

GASMASK GAZETTEER

St. John's Public House

Being an investigation of unsavory boxers, whores, and even less savory characters.



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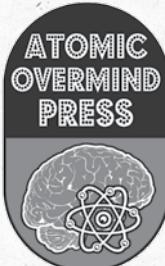
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Introduction

The *Gasmask Gazetteer* is a series of supplemental material for *Unhallowed Metropolis, Revised*, of interest to and for use by Narrators and players alike. Each instalment of the *Gazetteer* shines a light upon a location in the city of London, 2105 A.D. and the inhabitants thereof with particular attention devoted to a specific Calling. These locations are described in grim detail and include statistics for important non-player characters. Narrators may wish to include these locations and characters in their games of *Unhallowed Metropolis*, and players may find them useful in describing the backgrounds of their characters. Each instalment of the *Gazetteer* concludes with several items intended for the use of players, including new Calling-specific Stunts as well as a number of new combat Stunts, Qualities, Impediments, or equipment of use to any character.

In this, the second instalment of the *Gasmask Gazetteer*, we explore a singular example of the corrupt underworld of Neo-Victorian London: St. John's Public House. A simple pub conceals a depraved house of ill-repute where one can indulge one's taste for flesh, drugs, and gambling upon both games of chance and displays of violence. The establishment's staff is introduced, its decadent halls described, and we conclude with new Flash Thief Stunts for Criminals as well as two new Qualities appropriate for any character who spends his time among such poor company.

Part One: St. John's Public House

5. A man hanging on the ropes in a helpless state, with his toes off the ground, shall be considered down.

—*the Queensberry rules for the art of boxing, 1867*

For most passersby and even many of its customers, St. John's Public House is nothing more than a modest-sized pub located on a street corner next to a block of grey, rundown tenements along an otherwise unremarkable stretch of London road. The red brick *façade* long ago faded to a dull ashen grey, and the windows, coated with years of filth, barely let the light within escape. An old rusted pub sign hangs listlessly over the entrance, depicting a head on a silver platter.

During the day, St. John's caters to the Shoreditch factory workers, letting them wash the grime and dust from their throats with a pint of bitter or three. However, as dusk falls over London, St. John's transforms into one of the more decadent destinations in the capital. On the face of it, St. John's remains just a working-class pub with a few tired-looking serving girls, a pair of red-faced publicans, and a hunchbacked busker banging out this month's tunes from the pantomime theatres in Piccadilly. For many, this is all that "Sin'jin's" will ever be.



As one enters St. John's, one steps from the smog-filled street into an equally smoke-filled room, albeit one with less of an acrid stink. The main room of the pub runs twice the length of its width. The left wall is lined with grimy, curtained booths, affording blurred views onto the street through filthy windows. Various tables litter the centre of the pub, and the pitted wooden bar runs the length of the room on the right side. Behind the bar, the right wall is mirrored, cracked in several places, making the room appear much larger than it actually is. Depending upon the time of day or night, the pub can be filled with customers, and it can take a moment or two to find a place to sit or even a space to stand at the bar. If the customer appears to be of a higher station, a serving girl will often toss someone out who doesn't look like they will be spending any more coin. If any customer appears to be getting out of hand, two hamfisted nobblers stationed at the back of the pub will take great delight in tossing him out.

St. John's Public House serves a basic menu, but it never wins any awards for flavour or quality. This is done with a purpose. Food is expected, but St. John's does not wish to be subjected to the additional scrutiny of clients coming for the food, so meals are greasy and filling, but that is about all a customer can expect when dining there.

As with the food, drinks are basic but plentiful. Slap gin, a few types of flavoured rotgut, and maybe even a few kegs of actual poor-quality beer are the extent of the drink menu at St. John's. The pair of publicans fills drink orders without much enthusiasm almost before the serving girls are finished delivering them. Kevin MacDonald and his son Brian have stood vigil over the bar at St. John's for nearly ten years. Whether this is because they like the job, have some arrangement with the owner, or just have nowhere else to go, remains a mystery.

For those not interested in food or drink, but rather seeking an avenue to explore their baser desires, St. John's offers a great deal more.

A small advantage that has arisen from the foul air in London is that the extensive use of gas masks ensures a great deal of anonymity for the clients of St. John's. So long as the gas mask or style of clothing is not particularly unique, the clients rarely need worry about being seen entering an establishment of ill-repute. In fact, a masked client can choose to enter the establishment through a number of side entrances and be escorted to his private room, where he may partake in his particular vice for the evening, never letting those beyond the door know his true identity. While some still cling to their outmoded sense of propriety and keep with this method, many of the pub's customers are far beyond such petty worries as being seen while smoking an opium pipe or losing a year's wages at the gambling tables. Some of the thrill is the risk of discovery, and this is often one of the few pleasures many of these jaded aristocrats have left.

Still, to keep up a sense of propriety and discretion, St. John's came up with a method to differentiate the customers of the Public House from those who would be sampling the more exclusive menu. The credit for this process goes to a barmaid named Molly Jenkins, who offered the suggestion that a gentleman interested in the specialties that St. John's provided simply ask one of the staff to check his coat. The gentleman would be escorted to the back of the public room and through a door where they could more discreetly enter the rest of the establishment. This particular code has gone beyond the walls of St. John's and into public slang; in many of the less reputable parts of London, asking to check one's coat will often result in a sniggering grin and a raised eyebrow. As the services of St. John's have expanded over time, so have the types of items that could be checked by the house. For example, if one desires a turn at the gambling tables as well as companionship, one checks one's gloves in addition to the coat. This tradition has continued to evolve as patrons continually find new ways to identify their desires while maintaining a veneer of innocence; now the colour of the items to be checked, as well as the order in which they are handed over, all have some significance to the staff of St. John's.

Part Two: Off the Menu

Mrs. Honoria Quist, the owner of St. John's, stands a modest five feet, three inches tall. Looking and acting as the proper matron, her white hair is pulled up neatly in a tight bun and a pince-nez sits atop her nose. Her black dress is modest and severe, and her only nod to fashion is a large double set of pearls resting about her neck. While not often seen amongst the guests, Mrs. Quist (or Mrs. Q to her staff) runs St. John's as efficiently and ruthlessly as any captain in Her Majesty's Royal Navy would run his ship. Even in her advancing years, Mrs. Quist's memory remains as sharp and as deadly as a surgeon's scalpel. Slights against her are rarely forgiven and never forgotten.

Her rise to ownership of St. John's is often a topic of debate amongst both the clients as well as her own staff. Everything from cold-blooded murder to collusion with vampires has been attributed to her. The rumours are not far from the truth.

Honorina Quist grew up poor and had the distinct misfortune of being rather beautiful. While this would not appear to be an impediment, her father, scum of the worst sort, not only abused her for his own pleasure, but charged men from around the neighbourhood for the privilege as well. Over the years, she attempted to escape, but her father invariably caught her and dragged her back to work. He would threaten her with rats, vowing that he would cut her open and put them inside her to watch as they tried to eat their way out. To this day, Mrs. Quist has a deep, abiding hatred of rodents, taking great delight in watching them slaughtered by the thousands in the ratting matches at St. John's.

When both she and her father were amidst an animate outbreak, Honoria did not hesitate to kick out her father's legs and push him down a flight of stairs into the waiting arms and mouths of a large group of hungry animates. She fled to the roof and freedom. Using the skills her life had taught her and her beauty as a weapon, Honoria became a skilled prostitute, working the streets of the East End, stealing what she could, and ruthlessly accounting for every penny earned. Eventually, she was able to gain valuable opportunities to extort a few wealthier clients whom she exploited with cold conscience. She began to amass a wealth of information that she would use to help her climb to power. Eventually, as she grew older and fewer and fewer men warmed her bed each evening, she used some of the material she had collected over the years to secure herself a position at the hidden brothel within St. John's, ostensibly as one of the working girls, but more realistically as a trainer for the newer, less-experienced girls and boys. During this time, she met a young lad by the name of "Big George" Newell. He was very dim but both exceedingly strong and incredibly loyal to one of the few people to ever show him kindness.

One stormy evening, some twenty-five years ago, Honoria felt it was time to make her move. Convincing George that the current owner, a bloated leech of a man named Thomas Eastwicke, had hurt her, she watched from the darkness as George strangled the life from poor Thomas. Using the various materials she had collected over the years, she called forth documentation clearly showing Mrs. Honoria Quist as the rightful heir to St. John's, and Mrs. Quist assumed control over the establishment, which she has ruled with an iron fist for the last two and half decades.

Maintaining control over such an establishment has proved difficult at times, but Mrs. Quist is extraordinarily clever. She realizes that her clientele come to St. John's not for merely the absinthe or carnal pleasures it affords but for the reputation for absolute discretion it has earned over its many years. Very few reasons cause Mrs. Quist to consider taking action against a client. Refusal or inability to pay is one. Threatening the secrecy of St. John's is another. Once a guest crosses the line, though, Mrs. Quist is as merciless as any animate hungering for flesh. The reputation for absolute discretion is worth more than the vast fortune Mrs. Quist has amassed over the years. If that reputation came into question, St. John's would be ruined. As such, Mrs. Quist has developed an ingenious method of ensuring the peace; she allows the clients of St. John's to police themselves. Many of Mrs. Quist's most valued clients have strode through the halls of industry and Parliament for many years, and each and every one of them knows that if the secrets and client lists of the establishment were to become public, they could not avoid being dragged into the scandal, so when Mrs. Quist hears of a situation that may cause her or St. John's difficulty, she simply lets slip to the right ear that a certain individual may be causing trouble. In this way, no disgruntled client or loudmouth drunkard has ever let slip the secret of St. John's.

Honoraria Quist

Calling: Criminal

Vitality: 2

Coordination: 3

Wit: 3

Intellect: 3

Will: 5

Charm: 4

Prowess: 6

Actions: 2

Skills:

Appraise 3, Etiquette 4, Gambling 4, Language (Rhyming Slang) 5, Law 2, Pistol 3, Seduction 5, Streetwise 5

Feature:

Flash Thief

Stunts:

Alibi, Cant, Confidence Man, Negotiator, Procurer

Combat Stunts:

Pistol, Fast Draw, Lucky Shot, Preferred Weapon (Revolver)

Corruption Path:

Drive 3 (Killer Instinct)

Qualities:

Criminal Associations

Reputation – Street

Business (7 Point) St. John's

Business (5 Point) Counting House

Connections (6 Point)

Wealth (8 Point)

Blackmail Material (5 Point)

Trusted Servant (Big George)

Impediments:

Fastidious

Phobic Disorder: Rats (2 Point)

"Big George" Newell

Calling: Criminal

Vitality: 6

Coordination: 3

Wit: 3

Intellect: 1

Will: 2

Charm: 1

Prowess: 6

Actions: 2

Skills:

Melee Weapon 4, Shadow 2, Streetwise 2, Unarmed Combat 5

Feature:

Flash Thief

Stunts:

Nobbler, Mobsman

Combat Stunts:

Melee Weapon

Bell Ringer

Disarm

Preferred Weapon (Club)

Snap Reaction

Unarmed Combat

Breakout

Brutality

Hardened Strike

Improved Knockout

Iron Grip

Corruption Path:

Physical 2 (Aura of Deformity)

Qualities:

Criminal Associations

Reputation – Street

Gigantism

Strong Man

Impediments:

Dim

Illiterate

Discretion will always be the hallmark of St. John's, and St. John's can offer the service of absolute, uninterrupted privacy. When wanted or needed, a number of private rooms not easily accessible to the public are available from the establishment at a price. In fact, the whispered reputation of St. John's as a den of iniquity has been used to good effect on at least one occasion. Assuming that a member of the Prime Minister's staff was simply off whoring at St. John's, Prussian spies were unaware that he was secretly meeting with an American arms manufacturer and securing a large shipment of weapons and ammunition for Her Majesty's government.

These rooms, though few in number, can serve a variety of purposes, from simple meeting rooms to the more exotic, with the need for restraints, hoses, and drains. The more cleanup required after the fact, such as the disposal of bodies or animates, the higher the cost, but rarely is a request refused. Never one to miss an opportunity, Mrs. Quist makes certain that any victims of a particularly violent client are handed off to the local meat market. "Waste not, want not," Mrs. Quist often says.

The company of a young lady or gentleman (St. John's does not discriminate) is the largest portion of the establishment's enterprises, and at the same time, the most discreet. The façade of Neo-Victorian propriety remains a bastion that depravity has not yet toppled. However, when it comes to the pleasures of the flesh, St. John's can cater to almost any desire, from simple dalliances to more complicated encoun-



ters involving a detailed knowledge of biology, geometry, and physics, so long as the price is met. More twisted encounters involving the deceased or even animates can be arranged but with substantially higher cost. While many of the ladies and gentlemen do mingle with the clients, their faces (dolled up with makeup) and style of dress (or undress, as the case may be) mark them for what they truly are. Public displays of carnality are simply not tolerated at St. John's. While the occasional slap and tickle is allowed, anything more is done behind closed doors and only after the money has changed hands. Owing to the simple facts of life of London in the year 2105 A.D., St. John's is never without new items to place on their menu. The lower classes, so desperate for a chance at a better existence, are a vast sea of fish through which sharks like Mrs. Quist glide, seeking out their next meal.

For those clients who are interested in more pharmaceutical methods of pleasure, the menu is quite varied. Mrs. Quist keeps a local apothecary shop flush with coin as she tends to the needs of her clients, be they swallowed, injected, or smoked. From the more basic forms of opiates, such as heroin, and laudanum, to the more extreme examples of alchemical pharmacology, such as truth seeker and hyoscine, St. John's is able to provide for the diverse needs of its clients. Even those more dangerous and highly illegal drugs such as nectar are available. On the rare occasion that a client dies from an overdose or succumbs to the more unpleasant side effects of a drug such as Styx, the meat markets of London are always in need of new material.

St. John's is not a kind place to its employees, except those who serve a continuing purpose, such as the publicans at the bar or the bookmaker in the arena. As soon as a lady or gentleman in the employ of St. John's is no longer needed, they are tossed into the street without so much as a by-your-leave. Stories of what happens to those who try to go to the authorities or even more foolishly attempt to blackmail Mrs. Quist are usually enough to force these castoffs to simply vanish into the fog. Mrs. Quist does not react kindly to anyone attempting to leave her employ before she is ready to dismiss them. She recognizes the value of keeping her staff frightened enough to remain permanently cowed. Every so often, she will remind them by drugging one of the girls with repose and letting her Big George have some fun. Those who actually do attempt to flee are generally found quickly and given over to the meat market or discovered face down in the Thames the following morning, and Mrs. Quist will make certain the staff hears of it.

The Central Atrium

One of the many concealed features of St. John's is its central atrium. The supposedly abandoned row of flats next to the pub is only a facade; the interiors of these buildings have been gutted and remodelled into a single, large open space rising four stories. Each floor is ringed by wooden balconies and clients pay for the privilege of ascending to the Crown, as the highest level is known. The ceiling of the atrium is a stained-glass copy of the ceiling of St. John's Cathedral in Malta, depicting the life of St. John. Installed by one of the former owners countless years ago, either through a sense of religious obligation or downright mockery, it is backlit from above by lighting attached to the



underside of the roof. The window is not actually exposed to the sky, lest the lights from inside be a beacon for some gallant constable to investigate. While the rooms and services up at the Crown are the best in the house, some clients choose to remain on the lower levels of the atrium because it gives them a far better view of another of St. John's attractions, the boxing arena.

Boxing and Rattting

Set at the base of the atrium, the large sand-floored fighting pit, ringed by three tiers of white stands, holds a varied array of matches throughout the evenings, from various boxing weight classes to the ever popular rattting exhibitions. Due to the interest in the fights, both human and canine, and the vast sums of money that change hands, St. John's ensures its cut by employing the services of one William "Bookie" Stewart, the house's bookmaker. Stewart's expertise (and the profit he generates) gives him a position within St. John's second only to Mrs. Quist herself.

William "Bookie" Stewart

Calling: Criminal

Vitality: 3

Coordination: 3

Wit: 4

Intellect: 3

Will: 3

Charm: 5

Prowess: 7

Actions: 2

Skills:

Appraise 4, Etiquette 1, Gambling 5, Language (Rhyming Slang) 3, Pistol 3, Streetwise 4

Feature:

Flash Thief

Stunts:

Confidence Man, Gut Feeling, Negotiator, Procurer

Combat Stunts:

Pistol

Fast Draw

Pistol Whip

Snap Reaction

Corruption Path: Physical 4 (Ravenous)

Qualities:

Criminal Associations

Reputation – Street

Connections (4 Point)

Wealth (5 Point)

Blackmail Material (3 Point)

Impediments:

Zoophagous Maniac (2 Point)

Leading such dreary day-to-day lives, most clients who come to see the boxing or ratting matches wish to vent their frustrations by witnessing violent bloodsport, and St. John's does not disappoint. Two or sometimes three bare-knuckle boxing matches will occur in a night, as London is full of young thugs wanting to prove their worth and take home the prize money, which can often be many months of a labourer's salary. Death is an uncommon, but not unheard of, visitor to these matches although it is never the point. Gruesome deaths are common enough in the streets of London to have little allure in sport. However, the more genteel Queensberry rules are not observed in favour of the classic London Prize Ring rules.

Randall "Masher" Fogg is the reigning champion of the arena but is very new to his title, owing his victories completely to Mrs. Quist. She has been dosing Fogg with maiden's heart since the beginning (see *Unhallowed Metropolis*, pages 257 – 258), making him virtually immune to pain and thereby allowing him to ascend to the championship.

Randall "Masher" Fogg

Calling: Criminal

Vitality: 5

Coordination: 4

Wit: 3

Intellect: 2

Will: 3

Charm: 2

Prowess: 7

Actions: 2

Skills:

Escapology 2, Shadow 2, Language (Thieves' Cant) 2, Melee Weapon 3, Streetwise 2, Trade (Fishmonger) 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Feature:

Flash Thief

Stunts:

Nobbler, Hay Maker

Combat Stunts:

Mellee Weapon, Deadly Skill, Disarm, Free Parry, Unarmed Combat, Brutality, Improved Knockout, Hardened Strike

Corruption Path:

Desire 1 (Defiler)

Qualities:

Criminal Associations

Reputation – Street

Wealth (4 Point)

Impediments:

Criminal Record, Illiterate

Between these matches, the crowd is entertained by watching the ratting exhibitions. London's population of rats seems without limit, and St. John's taps that endless resource with great abandon. Mrs. Quist has employed the services of St. Alban's Orphanage located near St. John's, paying the owners a fat purse for as many rats as their charges can capture. While the children never see a farthing, it does provide them exercise and extra meat in their meals on rat-catching days. Due to Mrs. Quist's abiding hatred for rats, she is very keen on promoting these ratting exhibitions. On some nights, they are more popular than the boxing matches, owing perhaps to Mrs. Quist's lowering the price of slap gin on "Rat Nights." King George III, a 7-year-old rat terrier with over a thousand kills under his collar, currently reigns as champion and serves as mascot. It is rumoured that Mrs. Quist treats King George III to actual beef for his meals, but this is generally discounted because this would cost Mrs. Quist money. While King George's diet is supplemented, it isn't beef that Mrs. Quist feeds him.

The establishment has rigged up an ingenious method of concealing the noise generated by the crowd during boxing matches or ratting exhibitions. Whenever a match gets underway, small lights turn on next to the piano in the tavern and under the bar. When these lights come on, the publicans, serving girls, and the piano player begin singing and playing a loud (and often bawdy) tune, actively encouraging the customers to join in.

Gambling Rooms

Other than the public tavern itself, the gambling rooms are the most heavily used rooms at St. John's. The three rooms run the length and breadth of one of the floors of the gutted row houses in which part of St. John's is secretly housed. The rooms divide the floor into thirds, separated by two large pass-through coal fireplaces, keeping the clients warm in the colder months. The fireplaces are flanked on either side by open doors, allowing clients to freely travel between all three rooms. The front room, also known mockingly amongst the clients as "the winners' room" for its lower-risk games, is devoted to calmer games of chance, such as faro, cribbage and vingt-et-un. The centre room is the largest of the three, devoting itself to dice games, such as craps, as well as other mechanical games such as roly-poly and roulette. The back room hosts the clients willing to involve themselves in riskier games of chance, such as baccarat, basset, or the American import, poker, in its many varied forms.

Security is always on Mrs. Quist's mind. While being as discreet as possible, she keeps no less than three guards, armed with cudgel, knife, and gun, in each room. The gambling tables are each equipped with a push-button alarm for dealers to use in case of trouble. In order to discourage cheating, Mrs. Quist generally hires broadsmen as dealers, thereby turning the tables on would-be cheaters. She offers a hefty reward to those who catch cheaters, but she is ruthless with those who accuse a player falsely.

With such vast sums of money changing hands, St. John's is sure to get its cut, and Mrs. Quist takes extreme care with the laundering of her funds. Among Mrs. Quist's acquisitions over the years was the purchase of at least one counting house, over which she keeps a very close eye. The money she collects from her clients is immediately turned around and lent to the poor of Neo-Victorian London at usurious rates.

Part Three – Tricks of the Trade

Criminals who ply their dubious trades in gambling halls, illegal boxing arenas, and ratting dens learn specialized skills. Some of the most vicious thugs and enforcers can be found employed by these establishments, and such houses are rare meeting places for individuals from every stratum of Neo-Victorian society. Even the most sheltered aristocrat can learn a trick or two when slumming among his lessers.

New Flash Thief Stunts

Fence

The character is an established fence and launderer of money. Through a network of criminal connections, the character is able to move stolen goods or ill-gotten funds without attracting the attention of the authorities. The character's connections and colleagues may also make him aware of opportunities pertinent to his business such as the heist of valuable items by criminals who now seek a fence. Particularly high-profile items, foreign currencies, or exceptionally large sums of money may require special efforts as determined by the Narrator.

Haymaker

The character is adept at delivering blows to the cranium intended to knock his victim unconscious. If the character succeeds in making an Unarmed Combat attack with the chance to cause a knockout (see *Unhallowed Metropolis*, page 167), the victim must make a Vitality roll with a DR equal to 11 + twice the Vitality of the attacker to avoid being knocked unconscious (see *Unhallowed Metropolis*, page 177).

Lucky Cove

The character has become exceedingly skilled at cheating at games of chance involving dice and cards. Unless his mark or those watching the game have reason to be especially suspicious of the character, there is no chance that his deceit will be detected. Should the Criminal arouse such suspicions, observers must succeed in a Wit – Perception roll or Wit – Gambling roll, whichever is lower, against (DR 16) to detect his actions. These benefits may be lessened if outside forces interfere with the Criminal's ability to rig the odds.

No Warning

The character has learned to give nothing away in his face or posture to indicate that he is about to commit violence. He may reroll



a failed Surprise Attack. In the instance that a character uses this Stunt against a character with the Stunt Gut Feeling, the Surprise Attack is resolved as if neither character had those Stunts.

New Social Quality

Blackmail Material, Variable Point Quality (1-5)

Similar in nature to the Quality Creditor, the character holds some incriminating evidence over another individual and is blackmailing him for various purposes. The character may force the individual being blackmailed to provide information, services, or money depending upon the gravity of the blackmail material. The pressure applied by the character will have a direct correlation to how the individual being blackmailed responds. Needless to say, this individual is unhappy to be under the character's thumb and will seek a way to get out of this arrangement, such as finding similarly damning evidence to hold against the character, putting the character into his own debt, or hiring assassins to remove the blackmailer from this world, if too many demands are made upon him. The lethality of this response will, of course, match the value of the Quality.

This is a Variable Point Quality. The more Quality points that are spent, the greater the value of the blackmail material held.

1 Point – The character holds some incriminating evidence over an individual of little consequence, such as a shopkeeper or tavern owner. The character may expect services, information, or coin valuing 4s every two weeks.

2 Point – The character holds incriminating evidence over an individual of some consequence in the lower classes (a sergeant in the Deathwatch, perhaps) or someone in the middle class (a respected artisan, for example). The character may expect services, information, or coin valuing 8s every two weeks.

3 Point – The character holds incriminating evidence over a prominent individual in the middle class (a local councilman) or someone of lesser importance in the upper class. The character may expect services, information, or coin valuing 1£ every two weeks.

4 Point – The character possesses incriminating evidence over someone of such station that its release would undoubtedly ruin him socially or financially. The character may expect services, information, or coin valuing 2£ every two weeks.

5 Point – The character possesses incriminating evidence over someone of such high station or public office that its release would undoubtedly destroy him utterly both socially and financially. The character may expect services, information, or coin valuing 4£ every two weeks.

Gambler, 2 Point Quality

The character has a natural predilection towards gambling. Whether it be some latent form of precognition or just uncanny luck, the character is quite skilled at games of chance. The character gains a +1 bonus to Gambling rolls.