmember (limit one per Crewmember). This question should always be about something specific they did during the Job, and it's useful for two things. First, you can use it to reveal a little bit more about the character to everyone, and that's sort of the above-board reason for asking this question. But the real purpose is to be able to tweak things a little. If the character ended up in a potentially embarrassing situation or was presented with a choice, and it wasn't resolved publicly, then the question should give them a chance to resolve it. This doesn't need to be anything big or important. One of the best possible examples comes from *The Two Live Crew Job*: "Hey Eliot, what happened to the handcuffs?"

You are never obliged to ask these questions, but the opportunity is always there in case you need it.

Getting Your Hands Dirty

Okay, all of this is great on a high level—it gives you everything you need to build the Job and introduce twists—but something's still missing. There's still the question of actually running the Crew through specific scenes and activities that make up the Job, and while

that might be easier than it sounds, there's still some tricks to it, and thinking in terms of scenes and beats can make your life much easier.

Hey, Player.

Yeah, you. We both know this is the Fixer chapter, but we also know you're reading it anyway to get a leg up. That's smart—you're already thinking the right way. So here's a tip: you want to pay special attention to this stuff about beats if you want to run a con on your Fixer. See, the truth is this—he's going to be running things fast and hard, and when that happens, he's going to tend toward the path of least resistance. That means if you can provide him with a plan that already does everything he needs (like hitting a beat for each Crewmember) then he's going to be happy to roll with that, and it's that much more likely to work.

If you're feeling really tricky, start suggesting problems you might encounter before the Fixer starts coming up with them. Why? If the Fixer creates a problem, you'll need to figure out a way around it, but if you create the problem, you can build it with a loophole. Just phrase problems as, "We'll need (Crewmember) to (do something) to avoid (problem)." Again, you tap the Fixer's laziness to guarantee that you're on the right track.

Plan the Scene in Beats

The players' plan dictates the general shape of the scene—they'll be in a place looking to accomplish something. The place is mostly your responsibility, but you may need to talk to your players to get a clear sense of what they're trying to accomplish. Usually they'll be trying to get some specific piece of information or acquire a certain item. Consider what that thing is and what needs to happen to get it, and the beats will start suggesting themselves. If the information they need is in a safe, then the Crew needs to 1) find the safe, 2) get to the safe, 3) break into the safe, and 4) get away with the contents.

Once you have the basic beats, you can expand and refine them. First, look at the beats and who is well suited to address them. Looking at those beats, the Thief will almost certainly do numbers two and three and the danger is that you could easily see the Thief doing all four. Good for the Thief, but not so good for the rest of the Crew. So the first thing to think about is how to spread the beats around a little bit. In this case, let's start with numbers two and three, the ones that seem most Thief oriented. Could either of them be resolved by another Crewmember? Well, you definitely want the Thief to be the one at the safe, so number two seems required, but what about three? What if the safe can't be cracked in the time available, and instead a password or keycode or the like is needed? Suddenly, that's something the rest of the Crew might be able to work on. Similarly, it might require some footwork to reveal where the safe is hidden without searching (see "Death by Reconnaissance," below).





You might notice that identifying beats is not an objective science; it depends a little bit on perspective. Parker climbing a wall, picking a lock, and evading a tripwire might be three beats, but it might also just be one beat described as "Parker breaks in." This may seem like an oversight, but it's actually a powerful tool for you to shift focus around. If you need to give one player a little more focus, you can often split his beats into smaller beats. Alternately, if another Crewmember is getting to do everything, reduce his actions to fewer beats so you can spread the attention around. (Incidentally, this same logic applies when deciding if something's going to be a Basic Action or Contested Action.)

A beat's **resolution** is quick (a single roll i.e. a Basic Action), but remember that the beat itself may take some time. If you have a scene with one beat per Crewmember, you can allow each Crewmember to play out the scene appropriately without needing to move from beat to beat with machine-gun rapidity.

Beats and Complications

Over and above whatever beats are necessary to deal with the main plot, you can also expect the Crew to take a beat or two to deal with the unexpected Complications that come up, especially if you have been particularly nasty in coming up with interesting ones. Depending on how many Complications have come up, it's entirely possible that a scene may be dominated with attempts to put out fires, so to speak.

Death by Reconnaissance

Every now and again the players won't have a plan and won't feel like they know what to do. When this happens, their most likely course of action is to try to gather some intel, resulting in them going places to see what they can find out. This is not a good outcome—if this is happening, your players are right on the cusp of bored and are possibly fingering their d8s thoughtfully as you speak. At this point, you need to do one of two things. First, you can drop a twist in right here and now. Resolve their recon quickly and successfully, and send them home with the information they need (or

alternately, have things go terribly wrong). Doing this cuts the problem off at the pass.

Second, you can drop the question in their lap. Not the answer, the question. The problem in this situation isn't that the Crew doesn't have the information they need, it's that they don't know what questions they should be asking. That is, they don't know what they don't know. If you can reveal the question to them you help them know what they don't know, and suddenly they have a problem they need to solve.

A similar problem, on a macro level, involves searching. The Crew may have a general idea of where something is, and there's a temptation to just say, "We search for it." This is dull, and more importantly it messes up the role of the Thief. Since the Thief is usually the one who needs to **get** whatever is being looked for, that means the Thief is usually the one who ends up searching. That's boring for the Thief and for everyone else as they get to watch. When this comes up, it's reasonable to say it would take too long to find, and require that someone else figure out a way to flush out the location. This shouldn't be difficult: Hackers usually find supporting information; Grifters can often get a mention of it; Hitters can sometimes spot where security's heaviest; and the Mastermind can often convince the Mark to show him personally. Whatever the details, when one Crewmember declares they'll be searching for an item or information, that's a cue to the Fixer to switch to another Crewmember to get the first one that information.

Assets and Complications

Here's the dirty secret of the game. We've hidden it deep in this section in hopes of keeping your players from finding out, but they're a wily bunch, so don't be too shocked if they figure it out on their own. You ready?

You really don't need much more than Assets and Complications.

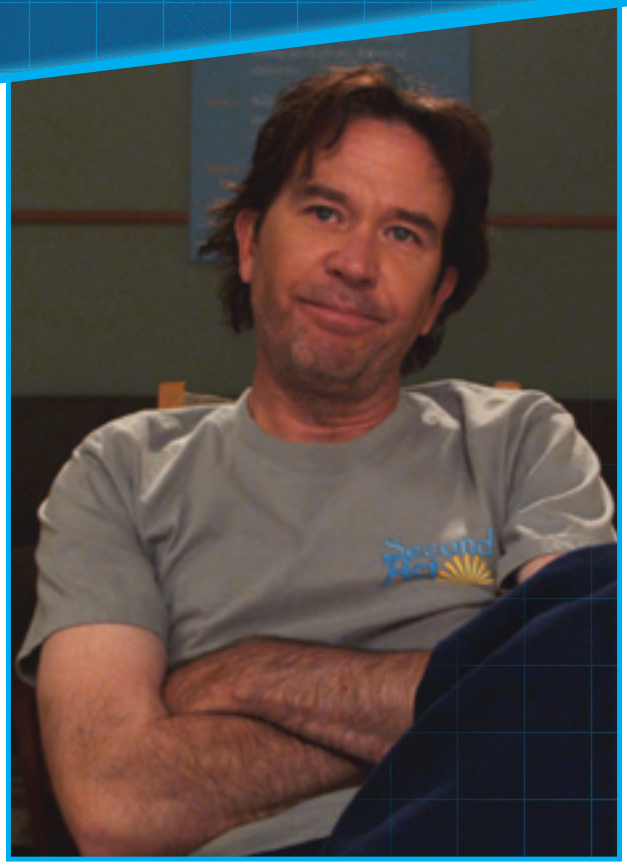
Not to say that all the other stuff is useless—there's a ton of fun in Talents and Distinctions and every other Trait under the sun, but your game's beating heart is going to be the ebb and flow of Assets and Complications. For players, Assets are ways to step in and shape the game in directions they want and call attention to things they think should be awesome. For the Fixer, Complications turn even the most boring situation into something interesting and challenging. Yes, you can have a good game without really taking advantage of Assets and Complications, but doing so is going to take a *lot* more work for everyone involved. For less work, you could take advantage of Assets and Complications and turn that good game into something really great.

But there's a catch. Assets and Complications mean you simply can't plan everything. You'll need to plan, certainly, but you'll also need to be able to think on your feet, and this applies just as much to the Fixer as it does to the Crew. Assets and Complications, by their nature, guarantee that unexpected things are going to come up, possibly taking the Job in entirely unplanned directions. If you embrace this, you can ride it like a wave to a fluid, exciting game, but if you fight it, you risk things feeling stiff and forced.

Easy to say, I know. Thankfully, we've got some suggestions for how to do it.

Using Complications

As Fixer, the ebb and flow of Complications is going to be one of the most challenging parts of running a Job, but it can also be the most rewarding. As you become more comfortable with the idea, you'll find you need to plan less stringently for future trouble—the characters' Complications give you all the juice you need for the next bit of trouble and the next and the next. Statistically, any scene with a few beats is going to generate at least one Complication, and if that Complication is used to fuel the next scene, you can potentially keep the ball in the air as long as things stay interesting.



Complications vs. Twists

The truth is, the line between Complications and twists is very thin indeed, thin enough that a string of Complications can pretty easily culminate in a twist. If the Job you're on is generating enough Complications, you may never need to introduce a twist—the individual problems introduced can keep the Crew busy for the duration of a Job. Certainly, some Jobs may still depend on a twist, but Complications are one of the reasons the Crew can never be entirely sure whether or not there will be a twist. Keeping them guessing is half the fun.

When a twist does occur, you should take a second and review the Complications that have emerged thus far. The change in situation that the twist causes may render some or all of them moot—if so, just let them go. There's plenty more where those came from.

Interesting Complications

The best Complications always make sense. They're a natural evolution from the scene and the details surrounding the Job, but at the same time they can be quite surprising. When a Complication comes up, think about who's in play and what's going on, then think about what the Job needs.

While a Complication could be almost anything, there are a few broad categories that they usually fall into. The first, and probably most interesting, are **reveals**. Someone or something that has already been introduced is revealed to have some new Trait—the mom and pop store turns out to have a FANCY PANTS SECURITY SYSTEM D8, or the overweight security guard turns out to be TOUGHER THAN HE LOOKS D8. These reveals shouldn't contradict anything that's already happened within the Job—if the security guard has already been trounced once, he shouldn't suddenly become more badass (unless it would be especially funny—then it's probably okay). You can continue adding more reveals to the same character, and this can actually be an interesting way to transform an Extra from simple color into an important part of a Job, simply by making him more interesting.

The next option is an **addition**, when something new is added to the Job. Most often, these take the form of new people or new problems. New people are easy enough to integrate, but problems are pretty specific. The introduction of a problem serves a specific purpose in play—it takes something that the players would not normally have to roll the dice for and turns it into something that needs to be resolved. For example, if Parker is breaking into a house, most of the steps get boiled down into a single beat, but the complication can bring that to a halt as she discovers A SURPRISINGLY GOOD LOCK D8, or that THE DOOR HAS BEEN NAILED SHUT D8. She'll need to take a new action to deal with this new problem. It's worth noting that a single Complication of this sort may not be a huge challenge for a Crewmember within his specialty, but it can be a real problem if it applies to his weakness. Take the

door that's been nailed shut—for Eliot that would be no problem at all. He can pretty much just kick it down and move on; but for Hardison it might be a real difficulty. Of course, if the door has a sophisticated biometric identification system, the tables are turned.

Design Vs. Discovery

Ambitious Fixers may have noticed something about the nature of Complications. If you can use them to introduce characters and problems, and then flesh those out, couldn't you just make *everything* a Complication? Yes, yes you could. But it's a little trickier than it sounds. Doing this requires you to really scramble to fill in details on the fly, but for some Fixers, that's exactly what they'd like to do. Rather than plan a Job in any detail, you might just sketch a rough outline and then fill in the details and problems based on the Complications that come up. In this approach, the Fixer is just as likely to be surprised about where things go as the players.

Consider, for a moment, how Sterling is introduced in the TV show. When we first meet him, we don't know much about him, but over the course of the episode and subsequent episodes, we get a fuller picture. Now, imagine this in a game from the Fixers perspective; this might be because he had already written up Sterling and he reveals him over time—that's certainly the normal assumption. But what if, when he started, the Fixer didn't know any more about Sterling than the players did? He's just INSURANCE INVESTIGATOR D8 at the outset, but the Crew decides to mess with him, gains a Complication, and suddenly he picks up EVIL NATE D8 as a Trait. Over the course of play, he picks up other Traits, like BASTARD D8 and OPPORTUNIST D8 (and maybe gets BASTARD bumped up to d10, just to be thorough) and after a few sessions, Sterling is a well fleshed out character, created entirely through play. This is just one example, but a Fixer who enjoys flying by the seat of his pants can build almost anything this way.

Shifting the Emphasis

A Complication doesn't need to change the situation; sometimes it's just a matter of shifting emphasis. Let's say, for example, you use a Complication to decide that the Mark's underlings are WELL-ARMED D8. This does not suggest that guns magically appear in their pockets—instead it's a declaration that the guns they're carrying matter. Notice that thugs have guns all the time, but it's very rare that they really matter much.

Working Without Complications

Sometimes you need to define the Traits of things when you don't have a Complication to use. Sometimes these will be things you planned for; other times you'll be adapting to surprises your players have thrown your way, and you need to pull something out of thin air. That thing will almost always be a d6.



One tricky benefit of being the Fixer is a virtually limitless reserve of d6s to draw on. Since d6 really means "normal," saying something is POOL HALL D6 or RENT-A-COP D6 is really comparable to just calling it a pool hall or a rent-a-cop. There's nothing interesting or exceptional about it, but the direction play has taken has given it enough spotlight to matter for this scene or beat. Just realize that, in a pinch, you can always reach in and pull out a d6 or three to get you past any rough decisions.

Take a Breath

It's important to remember that you don't need to use the Complication instantly. If you want to complicate the roll that just happened, then you can do so, but you can also sit on that Complication to use somewhere else in the scene. That buys you a few moments as you wrap up this beat, so you can decide what to do next and think about where something should go wrong. It's not a *lot* of breathing room, but usually you'll find that just a little bit of time is all you really need.

In fact, you'll find that a spare Complication is one of the best tools in your arsenal to keep everyone participating in a scene. When one player seems like he's not doing anything, use the Complication to throw some trouble his way. A Complication is always a good excuse to bring a bit of attention down on a player.

Pack a Few Extra Aces

While you can't precisely plan for Complications, you can prepare. First and foremost, when you create the original situation it's worth looking over it and thinking what might go wrong. What can break? Who can show up at the wrong time? What can go from bad to worse? What can you imagine happening to the Crew that puts a wicked little smile on your face? Odds are good you can think of a few, and if you can't, give the Job another once over and see if you're really interested in it. If you can't think of anything bad happening, that's a sign that you're not really invested in things. That's a good reason to step back and maybe make a few tweaks.

It's also worth developing a stable of Complications you can draw on when you're looking for an idea. You'll want to think of these while you're away from the game table. When you're reading books, watching TV, or at the movies, look at how things get worse and what happens to stymie the characters. Go ahead and steal those ideas, and if anyone asks, it's an "homage."

Similarly, keep an eye out as you travel. When you see interesting places or things, consider how they might complicate a Job. When you encounter problems that frustrate you or mess up your day, make a note of them as something you can bring to the game. And if you're naturally inclined to worry, this is your time to shine. All those random things you imagine going horribly wrong? Hang onto them, and lay them down on the Crew when the opportunity arises.

If you're looking for examples of some general-purpose Complications, we've got a handful at the end of this section.

When in Doubt, Just Make Things Worse.

If you're absolutely desperate for ideas, you can always just take an existing Complication and make it more intense. It's fast, it's easy, and it lets you get on to the next step soon.

Complications and Player Cleverness

Every now and again your players are going to surprise you with some judo. They're going to take a Complication you introduced as a problem for them and use it to their own advantage. This can be very surprising the first time it happens, but there's a good chance it's going to keep happening, depending on the style of your players.



You might feel an instinctive desire to refuse to let them do this—that somehow this is cheating. If so, you have to tamp that instinct down, because it's absolute poison. Your players are interested in capers and heists, at least in part, because they want the chance to be cool and clever. The ability to turn an obstacle into an Asset is exactly that, and you need to be able to celebrate that. Acknowledge their cleverness, and come back swinging.

The only time you need to worry about this is if you have a player who's clearly trying to game this system for extra dice. You can usually spot this because he'll already have most of his dice in hand, and he thinks of exploiting the Complication as an "Oh, by the way" instead of as an inspiration. At that point the appropriate response is "Just roll the dice."

Get Your Tinfoil Hat On

If you like a little conspiratorial element to your game, Complications are a great way to handle that—pick a few thematic elements, like rings denoting secret society membership, old or ancient artifacts, coded messages, and so on—and introduce them as Complications. They don't even need to *do* much in a particular Job; they just need to show up a few times, enough for your players to start wondering what it means. And by the time that happens, you might even have an idea of what that might be.

Sample Complications

THE PARADE—This is a great Complication for any chase or shadowing scene that should be familiar to anyone who's ever watched a detective movie. Judging by cinema alone, you'd think that a day couldn't go by without a parade dragon in Chinatown and a jazz funeral in New Orleans, and this taps into that fine tradition.

THE CAMERA CREW—Maybe they're a local camera crew. Maybe they're a reality show or an extreme sports program. Whoever they are, they're in exactly the right place to throw the Crew off.

THE HOT CHICK/DUDE—They're crazy hot, and they're flirting with a Crewmember. This can be a little distracting when it happens, but most Crewmembers can keep it together long enough to keep their hormones in check. That's fine, because that's not when this Complication shines. Instead, it shines when he or she shows up *later* at an inopportune time, possibly after having also picked up the Complication UNDERCOVER AGENT or the like.

CHILD IN DANGER—A ball bounces into the road, a kid chases after it, brakes squeal, you know the drill. Good. Now *never ever do it*. There are ways to bring children and problems into a Job with style and restraint, but there are less ham-fisted ways to do it than randomly endangering a kid. Take Eliot and the abused boy, Randy, in *The Order-23 Job*.

BLACKOUT—The lights go out. Maybe the Mark or someone else killed them. Maybe it was just the weather. One way or another, it's dark, and that's never good.

WEATHER—A storm's rolled in, or maybe the fog's thick enough to shut down the roads. Whatever the specifics, the weather is now part of the scene.

THE REPAIRMAN—It may have been months ago that someone actually put in the request for a repair, but he's here now and he's gonna do his job!

THE ACTUAL GUY—If a Crewmember is passing as someone else, either a specific identity or just a role (like the delivery guy), having the actual guy show up can be a real problem. If this is central enough to the Job, this might be more appropriate as a twist than a Complication.

THE CONCERNED CITIZEN—He's seen something happen and wants to help! Should he call the police? Do you need an ambulance? He's a good guy trying to do the right thing, but that may be the last thing the Crew needs.

Managing Assets

The rule of Assets is this: you should very rarely have any reason to say no to an Asset. Even if it seems like a stretch, it's still just a d6—the Asset itself is unlikely to be tipping the scales on things anytime soon. And that's the trick: players might pick up Assets for the bonus if they're hard up, but more likely they're going to pick them up for the cool things the Asset allows. Picking up a FULL WINE GLASS D6 and an EMPTY WINE BOTTLE D6 for two Plot Points is not something you do for the extra d6 alone—you do it so you can say you just beat the crap out of those guys with an empty bottle and a full glass. To some extent, Assets provide the player the chance to control his own special effects budget.

The Role of Assets

So, Assets give the players a lot of leeway to add elements to a scene. Assets come in the same general categories as Complications, but they have an additional layer that's tied in to how the player introduces them. These layers say a lot about the player's comfort level with creating Assets, and they might also be useful to consider as Fixer. Thing is, even if you're totally comfortable with giving your players free rein, talk to them a little bit about Asset origins to avoid any confusion.

The first Asset origin is **opportunity** (not to be confused with the Opportunity you get from the Fixer

rolling a 1). This is when the player takes an element that's already been introduced in the scene (like a sword on the wall) or something they could easily be carrying or buy (like a cell phone or pocketknife). Assets of opportunity represent the Crewmember taking advantage of things that are already in play, or sticking with things they control—like themselves. Nothing wrong with a Crewmember spending a Plot Point on a PISSED OFF D6.

Next we have **likelihood**. Likely Assets are things that have not been explicitly outlined in play, but would make sense in the context of play. If the Fixer describes a richly appointed library but doesn't provide much in the way of details, a player might reasonably expect to find a particular book or perhaps a snifter of brandy. These are things that are likely enough to exist that the player buying them as Assets just spares everyone the "Mother, may I" conversation of "Is there a bar? Does it have brandy?" and says "I get the snifter of brandy at the bar."

Last and most challengingly, we have **inspired** Assets. When a player introduces one of these Assets, it's very like he's playing the Fixer for a moment. This opens up a world of Assets that aren't necessarily physical. Players can use these kinds of Assets to have a taxi show up right on time, to have the informant they're talking to be HARD UP FOR CASH D6 or DEVOUT CATHOLIC D6. Because it's still ultimately limited to d6, it is rare that a player can solve a problem directly in this fashion, but he can make it easier, and not just with the extra d6. An Asset might change the problem—a thug with a gun is best dealt with by your Hitter dice, but if the thug with the gun is HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS D6, that may mean the Grifter can talk him down instead.

Keeping Track of Assets and Complications

There's a good chance that any single Job you run might produce a dozen or so Assets and Complications, some of which are gonna hang around a long time. You don't want to lose track of them all, obviously, and while the players might keep 'em in mind the trick is to have the table aware of what Assets and Complications are in play. The best method we've found for this is index cards or those sticky memo squares. Just write the name of the Asset or Complication on the card or memo, along with the current die rating. If you've got a lot of dice, you could even put the die itself on the card. Either way, set these reminder notes out in front of you. If the Asset or Complication gets stepped up, just change the die rating on the note (or switch out the die). Once the Trait goes away, remove the note. Easy!

This also works well for tracking Extras and Agents, who are just lists of Traits anyway. Scribble down the Supporting Character's name, Traits, and dice on the card, and put it out in front of you. Makes a great reference and helps you remember what's going on even in the most complicated and convoluted Jobs.



Beyond that, it's probably worth mentioning **impossible** Assets. If your players are trying to introduce elephants, unicorns, or world peace, then there's a good chance you're not all on the same page. If this actually happens, there's a good chance your player is uncomfortable with inspired Assets and is expressing this in a passive-aggressive fashion. The instinct is going to be to smack him down or criticize him for his behavior, but you will go much farther by being sympathetic and talking to him about why he's uncomfortable. There's no sure fire solution to this sort of problem, but any solution you find is going to start with talking.

Your Players Are Up to Something

Most of the time, a player immediately uses the Asset he's just introduced. But sometimes they'll surprise you. Every now and again a player may shell out for a game-length Asset and then do nothing with it, or do something that makes no sense to you. Don't sweat it. Odds are good he has a plan, and he's setting things up now so he can use them later at just the right moment. Either it'll come up or it won't. And if it does come up in a really awesome fashion, you might want to consider the "Really Awesome Assets" optional rule, below.

If you do figure out what he's up to (and a hint, he's probably securing his exit strategy) then don't squash it just because you can. You don't have to go out of your way to make sure his plan comes to fruition (though it might be nice to tilt things that way) but don't steer things around it just because you—as Fixer—have seen it. If you *must* mess with it, then use a Complication to do so, and if your player surprises you by using the Asset in an unexpected way, then take it like a grown up.

The Really Awesome Assets Option

Every now and again, a player does something unbelievably awesome with an Asset. He'll do something so improbable, cool looking, or clever that it just knocks your socks off. When that happens, let him step up the Asset die (so a d6 becomes a d8), just for that first roll. It's not a big thing, but it's a good way to acknowledge when your players have just plain rocked the house.

Picking Up Assets

The players will be looking for ways to pick up your Assets, and you can do the same thing with their Assets, but this is a power to exercise with some caution. Unlike players, when the Fixer poaches an Asset, it's very rarely impressively clever. It tends to just feel like the Fixer throwing his weight around. To address this, pay careful attention to which Assets you attempt to pick up. If your players are excited about an Asset or doing something clever with it, then keep your hands off. But if the Asset is clearly more valuable for the d6 than anything else, then it's fair game.

Mixing Complications and Assets

While picking up the player's Assets is something you might want to be careful about, there's another way to engage the Assets that players bring to bear, and that's with Complications. Putting a Complication on an Asset is a great way to put a little spin on things.

There's also an interesting trick to this: if the Fixer puts a Complication on an Asset, then it's going to remain in play as a Complication. It's a great way to show something taking a bad turn.

Cheating with Assets

Seriously, it's *really* hard to cheat with Assets. Assets look really valuable and easy to exploit. After all, it's not hard to pick up a whole lot of extra d6s for a Crewmember, nearly guaranteeing a pretty good roll. That's true, to a point, but the thing about d6s is that, no matter how many you have, you're never going to do better than just pretty good. And more, while they're not as likely to kick up a Complication as a d4, rolling a lot of d6s is still inviting trouble. That is to say, it may look like a problem, but it's much less of an issue than you might think.

Sample Assets

RAPPELLING GEAR—Sure, it's worth an extra d6 when climbing, but the real advantage is that without it you just can't jump off the side of a building (or down the center of a really long stairwell). Sophie and Parker's stunt in *The Second David Job*? Now you're seeing it.

DUCT TAPE—Is there anything it can't do?

CAFFEINE BUZZ—Pound enough coffee and the Asset is definitely on the table.

DISTRACTION—This can take any number of forms, from a loud noise across the room or a momentary bump from a passerby. This is the classic Asset for deceptions.

THE LATEST HARDWARE—Whether it's a computer, a phone, or any other gadget, the most cutting edge gadgets make worthwhile gadgets.

THE RIGHT CLOTHES—To look the part.

A CLIPBOARD—It is something of an old chestnut in crime fiction that you can get into any building with a uniform, a clipboard, and the right attitude. It may be a cliché, but it's a cliché well worth supporting.

The Players' Bag of Tricks

For all the tools the Fixer can bring to bear, the players usually have an ace or two up their sleeves as well. The Fixer needs to take steps to be able to deal with some of the more common tricks when they come up.

Plot Points and Assets

Much of the time, players use their Plot Points for strictly mechanical things, like adding an extra die to their total; but they actually have more leeway than that. The ability to create Assets is not limited to merely creating improvised weapons and clever gadgets. Assets can have a profound impact on the game, and when a player creates an Asset he's saying something about the game is true, and you need to either be able to roll with that or be able to discuss it with the player.

What's important to realize is that when a player creates an Asset, he can do almost anything the Fixer can do with a Complication. This means that the player

can introduce new elements or characters or alter things that are already in play. Unchecked, that gives players a huge amount of power—they could decide the Mark has a PEANUT ALLERGY D6 or is OUT OF GAS D6 simply by spending a Plot Point. At first glance, that seems pretty overwhelming, but there are two big things to keep in mind.

First, the presence of a d6 on the Mark is not that big a deal—it indicates something that might be a problem (or an advantage), but not a huge one. It's not likely to kill him or cause him to fail dramatically—at best it might make his life a little bit harder.

Second, the players do not have the same scope to apply Assets that the Fixer has with Complications. Specifically, the player needs to limit his Assets to things that are local to the Crewmember, usually within the same room. Local is a little bit flexible—if the Hacker is logged into a remote system or the Grifter is talking to someone on the phone, that's a reasonable definition of local.

Flashbacks

Deciding what dice to roll in opposition to a flashback can be tricky, especially since the Flashback Action is very rarely in direct opposition to something—by their nature, flashback events usually don't have any witnesses. To decide on the Traits to use, consider that what you're rolling for is either the likelihood that the Mark (or one of his minions) prepared for this, or the likelihood that they discovered it and did something about it.

It's also worth taking some care when you do and don't call for a roll. Sometimes a player may call for an Establishment Flashback solely as a colorful way to introduce an Asset. If they don't *need* to use a flashback to do so, then there's no need to make a contest of it. Similarly, trust your own dramatic sensibility. If this flashback neatly resolves things on a success but introduces headaches for everyone if it fails, then maybe it's not worth rolling.

Also, if your players fail a flashback, there's a chance that another player may then decide to spend a Plot Point to flashback and fix the situation. That is entirely kosher.

Example

The Crew and the Mark are each racing to get to the same destination. A Crewmember spends a Plot Point to say the Mark gets a flat tire. It might seem like that should decide the matter, but it's no guarantee—after all, perhaps he has a spare, or just hails a cab, or has a service that answers promptly, or the tire goes flat a block away from the destination? Hell, maybe he calls a police escort. That d6 doesn't **stop** him; it just provides an extra d6 for the Crew to roll. It improves their odds, sure, but that's very different from a guarantee.

Similarly, if the players need to get some information from the local police, they might decide they have a FRIEND ON THE FORCE D6, but that doesn't automatically mean they'll get the information they need. The friend might help them out (adding that d6 to a roll), but there's no guarantee he knows what they need.

Pulling It All Together

With all these tools in hand, you should have everything you need to make a Job. The process is simple enough: find an end point, identify the barriers to achieving it, turn those obstacles into scenes and beats, prepare any twists, and repeat the cycle as necessary. Wash. Rinse. Repeat.



Find the End Point

The end point should be built into the problem and the Mark. Some decisive action should be able to bring the Mark's weakness down on his head. It might be a piece of evidence that needs to be found and publicized, it might be a hostage who needs to be found and rescued. Whatever it is, it's the end point of the Job, and it should be part of the Crew's plan. If you find yourself in a position where you have one idea of the endpoint and your players have a different one, stop and reconsider the end point they see. If their plan seems totally untenable, you should discuss that with them, but otherwise you should consider using their end point.

Identify the Barriers

This is one of those parts that seems like it should be complicated, but it's actually quite simple. Just ask yourself why they just can't do whatever they need to do to make it happen. If there's a MacGuffin, why can't they just walk in and walk out with it? If it's a piece of information, why can't they just find it? The answers should be pretty obvious and go something like "because there are armed guards" or "because we don't know where it is." Once you've identified those barriers, ask the question again. Why can't they just get past those problems? Why can't they just sneak past the guards? Why can't they research the information? Those may in turn suggest new barriers, and you can repeat this process one or two more times, at which point you should have several specific obstacles that need to be overcome.

Discussing the Process

You can do this entirely privately and present it as a challenge for your players, but if you do this process *with* your players, then you can integrate the needs of creating a Job with the Crew's need for planning. You don't necessarily need to reveal every detail to the players as you discuss these obstacles, but unless something is explicitly secret (such as something you hope to hang a twist off of) then there's no reason not to be open about it with your players. After all, the Crewmembers are professionals; they know this kind of thing.



Turn the Obstacles into Scenes and Beats

Now that you've got a set of challenges, start thinking about how they can be overcome and what sort of effort that's going to entail. Odds are the Crew is already thinking about how they're going to do this, and they may well do the work for you; so the main thing you need to do is look at all these problems and figure out how to best tie them together. Sometimes a complex problem requires several steps to solve, with each step equating to a beat; sometimes a problem requires only a single beat to resolve. What you need to keep an eye on is that the challenges are not all oriented on one Crewmember. It may seem like the way to do this is to spread around the kinds of tasks that need to be done, but it's actually even easier than that—just make sure the tasks can't be done one at a time. Forcing the Crew to spread out and work in tandem keeps everyone busy and also forces Crewmembers out of their comfort zones.

Twist and Cycle?

A single pass through the cycle outlined in the "Putting It All Together" section on page 118 might or might not be enough material for a single Job. If it is, fantastic, you're good to go. But if it's not, then a twist allows you to build a whole new structure with a new end point based on the twist. You can repeat this cycle as many times as you need.



The Toolbox

People, Places, and Plans

The Toolbox

This one's for the Fixers, too, so we're going to talk directly to the person in that position for the rest of the chapter. Not that the rest of you can't read this of course, but know that "you" in this chapter won't so much mean you. You're going to find all kinds of aids and advice in here: detailed discussions of people, places, and situations, as well as how to apply them to your own capers.

We finish off the whole package with a series of tables and charts. You can use these to randomly generate different aspects of a caper or as prompts for when you're stumped. Taken as a whole, this section of the chapter also serves as a fast caper creation aid, for when you sit down to play with zero prep time. Given that the LEVERAGE *RPG* plays well as an evening's pick-up game, this is a good thing.

People

Nothing matters more to your game than the people in it. The Crew, obviously, are the most important people, but unless your Crime World is populated with people who your players are going to react to, it's all for naught. Rooms full of lasers? Man-hunting military drones? Rogue armored vehicles? They're only so interesting until there's a human face to attach to them. Players might fear a thing, or be interested in it, but they're only going to get really invested in other people. People make us sympathetic or hateful—they elicit strong reactions, and they turn random events into things with interest or purpose. People turn things into a game.

Consider a factory that's had a series of industrial accidents. Unless your players are very interested in workplace safety, that doesn't hold much promise as an interesting night's play. Now imagine that someone has been orchestrating these accidents. We immediately start jumping to questions: Who is it? How's he doing it? What's he hoping to accomplish? We've given the problem a face, and we don't have to stop there. What about the people hurt by the accident? How about the folks who should be getting to the bottom of this? As we think about each one, the situation gets that much richer, until it's transformed from some sort of abstract problem into something recognizable.

The Power of Names

Look at the name of the Trait and not its die rating to understand it. The name says what it is, while the rating says how important it is to the story. STRONG D4 doesn't mean the character is weak! Rather it means he's strong, but it's more of a hindrance than a help. In this case, he's probably big, bulky, clumsy, and tends to break things. IMAGINATIVE D4 means that the character's often off in his own world, not that he's unimaginative. Other Traits follow this same pattern.

Marks

Outside of the Crew, the Mark is the most important character in a Job. Whatever the details of the problem may be, it's the Mark that personifies that problem. Even if the specific details of the situation are dealt with, if the Mark gets off the hook, you can be confident that only means new problems down the line.

But even beyond the specifics of the problem and the Job, there's an even more important thing you need to remember: the Mark needs to really *bug* your players. They may not necessarily *hate* every Mark they have to deal with, but they should still react with one of the four D's of the Internet—disdain, disgust, disbelief, or derision. There should be something about the Mark that just gets under their skin. The more he annoys your players, the more they will delight in his fall (and the more creative they'll be in making sure it hurts).

Creating the Mark

While a Mark might have any number of Traits, you'll always want to start with five.

The first two will be very big: d12s. The first represents the reason he's untouchable, so it might be CEO D12 or MOB BOSS D12. Unlike the Crewmembers, this die doesn't necessarily represent the Mark's skill so much as the extent of his resources. The second should represent his angle, like SELF-RIGHTEOUS D12 or ENTITLED D12.

These Traits are high enough to be challenging to the Crew, even in their areas of strength. What this really means is that these define the angle the Crew shouldn't want to approach the Mark from.

The next two Traits should reflect the Mark's weakness, and they will be d4s. One will reflect the Mark's point of weakness (COWARDLY D4, GERMOPHOBE D4) and his point of vulnerability (UP FOR RE-ELECTION D4, HIDING FROM THE LAW D4). If the Crew can find these and engage them, it greatly increases their odds of success and of getting Opportunities.

The last Trait should be a d8 and should reflect some personal quirk or character element of the Mark. Have a little fun with this—think of mannerisms or ways you want the Mark to come off—ANNOYINGLY BRITISH D8 or OBSESSIVELY TIDY D8.

If you have some ideas for other Traits at d8, feel free to assign them; as long as there are less than 8-10 total Traits you're probably fine.

Sample Marks

Karl Harris, CEO of Harris Pharmaceuticals

RICH AS HELL D12, HEALTH NUT D12, GERMOPHOBE D4, COOKING THE BOOKS D4, FAUX-COWBOY D8

Harris' face to the world is of a man dedicated to helping mankind, a renegade maverick of the health care industry fighting against government restrictions that keep him from bringing good medicines to the public. In reality he's an obsessive-compulsive one-man crusade against a dirty, dirty world. He's rushed dozens of medicines to market without proper testing thanks to his also owning (through shell companies) Cloverleaf Labs, which have been responsible for the "independent" testing of his products.





Peter Brumsfield, One Man Army

RANCHER D12, VIGILANTE D12, CRAVES ATTENTION D4, FEDERAL WATCHLIST D4, ASPIRING NOVELIST D8

Brumsfield is a tough sonofabitch with a thousand acres near the Mexican border. He and his Crew pretty much run the town—the last sheriff who tried to stand up to them ended up in the hospital, and things have been quiet since then. Brumsfield likes to style himself as a Texas Ranger, unaware of the irony of what that group would think of him. From his perspective, he and his boys are "keeping the peace," but that usually just means they have a badly thought out rationale for whoever they're beating up this week.

Lyla Fisk, Charity Lamprey

IDENTITY THIEF D12, SOCIAL CHAMELEON D12, VAIN D4, ENEMIES D4, PAPER PUSHER D8

Lyla has run a dozen charities under a dozen different names, and on each occasion she's walked away with most of the money collected. She swoops in with buzzwords and PowerPoint slides and an impressive array of bogus references, and she's just started with the Children's Gift Fund.

Clients

In most Jobs, the Client doesn't get the same amount of attention that the Mark gets—in many cases, the Client is only in play long enough to lay out the problem to the Crew and get out of sight. In these cases, two Traits at d8 or d10 and one Trait at d4 are probably sufficient. If there are exceptions, it's usually because the Client is looking to take some action on his own, usually creating more than a few problems for the Crew. In that case, give the Client stats similar to an Agent (see page 125).

Sample Clients

Cindy Calypso

BUDDING HACKER D8, SKATE RAT D8, LOOKING FOR PAYBACK D4

Cindy's little brother is the one who got hurt, and she's not going to let the Mark get away with it. And she doesn't trust that anyone else will handle the job, either.

Jim Hardy

FARMER D8, TOUGH AS OLD TREE ROOTS D8, SUSPICIOUS D4

Jim Hardy signed a contract with an energy company to allow "minimal" natural gas exploration on his farm. The next autumn, his harvest consisted of a grand total of nine ears of corn and one cow that burps fire.

Maria Aguilar

DRIVING D10, HOT-TEMPERED D8, TRUSTING D4

Maria Aguilar is a talented race car driver whose team owner is threatening to have her father arrested for a crime he didn't commit if she doesn't throw her next big race.

Supporting Characters

Aside from the Crew, the Mark, and the Client, we have, well, everyone else. From the Mark's right hand man to the security guard the Crew needs to bluff past, these people all have their own part to play in the game and their own Traits to reflect that role. The Supporting Characters can be roughly divided into Extras, Agents, and Foils.

Extras

Most of the people the Crew encounters are Extras. On the TV show, they're the type who show up on screen, maybe say a line or two tops, then leave. For purposes of the game, these are people who are important only for the role they play in the game. If you have a few waiters in a scene, there's no need to delve into their names or the details of their lives. Just assign them the Trait WAITER D8 if absolutely necessary and move along.

You should never really have to plan for the Extras you need for a Job. They're simple enough to keep track of that you can just fill them in on the fly.

Sample Extras

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT D10—He's good looking, well dressed, intensely professional and he simply is *not* going to let you through that door without an appointment.

SECURITY GUARD D6—Yes, most Extras will probably be d8s to indicate that they're at least good at what they do, but these guys? They answered an ad in the paper and their training consisted of half an hour of PowerPoint followed by filling a specimen cup. They're just not that scary, though the fact that they get to carry guns might be.

DOCTOR D8—He's not here to provide riveting conversation; he's here to patch someone up.

Agents

More important or interesting characters are Agents who work for the Mark or the Client, though they are sometimes tied to an external group, like the FBI. These guys have at least two Traits that reflect who they are and what they do, though they may have as many as 3 or 4 if necessary. It will be rare for an Agent to have any Traits at d10; if they do, then it's extremely noteworthy. The Butcher of Kiev, for example, probably had BUTCHER OF KIEV D10 because he was that scary. Whether an Agent has any Traits at d4 is a matter of taste, but it can definitely round out a character. Flaws (as represented by d4 Traits) can make a character a lot more likeable, even if the dice are never rolled.

> One of the rules of the Crime World is that most law enforcement is well intentioned, but ineffectual. If you want to support that idea, one trick is to give any law enforcement agents who fit the bill a positive Trait, like HONEST or WELL-INTENTIONED, at d4.

While it's easy to create Agents on the fly, it's worth putting a little planning into them if only so they seem a little more interesting than an Extra. Specifically, you'll want to think about whether the Mark has any Agents worth mentioning. Not every Mark does, but if you feel like the Mark is lacking in some area, an Agent can make up for that. For example, the super-rich CEO is unlikely to know much about breaking legs or firing guns. He has people for that. People like Mister Wolf over there, who'd like to talk with you for just a moment.

Agents are also the faces of any group you want to introduce to a caper. If the mob is interested, there should be an Agent who speaks for the mob. If the FBI is watching, then there should be an FBI Agent or two. People don't interact with abstract entities—they need to have a face, and the thirty seconds it takes to come up with a convincing Agent is much easier to come by *before* the Job starts.

Mister Wolf—FORMER MARINE D8, INTIMIDATING D8, UNIMAGINATIVE D4—He's a tall guy with a buzz cut and a perpetual frown, and he's here to make sure the Mark's business continues uninterrupted.

Doc—DOCTOR D8, SMART GUY D8, WELL-INTENTIONED D4—Doc is the guy who found the Client's problem, and he's intent on helping. Unfortunately, he's not really clear on how to help, but he figures as long as he keeps trying, he'll get lucky eventually.

Sheriff Beckett—COP D8, SMARTER THAN HE LOOKS D8, DOESN'T WANT ANY TROUBLE D4. Beckett knows there's something wrong in his town, but he's pretty sure he doesn't want to know any more than he does.

Foils

The last and most interesting characters are Foils. These are characters who, while they may have a role in the current Job, might well show up again to make trouble in another Job. The Foil doesn't work for the Mark, though their interests may temporarily align. Whatever temporary arrangement he makes, the Foil always has his own agenda he's taking steps to pursue. The best example of a Foil is none other than Interpol's James Sterling.

Foils have character sheets, similar to the Crew. The have Attributes, Distinctions, and Talents like Crewmembers, and differ only in that they have Traits instead of Roles, reflecting the important things about the Foil (though depending on the nature of the Foil, some of the Traits may be the same as the Crew's Roles). A Foil can have a Rap Sheet as potent as any Crewmember.

Often, the Foil will have the strongest tie to one Crewmember; in that case, he may have the same dominant Role.

Sample Foil

Sheryl Davis

A freelance reporter with a drawer full of awards, she's caught wind of the Crew and what they do; now she's poking around in the corners trying to get more details about this mysterious group of criminals.

Attributes: AGILITY D4, ALERTNESS D10, INTELLIGENCE D8, STRENGTH D6, VITALITY D8, WILLPOWER D8

Traits: REPORTER D10, INTREPID D8, INVESTIGATOR D8, HITTER D6, HACKER D6

Distinctions: Brave, Stubborn, Friends in Low Places

Talents: Perfect Timing, Takes One to Know One

Changing the Cast

It is entirely possible that an Extra may become an Agent or an Agent a Foil. Sometimes your players will take a shine to a particular character, or you'll have a lot of fun playing as a particular character and, in the process, he becomes more interesting. More interesting translates into more Traits, and suddenly that guy working the slushie machine is revealed to be POET D8 KUNG FU BADASS D8—if so, that's *great*. If a character seems interesting enough to flesh him out more, then absolutely do so.



Foils versus Agents

Sometimes Agents recur without becoming Foils, usually because they're still fairly simple characters. Sometimes an Agent picks up more than 4 or 5 Traits and starts getting pretty fleshed out without becoming a full fledged Foil. All these things are fine—the distinctions between character types are guidelines, not hard rules that must be obeyed at all costs. If you end up with an Agent with several Traits and want to use him as a Foil without writing up a full sheet, then do it! This is a great way to handle borderline cases like the other Crew from *The Two Live Crew Job*. And yes, if you want to give an Agent a Talent or Distinction without giving him a full set of stats, go for it!

Places

It's not enough, of course, to just have a bunch of characters standing around and chatting with each other or even beating each other up. They need to have a place in which to act, something with a bit more character than a windowless room with a single door and four blank walls.

The places in your game should feature the kinds of details that make them come alive. They need to feel like they've been planned out with a purpose, lived or worked in, and then repurposed again. They should feel real, not like a lineup of the empty facades of a barren set on a Hollywood back lot.

Roles of Places

The places where the Crew winds up are more than just backdrops where the action happens. They often play a vital role in determining exactly what the Crew can get away with. That means you need to know them inside out—or at least be able to fake such intimate knowledge on the fly.

Because you're going to regularly put your Crew into situations where they need to improvise a solution to a problem, they are naturally going to turn to their surroundings for help. If they're in a bar, they might

look for a bottle to smash over a goon's head. If they're in an office building, they might hunt for an unsecured Wi-Fi connection into the CEO's laptop.

Places generally fall into one of five different types: homes, offices, businesses, public places, and isolated places. Sometimes they can serve more than one purpose at once or switch purposes depending on the time of day.

Homes

A home is any place where someone lives. This can range from a two-bedroom one-bath in the exurbs, to an apartment in a skyscraper, to a palatial estate on twenty wooded, fenced, and well-patrolled acres, to a cardboard box that once housed the massive refrigerator installed on that estate. The key thing about a home is that it's someone's castle, the place where he rests his head.

Most homes have some minimal form of security. Their biggest protection is the fact that people spend a lot of time in them, which means they have a built-in security team. Many people will fight tooth and nail to protect their homes and are suspicious of any strangers who approach the place.

Offices

An office is a particular place of business where people shuffle papers, meet clients or patients, and do whatever passes for their sort of quiet, climate-controlled work. Offices can range from a third-story walkup that once served as a maintenance closet to several floors in a skyscraper. During the day, most offices are unlocked but are filled with people. At night, after those people go home, those same offices are kept securely locked. If there are real valuables in the place, a security team would protect the offices as well.



Businesses

A business is any place where the workers regularly interact with the public and sell them goods or services. This includes restaurants, auto shops, copy centers, coffee shops, grocery stores, hardware stores, and more. Many businesses have an office section inside of them, a place where the workers handle the details of the business but don't much talk to outsiders on the premises.

Public Places

A public place is one that is open and accessible to the general public. This includes parks, streets, beaches, airports, museums, waterways, and so on. These make for great places to meet if you want to get lost in a crowd. A group of people who happen to gather in a public place isn't likely to draw any attention. That's one reason why Crews often like to make them their backup locations to meet up should everything go wrong.

Isolated Places

An isolated place is one that's remote or otherwise cut off from the public. People can meet here with little chance of being disturbed; however, if someone does notice them there, it's bound to stick out. Isolated places includes warehouses, docks, empty lots, cabins in the woods, desert gullies, storm sewers, secret military installations, basements, empty parking structures, construction sites, and so on.

Many public places become isolated places when they're closed down for the night. The security for such places can range from tight to nonexistent.

Making Places Interesting

If you like, you can get by with just using the same generic places over and over again. It's easy to having meetings in "a bar" or to have the Crew try to rob "a bank." While such descriptions don't require much work, they rob the adventure of a lot of its flavor.

It's more fun if each important place the Crew goes is as distinct and intriguing as you can make it. That doesn't mean you have to draw up a set of blueprints for every location or map them down to the last micron. You can usually do fine by simply adding the right details.

Names

The first thing a place needs is a good name. Your Crew doesn't walk into a bank. They stroll into the First National Farmers Bank and Trust of Springfield. Instead of heading into a bar, they duck into the Skinned Cat.

If it serves your purpose, you can use the names of any national chains you like in your private games. You don't need to come up with your own fast-food franchise when McDonald's will do. In a pinch, this can save you a lot of time.

In most cases, though, try to come up with something unique to your Crew's adventures. If you use a known name, the players will come to it with all sorts of preconceived notions. If you come up with your own flavorful place, you can trick it out exactly how you want to and never have to worry about a player saying, "But it doesn't really work like that."

People

Think about the people who live or work in the place. Give them each a name or at least a role, even if that's Security Guard #3, Drooling Old Man, or Snot-Faced Kid. The people in the place tell you and your Crew a great deal about what the place is for and how it's used. Those names can become Traits without much work.

Think also about the general attitude of the people inside the place. Are they hostile? Welcoming? Are they tired but earnest or do they wear fake smiles? How do their dispositions color the place?

History

Places don't just spring up from nowhere. Every place has its own history. The library may once have been a post office. The park may have started out as a graveyard. A beloved ice-cream store may have been torn down to make way for the monstrous supermarket. The bar may have served generations of people in the same neighborhood, changing with the times—or stubbornly trying to stay the same.

Think about how long the place has been there and what's happened to it since it was built. What was in this location before? Has the place been well kept? How many owners has it had? These help you build a story for the place that's as interesting as you might have for any character.

Location

Context means a lot. Consider the places that neighbor the location in question. Are they all of a sort or do some of them stick out? A single-family home in the center of a business district has a story attached to it, as does a strip club next to a church.

Even if the differences are that large, it's good to know what's around. The Crew may need a spot where they can spy on the place, or they might need to duck into a nearby place to hide if they have to flee. You don't need to go overboard here. Having a rough idea of what kind of neighborhood the place sits in should be enough most of the time.

Senses

When describing a place, don't just tell the players its name. Describe it in a sentence or two. If you can, toss in details that use a sense or two other than sight. How does it smell? Can you hear the neighbors shouting? Is the air climate controlled or clammy? Is the place built from bricks, wood, glass? Is the paint peeling and the roof caving in, or is the place in good repair?

Again, don't go overboard here. It's a short description, not a real estate listing.

The Hook

If you can, toss something into the place that makes it remarkable and gives it the potential to develop into a hook for a future adventure. The simple way to do this is to give one of the people in the place a notorious past, but you can just as easily make the place itself interesting, too.

Perhaps it houses something worth stealing. Maybe someone was killed there once. Let your imagination roam freely. It's just a hook. Let the Crew nibble at it. You don't have to set the hook until you want to.

Traits

Add a Trait or three to the Location (see page 63 of **Chapter Four: The Job** for more on Location Traits).

Examples

Here are a few examples of key places you can use in your game. If you like, you can come up with all-new places on the fly by just altering a few salient details.

Crew Headquarters

H.Q. D10, COVER STORY D8, PORTRAIT OF "OUR FOUNDER" D6

A well-set Crew should have a headquarters, a place where they can all meet and set up their plans for their next Job. Often one member of the Crew owns the place, but it's not uncommon for the Crew to chip in together to rent a headquarters.

A Crew's headquarters says a lot about them, so it's best to simply provide a location and then get out of the way. The Crew will outfit the place to fit their tastes, so let them loose on the place. They'll do all the work, and you can just lean back and watch.



Murray's Bar

NEIGHBORHOOD BAR D10, SLAINTE! D8, YOU'RE NOT FROM AROUND HERE D6

Murray's Bar is an Irish pub that's served the locals for decades. The wait staff has little patience with strangers, but once they warm up to you, you're family. They serve standard pub grub and have any kind of beer you like on tap, as long as it's Guinness or Harp.

The bar has been in the hands of the Murray family for generations. Martin Murray, a ruddy-faced, balding man in his sixties currently helms the place. He has two sons and a daughter, but the only relative who works there with him is his granddaughter Colleen.

(This bar bears more than a passing resemblance to John McRory's, of course, but then it's also a living, breathing, wood-paneled archetype seen coast to coast.)

Police Station

COPS ON DUTY D8, HOLDING CELL D8, THE USUAL SUSPECTS D6

The police station is a standalone building that squats in the center of town. It serves as the headquarters for the local precinct. A dour-faced receptionist named Grace Lusinski greets any outsiders from behind a partition of bulletproof glass that looks out over the foyer. She's seen just about everything in her thirty years working here, and the experience has left her jaded and grouchy.

Beyond the foyer, the building houses the police locker room and offices, the evidence room, and a row of holding cells that almost always has at least a few disheveled people in it waiting for a ride to the jail next to the courthouse downtown.

William J. Culvert Park

FOUNTAIN D6, OAK TREES D6, KIDS AT PLAY D6

This stretch of green space in the heart of the city is named after one of the city's first mayors. Several office buildings and a few bars and restaurants surround it, plus a small organic market that caters to the busy professional hoping to grab some food on the way to or from work. The place used to be a hangout for a local gang, but the city cleaned it up about ten years ago, redoing the landscaping



from one end to the other and installing a handsome circular fountain in the park's center.

Benches and conversation areas appear randomly along the winding and well-groomed sidewalks. Many of these are sheltered from the street, making them perfect meeting spots for folks needing a little privacy.

King Storage

STOLEN GOODS D8, UNRELIABLE SECURITY CAMERAS D4, HE PAID IN CASH D6

This large, steel-sided building is supposedly a warehouse for legitimate goods being shipped in and out of the city. The front part of the place serves that function, but George King—a handsome young man who's not as smart as he thinks he is—runs a fencing operation for stolen goods out of the back end. His father Bruce owns the place and has been running the honest operation for nearly twenty years.

Bruce doesn't know anything about George's shady dealings. He has his suspicions, but he's chosen to ignore them rather than risk driving off his son. He has decided to trust his son, as misplaced as that trust may be.

The Lafitte Wharf

DARKNESS AND SHADOWS D8, ARMED THUGS D8

John Lafitte runs this private dock on the edge of the city's waterfront. He is technically beyond the city's jurisdiction, and the managers of the township where the wharf is located are sitting in his pocket. Lafitte, who moved here from New Orleans many years back, is not a bad man, just desperate. If not for the smugglers who use his port, he would have little traffic at all.

The wharf is stained with oil and possibly blood, and it consistently stinks of diesel. It sees less traffic than the other docks, and the boats all seem to be guarded by large men with poorly concealed guns.

Freedom Parking Structure

FAR FROM PRYING EYES D8, LONG WAY DOWN D6

The Freedom Parking Structure was once an open park in the middle of a downtrodden part of the city. As businesses moved into the revitalized neighborhood, their owners decided they needed more parking, so the city built this structure. Unfortunately, the businesses

never did well enough to need the whole structure, so the uppermost and lowermost levels of it often stand empty.

This makes the Freedom Parking Structure the perfect place for clandestine meetings of all kinds. The basement level and the top of the structure are far from prying eyes. The only trouble comes when two separate gatherings are accidentally scheduled for the same time.

Ho-Ko Imports Headquarters

COMPANY MEN D8, EXCELLENT SECURITY D8

Ho-Ko Imports specializes in bringing cheap Chinese knockoffs, tech gadgets, and toys into the US. Their CEO and founder Lau Liu started out selling copied DVDs on the streets and built the company on the pillars of cheap, illegal labor and utter disregard for intellectual property laws. He bought this shiny high-rise at foreclosure prices a year back and has since strived to establish himself as a legitimate businessman and philanthropist.

The place still has that new-building smell and features state-of-the-art automated security systems. Most of the people who work here have no idea of Liu's shady past and are good folks dedicated to increasing Ho-Ko's share of sales into dollar and thrift stores around the US. They are uniformly friendly and eager to help, almost religious in their dedication to the company.

Casa Lopez

LA COMIDA CALIENTE D8, WELCOMING D6, TIGHT FINANCES D6

Emilio and Pilar Lopez own this McMansion located in a new subdivision on the edge of town. The house seems just like every other house on the street, except for the smell of spicy cooking that always wafts out of the home. Many of the other houses in the neighborhood stand empty—they've either not been sold or their owners have been evicted due to foreclosure.

The warm and friendly Lopezes run a Costa Rican restaurant in the city center, and they have worked hard for everything they own. They are on the edge financially but determined not to fall into the abyss. Their sons Rico and Alberto are secretly running a business smuggling illegal aliens into the area. They use some of the abandoned homes as free housing for their clients, as squatters.

The DiFeranti Estate

HOUSEHOLD STAFF D6, LUXURY D8, ECHOES OF THE PAST D6

Giuseppe and Chiara DiFeranti long ago left behind the organized crime syndicate and moved to this six thousand-square-foot mansion in a gated community to escape their pasts. Their children attend boarding schools back east, and they live luxuriously off of the profits from Giuseppe's past investments. The DiFerantis likely should have tried to enter a witness protection program, but they couldn't bear the thought of ratting out their old friends.

The home features four floors, ten bedrooms, a dozen bathrooms, a private screening room, an indoor pool, a gym, a gigantic kitchen, a ballroom, a library, a den, and a fully stocked bar. A small army of hired help maintains the place. None of them know for sure about the DiFerantis' past, although rumors circulate among them. They are courteous to friends and business associates, but they are fiercely protective of their meal tickets.

Lamar's Crib

LUXURY D8, DANCE ALL NIGHT D8, THE CREDITORS ARE KNOCKING D6

Lamar Pulliam—a.k.a. MC Pull—lives in this luxury bachelor's penthouse that sits high above the pulsating heart of the city. Lamar is the hottest DJ and record producer in the state, and he likes to show off the wealth that this has bought him. In truth, he lives well beyond his means, but he is sanguine about it. He knows that

the end is near, but he's lived poor before and he doesn't fear going back to that again.

The place is appointed with the finest materials, exotic wood, luxurious leather, shining metal, and gleaming marble. The centerpiece of the vast living room is one of the greatest entertainment systems ever assembled, and the place even has its own dance floor that extends out onto the rooftop patio so that Lamar can host private parties.

Central Avenue

TRENDY D6, IMAGE CONSCIOUSNESS D6, SHAKY JAKE'S TURF D8

Central Avenue runs right through the city's entertainment district. The north end features run-down theaters, dive bars, and strip clubs, but as you move south it becomes progressively pricier until it terminates in the Opera House. The seedier elements of the street once dominated it, but a city beautification project launched six years ago widened and rebuilt the street, and most of it now features open-air coffee shops and trendy boutiques.

The best-known person on the street is Shaky Jake, a sometimes-homeless street performer who often has a bad case of the DTs. After serenading people here for nearly a decade, he's become something of a hometown celebrity, even selling postcards and bumper stickers with his image on them.

The Best Damn Coffee Shop

DRIPPING SARCASM D8, COFFEE SNOBBERY D8, ALMOST WORTH IT D6

The Best Damn Coffee Shop lives up to its name. It easily produces the best coffee in town, and you can smell it from a block away. If it wasn't for the fact that the baristas here are uniformly arrogant and insufferable about their abilities, it would be a wonderful place to while away a morning. Instead, most customers get their coffee and pastry to go. Some settle for sitting at the café tables outside the place, as the baristas rarely venture out that far to berate the customers.

The only people who make it a habit to hang out inside are snarky hipsters who can dish out verbal abuse even better than the staff. Anyone who tries to join them invites a withering firestorm of scorn, but if you manage to withstand this—or, better yet, put one of the baristas or regulars in his place—you may find some measure of acceptance.

The Last National Bank

LOCKED DOWN TIGHT D10, THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS WRONG D8, FRESH, CLEAN MONEY D8

This locally run bank sits in an old building that once served as a National Guard armory. The brick edifice been retrofitted with all of a bank's modern amenities, including a drive-through window, an ATM, a vault, and a surprisingly sophisticated security system. The bank manager is Jack Gibson, a handsome man of about 40, with a viselike grip and a shark's grin. He founded this bank himself with profits from a shady Internet business, and he uses it to launder money and process payments for virtual currencies used in massively multiplayer online games.

The bank gives only lip service to customer satisfaction. It opens at 11am and closes at 4:30pm. Its guards are uniformly burly, well-armed men who would seem more at home on a bouncer's stool. The place is locked down hard after hours, and there are always at least two guards on duty.

Faith Memorial Hospital

BLOOD FROM A STONE D10, EMERGENCY ROOM D10, LAX SECURITY D8

Faith Memorial was once a Catholic hospital, but an HMO conglomerate purchased it back in the 1990s. It is currently in the middle of a seemingly endless series of remodeling projects that leave huge holes in its security. The place regularly overcharges its patients

with complicated billing procedures that a CPA would find hard to follow.

The hospital is clean and inviting in a modern, antiseptic way, and the décor features spare Southwestern colors and themes. The staff is competent and caring, and the ER is the best in the city. The place caters to wealthy suburbanites with rock-solid insurance coverage, but it does not refuse treatment to anyone. Despite this, the HMO is considering shutting the place down so that it can increase the demand at its other facilities in the area.

Yes, they're remodeling a place they might shut down. No, it doesn't make any sense on the surface. There's always a reason for these things, but figuring it out might require some serious digging.

Problems

Going out into the world and trying to help people means that the Crew is going to run into all sorts of problems brought to them by Clients. These can range from helping an old lady cross the street (while she's being chased by guys with guns) to bringing down a multinational conglomerate specializing in black-market body parts. Some are simple, others are complicated, but they all require the Crew's intervention.

Chapter Five: The Fixer describes how to build a Job out of a problem. It covers how to hone in on what's going on and what kind of good the Crew can do by stepping in to help. However, it doesn't give you any suggestions for problems that you can build your Job around. If that's what you're looking for, you've come to the right place.

Common Problems

Here's a good sampling of common problems you could build a Job around. These are just the seeds of any Job. You're going to have to put a bit of time and effort into tending them to grow any one of them into a full-on Job.



Feel free to riff on these as you like and tailor the ideas to your own interests and those of the Crew. If you're a sports fan, go ahead and put a sports spin on a situation. If you're a hardcore gamer, don't be afraid to spice things up with gaming details. Make each problem your own.

Scammed

The Client sunk his life savings into what turned out to be a scam real-estate investment. Pushed to the brink financially, he's desperate to get his money back but has run into brick walls every time. The scammer bankrupted the scam business and got away with every dollar through some tricky accounting. Legally, he's untouchable, and most of the victims have managed to move on with their lives.

The Client has discovered, though, that the scammer has launched a new scam similar to the original one, but with a brand-new corporate identity. More than he wants his money back, he wants the Crew to take the scammer down before he leaves another swathe of emptied bank accounts in his wake. If the Crew can make sure the scammer never gets to start over with a new scheme again, that would be even better.

Industrial Espionage

The Client came up with an invention and submitted it to a company that claimed to help match investors up with inventors. It claimed that they already had a product like his in the pipeline, and a year later he saw his invention on store shelves. Suspicious, the Client checked around with other hopeful inventors who had submitted their ideas to the company.

The company had told each of the other inventors the same thing: that their ideas were already in the works. While it's possible that this might happen a few times, it's unlikely to happen so many times to so many different people, some of whom were ripped off multiple times. They each signed a form waiving their rights to sue, so they have no recourse. The Client wants the Crew to prove that the company stole all of its ideas and get him the money he needs to pay for his wife's cancer treatments.

Framed

The Client worked for a powerful man with a shady past. At one point, his boss committed a crime and pinned the blame on the Client. In jail, unemployed, and unable to afford a decent attorney, the Client stands to be convicted of the crime and sent to jail long enough that his kids will be full grown before he sees them again.

Upon investigating, the Crew learns that this is not the first person the boss has done this to. If they can uncover evidence of his crimes, they may be able to overturn a number of other convictions and set several wrongly convicted people free.

Kidnapped

The Client's child has been kidnapped. The kidnappers don't want money, though. They want the Client to commit a crime for them, and they threaten to kill the child if the Client doesn't play along.

The Client can't go to the police because he knows that his kidnappers have an informant inside the police station. He's not willing to risk his child's life over this, but he doesn't want to go to jail or get himself killed while committing a crime. He needs the Crew to help him out.

Cheated

The Client is an athlete with an up-and-coming career. He's drawn the attention of the local organized crime syndicate, and they want him to throw a game. While he would hate to do this, he believes it's probably worth it to save his kneecaps.

However, a rival gang has also approached the Client and ordered him to win the game. This way, they'll not

only make a bundle but hurt their rivals too. The Client is caught between two vicious gangs and can't figure a good way out of the dilemma. That's where the Crew comes in.

Witnessed

The Client witnessed or discovered a crime and is ready to testify to the police about it. Unfortunately, the criminals learned of this and have decided to remove this obstacle to their continued success. Their attack drives the Client into hiding, but he now fears for his family and friends. He has no way to strike back against the criminals, and he no longer trusts the police to protect him and those he loves.

The criminals have managed to tap into the local police communications channels. To stop the crooks, the Crew will not only have to protect the Client's family and friends but shut down the crooks' intelligence gathering. While they're at it, they should come up with incontrovertible proof for the original crime so that the witness won't have to testify any longer.

Ripped from the Headlines

If you have a hard time coming up with a problem that you think is wild enough to engage your Crew's full attention, you have a world of inspiration at your fingertips. Just pick up a copy of any decent newspaper and scan the headlines for scandals and crimes. Or get online and check out the top stories from your favorite newsfeeds. You should have a wealth of ideas in no time.

Do Your Research

A little reading can take you a long way in your search for inspiration. If you get stumped, punch search terms like; "scandal," "crime," "con," "caper," or "thieves" into your favorite search engine. Then skim through the results until you find something that intrigues you. If you can relate it to some interests that you or some of your Crewmembers already have, all the better.

Try to stick to recent stories if you can—or to older ones that haven't been in the news for a while. You want to make sure that the Crew hasn't already heard about the kinds of stories you plan to use. That should make the adventure that much more surprising.

Be sure to keep track of your research. Inevitably, something will happen in the game that the players will think is impossible but you know isn't. Ask them to trust you until the adventure's over. Then show them your research notes and watch their jaws drop.

Make the Story Yours

Take some time to file the serial numbers off the story you're using as the basis of your adventure, and twist a few of the elements around to make it your own. For one, it's a game. You don't need to tie yourself too tightly to what you read in the news. Take a little license with it.

For two, the players may already have heard of the story, too. If you take pains to disguise it, you stand a better chance of them not realizing the truth behind the tale until it's too late for them to do anything about it.

Think Leverage

When noodling your story around, don't forget that this is a LEVERAGE game. You need to have a Client to contact the Crew, and that Client needs a sympathetic angle to convince the Crew to help him. Also, the story needs to have a potential end with a satisfying result. Something like trying to clear the drug trade out of a large city is a never-ending, thankless task, and it's best left as the subject for a story in a different game.



Situation Generator

If you're still stumped for ideas—or if you find yourself needing to generate a situation on the fly—flip to this section of the book and give the Situation Generator a try. For this, all you need is d10 and something to write on. You should have yourself a situation you can work with in no time.

Since there are eight different tables to help you generate your situation, that comes out to 100,000,000 different possible combinations. Actually, since the last entry in each table is "roll twice on this table," there are even more combos than that. In any case, they should keep you busy for a while.

However, remember that the Situation Generator is only a guide. Use it as you like and feel free to consider the results more inspiration than declaration. Change them as you will, and make the adventure your own.

If you want, you can modify the tables or come up with entirely new ones on your own. It's your game. Play it how you like it.

Using the Generator

Roll a d10 on each chart and record the results. When you're done, you should have a skeleton of a possible Job to play with. Dress it up a bit, and you're ready to go.

Client

D10 RESULT	
1	Full-time parent
2	Scientist/engineer
3	Clergy
4	Professional
5	Teacher/professor
6	Child
7	Athlete/entertainer
8	Politician/public servant
9	Businessperson
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring any 10s.

This table describes the kind of Client that approaches the Crew about the situation.

- **FULL-TIME PARENT:** A stay-at-home mom or dad dedicated to raising the kids.

- **SCIENTIST/ENGINEER:** Someone with a scientific background. Could also be a technician, mechanic, or computer programmer.
- **CLERGY:** A priest, nun, reverend, rabbi, deacon, imam, minister, or anyone else in a leadership position in a religious organization.
- **PROFESSIONAL:** A doctor, lawyer, agent, consultant, and so on. Someone who works in an office and rarely gets his hands dirty.
- **TEACHER/PROFESSOR:** An educator, from a preschool teacher on up to a college professor.
- **CHILD:** A minor, anywhere from an infant to a teenager.
- **ATHLETE/ENTERTAINER:** Someone whose job it is to help people forget about the troubles of their daily lives, if only for a while.
- **POLITICIAN/PUBLIC SERVANT:** An elected official or bureaucrat in some level of government.
- **BUSINESSPERSON:** Someone who runs a business, anything from a corner store to a conglomerate.



Problem

D10 RESULT	
1	Lost home
2	Lost money
3	Lost reputation
4	Mistaken identity
5	Extorted
6	Injured
7	Killed
8	Threatened
9	Framed
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring any 10s.

This table describes the general nature of the Client's problem. The problem may be about to happen or may have already taken place, but either way it's still a huge deal.

- **LOST HOME:** The Client's domicile is in danger.
- **LOST MONEY:** The Client has lost (or had stolen) a substantial amount of money.
- **LOST REPUTATION:** The Client's image has been tarnished, perhaps irreparably.
- **MISTAKEN IDENTITY:** The Client has been mistaken for someone else, someone who has serious troubles.
- **EXTORTED:** Someone is blackmailing the Client into doing something horrible.
- **INJURED:** The Client has been injured, maimed, or traumatized.
- **KILLED:** The Client has been killed—in which case the actual Client is someone who cared about the dead person.
- **THREATENED:** The Client has been threatened by someone and fears for his life and limbs.
- **FRAMED:** The Client has been framed for a crime he didn't commit.

Pressure

D10	RESULT
1	Running out of time
2	Running out of money
3	The courts can't help
4	The police refuse to help
5	No one else believes
6	Fear of reprisals
7	Knows one of the Crew
8	No solid proof
9	It's personal
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring any 10s.

This table tells why the Client needs the Crew to help him now.

- **RUNNING OUT OF TIME:** The Client has little time before the situation will be too far gone to correct.
- **RUNNING OUT OF MONEY:** The Client doesn't have enough cash to defend himself.
- **THE COURTS CAN'T HELP:** Either there's not enough evidence or the courts have already heard the case and decided against the Client.
- **THE POLICE REFUSE TO HELP:** Maybe the police are corrupt. Maybe they can't find enough evidence to press charges. Maybe they think the Client is the guilty one.
- **NO ONE ELSE BELIEVES:** Everyone else thinks the Client is the cause of the problem.
- **FEAR OF REPRISALS:** The Client is afraid that if he tries to solve the problem, he or the people close to him might be hurt or killed.
- **KNOWS ONE OF THE CREW:** The Client goes way back with one of the Crew and turns to him for help.
- **NO SOLID PROOF:** The Client can't find any solid evidence of what really happened, perhaps because it was destroyed or witnesses were made unavailable to testify.
- **IT'S PERSONAL:** The situation raises issues that are personally important to a member of the Crew.



Mark

D10	RESULT
1	Gang lord
2	Law enforcer
3	Clergy
4	Businessperson
5	Politician
6	Criminal
7	Financier
8	Attorney
9	Grifter
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring any 10s.

This table tells you a bit about the Mark, the person who is causing the Client's problems.

- **GANG LORD:** The Mark is a prominent and well-connected organized crime or gangland figure.
- **LAW ENFORCER:** The Mark is a police officer or federal officer, perhaps even a judge.
- **CLERGY:** The Mark is a prominent leader in a religious organization.
- **BUSINESSPERSON:** The Mark runs a business of some sort, likely a successful one with lots of pull in the community.
- **POLITICIAN:** The Mark is an elected official, likely corrupt.
- **CRIMINAL:** The Mark is a thug or a white-collar crook, an independent criminal.
- **FINANCIER:** The Mark works in finance, either inside a corporation or on Wall Street or some other stock exchange.
- **ATTORNEY:** The Mark chases ambulances for a living.
- **GRIFTER:** The Mark is a con artist who is very good at what he does.

Mark's Angle

D10	RESULT
1	Amoral
2	Self-righteous
3	Just business
4	Visionary
5	Hard-nosed
6	Best for all involved
7	Entitled
8	Evil
9	Greedy
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring any 10s.

This table tells you what makes the Mark such a bastard.

- **AMORAL:** The Mark doesn't care about right and wrong, only what's good or bad for him.
- **SELF-RIGHTEOUS:** The Mark is sure he knows what's best for everyone. He doesn't always include himself in that, but he's happy to inform others.
- **JUST BUSINESS:** The Mark doesn't mean to hurt anyone. He just cares about his business more than he does about them.
- **VISIONARY:** The Mark has a vision for the future, and he is willing to sacrifice others upon its altar.
- **HARD-NOSED:** The Mark believes all's fair in love and war and everything else.
- **BEST FOR ALL INVOLVED:** The Mark thinks that his actions are honestly for the best. It may be sad if someone gets hurt by them, but he's thinking of the greater good.
- **ENTITLED:** The Mark is a special person, and he deserves the things he's taken from others.
- **EVIL:** The Mark enjoys inflicting pain on others just to watch them squirm.
- **GREEDY:** The Mark wants more of something (money, sex, fame, etc.), and he's willing to kick aside anyone who gets in his way.

Mark's Power

D10	RESULT
1	Connected
2	Wealthy
3	Powerful
4	Smart
5	Sociopath
6	Attractive
7	Scary
8	Tough
9	Immunity
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring any 10s.

This table describes why the Mark is dangerous.

- **CONNECTED:** The Mark is connected to powerful people who care about him and protect him.
- **WEALTHY:** The Mark is rich enough to buy whatever he wants, including other people.
- **POWERFUL:** The Mark is influential within a group of people who listen to what he tells them to do.
- **SMART:** The Mark is a genius capable of outsmarting just about anyone.
- **SOCIOPATH:** The Mark is a master manipulator of other people's emotions and has few genuine ones of his own.
- **ATTRACTIVE:** The Mark is beautiful or handsome enough to get others to do things with just a smile.
- **SCARY:** The Mark is dangerous and creepy. He may burst into a violent rage at any instant, or he may be a cold-blooded killer.
- **TOUGH:** Nothing gets to the Mark, and he is often willing to do things that would terrify others. He knows this and uses it to get what he wants.
- **IMMUNITY:** The Mark is immune to the consequences of his crimes. Perhaps he has diplomatic immunity, or maybe he has the police in his pocket.

Mark's Weakness

D10	RESULT
1	Arrogant
2	Obsessed
3	Tyrannical
4	Fearful
5	Needy
6	Loyal
7	Phony
8	Guilty conscience
9	Addiction
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring any 10s.

This table suggests flaws in the Mark's personality, the things that drive him to be the kind of person he is.

- **ARROGANT:** The Mark is incredible and knows it a bit too well.
- **OBSESSED:** The Mark is obsessed with something, anything from a collection to revenge.
- **TYRANNICAL:** The Mark has a deep-rooted need to be the boss in any situation.
- **FEARFUL:** Anxieties of one sort or another drive the Mark.
- **NEEDY:** The Mark craves the acceptance of his peers and the adulation of his public.
- **LOYAL:** The Mark is determined to help someone important to him and will do anything to make that happen.
- **PHONY:** The Mark is a fraud, and he refuses to let anyone expose the truth.
- **GUILTY CONSCIENCE:** The Mark did something horrible and is determined to either cover it up or make up for it, no matter what it takes.
- **ADDICTION:** The Mark is addicted to something—drugs, sex, gambling—and will do anything to feed his addiction.



Mark's Vulnerability

D10	RESULT
1	Secret dream
2	Reputation
3	Superiors
4	Criminal
5	Debt
6	Time
7	Enemies
8	Family
9	Love
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring any 10s.

This table describes the Mark's fatal flaw, an angle the Crew might exploit to bring him down.

- **SECRET DREAM:** The Mark dreams of ditching it all and starting over again as something else: a cook, a fashion designer, an athlete, and so on.
- **REPUTATION:** The Mark's reputation is important to his position. Without it, he is done.
- **SUPERIORS:** The Mark has a boss who would not be happy to learn what he's been doing, no matter his motives.
- **CRIMINAL:** The Mark has broken many laws, and evidence that he has done so would ruin him.
- **DEBT:** The Mark owes a great deal to a powerful person. If that debt gets called, he's doomed.
- **TIME:** The Mark is racing against the clock. If the Crew can disrupt his plans, the Mark may self-destruct.
- **ENEMIES:** The Mark has enemies of his own, and they would all be happy to help him fail.
- **FAMILY:** The Mark has family members who need his support, but if they found out what he was doing, it would destroy his relationship with them forever.
- **LOVE:** The Mark is desperate for affection and will risk much to satisfy his needs.



Who Else is in Play?

D10 RESULT	
1	Enforcer
2	Guilty conscience
3	The loose end
4	The vizier
5	The innocent
6	The wildcard
7	The inspector
8	The dupe
9	The hostage
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring any 10s.

This table describes someone else who's going to play an important role in the Job.

- **ENFORCER:** The Mark has a skilled Hitter in his employ. The Crew needs to watch their backs.
- **GUILTY CONSCIENCE:** The Mark knows he's done wrong, and part of him wants to come clean.
- **THE LOOSE END:** There's a witness. The Crew better find him before the Mark does.
- **THE VIZIER:** The Mark has a loyal and highly competent assistant who can spot a con a mile away.
- **THE INNOCENT:** The Mark's spouse, son, or daughter is closely tied to his business dealings, a person who had nothing to do with what happened to the Client.
- **THE WILDCARD:** There's another business interest, political power, or even another victim looking at the situation, one who's not especially friendly with the Mark.
- **THE INSPECTOR:** A banking regulator, federal agent, or insurance investigator has the Mark in his sights.
- **THE DUPE:** The Mark has a defender absolutely convinced of his innocence, an innocent that the Client insists not be harmed when the Mark goes down.
- **THE HOSTAGE:** The Mark holds power over someone important to the Client, and has threatened to do him harm (physical or otherwise) if the Client comes after the Mark.

The Twist

D10	RESULT
1	Secret vulnerability
2	It's personal
3	Turnabout
4	The Mark's not really the bad guy
5	The police have their eye on this one
6	The Mob has their eye on this one
7	Death/disappearance of the Mark
8	The Client is the Mark
9	It's much worse than you think
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring any 10s.

This table gives the Fixer ideas for something to thicken the plot.

- **SECRET VULNERABILITY:** Roll again on "Mark's Vulnerability"—that's his real vulnerability.
- **IT'S PERSONAL:** The Mark has directly hurt one of the Crew, or the Client is a loved one of one of the Crew
- **TURNABOUT:** The Mark discovers that he's being scammed and turns the tables, forcing the Crew to play defense
- **THE MARK'S NOT REALLY THE BAD GUY:** There's a power behind the throne, so to speak. This matches well with the presence of a vizier, above.
- **THE POLICE HAVE THEIR EYE ON THIS ONE:** The Mark is under investigation by a law enforcement agency, and the Crew must tread carefully lest they get swept up in the net.
- **THE MOB HAS THEIR EYE ON THIS ONE:** As above, but it's an organized crime syndicate rather than law enforcement, and the price of failure is "dead" rather than "arrested."
- **DEATH/DISAPPEARANCE OF THE MARK:** The Mark dies, goes missing, or is taken out of the picture… before the Crew can get what they want. Who steps up? Likely one of the Mark's Agents or even a Foil.
- **THE CLIENT IS THE MARK:** Similar to "the Mark's not really the bad guy," but in this case it turns out the Client is the real bad guy and the Mark is totally innocent. Played out well in *The Nigeran Job,* though the Client might even be in on it.
- **IT'S MUCH WORSE THAN YOU THINK:** The Mark is the tip of an iceberg. He's still the bad guy, but it's revealed that there's somebody else (or lots of somebodys) backing him up. Maybe the Mark is a member of a syndicate of other crooks all doing the same thing, and the Crew has to take them all out.



A SIGNIFICANT FOIL

"You know your entire plan depended on me being a self-serving utter bastard."

NAME

JIM STERLING

DISTINCTIONS

STERLING NEVER LOSES

PREPARED

ARROGANT

ATTRIBUTES

	4	6	8	10	12
AGILITY		[6]			
ALERTNESS			[8]		
INTELLIGENCE				[10]	
STRENGTH			[8]		
VITALITY		[6]			
WILLPOWER				[10]	

ROLES

	4	6	8	10	12
GRIFTER			[8]		
HACKER		[6]			
HITTER			[8]		
MASTERMIND				[10]	
THIEF	[4]				

TALENTS

Stay On Target: You're used to ignoring distractions and keeping your goal in mind. When a Crewmember you're opposing rolls an Asset die as part of an action against you or one of your Agents or Extras, you may hand the player a Plot Point to nullify that Asset for the remainder of the Job.

Takes One to Know One: You're good at telling when you're being lied to, mostly because you're good at lying to yourself. When a Crewmember attempts a Face Action to deceive or mislead you, you add a d8 to your roll to set the stakes of their Face Action.

Background: James Sterling is Nathan Ford's nemesis, a former colleague of his at IYS. Sterling rose through the ranks, from Chief Insurance Investigator to Vice President to President, almost all as a result of his clashes with Nate. Sterling later joined Interpol, whose resources enabled him to finally collar Nate at the climax of "The Maltese Falcon Job." However, his victory was short-lived.



NAME

COLIN "CHAØS" MASON

ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT FOIL

"Hardison, I heard you sucked. Guess I was right!"

DISTINCTIONS

BLACK HAT

WELL-EQUIPPED

DICK

ATTRIBUTES

	4	6	8	10	12
AGILITY		6			
ALERTNESS			8		
INTELLIGENCE				10	
STRENGTH		6			
VITALITY		6			
WILLPOWER			8		

ROLES

	4	6	8	10	12
GRIFTER		6			
HACKER					12
HITTER	4				
MASTERMIND			8		
THIEF		6			

Explosives (Hacker), Slap Fight (Hitter)

TALENTS

Are You Gonna Log-In or Are You Just Whistlin' Dixie? Your expertise at dueling with human opponents rather than automated systems is well known. Add an extra d8 to any HACKER roll you make in a Contested Action against a human opponent.

The Bigger They Are: You love using your opponent's own tricks against them. When a Crewmember uses an Asset die in an action against you, you may hand the player a Plot Point and take the Asset away from them for the remainder of that action, using it as a Complication die in your own roll to establish or raise the stakes.

Background: Colin Mason's hacker tag is ChaØs, which is exactly what he seeks to bring to most organized network security. He has a huge chip on his shoulder and carries a grudge, and is easily Alec Hardison's greatest opposition. Unfortunately for Chaos, he was unable to outwit the Leverage Consulting & Associates Crew, ending in custody for attempted smuggling of forged paintings in "The Two Live Crew Job."



SEVEN SIGNIFICANT AGENTS

NAME

MAGGIE COLLINS

Art Expert d10, Tougher than she looks d8, Still Got It d8, Bereaved d4

Dr Maggie Collins is a renowned art expert and Nathan Ford's ex-wife. Her marriage to Nate fell apart after the death of their son Sam, though they remain on at least amicable terms. Though she once worked for IYS, she now lends her expertise to art museums around the world.

MARCUS STARKE

Planner d10, Forger d10, Leader d4

Marcus Starke is an international art thief and master forger who assembles short-term Crews, or whiz mobs, to assist him in stealing priceless works of art. For a time, he worked with Sophie Devereaux, and while they are no longer partners he still holds her in high regard. Starke's favorite con is the Mona Lisa Variant, though he's certainly familiar with dozens of others.

MIKEL DAYAN

Reckless d4, Ex-Mossad d8, Ass-Kicker d10

Mikel Dayan is a beautiful yet deadly mercenary, once a member of Israel's Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations. Her paramilitary training and expertise has commanded the highest bids around the world. She was Marcus Starke's muscle "during the Two Live Crew Job."

APOLLO

Sneaky d8, Fast Hands d10, Friends in the Business d4

Little is known of Apollo beyond his considerable skills as a thief and pickpocket, though it's clear he doesn't subscribe to violent methods. He works very well in a group, as evidenced by his performance in Marcus Starke's crew during the "Two Live Crew Job."

BUTCHER OF KIEV

Butcher of Kiev d10, Scary d8, Long Memory d8, Sense of Humor d4

The Butcher of Kiev has a history with Eliot Spencer, one that came to a head during "The Wedding Job." He has Russian mob connections and his title just about sums it up.

AGENT TAGGERT

World Weary d8, Well Intentioned d8, FBI Agent d6, Sharp d4

Agent Taggert is an FBI agent who has shown remarkable success in busting mobsters, meth dealers, and other wanted men. He's the senior partner on most cases with Agent McSweeten.

AGENT MCSWEETEN

Fresh-Faced d8, Earnest d8, FBI Agent d6, Cunning d4

Agent McSweeten is a hardworking FBI agent who, together with Agent Taggert, has proved himself to be a rising star in the Bureau. He's developed a major crush on Agent Hagen, and has no idea that she's really a thief named Parker.



The Crime World

Where It All Happens

Crime World

Now we get to the part where you might expect us to tell you that everything you think you know about the world is a lie, that it's all just a cover story for something deeper. Well, that's not exactly true. I mean, sure, there are probably more bad things going on than you realize, and the stories you see on the evening news or your favorite cable network are likely to be biased. But for all intents and purposes, yes, the world of LEVERAGE is the same one you're used to.

Only, there's another world, a world of conspiracy and high-stakes theft and intrigue and people pulling strings, and it's above all of this day-to-day nickel and dime criminal behavior. It's larger than life. After a while, when you've pulled off your fair share of Jobs and brought some relief to the innocent people who've been wronged, you're gonna start getting a sense that you're only scratching the surface. That's what we're talking about. That's **Crime World**.

See, you can play Job after Job with this game and not touch on any of that, and that's great. I think that's a sensible way to do it, especially if you've got a busy kind of life and the players can only meet up once or twice a month. But if you're really keen to immerse yourself, this chapter takes you there. It goes over the world of the confidence game, how to think like a criminal, how this stuff really works. Obviously, you're gonna use all of this information for the right reasons. If not…well, that's why Leverage Consulting & Associates does what it does.

The Lay Of The Land

You don't need a special map or a gazetteer or a chapter full of locations to get yourself into the mindset of Crime World. No, you just need to grab an atlas or pull open one of those online map tools or a street directory for your favorite metropolitan center, and go to town. But all that aside, there are some places that have become strongly associated with LEVERAGE. Here's a couple to get you thinking.

Chicago

The Windy City has a wonderful history of crime and confidence games, and thus it makes perfect sense that this is the first city where Nathan Ford's Crew sees action. Chicago, Illinois, located on the shores of Lake Michigan, is a political and industrial hub for the Midwest; it spreads out into both affluent and asset-deprived neighborhoods and is home to global corporations and crime syndicates.

Along Lakeshore Drive, the gleaming towers and bustling crowds of Chicago hide some of Crime World's most deceptive and duplicitous Marks. It's a white-collar paradise, corruption and casual amorality apparently just out there to be found. But it's also a hard-working city, flanked by blue-collar cities Gary, Indiana, and (around the lake to the northwest) Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Finance, technology, and civic government share the limelight with manufacturing, extortion, and shipping when it comes to criminal playgrounds.

You could carry out Jobs in Chicagoland for months without stepping out of the city and into the suburbs, but you'd be missing an opportunity for an even more vicious jungle. The gangs in Chicago have formed strong roots in bedroom communities, preying on college students and professional families. Petty feuds and cheating spouses can act as red herrings for political corruption and Italian mobsters. The lists, like the greater metropolitan area, go on and on.

Historically, Chicago's crime story makes it all the more appropriate for a Crew to be attached to this city. Al Capone, Bugsy Malone, the hapless G-Men; if you were at all interested in playing out a LEVERAGE game set in the past, just as a fun variation, this would be where you'd set it. All the big stores, con men, and ropers of note traveled through and set up shop in Chicago in the 1920s

and 1930s, catching a train out when things got too hot. Something to consider, but hide your hip flask.

Los Angeles

It's not all Hollywood and South Central in Los Angeles, California, but in Crime World that does give you an indicator of the broad strokes this city is painted with. Crime and gang warfare is rife, but the rich and famous are thick as thieves in L.A. This was Leverage Consulting & Associates' first long-term base of operations, sharing a time zone with IYS Insurance, Nate's former employer.

The sunny—albeit smog-prone—climate in L.A. translates to a constant veneer of broad daylight, overexposure, and primary colors. If you're well off, you have big rings, nice suits, and security guards with sunglasses. If you're on the other end of the scale, your neighborhood is decorated in graffiti and kids are always playing basketball in a vacant lot nearby. At night, it's crisp and dangerous and high rises are towers of light. Crime World Los Angeles is a classic location for any crime you care to name, and more that you can't.

Because Los Angeles covers such a large area, you can drive for hours and still be stuck in traffic or taking another turn on a cloverleaf. On the other hand, it's not very far to sun-baked desert, perfect for dumping some poor innocent victim or stashing a hefty score from a bank job. The authorities are their own special kind of challenge, too, from the LAPD to the California Highway Patrol. If you want to get caught, you've got plenty of options.

The LEVERAGE Crew left L.A. somewhat explosively, but if you're interested in making your home in the great metro area, it's worth watching a lot of movies and TV set in the City of Angels. And speaking of movies and TV, you probably can't take two steps without



tripping over some struggling actor or screenwriter. They make great Clients, but don't discount them as potential Crewmembers, either.

Boston

The LEVERAGE Crew relocated to Boston, Mass after the *First & Second David Jobs* left them scattered to the four winds. With IYS CEO Blackpoole taken down and their headquarters in L.A. blown up, Nate decided to move back to his old stomping grounds. Renting a condo apartment right upstairs from the bar where his father, Jimmy Ford, used to hold court, Nate resisted his Crew moving into the place for a while until even he realized it just made good sense.

Boston's a city of old neighborhoods and strong family ties. It's multicultural, but it has a reputation for being run by the Irish. True, the Irish mob has a firm foothold on crime in Boston (especially the Donnelly, McTeague, and O'Hare families), but they share the attentions of the authorities with the Russians, Italians, and Caribbean gangs.

The city has a reputation for being a center of higher education, medical research, and industry. Harvard's nearby in Cambridge, after all. There's no shortage of big companies involved in questionable practices, many of which hire some of Crime World's choicest ex-military thugs and security personnel to keep these practices hidden away.

Because Boston's on the coastline and is a major shipping port, smuggling and illicit imports are rife. Customs officials are often paid off by the Irish mob or by wealthy industrialists hoping to keep their international trade under the radar. It's a hop step and a jump across the Atlantic to Europe and parts east, either by ship or a flight out of Logan International.



Your Place In Crime World

So where do you fit into all of this? Before you move on and start learning how the bad guys think, take a moment as a player and a group to ground yourself in Crime World's larger-than-life setting. You've already given this some thought during *The Recruitment Job*, but your backstory is one that should constantly be revealed during play. It's no fun to have it all worked out from the beginning, so even if you've already had your heart set on a Hacker who grew up in South Carolina or a Grifter from Lebanon, leave some space to find your place.

The following ideas should give you some ideas of how to give some background and weight to your Crew, tying them together and giving them the basics for a sense of purpose and teamwork.

Five Thieves Walk Into A Bar

So there's the random, just showed up and now you're breaking into high-security buildings background, where nobody has any real connection other than the money. And once that's taken care of, the thrill of the scam. This is a common niche that many LEVERAGE Crews are gonna fill, because it's so damn easy to set up. The Mastermind put out an ad, say, or the Hitter called all of his former employers together and suggested they have a drink. Drop a Client on them, and they're off and running.

The upside? Not much preparation, easiest thing to settle on. Lots of room to fill in those blanks. The downside? It's been done, not just in the caper genre but in almost any pulp story or fantasy plot every written. It's not so much that it's boring or tired, but it doesn't give you much to go on.

Band of Brothers

One day, something bad happened and a group of mercenaries or freedom fighters were blamed for a crime they didn't commit, forcing them underground and… you know the score. This isn't a bad setup for a Crew because it not only emphasizes Crime World's wide world of badness, but also gives all of the Crewmembers a solid foundation of trust and experience to work with. There's a reason movies and television like to use this trope—it's because, at any time, you could get a call from that guy you served in that unit with, and he has a problem only you and your buddies can solve. It's tailor-made for this game.

So why wouldn't you just do this? Well, it throws out a lot of options that you might otherwise have available if you didn't know everybody well. For instance, if you've all served in "the War" together, there's less opportunity for one or two of you to be mysterious and shady and difficult to trace. Your history's been spelled out, so the game is gonna spend more time in the present day unless there's some kind of military flashback. And let's face it, not everybody wants to be in some kind of crack special forces unit. Some people just want to be civilian criminals-turned-heroes.

Keeping It In The Family

Finally, there's this gem of an idea: you're all related. You can develop a background or previous life as a criminal independently of the others, but you will always share those memories of Christmas at Grandma's (with Grandpa still in the slammer) or your youthful indiscretions with the same girl and resulting weeks of feud. A Crew that consists entirely of family members is also a concept that embraces a background of organized crime: you're all in the Valentino family, for instance, or you're the sons and daughters of Arturo Mendoza, just north of the border.

Family-based Crews make the idea of the Crew being a dysfunctional family unit that much more literal. It's probably a little much to have one or two be parents or from an older generation, but brothers and sisters? Cousins? Much less likely to get weird, but there's nothing like the bond of a family united against a Crime

World that once clothed and fed them. The downside, if you can call it that, is that unless you bring in the oddball adopted sibling, you're going to have to line up everybody's cultural or ethnic background more tightly.

Thinking Like a Criminal

Criminals, whether part of a Crew or not, think differently from honest citizens. It's more than a lack of regard for the law. They see barriers as something to be overcome rather than respected.

For a criminal, a law against something doesn't provide a good enough reason to not do it. It just means that there are penalties if they get caught—so they'd better not get caught. Or at least not convicted.

Most people have a bit of criminal inside them. It's the rare person who's never broken a law when he was sure that no one was watching. We go just a bit over the speed limit. We jaywalk. We copy music.

The defining line for most people, though, is whether the transgression in question causes direct and substantial harm to another person—or is reckless enough to be likely to do so. Victimless crimes don't seem all that bad, nor do crimes against large, faceless corporations. Breaking someone's kneecaps, though, is something that most people can agree is wrong. You have to cross a pretty strong psychological barrier to directly victimize someone who's right there in front of you. Most people just won't do it.

Career criminals draw the line between what's acceptable and what's not in a different spot than other people. Sometimes crime is just poor impulse control, but we're not talking about that kind of criminal. No, we're talking about people who can recognize the illegality of stealing something, but they don't see it as wrong. They can come up with dozens of rationalizations for why it's okay, why it's the lesser evil, or even why it is unequivocally the right thing to do.

In the Jobs your Crew will be taking on, it *is* the right thing to do.

Problem Solving

Members of a Crew tend to approach problems in a direct way. A criminal might ignore the law, but he respects the trouble the police can cause. If you're smart, you'll look for a legal solution first. Saves you a lot of trouble. Of course, if things were that simple, people wouldn't come to you.

By the time someone approaches a Crew for help, he's tried all of the legal options, or at least discounted them for some reason. If that victim could have achieved justice without turning to a Crew, he would have done just that. Because of this, Crews almost never find easy problems to solve. The sorts of situations in which they find themselves require a bit more intelligence and finesse.

Think Big

Members of a Crew deal with big problems, and big problems require big solutions. If they need a nuclear submarine to pull off their insane scheme, they go steal one. If they need to run a major city, they take over—or at least make their Mark think they did. It is—in theory, at least—just that simple.

So sometimes you're going to need to think big. No idea is too crazy to consider. Prefer simple solutions over complex ones, but when the easy answers have been exhausted, remember that to the bold go the spoils.

Be Unobtrusive

Most people are trusting souls. They take other people at face value. If a Crewmember makes the effort to present himself as a particular kind of person, few folks will question that. The social pressure against questioning



a person's identity can be tremendous, and the smart Crewmember does everything he can to reinforce that.

If you need to get into a low-security area, sometimes the best way to do it is just waltz right in. Need to get through a busy office? Pick up a clipboard and stride with a purpose, you won't raise questions. Need to go unnoticed on a city street? A postal carrier uniform is the ticket. Infiltrating a catered party? Put on a white button-down shirt and black slacks, and everyone assumes you're one of the waitstaff. You'd be amazed at how far an air of "I belong here" can get you.

To be unobtrusive requires little or no preparation. You simply try to fade into the background—be one of the people everyone expects to see. You're just another face in the crowd. The trick is not to try too hard—no need to sneak if you're allowed to be there, right? Nothing makes someone stick out more than to be seen tiptoeing around.

Be Sneaky

Then again, sometimes you just can't fake belonging there. So, some criminals get good at being sneaky. They can slip around through heating ducts or rappel down the sides of buildings to get to their targets. This can be pretty effective, as long as no one spots him. Seeing someone dressed in black clothing with a rope rigging is enough to make a lot of people call for help.

If you do things this way, your big advantage is that no one ever sees your face. When the Mark realizes that he's been taken, there's no way for him to track you down.

Trying to be sneaky is pretty much an all or nothing thing, though. If it works, you slip away like a ghost; if you're spotted, the operation is blown—unless that's what you wanted, of course, but then we're talking a whole different sort of plan. There you go, thinking big again. I approve.



Be Brazen

A successful con man knows when to throw caution to the wind and go straight at the target. Sometimes being loud, flashy, or obnoxious—or all of the above—is just what the con needs. Now, you have to remember that once you pull a stunt like that the Mark isn't likely to ever forget your face, which has its own set of problems. But sometimes the payoff is worth it.

The perfect time for something like this is when you need a to cause a distraction. Maybe you flirt with the Mark. Maybe you sucker punch him. Maybe you set off all the car alarms up one side of the street. In any event, while you play out the big role of "diversion" in the spotlight, the other members of the Crew can take care of everything else backstage. (Once again, go big or go home. Sensing a pattern here?)

Be Fast

The longer a caper goes on, the larger the chance that someone will make a mistake, or that some random incident will tear through the carefully constructed tissue of lies the Crew has taken so many pains to build. Smart con men don't stick around to build a long-term relationship with the Mark. Stay exactly as long as you need to reel him in, and not one second longer.

Honor Among Thieves

The real trick for a decent Crew is to learn to trust each other.

Yes, I'm suggesting that some criminals trust each other. No, it doesn't come naturally. Yes, it conflicts with the large egos that most of us tend to develop. But at some point in most Jobs, something will go horribly and irreparably wrong. If you and your Crew hang together, you still have a chance of pulling it off. If you turn on each other at the first sign of trouble, though, it's all going to be over before it really gets started.

Trust is one of the toughest things for new Crewmembers to learn; it won't be easy for your Crew, either. You're all going to have your doubts about each other. I could pull out a cliché about the letters used to spell "team," but the fact is that trust is essential. It's the difference between a professional con and amateur hour. As you work together on more and more Jobs, these fears should fade, and you should become a well-oiled machine.

Violence

It isn't pretty, but when you have criminals doing their thing, fights and violence will come up. People will fight to keep what they've stolen, after all. The thing you need to remember is that you should try to avoid it. Look, I like a good donnybrook as much as the next guy, but in our line of work fights are a sign that something's gone bad. So, as a criminal of a particular sort, how do you deal with violence?

Be Decisive

Okay, so it's come to a fight. No way around it. Someone is threatening to pull the Job off the rails, and you can't tolerate that. Time to take out the trash.

Once you decide that someone has to go down, don't fool around, and don't hesitate; put him down hard and fast. Don't toy with him. Don't show off. You're not in a mixed martial arts tournament—remove the threat as quickly and efficiently as possible, and move on with the rest of the Job.

Show Restraint

Now, that said, do exactly as much as you need to do to remove the threat, and not one bit more. Why is that?

Well, for one, serious injury and death brings the heat. Curious police detectives are bad, bad news for a Job. If you slap a couple of guys around and tie them up in the closet, there's only an investigation if they report it. And chances are they won't. A corpse guarantees an investigation, and a serious one. Don't create corpses.

Second, serious injuries and death create enemies. Sprains, bruises, the odd mild concussion, those things heal with an icepack, some painkillers, and a few days off (of course, I'm not a doctor, and this is not medical advice). Bruised egos take a little longer, but a professional probably isn't going to take a restrained beatdown personally. Part of the Job. But you kill a guy, you put a guy in a wheelchair, his buddies are going to be looking for you. You think an FBI agent on your trail is a problem, try having grudge-nursing cocaine traffickers gunning for you. So keep it to sprains and bruises.

Remember Who You Are

Finally, remember what you're doing this for. You're not a common criminal, you're not a thug. You're doing this Job to right wrongs and get the innocent a measure of justice.

Dealing out death is pretty much the opposite of what you're trying to accomplish here. Bruises heal. Humiliation fades. Death? Maiming? Permanent injury? That's what the bad guys do.

You might have been a bad guy once, but you're on the side of the angels now. Never forget that. Bloodthirsty thugs have no place on your Crew.

Guns—The Elephant In The Room

We talked about this before, in the Roles section about Hitters (page 24), but it's worth bringing up again here, as we're talking about violence. Plain and simple, it's not a good idea to do this Job armed. There's a lot of reasons for this.

One is that guns introduce unpredictability. It's been said that God made man but Samuel Colt made them equal. Which is nice, but equality is the last thing you want in a fight. You don't get on a Crew without being one of the best in the world at what you do; getting into



a gunfight removes that advantage. Who knows what's going to happen then? No, you want certainty.

Second, shooting someone is pretty much the opposite of restraint. Few things bring the cops running faster than a report of "shots fired." You do not need that kind of trouble. And if you're carrying a tool, you'll always be tempted to use it.

Third, once you're carrying, you need to start worrying about things like metal detectors, pat-down searches, and observant guards. Access to courthouses, airports, and secure offices is extremely limited. And if you're trying to avoid attention, this is the wrong way to do it. Don't let the movies fool you; a handgun is a lot harder to conceal than most people think—and anything bigger than a handgun, forget it.

Fourth, they're plain illegal in a lot of places. The US has pretty lenient laws, depending on the state you're in, but in Canada? Europe? Some cities in the US? A simple traffic stop suddenly becomes a very big problem if you're armed.

I could go on, but you get the idea.

Keep it Simple

It's easy to make things more complicated than they need to be. A smart Crew knows that unforeseen circumstances often complicate a Job once it's started, so it's always better to start simpler if you can. Things will complicate themselves soon enough; no sense in helping them along.

Now, you might be saying "But you just told me to be bold, think big!" That's right. The trick is to do both. You just have to keep those big, bold plans simple.

Let's talk about a few ways you can keep your Jobs simple.

Keep A Low Profile

Don't draw attention to yourselves. Whatever plan you're hatching likely won't come off if you do it on national television. Smart people don't fall for plans they see coming, and if the Mark wasn't smart, he wouldn't have shafted your Client in the first place.

So make sure you play everything close to the vest. Take common sense measures to hide your identities; use fake IDs, don't use personal vehicles, don't let the Mark recognize your face until you're ready for him to. Don't draw the attention of security or the cops. Don't be conspicuous or ostentatious in your personal life.

Now, sometimes the plan calls for someone to make a spectacle of himself, cause a distraction, or otherwise draw attention. That's fine—it's part of the plan. The real work is happening quietly, behind the scenes.

Give Back

Yup, here's where I appeal to your conscience. When you or your Crew steals something you don't need, or that rightly belongs to someone else, return it. If possible, give it back so that no one knows it was ever gone in the

first place. This reduces the chances of uncomfortable questions being asked and the police being called in.

Don't Get Attached

The life of a con man (or, you know, con woman) doesn't lend itself well to long-term relationships—unless they happen to be with someone else in the Crew, and that can be…tricky.

Folks in our line of work need to be able to pick up and move at a moment's notice. You never know when the law or an angry Mark might come knocking on your door. It's best not to get too attached to things. But if you just can't part with your beloved grandmother's stamp collection, make sure you have someplace to keep it that's far away from you.

Careful with that, though. At a certain point, you don't own things. They own you. There's a certain responsibility that comes with owning something, and clever thieves keep their responsibilities as flexible as possible. They rarely know where life might take them next, so they need to make sure they're not letting anyone down if they have to leave in a hurry.

Most people in this line of work have few true friends. They value the friendships they do forge with people who understand us and who we can really trust. That's one reason why a good Crew works well together and keeps coming back for more. Together they're better than the sum of the Crew's parts, and they just don't experience that outside the Crew.

This is tough advice, but outside of the Crew, try not to form too many attachments. If you do have any, play it close to the vest so it can't be used against you. Maybe you have someone you send money to back home, but you should keep that to yourself. You certainly don't tell anyone about your ex-wife who's a world renowned art expert and insurance investigator. Ahem.



Cons

The core of any Job (sometimes we'll call it a caper, but that's kind of Hollywood, so I prefer "Job") is the con, which is short for confidence, as in confidence game or confidence Job. A person who runs a con is called a con artist, and the victim of the con is called a Mark.

There are dozens of different types of cons, but they all involve using guile to gain the confidence of the Mark. Once that happens, the Mark often willingly gives the con artist what he wants—or at least leaves access to the object of the con open in a way that it wouldn't normally be. This happens when, for instance, the Mark gives his trusted new friend (the con artist) the keys to his house and then comes home later to find he's been robbed blind.

A con itself is not a caper. It's simply a component of a caper. A full Job may include many different cons, although sharp Crews do try to limit the number of required cons if only for simplicity's sake.

Still, for a Crew, a con is a necessary and important part of the Job. This is the Crew's weapon of choice in its pursuit of justice. As professional thieves, it's the tool that they know best, and because of that they sometimes resort to a con when simpler methods might do. Because this is often what they do best, the choice usually makes sense.

Cons make for great capers because most of them use the Mark's own greed against him. They often can highlight what it is about the Mark that's so evil that it brought him to the Crew's attention in the first place. When that happens, the Crew can feel doubly good about taking the Mark for everything he has.

The downside of any con, of course, is that it's based on fraud. To some folks, that makes it immoral at its core, and usually illegal as well (though "illegal" and "immoral" have less to do with one another than you might expect). If the con artist is caught perpetrating



this fraud and exposed as a scammer, he can suffer all sorts of consequences—maybe you just have to run for it. Maybe you get shot. Or the con artist might become a different sort of con—a convict.

The Morality of the Con

A con is based on deceit, which makes it immoral by most people's standards. To a con artist in a Crew, though, a con is nothing more than a tool, a means to an end. A tool itself cannot be wrong, only the ways in which it is used.

A gun, for instance, is a tool. It can be used for murder, but it can also be used to save someone else's life, or in self-defense.

Con artists in our sort of Crew view cons the same way. We use them to deliver justice when playing by the rules has failed. Is that immoral? I'll leave that up to the philosophers.

The Steps of a Con

There are nearly as many different kinds of con games as there are con artists. Every con artist puts his own spin on the game. This helps keep them fresh and also lessens the chances that a savvy Mark might spot the con for what it is.

While every con is as unique as a snowflake, that doesn't mean that they're immune to being analyzed and separated into their component parts. Most cons can be broken down into a series of steps the con artist takes. (Take out your notepads, kids, there'll be a quiz later.)

1. Find out what the Mark wants.
2. Figure out a way to give it to him.
3. Gain the Mark's confidence.
4. Set up the deal.
5. Make the exchange.
6. Get away.

Most of these apply to every con, although some of them wind up going by so fast that if you blink you might miss them.

1. Find Out What the Mark Wants

The default answer here is money. In a short con like three-card monte, the con artist assumes that the Mark wants money. Even rich people like to have more money. It's the one gift that always works…

…Except when it doesn't. (You knew that was coming, right? Nothing's that simple.) Not everyone can be bought with cash. Some people have too much of it to care about the kind of chump change you see in play in most short cons. Others don't care much for money or have no direct need for it. A few see money as the root of all evil, and they prefer to have as little to do with it as possible.

So if they don't want money, what do they want? You might have to dig a little to figure that out. That billionaire might want to get rid of her daughter's fiancé. That crime lord might have a burning desire for his hometown to recognize him as a hero. That crooked politician might want to finally get his revenge on the woman who rejected him when they were in school.

Now, regardless of what form it ends up taking, what the Mark wants is called the bait. That's what you use to lure him into the con. The more the Mark wants—even needs—the bait, the better. People are prone to errors in judgment when they get close to getting what they want, and the smart con artist can exploit that.

2. Figure Out a Way to Give It to Him

If all the Mark wants is cash, it's easy enough to come up with that. Lots of us in the business can get our hands on a small—or even a large—fortune in a short amount of time if we need to. Often, the con artist doesn't even need to come up with a great deal of actual money for bait; he just needs to make the Mark believe he has it.

If the bait is something other than money, the con artist has to figure out a way to line it up. Again, the con artist doesn't need to actually have the bait in question. He just needs to figure out a way to make the Mark believe that he does.

If possible, a smart con artist works hard to line up real bait rather than just the promise of it. A savvy Mark may require proof of the bait's authenticity at some point, and that's a lot easier to provide if the bait is actually authentic.

3. Gain the Mark's Confidence

This is the tricky part; unfortunately the entire con turns on it, so you'd better pull it off. If the con artist can get the Mark to trust him, everything else should fall into place. Now, this can be complicated, or it can be *really* complicated, depending on how suspicious the Mark is.

There are two easy (relatively—this stage is almost never what you'd call "easy") ways to win that elusive confidence. In the first, the con artist provides a small sample of the promised bait or does a smaller version of the proposed big deal at the heart of the con. This may have to be repeated several times to build the Mark's confidence in the con artist. With persistence, though, the Mark should develop that necessary trust.

In the second, the con artist provides references for his trustworthiness. To manage this, he might try to con a third party into believing in him, but this can be fraught with trouble. If the third party is honest and doesn't have confidence in the con, the entire Job can fall apart.

Better for the con artist to bring in a trusted friend to pose as a stranger who can vouch for the con artist's honesty—this person is called a shill. Often the shill pretends to be someone who makes the same deal with the con artist that the Mark is considering. When the shill crows about what a wonderful arrangement he's made, the Mark's confidence in the con artist should grow.

4. Set Up the Deal

Once the con artist has the Mark's confidence, it's time to set the deal into motion. This is the arrangement the con artist makes for the Mark to take the bait. The bait never comes free. The Mark can only have it (supposedly) if he is willing to trade it for what the con artist is really after.

It's the most dangerous part of the con, too. If the Mark wises up in the middle of the deal, the best the con artist can hope for is to be able to just walk away. If the Mark decides that the con artist needs to be taught a lesson, though, the results can be fatal.

5. Make the Exchange

Once the deal is set up, the con artist must then exchange the bait for what he wants from the Mark. If the rest of the con has been handled properly, this should be easy. This is, unfortunately, where unforeseen complications often crop up.

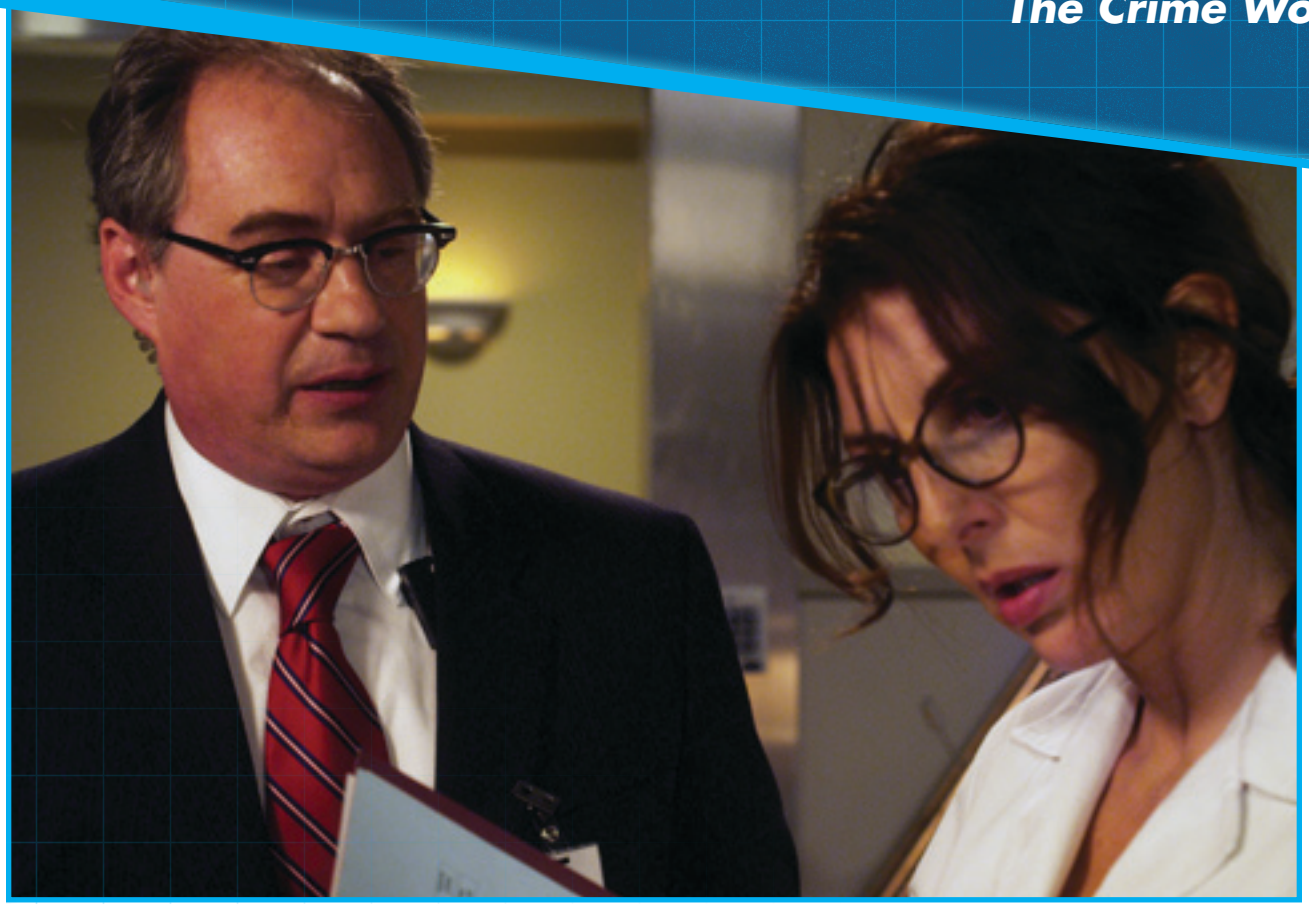
At this stage of the game, it's usually too late to back out. If the con starts to go perpendicular, the con artist will have to improvise a solution to any problems that arise. Otherwise, all the hard work that's gone into the con will be for naught.

Of course, the con artist doesn't actually give the Mark what he wants. If he did, that would be just a normal deal, not a con.

6. Get Away

Once the con artist has what he wants, it's time to make a clean getaway. Ideally, the Mark should never know that he's been defrauded in the exchange. At the very least, the Mark shouldn't figure it all out until the con artist is safely away.

If the Mark realizes what's happened, the first thing he's going to do is try to track down the con artist and get back what's been taken from him. He may be willing to



kill to nullify the fraudulent deal. A smart con artist takes great pains to make sure that can't happen.

Requirements of a Con

Every good con requires a certain number of elements. It's possible to ignore some or even all of these, but the more essential bits the con artist ignores, the more dangerous the con becomes. Eventually, the con is no longer a con but just a simple crime.

Nonviolence

A good con artist avoids violence in the course of a con. Any idiot could just rob the Mark in a back alley—you're better than that. Violence is usually artless and transforms a con into an act of thuggery.

Obvious violence—or even the threat of it—inevitably brings more attention to the con artist than it's worth. It tends to scare the Mark, and a nervous Mark isn't likely to give his confidence to anyone. It also moves the con artist's crimes higher on the priority list of any law-enforcement officials that might become involved.

The degree of violence makes a difference here, too. A killing causes far more problems than a simple beating. A few bruises is only an assault charge if it's reported; a dead body is always a crime.

Of course, sometimes things go pear-shaped and you need to use force to protect the con. It happens. The key is to resolve the situation quickly and efficiently, but with no more violence than is absolutely necessary to stabilize things.

Disguise

The con is over for far longer than it goes on. Once it's over, the Mark may come looking for the people who ripped him off. If the Mark knows who did him wrong, it's easy enough for him to track down the con artist and take his revenge. Or he can simply call the police and have them handle the heavy lifting for him.

To avoid that, the con artist should—if possible—hide his true identity from the Mark. This could be as simple as providing a fake name. The con artist could also come up with an entirely different persona, including dressing differently, talking differently, and behaving differently.

These days, coming up with a decent disguise requires a good deal of preparation. It's too easy for a suspicious Mark to hit the web on his smartphone and do some checking. If the fake persona has no history to speak of, this should raise all sorts of red flags. With a little advanced preparation, though, the con artist can fake that kind of electronic trail and even come up with official IDs in the fake persona's name. With some more time, he can even construct the sort of ephemera that makes a person seem mundanely real: coffeehouse discount cards, parking tickets, social media accounts, college transcripts, and so on.

Time Pressure

Even the longest con has to pay off sometime, and it's often the sooner the better. A con works best if there's some kind of time pressure involved. It helps to keep the Mark focused on the deal, and it also gives him less time to investigate the con artist's claims.

The easiest way to pressure a Mark is to tell him that the offer is only good for a limited time. The ostensible reasons for this can vary. Perhaps the police are closing in. Maybe there are other offers for the con artist to entertain. Or possibly the con artist needs cash quickly, which is why he's even willing to part with the bait in the first place. Or so he says.

Can't Con an Honest Man

The old saw states "You can't con an honest man." In truth, it's as easy to fool an honest man as anyone—maybe even easier than it is to fool a crook—but it's not much of a con. But an honest person steps away from a deal that has the barest scent of illegality about it, while someone with larceny in his heart will find himself drawn



toward it. (There's also the matter that you shouldn't need to con an honest man, because if he's honest he wouldn't have shafted your Client in the first place, right?)

Some of the most effective cons portray the con artist as a fool, someone that the Mark can take advantage of due to outside circumstances. That gives the Mark the sense that he is in control of the situation at all times, which makes it easier to trick him into taking the bait.

A smart, honest person knows that if something sounds too good to be true, it usually is. A dishonest person, though, is always hunting for an angle. He gets eager for the bait when he thinks he's worked out some sort of illicit advantage for himself.

As a bonus, a Mark who voluntarily engages in illegal activity to take the bait should be reluctant to contact the police once he figures out he's been taken. Turning in the con artist would mean incriminating himself, and few Marks are that dumb.

The Long and the Short of It

Con artists often speak of the short con and the long con. The length that these terms refer to is the amount of time the con game takes from start to finish. A classic short con like three-card monte takes only a few minutes, while more elaborate cons can take days, weeks, months, or even years.

In general, the more elaborate the con, the more generous the payoff for the con artist. A con artist could set up a con as complex as a Rube Goldberg machine set to pay off only after the Cubs win the World Series (that's sometime between "hell freezes over" and "never," in case you don't follow baseball. Not that I'm bitter.), but if the proceeds aren't enough to make it worthwhile, then what's the point? Most con artists are only in it for the money.

Of course, that's not true for the members of a Crew. They have a higher goal than mere cash in mind, and that means they might even be willing to lose money if it gets them what they want. If they can make their point and gather a nice profit for themselves at the same time, so much the better, but the money is not the point.

Classic Short Cons

By way of example, here are a number of short cons that have stood the test of time. Most con artists are experts at several of these cons, if not all of them.

If you're not familiar with these, it'd be a good idea to get familiar. A lot are classic street-level petty cons, but they can all be applied to more, ah, "sophisticated" targets as well. You'll probably use them as components of your big Jobs.

And don't let me catch you relieving little old grandmothers of their rent money doing this.

Three-Card Monte

A man stands on a busy street corner in a big city, a small folding table in front of him. He has three cards on the table, traditionally the Jack of Clubs, Jack of Spades, and the Queen of Hearts. He challenges any takers to find the Queen of Hearts after he shuffles the cards.

Other players take the dealer for a good amount of money. They are, of course, shills who are in on the con to encourage innocent onlookers to join the game. Once the Mark puts down some money, the dealer may lose a hand or two of low bets, while the shills encourage the Mark to put up some big money. Once that happens, the Mark loses every hand. When the Mark starts to become frustrated, the dealer closes up the game, claiming to have seen an undercover cop watching them.

Using sleight of hand, the dealer moves the cards around so that the Mark never has a chance to win. For this reason, three-card monte has been called "polite mugging."

Hustling

In a bar or other public place, the con artist (often called a shark in this con) plays some kind of game—often billiards or pool, but it can be as innocuous as



chess—and loses to a shill. After blowing a game or two, he challenges the Mark to a game and loses again. Once the Mark has beat him soundly, he asks if the Mark would like to make the game more interesting by placing a friendly wager on the game.

The con artist may lose the first game or two if the money is small. When the bet rises to the level of real money, the con artist starts to win, although usually by a margin narrow enough to encourage the Mark to keep playing. The games often end only when the Mark runs out of money.

The Murphy Game

Sometimes called the pig-in-a-poke con, the Murphy game starts when the con artist approaches a group of people, often in a bar, and offers to sell them some merchandise that has "fallen off a truck." One of the people in the group is a shill, and he encourages the others to accompany him to the sales point, claiming there is safety in numbers. At the secluded sales point, the con artist displays a number of sealed boxes and claims that they each contain valuable merchandise, like a gaming console or a TV, that he is willing to sell at a steep discount.

The shill steps up to buy the first box, but he demands the con artist open the box to prove what's inside. The con artist acts nervous about exposing the merchandise, but he is willing to open a single box to prove his claims. He does so for the shill, who pays the money and walks away, raving about what a great bargain he just made.

The Marks line up to buy the boxes and, with some help from the shill, the con artist hustles them out before they can try to open the well-sealed boxes themselves. Outside of the sales point, the shill suggests they all split up so as to not draw attention. When the Marks get the chance to open the box, they find it's full of worthless junk—usually a cement block, or maybe broken, nonfunctional merchandise.

Most Marks don't report this scam to the police. To do so would be to admit that they were attempting to purchase stolen merchandise.

Advance-Fee Fraud

If you've ever received an e-mail from a Nigerian prince—and who hasn't—you've been probed for this con. In the 1800s, a popular variant of it was known as the Spanish Prisoner con, in which the Mark is recruited to help secure the release of an important prisoner in a Spanish jail—someone whose gratitude was sure to be both generous and endless—but it boils down to the same thing.

The con artist approaches the Mark for assistance in liberating a large amount of valuables or cash that's been hidden away. The con artist needs a small amount of money to make bribes to transfer the valuables to the Mark's possession before the corrupt officials who have control over the valuables at the moment realize what they have. Once the Mark has the money, he can take a large finder's fee of several times his investment for his assistance.

Most Marks become greedy, and they immediately start to plan to keep the entire fortune rather than just the finder's fee. After they make the initial payment—the so-called "advance fee"—though, the con artist reveals that complications have arisen and the Mark needs to supply a bit more money. This continues until the Mark finally refuses to pay any more cash, no matter how much he may have already put into the deal. At this point, the con artist cuts off all contact with the Mark. Most Marks are too embarrassed to go to the police about this and, worse yet, they fear they will be confessing to attempted bribery if they do.

The Fiddle Game

The con artist goes into a business and incurs a small debt. Either having forgotten his wallet or simply being too poor, he cannot pay. He offers up his only item of value as collateral—traditionally a violin—claiming he will come back soon to settle the debt. Once the con artist leaves, a shill asks to see the collateral and identifies it as an exceptionally rare and valuable piece, for which he is prepared to pay an exorbitant amount of money. Typically, the business owner refuses the offer, especially if it's made in front of other patrons.

When the con artist returns the next day, the business owner offers to purchase the collateral from the con artist at what might seem like a generous price. The Mark, of course, plans to then resell the item at a large profit. The con artist reluctantly agrees to the sale.

Later, when the Mark tries to sell the item, he discovers it is worthless. Should the con artist be spotted later, he can claim he had no idea of its worth, one way or the other. The blame should be place on the shill, who—if somehow spotted—can also claim he sadly misidentified the item.

Classic Long Cons

The long con separates the professional con artists from the amateurs. These can take days if not weeks or even longer to pull off, and they often require several con artists and shills working in concert. They are reserved for the most ambitious con artists—those who are heartless enough to work with their Marks for long periods of time and those rare few who can manage to find enough people they can trust to help them pull it off.

The Wire

The con artists set up a false storefront in which they simulate a legitimate business that focuses on risking large amounts of money. This can be an off-track betting establishment, a stock exchange, or some other similar place. The important thing is that it seems perfectly legal.

One of the con artists approaches the Mark and claims to have inside knowledge that makes his bets in the storefront a sure thing. Unfortunately, he and his friends have been banned from the place or simply don't have enough money to make decent-sized bets on their own. To prove his claims, the con artist gives

the Mark the information for the first bet for free and encourages the Mark to bet a small amount of money to see if he's right.

The Mark enters the storefront, and whether he places the bet or not doesn't matter. He waits around to get the results for the bet and sees that the information the con artist gave him was right. It's important that the results are real, just in case the Mark checks up on them later.

To give themselves the proper edge, the con artists introduce a sufficient delay between the actual reporting of the results and when they announce them in the storefront. Most people won't notice the short time difference. This was originally done via telegraph, which is where the name "the Wire" comes from.

After building the Mark up with a few smaller bets, the con artist encourages the Mark to gather together as much cash as he can to make one huge bet. Once the Mark is ready, the con artist gives the Mark the inside information in a way that he's certain to misunderstand, but that the con artist can later claim was a stupid miscommunication. The Mark loses his money to the storefront.

If the Mark wants to try again, the con artist can either claim that his inside source has dried up, or he can risk another attempt. This time, the bet goes bad for another reason. Perhaps the police—actually more con artists dressed as police—close the storefront down. Maybe complicit con artists rob the place at the exact worst moment. In any case, the Mark is made to feel that he has been the victim of fate rather than an elaborate con.

The Pay-Off

The Pay-Off is a riff on the Wire. In it, the con artist is supposedly part of a crime syndicate and has inside information about sporting events that the syndicate has rigged. The Mark makes the bets at the storefront and racks up bigger winnings with a line of credit the con artist helps him establish.

Once the Mark makes his final, huge bet, he wins. Before he can collect his winnings, the manager of the storefront tells him there are some questions about the legitimacy of his line of credit. He will have to prove that he has access to this line of credit before he can collect the winnings.

The Mark arranges to provide the money, and he and the con artist go to collect on the bet. As they collect their winnings, the con artist decides to make one last bet with his inside information. This time, the information proves to be wrong, and the Mark loses everything. Alternatively, the con artist can persuade the Mark to make the bet but miscommunicate the fix to him because they're standing before the storefront's manager.

The Rag

The Rag is another variation on the Wire, but it generally focuses on stock market manipulation rather than betting. In this case, the vital information comes from a Wall Street insider partnered up with the con artist, who portrays himself as a well-meaning bumbler who just cannot fully grasp the mysteries of the stock market. They start off playing with a line of credit the insider set them up with, and it pays off huge.

As with the Pay-Off, the credit line gets called into question, and the Mark must help the insider and the con artist come up with the cash to back it. Once the Mark conjures up the money, the con artist manages to misinterpret the insider's instructions badly enough to lose all of their money.

The Rainmaker

This is a simple scheme, but it requires a bit of dedication and an extended amount of time on the con artist's part. The con artist comes to town and spends some time figuring out exactly what it is that most of



the town people want. In a farming community, this could be rain, which is how the con gets its name.

The con artist then claims to be able to provide the people of the community with exactly what they are hoping for. He may base his claims on pseudo-scientific theories he hopes to implement, or he might suggest that he has magical powers that can help. In any case, he needs a good deal of money to give it a try.

Once the people come up with the money, the con artist hopes that fate takes a hand and produces the rain the people want. If that doesn't work, he produces evidence of complications that prevented his scientific theories or magic spells from succeeding. He then asks for additional funds for his research, experiments, or spell ingredients. This continues on until the rain comes or the people come for the con artist with torches and pitchforks.

Ponzi Scheme

The Ponzi scheme—named for Charles Ponzi, who engineered the first big success of such a con back in 1920—is an investment fraud con. In it, the con artist offers the Marks the chance to become investors in an unregulated securities deal that offers an astounding and consistent return on their investment. Once the con artist has the money in hand, he pays the investors a portion of it to cover their supposed rate of return and keeps the rest for himself. Over time, he uses the money given to him by new investors to pay off the dividends for the old.

Some long-term investors require nothing more than a statement showing the superb results. Instead of cashing out the dividends, they reinvest them in the fraudulent fund. This works even better.



The con artist often suggests that his current investors tell their friends and neighbors about this exciting opportunity. After getting their first few statements, most investors are happy to do just that, and in this way a Ponzi scheme can spread through a tight-knit community like the latest and worst variety of the flu. As the fund grows, the con artist is better able to handle any payout requests, and his reputation as a financial wizard grows unabated.

A Ponzi scheme falls apart when the rate of investment slows enough that the con artist can no longer cover the promised payouts. This can also happen if there's a stock market crash that panics many investors into asking for their money all at once. Some con artists stick around to face justice, but many others simply take whatever money they have left and run.

The Anatomy of a Bad Guy

Some of the following material is touched on in **Chapter Five: The Fixer**, but mainly in terms of game rules and preparing a Job. Here, it's useful reference. Keep it in mind when you're thinking of the types of bad guys who populate the lower—and upper—levels of Crime World.

Every Caper Needs a Villain

Great capers have great targets. Often that target is not actually any money or object in particular but the person or institution that has possession of whatever the Crew is nominally after.

For the Crew to get behind the caper, the target has to be vile enough to bother with. No one wants to ruin

the career of a group of social workers who have been stealing money to help fund a home for runaway teens. If they're not helping those teens but instead are using the kids as mules for smuggling drugs in and out of the country, then they're fair game.

It's also helps if taking down the target is worthy of the Crew's attention. If it's something the police can handle, then they should be allowed to do so. Otherwise, it's a waste of the Crew's time and abilities.

The Right Side of the Law

The ideal LEVERAGE villain cannot be touched by the law. He has set himself up in a seemingly unassailable position of authority, and the average person has no prayer of toppling him. Honest cops—well meaning and talented as they may be—can't find the evidence they need to put a stop to the villain's activities, and the other kind of cops are nestled deep in the villain's pockets.

This is why the innocents involved need a LEVERAGE Crew to help put things right. When the law can't provide justice, these victims need someone able to work outside the law to get things done. Fortunately, there are criminals who have that necessary sense of justice in your Crew.

Villains and Heroes

The villains of a LEVERAGE Job aren't the kind to wring their hands together as they tie helpless damsels to the railroad tracks or the sort who cackle as they toss a bag of kittens into the river. They're usually serious people involved in serious businesses, and they often see themselves as the heroes of the story. The fact that they're corrupt and willing to do wrong to others to support their own level of success doesn't bother them at all.

That's what separates the heroes from the villains in LEVERAGE. The heroes often have the same kinds of skills as the villains and may even run in the same circles. But the heroes know where to draw the line. They don't make profit at the expense of those who can't afford it, and they go out of their way to not get pushed into a situation where they might have to kill someone.

Villains, on the other hand, see their own success as more important than anything else. They are determined to claw their way to the top—and stay there—and they don't much care who gets hurt along the way, as long as it's not them.

Why Now?

Most villains have been at their crimes for a long time. They've hurt a lot of people along the way. The heroes need to have a good reason for going after the villain now, something that encourages them to take action fast.

Any Crew that keeps up with the news should be able to find a handful of potential targets on any given day. Each of those competes with the others for the Crew's attention. Most Crews prioritize their targets with the following criteria in mind:

1) Can someone else take care of this? (Let the police do their job.)
2) Who's been hurt here? (Innocent families have more pull than wronged multinational corporations.)
3) Is this something we can handle? (Even the best Crew couldn't fix the US Congress.)
4) Can it wait? (More pressing issues take precedence over old wounds.)
5) Do we have a personal stake in this? (Villains who attack the Crew get pushed to the top of the list.)

Keep all these things in mind when coming up with a villain.



Villains Have Plans Too

LEVERAGE villains don't just sit in their homes, invest their dirty money in Treasury bonds, and live off the interest. They have ambitions of their own, and they're prepared to do whatever it takes to realize them.

This means that villains don't sit still. They are moving targets. No matter how much research the Crew does about a villain beforehand, he can still surprise them. An incautious Crew can get caught up in one of the villain's ongoing plots before they even realize it.

Also, once a villain learns about the Crew, he can take the battle to them. Instead of wondering what's going on and why things are going wrong for him, he can focus his energies on stopping the Crew from messing with him. Often, villains reach for a permanent solution.



The Record

Guide to Season One and Two

The Record

As of this writing, LEVERAGE is in its third hit season; it's possible you might have come late to the party or just want a reminder of what's already taken place. Your best bet, of course, is to grab the DVDs of Seasons One and Two, but this chapter includes a summary of every Job in the first two Seasons with all the pertinent details.

Season One

In the first season we get to know Nathan Ford and his Crew. Nate struggles with drink and the emptiness of his life after the death of his son and his split with his wife Maggie, while the others learn to work together and become something of a family. And, of course, there's IYS and Nate's ultimate revenge against his former employer.

The Nigerian Job

Written by John Rogers & Chris Downey; Directed by Dean Devlin

The Client: Victor Dubenich, CEO of Bering Aerospace. Desperate, facing the destruction of his company after the plans he worked on for five years are stolen by Pearson Aeronautics

The Mark: First, Pearson Aeronautics, but quickly the tables are turned and the Mark is their original client, Dubenich, who is revealed to be an arrogant, manipulative sleaze.

The Problem: Plans for a new passenger plane have been stolen, threatening a company with bankruptcy. To reclaim them, former insurance investigator Nate Ford has to turn four independent thieves into a team.

The Plan: Dubenich offers Nate the carrot he can't resist—the opportunity to get back at his former employer, IYS; the company had refused to pay for medical treatment for his son, who died soon after. Pearson Aeronatics is insured by IYS. All Nate has to do is be "the honest man" overseeing a team of thieves: Alec Hardison, the Hacker; Eliot Spencer, the Hitter; and Parker, the Thief. They are the best at what they do—and all used to working alone.

"Parker? You have Parker?" "Is there anyone better?" "No, but Parker's insane."

The plan is simple enough; go in, steal the plans back, get out. Only it doesn't work that way…

How It Goes Down: Complications, including a change in the guard's schedule so they can watch the NBA playoffs, mean the three inside end up going to an alternative exit—walking directly out in front of the guards with Parker masquerading as a facially-scarred employee. They transfer the files to Dubenich, and they go their separate ways, one show only.

The problem is that they were scammed: Dubenich used them to steal the plans from the rightful owner. Worse, he has no plans to pay the team, instead intending to kill them. The warehouse they are called to blows up; the four of them escape the warehouse, only to get arrested so they must work together to escape the hospital. Parker, Hardison, and Eliot are ready to scatter—but Nate has a better plan: revenge.

That triggers payback: Nate calls in Sophie Devereaux (the Grifter) to help run a scam on their erstwhile client; they use his own greed to make him believe that he's being offered an inside track on an airplane development deal in Africa. He, of course, suspects a con, and it looks like everything's blown—until it's revealed that they've used his own paranoia as much as his greed to switch it around; the FBI comes in to arrest him under the PATRIOT Act for solicitation of bribes from foreign nationals through a company with defense department contracts.

Dubenich goes down during his own party, the FBI seizes his files, Bering stock goes into the toilet, and the team gets their revenge—plus a *very* nice paycheck for each of them, since Hardison sold short on Bering stock just before it crashed.

And they're out, with "retire and buy an island" money.

Except, of course, they're not.



The Homecoming Job

Written by Dean Devlin and John Rogers; Directed by Dean Devlin

The Client: Corporal Robert Perry is a reservist serving in Iraq, injured during an off-duty shooting. He just wants those responsible for his injuries to cover the cost of his rehabilitation.

The Mark: Charles DuFort, a lobbyist for Castleman. His main interest is buying politicians, and making sure that they stay bought.

The Problem: While making a video to send to his fiancée back home, military contractors in the background started shooting, leaving Perry in a wheelchair and in need of intensive rehab. The problem is that as a reservist he was sent home to a hospital that can't afford to give him the needed treatment, and the nearest VA hospital is too far away.

The Plan: Originally, the plan had been to use the video to prove that Castleman—the contractors responsible for Perry's injuries—were at fault, and blackmail them into paying for Perry's expenses.

How It Goes Down: Once the blackmail plan is in motion, they discover that Castleman isn't just covering up the shooting—the shooting was to cover up something that was caught on the video. Perry's not a victim: he's a witness. They race in to retrieve Perry, just in time to keep him from being "forced" to commit suicide by Castleman's toughs.

"I'm a professional criminal and I found that [discussion of buying a Congressman] disturbing."

Although three of the five are ready to walk—the game has gotten too rough for thieves used to dealing with objects, not peoples' lives—they can't turn a blind eye to what's happening. The team decides to take down Charles DuFort and Congressman Robert Jenkins, the men responsible, by playing on their paranoia, making each believe that the other is about to bolt the relationship. Parker steals a Congressional bill sponsored by Jenkins and replaces it with one without any earmarks for Castleman; this leads to Hardison's shock and dismay

that Congressional bills are hardcopy, deposited in a wooden box, and are therefore unhackable.

Meanwhile, the team tracks the next shipment to a container at the docks, which is filled to the brim with cash. Taxpayer money being laundered through Iraq, then brought home to use for bribes and payoffs.

The team goes in again on the day the container of money is to be moved; they perform a bit of explosive sleight-of-hand to make the guards think the money's been stolen. The team arranges for Jenkins and DuFort to be caught in front of the container by reporters for the local news stations. When the two claim to have "discovered" the money laundering, the recording of them arguing over who illegally covered whose ass is sent to the reporters' cell phones.

Both men are hung out to dry, while some of that missing cash finds its way to the hospital where Perry and other wounded soldiers are being treated—enough money to buy them the help they need.

This episode is notable for the first appearance of LEVERAGE CONSULTING & ASSOCIATES offices.

The Two-Horse Job

Written by Melissa Glenn and Jessica Rieder; Directed by Craig Baxley

The Client: Willie, an old friend of Eliot's (and father of his ex-girlfriend, Aimee), a racehorse trainer whose career is destroyed when the stable burns to the ground, and he's implicated.

The Mark: Alan Foss, a Wall Street investor who everyone suspects set the stable fire to collect the $2 million insurance payout on underperforming horses. A high stakes player, he thinks in terms of money, not the lives he's ruined or the horses he's killed.

The Problem: Willie wants the team to get Foss out of the racing business, and he wants to take the one surviving horse, Baltimore, away from Foss.

The Plan: Sophie plays a high-rent bloodstock agent, connecting buyers with horses. She hooks Foss with talk of the strong performers she's brokered deals on, and then lures him into a high stakes poker game—rigged, of course—where he loses an IOU for the horse to Nate. Nate, in turn, will then hand the IOU over to Willie.



How It Goes Down: Unfortunately, Nate's former co-worker and nemesis James Sterling shows up and, after recognizing Sophie who he had also chased for IYS, smells a con. Rock and a hard place: if they keep Baltimore, Sterling will focus on what Nate is up to and expose the con, but if Nate hands Baltimore over to Willie, the trainer will become Sterling's obvious scapegoat for the fire.

With Aimee's reluctant help, they resume their poker game roles—Nate as an owner, Eliot as the trainer who works for him—and when Foss tries to buy Baltimore back, Nate ups the price to two million. Foss won't pay that—but he has to get the horse back while the fire is still under investigation. Meanwhile, rather than leaving racing, Foss is planning to bring in more Wall Street money to build up a new stable. Nate plays the Lost Heir con—selling Foss "the greatest horse that never lived." Baltimore, damaged in the fire, runs too slowly to be convincing, so the team steals another horse for the con. Sophie convinces Foss that Nate is interested in buying it—so of course Foss wants it more. Twelve million dollars more.

A game of "who's got the horse" plays out, as—despite Parker's fear of horses—they shift horses and stable details around, using a rigged scanner and a faked bloodline to convince Foss that he is indeed buying a potential winner. When Foss, with Sterling in tow, brings his fellow investors and their own scanner to check out his new purchase, they are instead confronted with Baltimore. A horse that Foss had previously insured for two hundred thousand dollars not twelve million. His investors want their money back, and Sterling rather gleefully informs Foss that, based on this obvious attempt at fraud, his insurance claim is denied. Foss is ruined, the team can hand Baltimore over to Willie, and Eliot makes peace with Aimee.

This is the first appearance of James Sterling, setting up future episodes.

The Wedding Job

Written by Chris Downey; Directed by Jonathan Frakes

The Client: A restaurateur who takes the fall for a mob boss' murder rap in exchange for the promise of protection for his family

The Mark: Nicky Mosconi promised to take care of the family and reneged. Now he's preparing a huge wedding for his daughter, while the client's family is falling apart financially.

The Problem: "Take the mob out of it." They need to make Nicky honor his obligation. But his offshore accounts are locked up tight, and even Hardison can't get at them. They're going to have to hit the mob boss… at home.

The Plan: The team "borrows" the FBI organized crime task force's surveillance, since they can't get in on their own. They can't get at his money offsite, so they go in as wedding planners. While inside, they discover that he's planning to do a "business deal" that day, and decide to take the cash themselves.

How It Goes Down: Much to Nate's chagrin, the team seems to get caught up in their roles, particularly Eliot, who is handling the catering. They're not making much headway, and then half the known mob world shows up for the wedding—including the Butcher of Kiev, who has a particular distaste for Eliot. Nate pulls the plug on the con, but Sophie's gotten emotionally involved with seeing the wedding through, and she insists on staying.

There's a problem with finishing the con, though: someone's gotten to the money before them, setting up Mosconi to take the fall when his "business associate" Sergei demands payment. It turns out Sergei's brother was the one Mosconi killed that night in the restaurant—an almost unbelievable coincidence that means Sergei's more than happy to kill him, given half an excuse.



The team figures out that Mosconi's wife Heather set him up, expecting the Russians to make her a wealthy widow since Mosconi's offshore accounts are in her name. While Sergei is threatening to kill everyone until he gets his money, the team tries to get their hands on Heather, and make sure the wedding goes off without a hitch, despite Nate getting a little carried away during the service.

The reveal shows that Eliot put the bag with the money into the trunk of the newlywed's car, and then Nate let Mosconi know that his wife betrayed him. When Mosconi rushes off to change the passwords on the offshore accounts, Hardison is listening in, and cleans the accounts out before either Mosconi or Heather can get their hands on the cash. The cash restores the client's restaurant—and the taped conversation they got during the con gets the client's husband out of jail.

Classic moment: the pots-and-pans fight between Eliot and the Butcher of Kiev.

The Snow Job

Written by Albert Kim; Directed by Tony Bill

The Client: Wayne Scott, whose home is in foreclosure because he trusted his contractor, who intentionally screwed him over.

The Mark: Henry Retzing, a home renovation contractor who talks owners into taking out home loans to pay for everything, intentionally does a bad job, puts a lien on the house when the owners refuse to pay, and then takes possession when the house goes into foreclosure.

The Problem: The Mark has already beat a State fraud investigation, so they're cocky—and ripe for the team to take down. But what should be a simple con gets complicated when they realize there's more going on than one family losing their home.

The Plan: The contractor's two sons are Grasshopper and Ant—one's a hard working MBA-type, the other is a playboy. Sophie is set to hook the latter with a story about a sexy, hip ski resort, to lure him into buying in for the amount the client needs. While dealing with the other brother, who has to write the check, Sophie

discovers that there are over four hundred people who have been similarly displaced. Nate changes the plan; they're going to take down the entire company.

Unfortunately, the cops have the house bugged, too. The team is on record as making a deal with the Retzings.

How It Goes Down: They hook the other brother with "Glengarry Glen Death"—Nate plays an insurance adjuster who buys out policies of people who are about to die, offering Dennis a buy-in—and playing the brothers against each other.

At the same time, the State police are investigating the family on a RICO charge, making things a little more complicated, especially when Nate is pulled over by Lt. Stone, part of the team investigating the Retzings. The Crew is officially on the cops' radar now.

The con goes on, with Nate and Sophie convincing Dennis that the list of dying people is legit by "mocking up" a brain tumor in Parker who is masquerading as one of the people on the list, but then Nate pushes too hard and almost loses the Crew, who won't trust him when he's drunk.

"Somebody find me a brain." "Oh yeah, he's definitely getting creepier."

Meanwhile, Dennis comes back with a five million dollar buy-in; but in order to manage that, he has to move family accounts around. His father and brother discover it, and go in to take him off the account. At the same time, the reveal shows that Parker switched out the paperwork so instead of transferring money, Randy gave them 51% of the voting share of the company. They move the money to offshore accounts, which alerts the SEC and triggers the RICO investigation, as the reveal shows that Nate had made an agreement with the state police.

With ownership of the company, the team reclaims all the homes—including the Mark's own home, which was listed as a corporate asset for tax reasons. Nate, gleefully, hands that house over to the client.

The Mile High Job

Written by Amy Berg; Directed by Rob Minkoff

The Client: The Jamesons want revenge for the death of their daughter Ashley, who died as a result of unsafe agricultural fertilizer contaminating the drinking water. The company brought out expert witnesses, and the Jamesons lost their case.

The Mark: Allen Haldeman, CEO of Genogrow, the company that produced the fertilizer.

The Problem: The Crew breaks in—despite Hardison oversleeping after a night playing World of Warcraft and leaving them hanging—looking for a "smoking gun." They overhear plans to move assets via commercial airline to the Cayman Islands, to prevent the EPA subpoenas from damaging the company. The team assumes that Haldeman is liquidating, looking to bankrupt that arm of the company, and ensuring the clients will never win their civil case.

"Go for the tan, stay for the tax shelter."

The Plan: Hardison gets them on the plane, while he continues looking for the smoking gun by impersonating a new employee at the company to get access to their computer systems. The plan is to use the five and a half hour flight to find the assets, steal them, and get away when the plane lands without anyone the wiser. What Hardison soon discovers, however, is that the "assets" are actually a person—an accountant who had stumbled onto irregularities in the payments made to a safety-testing lab. Also on the plane is the head of security—tasked with making sure she never comes home. For "liquidation" read "murder."

How It Goes Down: Eliot, carrying an air marshal's badge, takes the would-be victim aside and breaks the news to her (with a little help from Parker). All they have to do is walk her safely off the plane, right? Then Hardison discovers that the plan is to take out both employees, ensuring that no record is left to tie



Haldeman to the murder. The best way to do that is to take down the plane they're both on—the plane the *team* is on.

Parker and Hardison discover that someone has hacked the black box, just as the hack kicks in—the autopilot is engaged, taking the plane down. The only one who can stop it is Hardison—who has to hack a system he knows nothing about before the plane hits the ground. A quick pep talk from Nate, and Hardison is able to talk Parker through the steps to disengage the autopilot.

They land safely, their accountant in-hand, and she agrees to testify—but all the evidence is back in her office. And we cut to Hardison making his exit—carrying the records they need to convict Haldeman of fraud and conspiracy to murder, stolen off the CEO's personal computer.

This episode fills in more details of Sophie and Nate's history, including where and when they first met.

The Miracle Job

Written by Christine Boylan; Directed by Arvin Brown

The Client: None, technically—Nate comes in on behalf of Father Paul, after he is attacked by thugs trying to keep him from making one last attempt to save his church from closure. Father Paul, however, doesn't want them to get involved.

The Mark: Andrew Grant, a crooked real estate developer and media whore, with a moderate anxiety disorder.

The Problem: The land Father Paul's church stands on has been sold to a shell company owned, indirectly, by Grant, who wants to build a mall—sorry, "lifestyle center"—on the spot.

The Plan: They have three days to stop the sale from going through. They fake a "miracle" involving the statue of Saint Nicholas, thinking that it will stall the redevelopment.

"Somebody's got to fight the injured. That's my niche!"

How It Goes Down: The statue of Saint Nicholas begins to weep, thanks to Hardison's technical refiguring,

but they do too good a job. Rather than causing a slight buzz, the church and its statue become an overnight sensation, to the point that the Vatican sends in a team to assess the legitimacy of the event. Father Paul, who knows Nate too well from their days together in the seminary, is furious; he tells them to stop whatever they're doing, that this isn't the answer. Meanwhile, the Mark, rather than being scared off, is making plans for a "Bible World" theme park to integrate into his earlier plans. Everything's spiraling out of control, until Nate comes up with the idea to steal the statue while everyone is focusing on Father Paul's sermon, leaving a sense of wonder around the church, but no evidence to harm anyone.

The statue disappears, and, as Nate expected, Father Paul can't help but tell the truth about it being a hoax: but when he does, the team's left evidence that leads directly to the Mark being responsible. He tries to deny it, but his assistant, who has been growing uneasy with the scam, blurts out the truth—that the developer had acquired the land through underhanded measures, and then hired the thugs who roughed up Father Paul to keep him from ruining the deal.

As the team leaves, Sophie reveals that the patron saint of the church is also the patron saint of thieves, adding an extra poignancy to the entire episode.

This is the first episode in which we hear about Maggie, Nate's ex-wife, and Hardison's grandmother "Nana."

The Bank Shot Job

Written by Amy Berg; Directed by Dean Devlin

The Client: A former military man and his teenaged son, who are robbing a bank in order to get the money to pay off meth dealers who suspect the boy of hijacking their shipment and are holding his mother as hostage against the payoff.

The Mark: Judge Roy, who has been taking payoffs from everyone in sight; in the process, he released a man from prison who went on to kill a young girl.

The Problem: While the original con is in its final stages, two would-be bank robbers take everyone hostage—including Nate, Sophie, and their Mark.

The Plan: The original con was to set themselves up as money-launderers, bankrupt the Judge, and pass the cash along to the victim's family. They are in the final stages when the robbery occurs. Nate quickly determines that these two are not professionals, and the rest of the team scrambles to find out the back story and to find a way to get Nate and Sophie out.

How It Goes Down: It's quickly obvious to Nate that these two are not professional—or even competent—criminals. Hardison and Parker play FBI agents Elmore and Leonard, taking control of the situation from the local cops; meanwhile, Sophie and Nate try to work the scene from within. Once they win the robbers' trust, Parker "steals" the briefcase of the Judge's money and hands it over to Eliot to deal with the kidnappers/meth dealers. Meanwhile, the Judge, trying to gain control of the situation, ends up shooting Nate. Sophie blows their cover by calling Nate's name; the Judge finds their ear buds and puts it together, assuming all four were in it together. They're trapped, until the Judge gets his money back.

Without contact, the rest of the team improvises a plan, sending Hardison-as-FBI in with paramedics to get Nate out and bring the Judge's money hidden in pizza boxes meant to feed the hostages. A little role playing, a little manipulation of the old-fashioned security cameras, and it looks to the cops as though the Judge has been behind the robbery the whole time.

They load Nate into the ambulance, and the reveal shows that the "EMTs" were actually Parker and Eliot, who switched clothing with the would-be robbers, getting them off the scene and reuniting the family.

"This is all very heart-warming, but can it wait until the morphine drip?"

The alias choices throughout the episodes are in-jokes based on Hardison's geek-cred, and nods to mystery/caper writers of the past.

The Stork Job

Written by Albert Kim; Directed by Marc Roskin

The Client: Joe and Dana Morton, who were caught up in an oversea adoption scam and roughed up by thugs when they tried to bring home Luka, the child promised to them.

The Mark: Irina Larenko, a former Russian model-turned-soft core porn actress-turned criminal who sells orphans to would-be adoptive parents.

The Problem: Stealing a kid? More, finding a kid in a country as chaotic as Belgrade? The team isn't sure they're up to this. But they can't say no, either, not when a child is involved.



The Plan: Irina is on the guest list for a party at the American embassy in Belgrade. The team crashes the party, fishing for Irina. Hardison discovers that Irina and her partner, Nicholas Obrovic, are using his position with a government relocation program to "acquire" orphans. An attempt to use Parker to get info from Obrovic fails rather spectacularly, but Eliot sets the hook with Irina, promising the former actress a role in an indie film he's financing nearby.

Which of course means the team now has to steal a movie, with Hardison hacking the real producer's funds and calling the director away with the lure of a better job. Nate steps in as director with a role for Irina—and for a young boy who fits the description of the missing Luka.

How It Goes Down: Parker follows Irina when she goes to retrieve Luka, to ensure her role in the film. The trail leads to an orphanage in an old warehouse. Parker also discovers heavily armed men, guarding crates. The orphanage is being used as a cover for a gun running operation, and a major deal is about to go down.

None of this changes the plan, Nate informs them. They need to get Luka out, first… and then, after, they can come back with a plan and get the rest of the kids out. Hardison's not happy, but Parker agrees with Nate. Her experience with the child welfare system in the States was a bad one, and she doesn't see how putting these children into that system will be any better for them.

But when they pull off the con and reunite Luka with the Mortons, they discover that Parker has gone back to the warehouse, intent on stealing the orphans. The team follows, getting the children away, and then using fake weapons from the movie's prop truck to ruin Obrovic's deal, leaving him having to answer to some seriously pissed-off locals. The orphans are handed over to a reputable agency, which will find them new homes. Meanwhile, the money Hardison had siphoned away from the film's budget mysteriously reappears—in Irina's account, just seconds before she is hauled away, under arrest for stealing that money.



The Juror #6 Job

Written by Rebecca Kirsch; Directed by Jonathan Frakes

The Client: Gloria Vargas, who is suing a company called Live Herbally for the wrongful death of her husband due to one of their supplements.

The Mark: Tobey Earnshaw, the daughter of the founder of Earnshaw Pharmaceuticals. A hard-nosed, coldly pragmatic woman, she is manipulating the trial to make it go her way, because she's invested huge sums of money in Live Herbally, planning to buy it out, and she can't afford to let her father—or the rest of the board—see the deal sour.

The Problem: They're too late to the game to win the case—they have to try to force a settlement.

The Plan: Earnshaw is trying to buy herself a jury—so the team has to steal it first. Parker, stuck with jury duty via one of her aliases, is already on-site, so their plan is built around her. Interacting with people. Uh-oh. Sophie does her best, coaching Parker on how to work her Alice White persona, while the others try to get as much information on Earnshaw as possible.

How It Goes Down: Eliot and Hardison scout for info on the other jurors, while Sophie plays a businesswoman representing Mumbai International, an Indian company interested in acquiring Live Herbally from owner William Quint—at better terms than Earnshaw is offering. But first, Sophie insists, Quint has to settle the court case, quietly.

Meanwhile, Parker sets up the foreman—who has been bought—to be accused of stealing from his fellow jurors. Much to Parker's surprise, she's voted the new foreman. Maybe she's not as bad at working with people as she thought. It looks as though they're home free—until Ms. Vargas' lawyer doesn't show up. Earnshaw bought him, too. The client can't afford another lawyer; the case is heading for a mistrial. Quint—and Earnshaw—will have won, since the client can't afford to start another suit.

Nate sends in Hardison as Vargas' new lawyer with instructions to stall. Then news comes that Earnshaw

has bought Mumbai International, taking them out of the running as competition. Now the team only has one option: win the trial.

While Sophie, Nate, and Eliot are setting things up outside the courthouse, "lawyer" Hardison establishes that the "expert witness" for the defense is a notorious drunk who has been banned from flying commercially because of bad behavior, and he winds up his case by addressing the jurors directly. Parker takes it from there.

Watching from her warehouse, Earnshaw thinks she's won and, after revealing that the Mumbai offer is no longer viable, forces Quint to accept a reduced, but still significant, price for his company. But when the jury returns their verdict, it's for Vargas—for five million. Hardison manipulated the feed so that the jury voting on pizza for lunch showed as them voting for the defense. Live Herbally, as a company, is now worthless to Earnshaw.

The 12-Step Job

Written by Amy Berg & Chris Downey;
Directed by Rod Hardy

The Client: Michelle, who handles finances for a local food bank. She wrote a check, and discovered that not only were the funds they had invested gone, but the management company claimed to have no record of the account at all.

The Mark: Jack Hurley, an overweight, addiction-prone money manager who was in charge of the funds—and appears to have done a runner with the money, leaving the management company denying responsibility.

The Problem: The team needs to get the money back before the food bank's board of directors discovers it and holds Michelle legally responsible.

The Plan: They track the Mark down easily enough. But they're not the only ones who want to lay hands on him—three men get there first and beat the crap out of him before the boys step in. Hurley runs and slams his car into a lamppost; when the team catches up with him, he's passed out stone drunk, with the cops on their way. Short on time, there's only one way to get sense out of him—sober him up, and then hope he trusts them enough to spill the beans.

How It Goes Down: Hurley wakes up in rehab with the roommate from hell—Nate Ford. Sophie (therapist) and Parker (patient) are also on the inside. Eliot and Hardison, meanwhile, are looking for where he stashed the money. They discover a bomb in Hurley's car, and then not one but two groups show up, looking for Hurley and/or the money.

Complicating matters is the fact that the "inmates" are getting an actual taste of rehab—Parker's being fed happy pills and Nate is going through withdrawal symptoms, including hallucinations—while Sophie, instead of focusing on the Mark, is trying to use the con as a way to get Nate to admit that he has a problem.

Eventually, Nate gets the truth from Hurley: he didn't mean to hurt Michelle—he wanted to use the tricks he'd learned to double her money for the food bank. Right reasons, wrong actions. But in doing that, he took money from dirty accounts, and now the owners want it back. But before Nate can find out where the money is, Parker shows up in their room: the real bad guys have arrived. Parker covers Nate and Hurley's escape.

Turns out the money is in the car, after all. But if they just take it, Hurley's dead. They need to deal with the criminals he swindled, first. They summon both groups to meet with Hurley, then stage another car bomb; this one actually blowing up the car, and Hurley inside it.

Except, of course, it's another con. Thankful to still be alive, Hurley shows them where he hid the money—in the tires, which, thankfully, survived the explosion. Michelle gets the money back, Hurley gets a new identity and a second chance, they retrieve Parker from the rehab center where she's still flying on happy pills, and Nate? He's ready for a drink.

The First David Job

Written by John Rogers; Directed by Dean Devlin

The Client: Nathan Ford. Driven by hatred and, according to his team, in need of revenge.

The Mark: Ian Blackpoole, the head of IYS, Nate's former employer—and the man who refused to pay for the treatment that might have saved Nate's son's life.

The Problem: Nate's drinking is getting worse. Sophie convinces the team that what they need to do is take Blackpoole down. Then Nate can let go.

The Plan: Nate crashes a party to celebrate the opening of the Ian Blackpoole wing of an art museum. After some mutual unpleasantness, he tells Blackpoole that he has something to sell him—one of the Two Davids, miniature models of Michaelangelo's famous sculpture. Blackpoole has the First David. The second one was stolen from the Vatican a decade ago. Now, Nate claims to have it. The idea is that Blackpoole will buy their fake, insure it with IYS, and then, when they reveal it as a fake, his reputation will be ruined.

How It Goes Down: With Sophie and Eliot both in place at the party as art experts, it should be a piece of cake to reel Blackpoole in…except for the arrival of Maggie, Nate's ex-wife—and an actual art expert. One of the best, according to Nate, who is having trouble staying in character faced with Maggie's obvious pity. He wants to call the con off, because they'll never fool her. Sophie disagrees—they can still do it—they just have to steal the First David, put their fake in its place, and use the original instead of their fake.

Break into a fortified vault, during a party, with no time to prep? Parker's up for the challenge—and pulls it off. "On our day off!"

They're going to go with the original plan and sell the statue back to Blackpoole. But Sophie has a better idea—sell him two fakes, and let him display them together. Once it's revealed, he'll be ruined for sure. The team thinks it's brilliant—except Nate, who recognizes the tone of her voice. "You don't con your own team," he warns her. She denies it, and he reluctantly agrees to go with the plan.

The exchange goes exactly as planned. And then they discover that Sterling, Nate's nemesis, has anticipated their every move. Now Sterling has Parker and Hardison; he arranges to meet Nate to discuss terms. Sterling reveals that Nate was played—by Sophie. She's the thief who stole the First David ten years ago—this was all a ploy for her to get her hands on the Second David as well. Now they have to play by Sterling's rules. He wants the David back, and Nathan to turn himself in. Then, and only then, will he let Parker and Hardison go.

Sterling knows how they think. So they have to think like someone else. Sophie, sent to deliver the statue in exchange for Parker, doesn't try to talk her way out—she and Parker jump off the rooftop, using one of Parker's harnesses. Nate, walking into their office to give himself up, brings along Eliot—not to fight, but to use Hardison's technology to incapacitate Sterling's goons and blow the office up, destroying any paper trail.

Scatter, Nate tells them, and then they'll meet up again.

The Second David Job

Written by Chris Downey & John Rogers; Directed by Dean Devlin

The Client: This one, they're doing for themselves.

The Mark: Ian Blackpoole and James Sterling.

The Problem: Sterling made a fool of the team. They want revenge. And they still haven't forgotten about taking Blackpoole down, for Nate.

The Plan: Despite Nate's orders to scatter, his thieves come back, individually scouting out the museum. They each plan on robbing it, just to embarrass Blackpoole and his new head of security, Sterling.

How It Goes Down: All four of them are spotted by security, and they run—only to be picked up by Nate, who "happened" to be driving by. He knew they'd all be there. And he's already told Blackpoole and Sterling that he intends to rob the museum on opening day.



He's given Blackpoole an ultimatum: resign now, and Nate will leave him alone. Blackpoole, naturally, refuses; nor does he call the police, not taking Nate's threat seriously.

Back together they're able to pool their talents—but they need someone on the inside. Someone who can help them run the heist. Someone like Nate's ex-wife Maggie. They think they're conning her, but she sees through the ruse and demands to know what's going on.

And, finally, Nate has to tell her, not only what he's doing, but why. The reason why he hates Blackpoole so much. Maggie never knew that Ian refused the payment. Nate, feeling responsible, kept it from her all this time.

Maggie's heartbroken, but also angry. She's in.

As all this is going on, Sterling is aware that the team is back. He's making his plans to put them away for good this time.

On opening day, the team is in place, and Nate walks in the front door, ticket in hand. Blackpoole makes Sterling leave him alone, reminding the other man it's better to catch him in the act rather than merely under suspicion. But they wait too long; the team's plan goes into effect and the museum is evacuated—leaving Nate alone in the Two Davids Gallery.

Blackpoole and his men rush back in as soon as the security system is reset and discover Nathan Ford—and the two Davids, still in their case. What they don't realize, until the lights go on, is that every other piece of artwork—$150 million worth of loaners from IYS clients—is gone. Nate told Blackpoole that he would rob the *gallery*, not that he would steal the statues. More, he has Blackpoole on tape saying that he won't call the police, despite Nate's warning.

The offer Nate made Blackpoole earlier is on the table again, but this time it's made to Sterling: *if* Blackpoole resigns immediately, *if* the policy of refusing all claims is dismantled, *if* he is stripped of all his assets, *then* the paintings will all be returned. Sterling will be a hero.

Nate knows his former co-worker well. Sterling takes the deal.

The team's achieved their goal—but Leverage Consulting's been blown as a cover; their offices are gone. It's time to scatter for real, now.

Season Two

Season Two starts with the members of the crew having gone their separate ways and Nate off the bottle. The season features Nate's slow descent, Sophie's leave of absence, the team trying out each other's roles with limited success, and a final reckoning with their nemesis, James Sterling.

The Beantown Bailout Job

Written by John Rogers; Directed by Dean Devlin

The Client: Matt Kerrigan and his daughter Zoe. Matt is a banker who discovered irregularities in the bank where he works, but can't get anyone to listen to him.

The Mark: Brandon O'Hare, a Boston Mafioso, and Glen Leary, the bank manager

The Problem: O'Hare's people have been laundering money through the bank for years, but now that it's going under, they have the chance to walk away clean with Federal bailout money. Leary is their inside man, covering up details so the Feds don't discover what's been going on.

The Plan: Nate, newly sober, is up for a Job with another insurance company in Boston, but he's unable to go back to the straight life. Unfortunately for him, he walks into the path of the Kerrigan's out of control car, rescuing both father and daughter. He visits them in the hospital, meeting a Lt. Bonanno of the Massachusetts State police. Bonanno says Kerrigan had arranged a meeting with him, but he doesn't know why or about what.

His good deed done, Nate heads out for an evening at the theater—Sophie Devereaux, in a one-woman performance of *The Sound of Music*. The rest of the team is there as well, and they are reunited. The team—frustrated and bored—tries to convince Nate to come back as their leader, but he resists—until someone tries to kill him. Then the team takes over despite his objections, tracking down the briefcase stolen from Kerrigan's car, observing videotape of the guy from the bank security camera, until Nate is, despite himself, drawn in. One Job, he says. Just one—the Turnabout.

"You know, when you're sober, your metaphors get creepier."

How It Goes Down: Parker and Hardison play FBI agents once again, leaning on the bank manager. Nate is front man for Sophie coming in as a member of a London crime family looking to buy into the buyout. They have O'Hare on the hook, Leary about to run scared, everything looks to be going well, until they discover that the mob boys aren't running the scam—Leary, Kerrigan's boss, is. The entire con goes awry, with Nate at gunpoint.

They go on the improv; Eliot is the undercover cop whom Sophie shoots, casting O'Hare as the turncoat informant. He runs, right into Parker and Hardison, who convince him to confess before tasering him and leaving him for Bonanno to find. Meanwhile Sophie and Nate convince Leary that he needs to go kill Kerrigan, their only remaining dead end—and Leary walks into the waiting arms of the law, carrying Kerrigan's stolen briefcase filled with evidence against Leary.

Kerrigan, who has recovered, is not only vindicated, but gets handed a check from the IRS for reporting of tax fraud. His daughter Zoe has her faith in people restored.

This is the episode that introduces Lt. Patrick Bonanno, who plays important roles in both *The Three Strikes Job* and the third season opener.

The Tap-Out Job

Written by; Directed by Marc Roskin

The Client: Jack Howorth and his son Mark, an MMA fighter with a bright future, who is forced to take a fall and ends up permanently injured.

The Mark: Jeff Rucker, a crooked fight promoter who demanded Mark take a fall and used dirty tricks to ensure it happened.

The Problem: Mark, now unable to fight, is facing a bleak future once he gets out of the hospital.

The Plan: Humiliate Rucker by beating him at golf, then set themselves up as rival promoters, luring Rucker with the promise of a pay-per-view television deal for his fights. Once Rucker bites, they'll take him for his half of the production costs—half a million dollars. Nate will be the fight promoter, Eliot one of his fighters, Sophie the producer.

How It Goes Down: The con starts well, with Eliot's "clueless but talented farm boy" act impressing Rucker. Once inside, Eliot lets details about Nate's character slip, including the deal with Sophie's producer character. They expect Rucker's greed and his desire to one-up the guy who'd humiliated him on the golf course to make it easy.

Unfortunately, Rucker smells a rat, and does the one thing they have no control over—he talks to people and confirms that nobody's ever heard of Nate's character. That blows the con; then Rucker demands that Eliot stay and fight—and throw the fight, so Rucker can make a fortune betting against him.

"I can't hack a hick."

They refuse, and Rucker comments that the team can leave, but the people they came here to help will still be in town and unprotected. Things happen to unprotected people. Bad things. Eliot tells Nate he'll fight. He'll take the fall.

Hardison is trying desperately to find some weakness in Rucker's position, but the usual entry—money—is so tangled Hardison's having trouble making sense of it.

Rucker drugs Eliot to make sure he goes down, but Eliot—a trained killer, not a ring fighter—loses control and appears to kill his opponent. Rucker takes the door receipts and runs, not willing to take the fall as accessory for murder, especially after he bet his entire life savings on his fighter winning the fight.



Of course, the team found the drugged water beforehand—since it was the same trick he pulled on Mark. Eliot didn't really kill his opponent. They had the doctor in on the scam. When Rucker crosses the state line the reveal shows that he has a trunk filled with cash and guns. The irregularities Hardison found gave them an in: Rucker had been misrepresenting his income from the gym and his bets. Tipped off, the IRS looks into Rucker's finances, and the team hands the deed to the gym over to Mark, giving both him, and the other fighters, a real second chance.

The Order-23 Job

Written by Chris Downey; Directed by Rod Hardy

The Client: Ronald, whose sister was swindled by the Mark and died destitute.

The Mark: Eddie, an unrepentant hedge fund swindler who preyed on members of the Armenian community—his own people—then co-operated with the government for a reduced sentence.

The Problem: Eddie will be taken to jail in an hour. They need to convince him to spill where he hid the still-missing four hundred thousand dollars before they lose all access to him.

The Plan: Nate notices a bottle of hand sanitizer Eddie left behind and makes the leap: Eddie's a hypochondriac. While Eddie is declaring to his guards about why he's not the bad guy, Parker, in the air vents, drips a liquid into his water bottle. In minutes, Eddie has passed out, and the nearest doctor—who happens to be Nate—is insisting that he go for an immediate MRI. No prison, not until he has a clean bill of health.

How It Goes Down: Parker, as a nurse, manages to "infect" Eddie with a rash. Nate sends him to the "infectious diseases" ward, while a dummy gets shoved into the MRI machine.

Eddie is roomed with Sophie, doing a turn as a fellow rash-sufferer. Her job is to terrify him into thinking he's going to die, aided by a frizting television that shows the start of a CDC press conference.

"Did you just give a guy a nose bleed with the power of your mind?"

Meanwhile, the dummy has been discovered, and Eddie's minders are ready to call in a runner—but Hardison and Eliot, as cops, convince them that Eddie has to be in the hospital somewhere; better they find him themselves, and nobody looks bad. Unfortunately, Eliot is distracted by a young boy, who is clearly the victim of parental abuse, and misses Hardison's discovery that one of the handlers is an assassin from the Armenian mob, sent to take down Eddie for turning state's evidence.

Nate, showing a disturbingly sadistic side, ratchets up the anxiety level for Eddie, until Sophie "dies" horribly and Nate himself staggers in, infected by what he says is a weaponized virus. Parker handcuffs him to a bed, saying it's "Order 23" and she's got no choice. Eddie, terrified, offers her the money if she'll get him out of there.

Parker sneaks him out of the hospital, but the real Federal Marshal calls in the missing prisoner, and Nate warns Parker that their cover is blown.

Eddie uses Parker's distraction to escape and goes back to the courthouse, where he reclaims a bag from a closet—and turns to find the team there, waiting for him.

Eddie laughs, saying he's going to put them away for kidnapping, and runs out into, literally, the arms of waiting cops. Who, of course, don't believe a word he blathers about hospitals and viruses, but haul him off to jail.

Back at the hospital, the real Marshal thanks "fellow cops" Eliot and Hardison for their help, and says he can never thank them enough. Eliot, however, thinks he can. The final scene shows the Marshal knocking on the front door of a house, which is opened by the abused boy Eliot saw earlier.

The Fairy Godparents Job

Written by Amy Berg; Directed by Jonathan Frakes

The Client: A doctor at a local, bankrupted clinic.

The Mark: Daniel Fowler, former CEO of an investment company who is under federal house arrest after it's revealed that his company was a Ponzi scheme, bilking everyone (including the clinic) out of their investments.

The Problem: All of Fowler's assets have been frozen—except the $20 million stashed somewhere in his penthouse. All they have to do is find it—except, since he's under house arrest, Fowler can't leave for them to search.

The Plan: There are three reasons a federal house arrest can be lifted: family death, personal safety, or a family event. The easiest to fake is a family event, and the arrival on surveillance cameras of Fowler's ten year old stepson Widmark gives Nate an idea: Fowler will leave the apartment to go to a school event.

How It Goes Down: Conning the headmaster into a sudden vacation, Nate moves in as "Dr. Melcher," bringing Sophie and Eliot in with him as teachers. Parker and Hardison set up shop in the empty apartment above Fowler's, masquerading as potential buyers.

While the three try to find something that Widmark is good at that they can showcase (sadly, he doesn't seem to be good anything), someone tries to break in to the penthouse. Hardison chases, while Parker picks up the abandoned gun just in time for the FBI agents guarding the apartment to appear—the same agents from *The Wedding Job*, who recognize Parker as fellow agent Hannigan. The duo makes this work in their favor, integrating themselves into the actual surveillance of the apartment.

The discovery that Widmark has a lovely singing voice sets the team into motion, with two days to set something up. Sophie decides to put their science fair, already in the works, to music. The parents at the school aren't happy about the kid whose parent bankrupted them having a star turn, and the kids take their cue from that, leaving Widmark crying in the bathroom when he should be getting ready to go onstage. Sophie starts to con him into performing, but then just talks to him, opening up about her own fears. It works—on both Widmark, and Sophie.

Halfway through the performance, the team spots an assassin in the audience. Fowler's set up a hit on his handlers; he's going to run. But who helped him? A quick reveal with missing cell phones connects Fowler with another parent in the audience—who, while videotaping the performance, "accidentally" picks up Fowler's camera bag and leaves his own.

Meanwhile, Eliot's taking on the assassin backstage, in one of the longest running, and quietest, fights in LEVERAGE history.

Nate swipes the replacement bag during the applause: it contains new I.D. and a ticket to Bogota. So what was in the other bag? Audiotapes, incriminating the other man. Sophie plays them over the auditorium's loudspeaker, and everyone in the school knows that there were two villains, not just one. The heat's off Widmark, at least a little.

And the clinic gets the money to keep their doors open.

The Three Days of the Hunter Job

Written by Melissa Glenn & Jessica Rieder; Directed by Marc Roskin

The Client: Sarah Pennington, whose father was outed on the Hunter show, using falsified facts, as being responsible for a school bus crash, which caused him to try to commit suicide.

The Mark: Monica Hunter, a sleazy exposé TV show host.

The Problem: The client wants Hunter humiliated and her father's reputation restored.

The Plan: Hunter has fame and money—but no respect. They're going to con her with the chance to break a real news story, something that will get her the offer from a reputable show she's been chasing for years.

How It Goes Down: Sophie wants to run this con. Nate, reluctantly, hands over the dossier. Parker, being an intentionally bad thief, tries to steal a media pass from Hunter's desk and is caught. Bullied into sharing her story, the two women go to see the snitch that, Parker claims, has the story that could bring down the President.

Hardison, doing his best wild-eyed conspiracy nut, spins a story of Guantanamo-like secret prisons within the United States. Hunter buys into it, especially when she sees Eliot, dressed as a Secret Service agent, loitering nearby, clearly keeping an eye on Hardison. Nate, impersonating a General, gives her just enough denial to put her solidly on the scent—until she decides that fear sells more sizzle than real stories and declines the bait.

Undaunted, Sophie ups the ante. Parker gets hit by a car driven by "secret agent" Eliot who takes documents off the body and leaves. Then Hardison shows up and takes Hunter to see Nate, still playing the General, who tells her the "truth": there's been a chemical weapons breach in the water supply. The prisons are actually safe houses for the elite, while everyone else gets sick and dies.

And then things get crazy, with Monica insisting on getting onto the base and investigating. She and Hardison are caught, and Nate has to con his way onto the base to get them out. Nate gives her pills he says are anti-virals. They go back to the apartment where she met Hardison, only it's been stripped clean, and he's gone. Eliot appears, looking menacing, saying to Nate that he just finished "cleaning up." Monica panics and runs back to the studio, insisting that she has to get on-air immediately. But her proof, the missing folder, says only page after page of "All Work and No Play Makes Monica a Dull Girl." The cops arrive, she freaks, and is tackled. Her producer finds the pills, which are actually anti-psychotics. And that's the end of Monica Hunter.

Pennington is shown in a television interview, talking about having his life given back to him. Nate and Sophie talk about how she liked running the con—she didn't: she's a Grifter, not a Mastermind. But something's missing. Nate tells her to take her time and find out what it is.

The Top Hat Job

Written by M. Scott Veach & Christine Boylan; Directed by Peter O'Fallon

The Client: Dr. Leigh Jameson, a former employee of Lillian Foods International. She is concerned because reports of salmonella in their frozen food are being ignored, and she's afraid someone's going to die.

The Mark: Erik Casten, the VP of Lillian Foods, who decided it would be cheaper to pay the lawsuits to go away than to pull the food from the market.

"Oh, Eric with a "C"—nice and friendly. Erik with a "K"—evil." "I didn't know that." "Everybody knows that."

The Problem: They need proof of the cover-up. The team goes in without Nate's approval or planning, and are made—they underestimated the secrecy around food companies, which can rival military installations to protect their patents. The team needs to actually be on the inside to get their hands on that report.

The Plan: Part of Hardison's report says Lillian Foods is having a State of the Company meeting. Nate's the only one who knows what that means: an all-day, on-site meeting tying up everyone in the company. That's their chance. The catering's done in-house, but the entertainment for the day is a magician. That's it. That's their way in.

Parker and Hardison attend the actual magician's act and set him up so he's unavailable (after he punches Hardison, and is arrested), then Nate and Parker go in



as the replacement with Sophie as their manager to chat up the CEO and get information, while Hardison hacks the system, with Eliot providing cover.

How It Goes Down: The con goes wrong from the start: first, the hour they expected for the VP's speech is truncated to a few words, giving them no time to search for the files; then a series of locks and delays keeps them from getting to the material. When Hardison finally does get access to the right database, he discovers that Casten is already deleting the files. Too many people in the wrong places, Hardison gets caught, and they're blown, with security running up to Nate and Parker on-stage, only to be left with a bewildered-looking rabbit.

But when Hardison is marched outside by Casten and his men, Hardison's phone rings. It's Nate, calling—on Casten's phone. Like all good magic tricks, it wasn't the act that was important, but the misdirection. The reveal shows not only Parker lifting the VP's phone, but Hardison hacking it, so that the company's food patents were copied onto the phone's memory card.

To get the patents back, Casten is going to have to pull the contaminated foods. But the team goes one better: the CEO walks up as they're talking with the Client, and tells Casten that he'll also be resigning, effective immediately.

Back at the bar, it seems like, despite the near-disaster, everyone is pleased with the result. But Sophie tells Eliot she's worried; Nate is starting to think he can control everything, and when he fails, it will destroy him.

The Two Live Crew Job

Written by Amy Berg & John Rogers; Directed by Dean Devlin

The Client: The Mercers, an older couple, claiming that a CEO has possession of a painting stolen from their family during WWII and won't return it to them.

The Mark: Marcus Stark, mastermind, thief, and egomaniac.

The Problem: Another crew has already stolen the painting—and someone sent a bomb in a vase of flowers to Sophie. Are the two related?

The Plan: A man comes up to Nate during the funeral for Katherine Clive, saying how mistakes can get you killed. They have their (attempted) killer—and the thief who one-upped them: Marcus Stark. Sophie's worked with him before. He always does a small Job before the big one. The painting was just a warm-up. If the team can figure out his real score and steal it first, they have a chance to get the painting back.

How It Goes Down: Stark is going after his favorite target: Van Gogh. There's one coming up for auction, so the team goes in during the opening night cocktail party, but the other team is already there. It's an evenly matched battle: every move one team makes, the other counters. Both teams determine they have to make their move that night.

Nate approaches the auction house late at night, drunkenly banging on the door and drawing the guards' attention so Parker and Eliot can sneak into the building. And the match-up continues, including another epic battle—and fan-service—between Eliot and the other Crew's Hitter, that ends with them both soaking wet.

Meanwhile, Hardison and the other Hacker, known as Chaos, trade control of the alarm systems back and forth, until—just as Parker and the other Thief make it to the painting—Chaos turns off the power in Hardison's van. Parker is trapped by lasers, and Hardison is helpless.

Stark and Nate confront each other outside, just as a police car pulls up. Stark thinks Nate's down for the count until Sophie gets out of the car and tells Stark that they're there to save him—that Stark's been betrayed.





On Nate's order, Parker back flips through the lasers, takes down the other thief, rips off her coveralls, pulls a gun, and calls for the guards. At the same time, Hardison whips out a generator, restores power to the van, and takes control of the alarm system.

Parker, Hardison, and Eliot, now all wearing police uniforms, cart their respective opponents—and the painting in question—out past the shocked guards.

Flashbacks show Stark telling his team to be wary of Sophie—who he had wanted to hire for this Job—and Hardison running facial recognition software on the people entering Sophie's building—the floral delivery guy matches Chaos. Chaos planned a double-cross, but didn't want to risk going up against Sophie. Stark doesn't believe them, until his car explodes at exactly the time he would have gotten into it.

Stark agrees to an exchange. But the con isn't quite done yet—the Van Gogh Stark walks away with is one of his own fakes. Meanwhile, Chaos is stopped by airport security on his way to freedom and asked to explain his checked luggage—the remaining Van Goghs, including the real one, marked with a post-it. Game and match to the LEVERAGE Crew.

The Ice Man Job

Written by Christine Boylan; Directed by Jeremiah S. Chechik

The Client: Joey, the driver of the armored truck that was robbed. A cop working a second job, he's been suspended without pay until this is settled, which means his medical bills are piling up.

The Mark: Jim Carrity III, the owner of the diamond company that was robbed. A lousy businessman who is maxed out and in debt, he had insured the diamonds for nine million dollars.

The Problem: Nate points out that insurance money takes a while to pay out—Carrity is going to have to fence the diamonds, to cover his debts for now.

The Plan: There are only a few people with the ability to remove the etched serial number from diamonds—they're going to make the Mark believe they have the equipment to do so. Sophie's gone walkabout to find herself after the events of *The Two Live Crew Job*, so the team is without a Grifter. Nate puts Hardison in that role, while Parker reels the Mark in using a diamond she stole as the bait**.** Once they have Carrity on the hook, they'll call in Lt. Bonanno, thereby clearing their client.

How It Goes Down: They meet with Carrity. Unfortunately, Hardison's an excellent Hacker, but a terrible Grifter and Carrity balks. But one of Carrity's bodyguards, who actually robbed the truck, takes Hardison's number down as they leave. To push Carrity, Nate pays him a visit—using Sterling's name—as a rep from the insurance company, and tells him the payout will take seven to nine months. Carrity calls the "Ice Man" and sets up a meeting, where they fake the de-etching with a cubic zirconia replacement. As Nate predicted, Carrity is so busy checking the serial number, he doesn't notice he's been given a fake.

"Mr. Carrity, I'm in insurance. If you think I've never been threatened by a gun before, you're mistaken."

Disgusted with Hardison's overselling of his Role, Parker and Eliot go off alone—and Hardison is snatched from the lab parking lot by the bodyguards. They are planning to double cross Carrity and want Hardison to help them steal the diamonds. He manages to get a message to Nate, who scrambles the team to find a solution.

If Hardison steals the diamonds, their entire con against Carrity collapses. Parker goes in to set up the theft for Hardison, but she can't get the safe open in time. In his office, Carrity sees something happening on the security camera, and races down in time for Parker and Hardison to disappear and the alarms to go off, locking both the bodyguards and Carrity in the vault until Bonanno arrives to find the "stolen" gems safe in Carrity's own vault. Carrity is arrested for theft and attempted fraud.

Back in the bar, Nate presents Joey—newly reinstated and healing up—with a case of cash. The diamond Carrity had given them to de-etch fetched just enough to cover his medical expenses.

The Lost Heir Job

Written by Chris Downey; Directed by Peter Winther

The Client: Ruth Walton, the founder of a children's foundation.

The Mark: Peter Blanchard, the Kimball estate lawyer, who claims to be the sole legal executor and beneficiary.

The Problem: Millionaire Bennett Kimball promised to leave his estate to Walton's foundation, but his lawyer is now contesting. The team is still without Sophie.

The Plan: Ruth comes to the meeting with her lawyer, Tara Carlisle, who insists on being part of whatever the team does. Nate resists, but finally gives in. Kimball was not exactly an angel, keeping his good reputation mainly by the maneuverings of Blanchard, his long-time lawyer. The team starts with Kimball's former partner, who is in jail for embezzlement. Nate thinks Orson might have dirt about a fifty thousand dollar payment made in 1980 to a George Gilbert he'd be willing to share, to bring Blanchard to heel. However, Tara insists on going in with honesty, which fails utterly. Nate then goes to Plan B.

How It Goes Down: Eliot and Hardison work the prison as newly-transferred guards, getting in with Orson. Nate, meanwhile, is working the system as Jimmy Papadakoulos, the world's worst lawyer. They discover that George Gilbert was actually Georgia Gilbert, a stripper whom Blanchard arranged to have go away. Nate makes the leap that it was because she was pregnant by Kimball, and calls in Parker—next door trying to crack Blanchard's safe—to play the "lost heir."



Tara earns her keep with the team by going to Blanchard and warning him that "Jimmy" is planning extortion and she thinks they should demand a DNA test—although if the test comes back positive, that will go into the record. Blanchard, worried, thinks they should settle. However, he also meets with a cop, and they discuss how bad things can happen to people in a new city—and then we cut to Parker and Nate, under the shadow of a sniper's gun. Eliot takes out the sniper, but the clock is ticking. Eliot takes Parker off in one direction, and Nate heads in the other.

Now chased by cops, Parker and Eliot aren't going to make it to the courtroom in time. Nate tells Parker to forget about it, and sends her off to do something else. He shows up at the courthouse in time to ask a single question of Ruth Walton: what color is his tie?

Ruth is colorblind, rare in a woman. It takes both parents being colorblind for that to happen. Nate checked the medical records: Kimball had been colorblind. So had Georgia Gilbert.

It wasn't a coincidence that Ruth, who had been adopted in 1982, found favor with Kimball: he had been looking for her. Ruth is the actual lost heir.

Job done, they go back to the bar, only to discover that Tara is actually a Grifter, sent by Sophie to help them out while she's gone. The team is pissed at being played, but Nate welcomes her aboard.

The Runway Job

Written by Albert Kim; Directed by Marc Roskin

The Client: A young woman working for an immigrant advocacy group, on behalf of the women being abused by the Pans, who run a sweatshop where the workers are getting sick. None of them are willing to make a formal complaint, but something has to be done.

The Mark: Gloria and Russell Pan, self-made millionaires who make knock-offs of high fashion and sell it cheap. Gloria, however, has dreams of becoming a fashion designer.

The Problem: The team needs to get the Pans on the hook for something incriminating enough to shut the factory down.

The Plan They'll use Gloria's desire to be a reputable designer as their entry point, and con her into buying into a show.

How It Goes Down: Tara is set up as "Caprina," a hot new fashion designer, to flatter Gloria and lure her in. After some ego-stroking and Nate's discovery that one of their designers has dropped out of an upcoming show, Gloria gives them fifty thousand dollars to have her designs included, while her husband worries what their partners in China will say.

Nate goes with Parker the next day to get the rest of the money, only to see a car speeding off as the mansion explodes. At the same time, Eliot and Tara are going through the factory looking for bank statements when they're threatened by men bearing cleavers. Too late, the team realizes that they didn't just take the Pan's money—they took money from the Triad, the Chinese mob, too.

Worse, Russell Pan is actually on the FBI's most wanted list as Nicholas Chow, a member of the Triad. The entire sweatshop is a front, and the team's stumbled into it. Russell wants his money back; he holds Tara hostage while Nate promises to get them the next season's designs, so they can start the knockoffs early and beat everyone else. It takes Parker and Eliot infiltrating the fashion show to get the designs, but they do so. While Nate's gone, Tara spills the beans and offers to make a deal.

Nate returns with the designs, but Russell tells him he's going to take the fall for all of it, including the bomb—he's already called the cops about a man trying to sell him stolen designs. But when the cops come and look at the thumb drive, they find both footage of Russell planting the bombs, and his Rap Sheet identifying him



as Nicholas Chow. He's carted off, while Nate and Tara walk free. The reveal shows both Tara setting Russell up to call the cops, and Nate making the sleight-of-hand switch while they argued.

With the Pans out of the picture, the factory goes into receivership, and the fifty thousand dollars is enough to set the former employees up as new owners.

"And for what it's worth, Sophie was right. You guys are the best I've ever seen."

The Bottle Job

Written by Christine Boylan; Directed by Jonathan Frakes

The Client: Cora McCrory, the daughter of John McCrory who owned the eponymous bar the team uses as their base. She is threatened by loan sharks during her father's wake, and told to pay her father's debts or lose the bar.

The Mark: Mark Doyle, a loan shark on a short timeline.

The Problem: Cora has two hours to come up with fifteen thousand, or Doyle takes the bar. She doesn't have that much money and, on a snowy Friday night, no way to get a loan.

The Plan: They're going to run an abbreviated version of the Wire—time-delay betting *a la* The Sting—conning Doyle out of the IOU for the bar.

How It Goes Down: Tara insinuates herself into Doyle's confidences, giving Parker time to lift his passport, which Hardison scans for information. Parker and Eliot distract the man's companions and lift their wallets as well as a ledger, written in code. They're Irish, looking to expand Doyle's family's business into the States. Tara works on the ledger, while Nate heads down to get chummy with Doyle, channeling his father, a small-time hood, to win the other man over. Upstairs, Hardison tears up Nate's apartment to rewire the cable into the bar for a twenty second delay. Nate loses just enough to make Doyle feel confident—until he notices that Nate's not drinking. He won't bet with a man who won't drink with him.

Everything stops, until Nate kicks back a drink, and then another. Meanwhile, Tara has cracked the code: Doyle has his claws into half the neighborhood.

Nate wins back enough that Doyle offers the marker as a final bet, but he refuses to end the con. If they let Doyle go, he'll just come back and do more damage. They have to stop him once and for all.

Tara comes back to stall Doyle, using the snowstorm as an excuse. While Parker and Eliot hunt down Doyle's office to steal the money he has in his safe, Tara winds Doyle up by telling him that Nate cheated. Furious, Doyle pushes his way into the high stakes poker game Tara tells him is going on in the back room and demands the chance to buy in.

The regulars, a grizzled looking bunch, reluctantly agree. Doyle—with Tara there to tell him what Nate's got in his hand—starts to play, winning steadily. Doyle brags about the things he's had a hand in while he was in Boston, trying to impress the locals. But when Nate buys back in with Doyle's own cash, he identifies the markings and figures out that he's being conned, pulling a gun on Nate.

At which point the "regulars" introduce themselves—they're not criminals, they're cops, and Doyle just served himself up on a platter. Cora gets the IOU back, the money gets handed back to the people it was taken from, and Doyle is run out of town with a warning from Nate to never come back.

"You're exactly like your father."

The Zanzibar Marketplace Job

Written by Melissa Glenn & Jessica Rieder; Directed by Jeremiah S. Chechik

The Client: Jim Sterling needs their help to get Nate's ex-wife Maggie out of jail after she's accused of stealing a Faberge Egg from a museum exhibit. He's more

concerned with the fact that IYS insured the egg than he is with the fact that Maggie's been accused.

The Mark: Alexander Lundy, international real-estate mogul—and Maggie's current significant other—who happens to be closing in on bankruptcy. Sterling likes him for the thief, but he's protected by his job with the American Embassy.

The Problem: Get Maggie out of jail and find out who actually stole the egg, without Maggie knowing that the team is involved.

"Maggie's the most honest person we know. But besides that, she's okay."

The Plan: To get Maggie out, and then steal back the egg, clearing her name.

How It Goes Down: A rumor that Maggie is having an affair with a highly placed official gets her out of the prison. Tara and Eliot intimidate a local fence who gives them an invitation to the Marketplace, a floating auction. Interested parties write down their bid, then leave town. Lundy is selling the egg, via a remote link-up. Eliot goes in and confirms that it's the real deal—and that it's being stored in the building. Parker follows the coordinates to the room where it's being held, and—with Sterling's help distracting the guard—steals the egg back.

While all this is going on, Maggie confronts Nate about the team being involved. He tries to explain, but someone tasers him before he can lie. They wake up locked in a basement room, while the rest of the team is contacted about a trade: the hostages for the egg. Sterling doesn't want to make the trade but in Nate's absence, Eliot, the Retrieval Specialist, takes control.

Maggie and Nate are joined by Phillips, Lundy's assistant, who claims that Lundy's gone crazy. The team is shown all this via camera, to prove that Nate and Maggie are still alive. But they're all being played: after the camera shuts off and Lundy walks into the room, accompanied by goons, it's revealed that Phillips is the mastermind. He'll take the egg, fake his death, and leave Lundy to take the blame.

The hostages are put in one elevator, with a bomb. The egg is placed in the other elevator. Phillips waits for his elevator to arrive—and discovers he has the bomb, not the egg. He runs, just as it explodes.

The reveal shows how Eliot had Parker switch the two, while Hardison manipulated the elevator displays so that there was no missing time. The team knew Phillips was the thief because, while he had the sound off when showing the egg to prospective buyers, he kept it on when the team saw Nate on-camera, to sell his performance.

Cut to Phillips being stopped by the police. He protests, claiming that he's driving an Embassy car—but Parker's stolen the diplomatic plates. The team's done the work—but it's Sterling who benefits, with a job offer from Interpol. "I hate that guy," Tara says, and is finally inducted as a full member of the team, united in their hatred of Sterling.

The Future Job

Written by Amy Berg & Chris Downey;
Directed by Marc Roskin

The Client: Ryan, whose pregnant sister Jodie is being taken in by a fake psychic.

The Mark: Dalton Rand, a phony psychic conning people out of their life savings by claiming to be able to channel their departed loved ones.

The Problem: Jodie has sunk so much into Rand, trying to get in touch with her dead husband, she's about to lose her house**.** They have to prove he's bogus and get her money back.

The Plan: The team goes see one of his performances, intending to gather intel on how to bring him down, but when Nate heckles, trying to get a rise out of him, Rand turns on Parker and mentions her dead brother. Shaken, she bolts. The team finds her back at the apartment, where she tells them she's never mentioned her brother. She thinks Dalton's the real thing. When they explain to her how he did a cold read, manipulating her, she's



furious and wants him dead. Nate offers, instead, to take him down. All the way down. Parker approves.

How It Goes Down: Tara sets up as a woo-woo psychic named Bethany, working at a table outside a coffee bar and siphoning away his clientele. When Rand goes to see her, intending to scare her away, she instead impresses him, both by knowing that his father isn't dead and by the mild electrical charge he gets when talking to her, because Nate, showing more of that sadistic—and vindictive—streak, rigged the table. Tara gives Rand a reading, and when enough of it comes true, he returns the next day, to talk her into working with him. Her profile is that of someone who needs money, which Rand shamelessly uses to get "Bethany" to agree.

The next show, the team is stationed out front, picking pockets and eavesdropping, feeding Tara info that she in turn feeds to Rand. The only problem is that they do such a good job that someone in the audience gets spooked and has Rand grabbed in the parking lot. Now, before they can take him down, they have to rescue him.

The kidnapper is a criminal who went to jail for bank robbery, but whose partner died before he could find out where the money was hidden. He wants Rand and "Bethany" to tell him where it is. So the team has to lay a fake trail, leading them to storage facility. But as they dig through and find nothing, Rand admits, at gunpoint, that he's a fraud, and that he can't actually talk to the dead. Tara slams the door behind them, and they're in darkness, until the far wall falls away to reveal that they're actually next to Rand's studio, in front of a live audience, with his confession playing over and over.

The client's sister gets her money back, saving her house, and they've put another predator out of business.

"And now I see why you do it."

The Three Strikes Job

Written by John Rogers; Directed by Dean Devlin

The Client: Wendy Bonanno, the wife of Lt. Bonanno, who has quietly helped the team out when they need official notice of a crime.

The Mark: Bradford Culpepper III, the corrupt mayor of Belbridge.

The Problem: Bonanno was working on a case off-the-record, something that got him shot. Nate wants to know who was so intent on taking an honest cop down.

The Plan: Doing a preliminary pass on the town, Nate and Tara attend a fundraiser for the mayor, posing as a real estate developer (Nate) and a PR rep (Tara) willing to donate a lot of money to the right candidate. Learning that the mayor was a pro ballplayer very briefly, Nate feeds the rumor that he's there to build a baseball stadium if he can find the right property, something on the waterfront. The plan is to catch the mayor taking a bribe, and get him to roll on whoever ordered the hit on Bonnano.

How It Goes Down: Eliot is set up as a hot new player for the local minor league team, spreading rumors about a move, getting everyone riled up. Meanwhile, Culpepper is drawn into Nate's con, thinking that if he convinces Nate to build in his city, it will be his legacy. Nate plays him, getting Culpepper to agree to an "incentive payment" of two hundred fifty thousand dollars. But there's a catch—according to Culpepper's partners, it has to be in cash—which means there won't be a check to trace it back to Culpepper. Problem. Also, they have to meet him down by the waterfront to get the cash. Larger problem. Everyone balks, except Nate, who convinces the team to continue with the con.

But when the team gets there, they immediately know something's wrong. Hardison says the security system isn't anywhere what it should be, based on the post 9/11 funds Culpepper received to increase port security, and Parker finds boxes labeled "beans" that are actually holding guns and grenades. Nate and Tara are about



to walk out of the meeting when feedback fills their ear buds, and they realize Culpepper's wearing a wire. He's an FBI snitch, which is why he's been getting away with being corrupt. Culpepper recognizes the name Bonanno, but Nate doesn't have time to do anything about it—they have to get out before the FBI breaks in. Hardison sacrifices his van, using the grenades to blow her up, and under the cover of releasing hostages, Tara and Nate walk out of the warehouse and are whisked away by the team wearing FBI jackets.

The special agent in charge is furious, threatening to break their deal with Culpepper for letting the two get away, without any idea who they are or how to find them. The camera pulls away, and we see Jim Sterling standing there. He, clearly, has a very good idea who the two were.

The Maltese Falcon Job

Written by John Rogers; Directed by Dean Devlin

The Client: Wendy Bonanno, the wife of Lt. Bonanno, who has quietly helped the team out when they need official notice of a crime.

The Mark: Bradford Culpepper III, the corrupt mayor of Belbridge

The Problem: Culpepper is a protected FBI snitch, tied into a gun runner working off the docks of Bellbridge who ordered the hit on Lt. Bonanno.

The Plan: Coming off the disaster of the *Three Strikes Job*, the plan is to find Tony Kadjic, Culpepper's partner. To do that, they have to steal a mayor.

How It Goes Down: Culpepper is being kept in a luxury hotel, under FBI guard. The team goes in and removes him, stashing him in a perfect replica of his hotel room, conning him—with Eliot and Hardison both playing Hitters—into believing that betraying Nate to the Feds was the last thing he's ever going to do.

Meanwhile, Sterling, who is investigating Kadjic for Interpol, discovers that Culpepper's gone. And he knows damn well who took him.

Culpepper gives up his partner, telling Nate that it was Kadjic who told him to give Nate up to the Feds to protect their arms deals. Nate tells the others to get to the dock. He disappears—heading for his apartment. There's something he needs.

But Sterling's already there, with Special Agent Nevins. Sterling hands Nate his son's drawing, clearly what he came back for, and a flask, and lays it out for the Mastermind. Sterling has everything on them, but he wants Kadjic. If Nate helps Sterling, he'll go free. Just this once, everything wiped clean. And just him. Not the team.

Nate calls the team back, tells them it's all-clear, and sets the new plan in motion: they need to catch Kadjic in the act, on the ship with the weapons. Tara and Parker go in to destroy the evidence, while Nate and Eliot go in to trap Kadjic. But Hardison discovers Tara has sold them out, while Culpepper escapes and warns Kadjic. Eliot and Nate are separated, and Hardison is limited in what he can do because of the ship's interference with his electronics.

Only the sudden surprise appearance of Sophie, posing as a weapons buyer, saves the day. Tara had—rather than betraying them—called her in when Nate went off the rails.

They escape, locking Culpepper and Kadjic on the ship with the evidence. But just as they're about to get away, the team is surrounded by FBI agents and Sterling, who reveals that Nate made a deal. But it's not the deal Sterling expects: without the evidence they destroyed, Sterling has no case. Except if Nate turns State's evidence. He will—Nate wants Kadjic to go down, too—in exchange for the team's freedom.

"You guys are the most honorable people I have ever met in my life. You've become my family, my only family. I won't forget that."

LEVERAGE
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

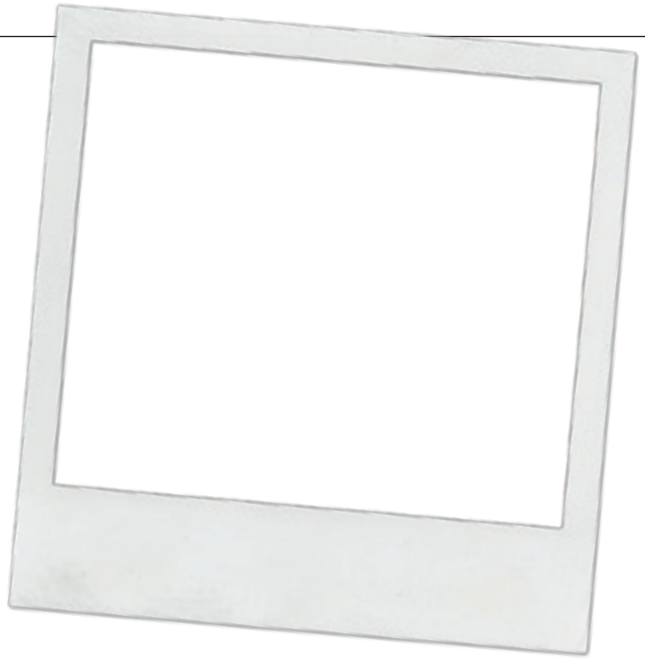
RAP SHEET

NAME

ALIASES

BACKGROUND

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION



ATTRIBUTES

AGILITY	4	6	8	10	12
ALERTNESS	4	6	8	10	12
INTELLIGENCE	4	6	8	10	12
STRENGTH	4	6	8	10	12
VITALITY	4	6	8	10	12
WILLPOWER	4	6	8	10	12

DISTINCTIONS

ROLES

GRIFTER	4	6	8	10	12
HACKER	4	6	8	10	12
HITTER	4	6	8	10	12
MASTERMIND	4	6	8	10	12
THIEF	4	6	8	10	12

TALENTS

SIGNATURE ASSETS

LEVERAGE
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

RAP SHEET

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THE RICH AND POWERFUL, THEY TAKE WHAT THEY WANT. YOU STEAL IT BACK.

You and your Crew used to be the bad guys, but there are worse people out there. The weak and the helpless need you. You provide... leverage.

Based on TNT's hit show, The LEVERAGE *Roleplaying Game* puts you in the middle of a dysfunctional but highly specialized group of con artists, criminals, and crooks who are trying to turn over a new leaf. You protect the victims of corporations, mobsters, and corrupt politicians by using your expert skills to outwit and overcome the real bad guys.

Using the award-winning Cortex System as its foundation, the LEVERAGE RPG includes all the rules you need to create a high-voltage team of rogues, plan the perfect job, and get it done... even if it means going to Plan B. This game requires a set of gaming dice available from any hobby or game store. Earbuds and really big HDTVs are cool, but not required.

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

CORTEX PLUS

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