



CASEFILE:

THE
MURDER
OF
JAMES
REAGAN



Mr Chairman, I am afraid that I can offer little more information to this inquiry. The ZODIAC organization exists, clearly, but they are so covert, so shrouded in secrecy we have discovered little of their agenda or even their modus operandi. This much is certain - they have compromised national security, have destroyed key strategic plans in the South American theatre of operations among others and, Mr Chairman, I don't think it is an exaggeration to suggest that ZODIAC are as big, if not bigger a threat to the United States and the free world as the communist menace.

- Agent James Casey Jones, to the Select House Committee on International Cabals and Terror

I have seen some nasty shit over the years, hell I have been the cause of a lot of it. One thing is for sure, when the cards are down there is no one you want in your corner more than those ZODIAC guys. Whether it's a genital eating demon or an alien home appliance with a fierce imagination, ZODIAC always comes through. They've tapped into a special brand of mojo, they've pulled the world off the brink of disaster more times than I can count, and no one even knows they exist.

- Willard D. Merton, the "Bananas in Pyjamas" Killer, two days before execution

Now my pretties, you must destroy ZODIAC. You must destroy them utterly with your groovy stings of stingy doom. Bwahhaahahahahahah. >hack< >hack< owww!

- Mycroft Penningworth, "The Bee Master", agent of ASTROLABUS



CASEFILE: ZODIAC

Dedicated to George Clinton and Peter Wyngarde

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Thanks to Stephen Figg for the loan of Big Bob
You can have him back now.

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0: Behind the Velour Wallpaper

Behind the velour wallpaper, under the bean bag, crouching in the grimy recesses of the shag pile carpet there is strangeness. A deep, messed up kind of strangeness that goes beyond the mind altering effects of macramé or the strange popularity of the Bay City Rollers. You may live your grim 9 to 5 life, worry about the energy crisis, worry about the bomb, worry about freaks and punks next door – but what you really should be worried about are the things you don't even know exist.

I am talking about aliens without fashion, big crime, 180 degree angels, funk sucking ghosts, discotheque gods, Agents of D.I.R.T., demonic swinger parasites. All these and more. The worst thing is they are organized, they call themselves ASTROLABUS and their plans for the future do not involve you. If they had their way, you won't be here to see the eighties in. That nice new suburb of yours? Just a death camp with lawn ornaments.

But, what do you know, we are organized too. Since the late fifties we have come to know about them (all the different them). At first we were castigated, called nuts, the men in white coats came like seagulls on a sandwich. But slowly and surely we made connections, found out there were others who had seen what we had seen. Most of us came from the espionage scene, it was our business to go poking around where no one was meant to be. But we made other allies too, occultists, mad, er ... fringe scientists, ecologists, hustlers and funk cosmonauts.

We knew the world was in trouble. We knew no one else was going to do anything. Steve McQueen is dead. We formed ZODIAC.

They call us crazies, defectors, security risks but we are well ahead of them. Forget the cold war, we are fighting for the whole planet in the black light war (you need the right equipment to even see it). We have tapped into the ley lines of mother earth and used that power for the cause. We have found others like us and trained them well.

We are prepared.

In the sixties we won some and we lost some. Now the seventies are here, the stakes just got higher...



Welcome to **Casefile: ZODIAC**, a roleplaying game of weird espionage set in the lurid and dynamic world of a 1970s that never was but might have been – the world of concept album gatefold art.

The Casefile: ZODIAC system in a nutshell

The Casefile: Zodiac system is fast paced, and simple, designed to augment wild espionage storytelling rather than provide any kind of realistic simulation of ballistics and vehicle engineering.

This game uses six sided dice and requires you to roll for a total which is compared against a target number based on the character's specialties - the higher the better, without going over. Unlike most other games, players get to choose how many dice they roll and can select the level of risk. More dice means a bigger payoff but also increases the risk of rolling over the target, of "going bust" and ending up with a result of zero.

In Casefile: ZODIAC, agents tend to be good at a lot of things, but are really defined by their area of expertise – they are specialists and their game characteristics are a list of specialties. Any given target number is constructed of two elements - the internal component dictated by an Agent's 'expertise value' and an external component determined by surrounding circumstances (situational advantages, supernatural factors, drama bonuses, etc).

Expertise values have a value from zero to twelve and external factors can be ranked on the same scale (which gives a maximum possible target number of twenty four, if you're counting). Your expertise value is comprised of four components (each contributing zero to three points to the specialty total) including spy rank, element (broad specialization areas), zodiac division (training) and personal talent. Each component is a more narrow specialisation based on the previous one and is added to the previous component (spy rank can be 0-3, elements are 0-6, zodiac division is 0-9 and talent is 0-12). Have a look at the sample character on the next page, start in the middle and work your way out.

Expertise totals are fairly fluid in play. If you fail a roll, or lose a contest of specialty with another, you temporarily lose points in that specialty - recorded by pencil tallies on your character sheet. As you succeed and regain confidence, you can rub these tallies out. The philosophy behind this system is that an agent's success is dictated by confidence, verve, skills and attitude

- expertise scores give you both your target number and act a little like "hit points", telling you how much more conflict you can take.

There are some specific rules for things like magick and weird powers, but we have attempted to keep this simplicity throughout. The same conflict resolution system is used in a gunfight as the one used in seduction or even a battle of outrageous fashion statements.

Character Example: Big Bob McMurcheon "The Discobobulator"

Meet Big Bob, larger than life and twice as sweaty. Player Raoul is a new to *Casefile: ZODIAC*, but he already has an idea about the sleazy kind of character that he wants to play.

In this **Character Example** section and others throughout this part we will return to Big Bob in order to illustrate the process by which one crafts a character.

Beginning with a concept, Raoul decides that he wants to play an unglamorous character or, rather, an unglamorous seedy character with the patina of fake cheesy glamour. He has obviously watching too many Roger Moore movies. Inspired by *Breakfast of Champions* and the ambiance of Las Vegas, he decides on a vulgar American archetype, the used car salesman. Money and glitz mixed with ugliness and squalor. Thus Big Bob McMurcheon comes to life. Drawing on a punnish mishearing Raoul decides that Bob's codename will be "The Discobobulator".

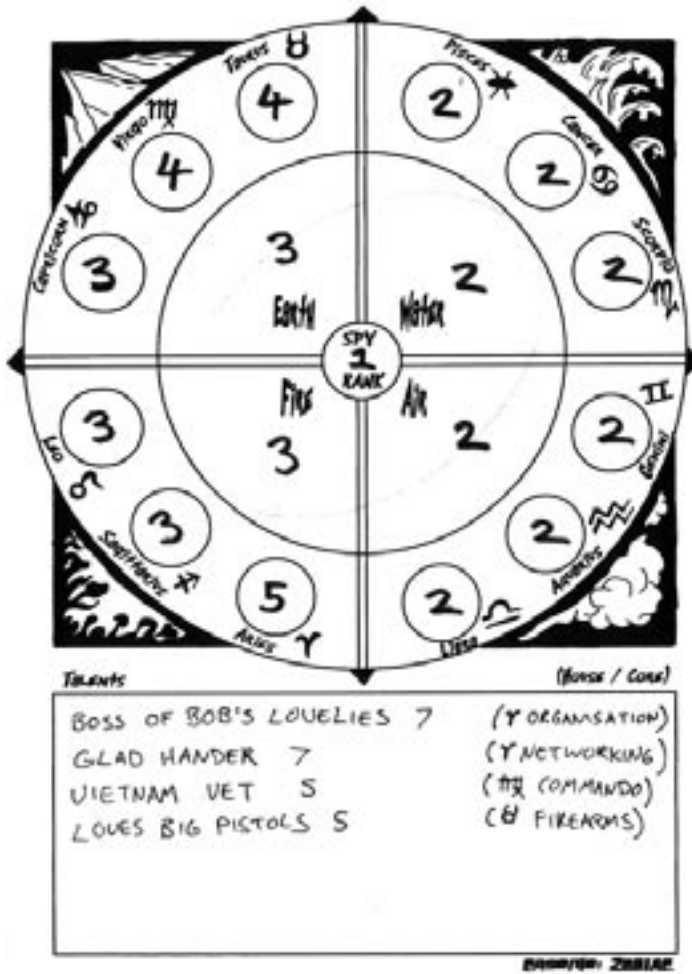
Now what is Bob's specialty, how does he distinguish himself as an agent of ZODIAC? Raoul decides that Bob is a Vietnam War veteran, spent some time in Army Intelligence, has a lot of money but really doesn't want to make him into a 'dilettante assassin' character.

Drawing on Charlie's Angels and the *Reef Tan Oil* magnate for inspiration, Raoul decides that Bob has a bevy of lovelies working for him as hairdressers and topless car washers. They also work as agents of Zodiac and do the hard work while the Discobobulator pulls the strings. Glancing at the rules, Raoul sees that during play he can 'spend' organisation expertise points in order to call in hench(wo)men for tasks. This looks like an good expertise to focus on.

Give him a fake tan, a toupee and a gold chain and Bob is on his way to being a fun, if slimy, character to play. Much more so than a steely eyed, lantern jawed agent of justice...

Big Bob McMurcheon: The DISCOPOPULATOR

Man of the World and Splymaster of Bob's Lovelies



Vehicle: Disco Convertible (Earth 2 Fire 2)

Vietnam left Big Bob with two things - the knowledge that there is a lot of crazy shit out there and a fortune in gold plundered from an ancient temple. Smuggling his wealth home in cooperation with a group of conspirators, Bob went back to his home town and spent it buying up real estate and local businesses with his fortune. The first thing he bought was the car showroom, which he had yearned after since he was a child. Then came the carwash (which he then converted to a classy topless establishment), several hair salons and the bowling alley which he modernised and added a discotheque. He also married his sweetheart who (luckily for Bob) is a sound businesswoman and uninterested in Bob's motives for staffing his businesses with beautiful girls.

A run-in with agents of Astrolabus has proven to Bob that he cannot outrun his past forever and he has been called upon to redeem himself for past sins by working for the ZODIAC group - otherwise his home town will find out where his wealth actually came from.





The Lovelies

These are the Discobobulator's henchwomen, called into action through use of his organisation expertise. Given Bob's character concept, they are going to come into play often enough that it is worth figuring out their abilities at the outset. Stats for the Lovelies are drawn from Hench template (see p24), Raoul swapping Fire for Earth as the prime element with the Ref's permission.

Spy Rank 0

Earth	0	Martial Arts and Firearms	1
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Fire	1	Seduction	2
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Air	0		
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Water	0		
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The next part will explore the process of character creation and will demonstrate just how Bob's stats were derived.

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The Agent: Dressed to Kill



PART A: The Rules of Engagement
SECTION I: Creating an Agent

“So Yuri, our little game draws to a close. The only problem is, all along I have been playing chess and you, my dear fellow, have been playing Whack a Mole” – *Greyham Nemo*

Casefile: ZODIAC uses a fairly minimal system to facilitate fast play. This section examines the way in which we describe ZODIAC agents and their foes, how we create a character within the framework of game rules structures.

At the core of each character is the set of expertises which define pretty much everything an agent can do (look at the ‘Decan Talents’ column of the character sheet on page 7). These values are derived from several elements and the sum total of an agent’s capacity to perform in a particular endeavour, expressed numerically we call expertise (or an expertise value). Expertise is comprised of four different elements, each ranked from zero to three, which are added together. Overall expertise values therefore range from zero (clueless) to twelve (mystic funk mastery).

The four components of an expertise value are the agent’s spy rank (their experience and status within their organization), their elemental specialties (taken from four broad areas of focus), their training in a Zodiac Divisions (specialised training) and their talent (innate ability, particularized experiences and concentrated individual training).

These components (except spy rank) are also expressed as astrological concepts, in keeping with the mystic world of *Casefile: ZODIAC*.

Specific components are ‘nested’ within more general ones. So within Spy Rank there are four specialties, within each specialty lie three divisions of ZODIAC which administer training in that focus and within each training division three core talents are developed. Have a look at the character sheet, it might help explain this idea. Therefore, the components on the left hand side of the diagram below are more general, those on the right more specific.

When expertises are described, it is usually with reference to the most specific component, the talent – so an gadget expertise or an infiltration expertise but not with Pisces expertise. It is important to distinguish for instance a *corruption talent* (ranked from zero to three) from the *corruption expertise value* (which is the sum of four components). For colour, you may want to add a special descriptive label to each expertise where you have assigned talent points.

If an agent is called up to test an expertise where they posses no talent, we can imply a ‘phantom talent’ of zero and simply add the other three elements. We will look at this concept again in section II.

Now let’s turn to each component in detail:

The Four Components of an Expertise Value

Spy Rank +	Specialty/ Element +	Training/ Sign +	Talent/ Decan
The agent’s echelon of experience which defines the power level of the story	Four broad focus areas, Earth/Action, Fire/Charm, Air/Science, Water/Magic	Twelve different areas of training. From combat training to engineering.	Focussed areas of proficiency – is your agent good at stealth, or lab work or disguises?
1-3	2-6	2-9	2-12

1. Spy Rank:

The most general component of the expertise value, spy rank reflects experience, seniority and power. Most ordinary intelligence agents (in the CIA, KGB and so on) are ranked at zero. Because of their special high intensity training, all ZODIAC agents begin at rank one. Rank two agents are the very best field agents and many are used as controllers for groups of agents. The ZODIAC Elite, rank three, are superhumanly adroit. There are only twelve of these agents in the entire ZODIAC organization.

- 0 Henchman/Agent
- 1 ZODIAC Agent
- 2 Super Spy
- 3 ZODIAC Elite

The ZODIAC organisation has approximately 5000 ordinary agents, 144 ZODIAC Agents, 60 Super Spies and 12 ZODIAC Elite. These are spread fairly thin through twenty or thirty secret bases around the world.

Some examples/comparisons:

- Rank 0: Agents in thrillers, LeCarre novels, 'real' spies, henchmen, the Watergate burglars
- Rank 1: Agents who operate in teams comprised of specialists. Mission Impossible IMF (as opposed to the 'real world' sinister IMF!), Department S, Science Ninja Team Gatchaman
- Rank 2: Agents who work alone or perhaps in pairs. These agents have a broad range of abilities and seldom need to consult specialists. James Bond, The Avengers, Joanna Dark, Derrick Flint
- Rank 3: Superhuman agents who can do almost anything well, but nevertheless have specialized talents bordering on the impossible. Mix every super spy with sorcery, psychic powers, weird science and you get the Zodiac Elite.

We will begin by creating a level one agent, a beginning ZODIAC Agent. If you want to create higher ranking agents, look at the rules on p 24.

Character Example:

Big Bob McMurcheon "The Discobobulator"

Big Bob has just joined ZODIAC and completed the rigorous initial training. He and his gals are champing at the bit to be released into the world of espionage.

Bob is Spy Rank 1: ZODIAC Agent

He has no idea what he is in for, but he hopes that beautiful ladies of all nationalities will be there when he arrives.



2. Specialties/ Elements

Because they are touched in some way (by fate, by nature, by cosmic beings, radiation) ZODIAC agents can channel the powers of the cosmos through their being and in their actions. There are countless ways that connection to the elements can develop, but some of the more common are living on ley line junctions, being born under auspicious astrological influences, having inhuman blood in your family and being the subject of strange experiments.

Other people may have a small elemental capacity developed by chance contact with the cosmos or through their experiences, a soldier might get a slight earth affinity grounded in battle, a scholar might absorb a deftness with air from the books in her library.

Earth gives power over action, physical activities grounded in the solid matter of the world. Military actions, martial arts, athletic exertions, are all affected by earth.

Fire is channelled into persuasion and influence. Fiery agents are seducers, manipulators, and masters of deceit. ZODIAC's network of contacts, alliances and betrayals is aided by the element of fire.

Air is the substance of mind and aids scientists and scholars, both prosaic and fringe. Without the influence of air ZODIAC would not have its secret bases, cunning gadgets, sophisticated vehicles, weapons and robots. Air is what separates a scientist who devises new formulas for fuller-hair shampoo from the one who develops psychic augmenting conditioner.

Water is a mystical element, the fuel of magick and psychic powers as well as the good luck that ZODIAC agents seem to have excessive supplies of. Water gives intuition and compassion to some, and a mad thirst for occult power to others. Mercurial and arbitrary, it is nevertheless one of the four pillars of power for a successful agent.

Elemental Meaning

0 – No affinity whatsoever, someone who has no natural skills in that field. Rigorous and diverse ZODIAC training usually gives agents at least level 1 affinity in all elements.

1 – Some affinity has been developed, a person may have gone into a career which uses the element

2 – Focussed elemental connection. You may have some inkling that your skills have mystic foundation or you may just think you are naturally gifted

3 – Elemental mastery, you are connected to the element and its activities in an innate way. You can feel the patterns of energy and force by which that element operates in the world.

Character Example: Big Bob McMurcheon "The Discobobulator"

Raoul gets 6 points to divide among Bob's elements and must put at least one point in each. Bob is almost all mouth (and money), but Raoul would like him to have a bit of muscle to back it up. He really can't see Bob having any intellectual leaning nor can he see a devotion to Magick really being part of the character concept. Therefore Raoul decides to split the element points mainly between fire and earth:

Earth 2 Fire 2 Air 1 Water 1



3. Training Divisions / Zodiac Houses

Now that the ZODIAC organization is mature, the training of new agents is conducted under more disciplined circumstances than the original elite had. ZODIAC is organised into twelve training divisions, each of which holds an element dominant and confers training in a specialist set of skills and equipment.

Earth Divisions	Taurus	This division focuses exclusively on combat training including all forms of armed and unarmed combat. Agents are skilled in firearms and all kinds of esoteric weapons and fighting styles.
	Virgo	Military, espionage and intelligence operations covering aspects of terror and control, assassination and explosives. House Virgo most resembles 'real world' espionage activities.
	Capricorn	The skills of survival in the most inhospitable environments, foraging for food, enduring hardship and hunting prey. Many of these skills can be readily transferred to an urban environment.
Fire Divisions	Aries	The movers and shakers of the organisation who use networks of information and favours to keep on top. Aries Division trains operatives to use local authorities through corruption and bureaucratic management.
	Leo	The disguise and infiltration specialists. You have probably seen them already, but you would never know.
	Sagittarius	Operatives trained in diplomacy and intrigue, able to carry themselves with aplomb and etiquette in many cultures. Sometimes seen by other houses as privileged dilettantes, they nevertheless have to do some of the nastiest work.
Air Divisions	Aquarius	Ecological specialists from every science. Aquarius Division is known for its experimental geodesic domes and undersea laboratories. It is the science of Aquarius that protects mystic sites and protects the Earth from sabotage and attack.
	Libra	Boffins, the gadget masters and fastidious keepers of knowledge, both in their enormous computer facilities and within the expertise of the specialist and professional members.
	Gemini	The division of weird fringe science. Vehicle and robot specialists, also the engineers of spectacular secret bases.
Water Divisions	Pisces	The mystics of Pisces are masters of mentalism and esoteric talents. ESP, hypnotism, mind control, remote sensing – all are developed in secret by this house.
	Cancer	The occultists of Zodiac and keepers of secret books of arcana and demonology.
	Scorpio	Once a hard core astrophysics division, Scorpio has stumbled across some of the dimensional secrets of the universe and the links between monumental architecture and cosmic travel and awareness.

Training Levels

- 0 – No training at all
- 1 – Some training, perhaps a six month secondment to another division
- 2 – Focussed training of at least a year, facing major tasks and trials
- 3 – Significant training and experience, you could train others in the secrets of this division.

Character Example: Big Bob McMurcheon "The Discobobulator"

Here Raoul thinks ahead a bit. In order to make the most of his beautiful assistants, Bob is really going to need to focus on the Organisation expertise which gives him his lovelies as well as other resources. This falls under Aries division, so Raoul decides that this should be the primary division in which Bob has received his intensive ZODIAC training. This fits the character concept nicely – Bob is hardly a suave operator who would fit in with the Sagittarius clique. For secondary training Raoul decides on Taurus (to sharpen that Nam training) and Virgo (ditto on the Army Intelligence).

4. Talents / Decans

All beginning agents have four to seven *Talents*, out of 36 areas of expertise. These are organised under the twelve ZODIAC training divisions as each division/house is relevant to different talents.

This is the most specific element of expertise and the expertise component which allows agents to specialise and develop their own areas of proficiency. When an agent seeks to perform a tasks in their expertise, they begin by checking their talents to see which one applies.

If they have not spent points in a relevant talent, a conflict can still proceed based on the other three elements that make up that expertise. This requires the player to make up a 'phantom talent' of zero, in order to score tallies against. This is important as it is quite possible to cripple an agent by attacking them in an area where they have no training at all. A target is lacking in Seduction Talents? Time to bring out the Velvet Enforcer.

For quick character creation, just choose talents from the lists over the next few pages. Players may also customise by adding labels (their own descriptions of these talents) at the time of character generation or during the first few sessions of play. These descriptions should tell us something about the character.

When describing super agent and elite agent labels you may only want to define their best talents (talent level 2 or 3 respectively) and leave the rest with the generic titles, see the example characters at the end of this book.

Labels are customised descriptions which might reflect an aspect of the person, a job or career, a quirk or basically any way of describing that agent's areas of expertise. These should not be constructed too strictly in play. It is perfectly OK for someone to be have *Friends in High Places* (Networking Talent) and use them to find out "the word on the street". Likewise a *Jaded Satanist* (Thaumaturgical Talent) may call on New Guinea ancestor spirits or rosy cheeked angels.

Decan Talent Levels

0 – No specific attention to this field, but your overall training may have given you some basics

1- You have trained in this area and have skills enough to work at a job in the field

2- You are focussed on this area, it would be considered an obsession for most people

3 – You have achieved perfection, a world class master



Earth Division Talents

Taurus

Those trained in Taurus division have talents of the most violent variety. These are roughly divided into three different types of weapon and feel free to invent outlandish martial arts. Remember that talents are construed broadly, if someone has the talent *Icepick Killer*, that talent should apply to a whole series of hand to hand weapons.

Martial Arts Talents	A wide variety of unarmed fighting styles and techniques. Haiiii! Thump. Ooof.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kungfu mama • Elegant fisticuffs • Bouncer • Seven Fist Technique of Xien Lau
Armed Combat Talents	Fighting with hand to hand weapons. Knives, broken bottles, truncheons, porcelain cats, lava lamps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knife fetishist • Reincarnation of El Cid • Handy with a truncheon • Madman with a hook
Firearm Talents	Using things that go bang.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too-cool hitman • Sneaky sniper • Gunspotter geek • Fast draw leather slapper

Virgo

Grim and nasty, the talents associated with this division are not the stuff of glamorous films but they are bread and butter to real espionage agents. These “black ops” skills are nothing to brag about, but someone’s got to do the dirty work. Virgo agents usually have some training in Taurus talents as well.

Terror Talents	Torture, hijacking, bombings, arranging assassinations and blackmarket deals. Most ZODIAC trainers use the CIA manuals, which are the most complete and comprehensive ones available. This also includes the use of explosives and weapons of mass destruction. Kind of like engineering in reverse order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Former CIA controller (presumed dead) • Gourmand poisoner or boutique plastique designer • Fanatical fashion critic • The mad bomber of Baltimore
Driving Talents	Virgo division have available to them a wide variety of vehicles and aircraft – the toys of the boys in the military. These talents cover familiarity with anything that moves and the handling of vehicles under combat situations. It overlaps a little with <i>Vehicle</i> talents which cover the engineering aspects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychotic bomber pilot • Getaway driver • Crafty old tank commander • Test pilot
Commando Talents	Commando skills of covert assault, assassination and small unit tactics. This includes breaking of security systems and overlaps somewhat with <i>Covert</i> which covers more civilised situations and the Taurus weapon skills which apply in fair fights, not sneaking up behind someone and cutting their jugular. The stuff of boys’ war comics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitchy veteran • Baader-Meinhoff groupie • Obsessed Nazi hunter • Grizzled soldier of fortune

Capricorn

The malodorous misanthropists of Capricorn train their agents in the ways of the wild. Capricorn talents are those beloved of boy scouts, hunters and weekend warriors. Just like camping but with the ever present threat of violence erupting – well, just like camping really.

Endurance Talents	Guts, stoicism, cool under fire. This applies to resisting pain from torture or injuries as well as working under fatigue from long hikes, staying awake for long periods, watching French films (especially the comedies).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mighty patience, like a rock• Loves being tortured (just like Number Six in <i>The Prisoner</i>)• Has transcended bodily matters• Craggy
Survival Talents	Some days you just need to know which bits of the caribou to eat and which ones to avoid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feral girl guide• The way of the tramp• Shaman in training• Serial castaway
Stalking Talents	The ability to follow prey, be it hunting a wild animal or following someone through a crowd. This covers the need to move with stealth in the wilderness or in the city streets. In the 1970s stalking was not yet a crime and it was sometimes considered quite romantic in some films of the time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Silent step of the hunter• Creepy Wally• Deer stalker• Sneaky paparazzi



Fire Division Talents

Aries

Most spies are infamously bad at keeping track of details, working to a budget. More than mere quartermasters, Aries Division's skills of organisation and resourcing, moving things around are vital in keeping ZODIAC's lifeblood flowing. You need a tank in downtown Shanghai, a rare turtle in a mosque in British Columbia or the cooperation of a certain famous movie star - Aries can make it happen. Therefore Aries talents are concerned with money, resourcing and using bureaucracies.

Networking Talents	Finding information from human sources rather than data banks or books. An anachronistic term for the 70s, but you know what it means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gossip queen • Well connected • Hears the word on the street • Web of agents in every Carwash in the country.
Corruption Talents	Use of local authorities, asking the police to turn a blind eye or arrest someone on trumped up charges. The talent includes the ability to do or obtain forgeries and create propaganda. The kind of thing that real spies do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep pockets • Scandal monger • Keeps extensive files • Political spindoctor
Organisation Talents	Skills of the bureaucrat and manager. This includes the ability to access or requisition resources (including money) of Zodiac or other organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old money • Good with paperwork • Career bureaucrat • So bossy he's going to get milked one day

Leo

At times one needs to fade into the background or steal the life of someone else. The masters of transformation and impersonation, Division Leo can get you into places that even the silver tongues of Sagittarius cannot reach. The talents of Leo are concerned with the undercover aspects of espionage and deception.

Disguise Talents	While <i>Infiltration</i> allows you to act as though you are someone else, disguise lets you look like someone else. It is amazing how latex masks can total change your appearance, almost like you were being played by an entirely different actor...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thousand faces • Greasepaint and latex junkie • Good with accents • Natural mimic
Infiltration Talents	Used to inveigle your way into a setting either by impersonating someone or just fitting into the background. This talent includes preparation of fake paperwork and identity documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The last one you suspect • Forgettable face • Just the plumbing inspector • Security analyst
Diplomacy Talents	The ability to conduct oneself properly and to use many languages. This also covers local customs and etiquette, the knowledge of a seasoned world traveller.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jaded diplomat • UN peacemaker • Vagabond author • Perfect lady, for a gentleman



Sagittarius

Most humans have one significant weakness. While their object of desire comes in different sizes, sexes, degrees of furriness and moral flexibility, it all boils down at some point to bumping uglies. Sagittarius agents have honed their talents to exploit this Achilles heel (but slightly higher up...).

Seduction Talents	If you don't know already, this is not the place to tell you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brazen gigolo• Sultry torch singer• Exudes ripe innocence• Gotta love those pig pheromones
Intrigue Talents	The ability to use people, persuade and flirt. Intrigue allows you to spread rumours, gather gossip and get your way in social situations. Actually getting it on is covered by the more hardcore talent <i>Seduction</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deal maker• Silver tongued devil• Kindly matchmaker• Scandal hound fashion designer
Covert Talents	The ability to move cautiously in a social setting, to sneak off to another room at an embassy party, to surreptitiously take photos with your camera ring, palm a set of plans, to pour a drug in someone's drink, to avoid security cameras and foil security systems around Queen Varna's Emerald. Think of it as a more civilised version of <i>Commando</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genteel thief• A shadow on the carpet• Nimble fingers• Seasoned shoplifter



Air Division Talents

Aquarius

Laboratory based science talents fall under Aquarius division's purview. Ecology is such an important part of this that it deserves a talent all to itself.

Ecological Talents	The science of the environment, very important when the harvesting of eidos energy depends on the environmental health of the site and the earth generally. Ecology is the more reputable cousin to the fringe science of <i>Geomancy</i> . In the 70s environmental consciousness was first building critical mass.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenie ratbag • Bitter bird fancier • Apocalyptic doom sayer • Tweedy professor
Laboratory Talents	Science, of the ordinary variety, all melded together into one convenient talent. 'Why of course I can fix the reactor, I am a qualified botanist after all.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheltered chemist • Smells of weird chemicals • Drug lab wizard • Redeemed vivisectionist
Fieldwork Talents	The talent of the detective and the field observer, to both spot vital clues and interpret what their meaning might be.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forensics ghoul • Grizzled detective • Brassy investigative reporter • The guy with the fine tooth comb

Libra

Libra Division trains an odd assortment of specialists. If you need to get your hands dirty with engine grease, look to Gemini division, Libra is more the place for those who like to have elbow patches on their tweed jackets and mutter about cryptic crosswords.

Gadget Talents	The domain of boffins. Gadgets perform some task that is ordinarily done by a larger piece of equipment, but are tiny and disguised as inconspicuous objects. Just how someone gets started in this field of study is a matter of some mystery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well equipped agent • Dithering boffin • Sinister toymaker • Voluminous pockets
Information Talents	The ability to access and process raw information, to use computer and other records, to break cryptography and to research information generally. "Well sir, I know it is a compound of crystalline formation usually found in wombat burrows, but apart from that..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trivia buff • Erudite blowhard • Computer egghead • Weird librarian
Specialist Talents	Everyone has something which they are supposed to be when they are not sneaking around as an agent. This talent covers general information and education as well as professional knowledges. Each specialist (ie someone who has points in this Decan/Talent) should chose one profession in which they have expertise but they also have a good knowledge base across the others. In the ZODIAC world, just as the sciences, create polymaths every GP can argue a case before the House of Lords and every Barrister can perform surgery – if they have to. That, kids, is why you should aspire to attend university instead of sitting in your bean bags smoking pot.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paranoid architect • Pet hairdresser • Kindly doctor • Author of thrillers

Gemini

Gemini is the division of applied science and technology – they are the builders, the engineers, the mechanics. So if its big, mad and groovy, you need a Gemini technician to build it for you.

Robot Talents	What a boring world it would be without giant robots everywhere, going berserk or just helping kittens out of trees. Insurance companies have gotten even richer in the swathe of destruction let by these lovable scoundrels. Remember, if it wasn't for the robots what would you do about the giant monsters?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eternal tinkerer• Mad robophile• Will built the perfect fembot• Stressed out robot genius
Vehicle Talents	Anyone can design a sexy looking car (well, except the Swedes), but what about one which transforms into a lounge suite and comes with neurotoxic cushion launchers? Combat handling is dealt with by <i>Driving Talents</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greasemonkey• Stern engineer• Hoon• Burnt out race circuit mechanic
Base Talents	Not what it sounds like (see <i>Seduction Talents</i>). Rather, a weird science specialty which allows ZODIAC not only to build useful bases, but to do so <i>in secret</i> and hidden away. Want to build a rocket bay under the local dental hospital? This talent enable you to do this and fill it with funky architecture, modernist spiral stairs (without safe railings) and mysterious machines with flashing lights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deathtrap engineer• Secret projects foreman• Alternative energies consultant• Futuristic interior designer



Water Division Talents

Pisces

Pisces is concerned with the powers of the mind, awakening the hidden potential within and unlocking the control freak inside. Some talents fall squarely under the umbrella of fringe science such as ESP and remote viewing while others are plastered with tired hippy or the nascent new age flavouring of mumbo jumbo.

Mentalism Talents	Powers of hypnotism and domination, including the ability to intuitively read people, their motives and tell if they are lying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evil hypnotist • Selfology salesman • Staring eyes • Soothing voice
Visionary Talents	ESP powers from sensing auras, seeing vague portents of the future, reading vibes from objects. Good for growing enormous mushrooms under pyramids in geodesic domes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasty medium • Fru fru mystic • Neurotic psi institute test subject • Tripped out stargazer
Sufism Talents	Supernatural physical mastery, exemplified by the clichéd bed of nails. This talent includes escapology and uncanny feats of acrobatics. Allows you to stick a condom up your nose and pull it out your mouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tremendous Turgid • Scruffy street performer • Studied in the East as a youth • Tells everyone about being double jointed with a wry wink

Cancer

This is the hardcore occult section of ZODIAC and the talents focus on the dark side of mysticism and a variety of cults. From the progressive rock stylings of *Liber Fortissimo* to the innocent charm of the all-choirboy organisation, the *Angeli Delicti*, these talents run the gamut of beliefs and style. At the end of the day all are fundamentally concerned with magick.

Thaumaturgical Talents	Magick which relies on making deals with supernatural entities, whether they be called spirits, demons, angels, imaginary friends or whatever. Spirits are bound by natural laws and can be tricked/ manipulated but seldom forget grudges. Spirits usually demand a return favour/ service proportionate to the summoner's request, sometimes to be specified at a later time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild mannered demonologist • Fondue party summoner • Lawyer to the damned • Plays guitar which can raise the dead
Ritual Magick Talents	Ceremonial magick, the ability to cast spells, make talismans, create curses. Rituals which tweak probability are easier, those which defy the laws of nature are much tougher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ringmaster Satanist • Neighbourhood witch • Curse street dealer • Recites mystical beat poetry
Arcana Talents	Knowledge of the occult and the uncanny. This is a research skill which gives information about spells, creatures and strange phenomenon, but an agent needs to use <i>Ritual Magick</i> Talents or <i>Thaumaturgical</i> Talents to actually use the Dark Arts. Arcana helps you guess what you might actually be doing with that Sumerian incantation rather than what the shifty man in the thrift store said it would do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obsessive collector of secrets • <i>Mysterious Mysteries</i> presenter • Runs a musty bookstore and head shop • Avid fan of <i>Dr Dank, Master of the Macarbe Macrame</i> comic



Scorpio

Scorpio trains its agents in an odd collection of talents, all of which focus on the exploration of space. From the hardcore science of Cosmology to the uncanny mysticism of astrology, these talents run the gamut of reason and magick.

Cosmology Talents	<p>Space was very big in the 70s and this skill covers everything scientific to do with space, calculating rocket fuel requirements, monitoring quasars and fitting a space suit properly as well as more obscure theories about the origin of the universe.</p> <p>No sophisticated world traveller is complete without some scuba anecdote. This talent also covers underwater operations as well as operating in any environment that requires cumbersome suits, such as space suits. Space and underwater adventure was considered very exciting in the 70s but makes for very sloooooow action scenes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embittered astronaut• Space fanatic• Demented test pilot• Roller coaster aficionado
Astrological Talents	<p>Not just ordinary <i>Women's Weekly</i> astrology but also deeper, cosmic knowledge. This is the companion to Geomancy which is the weird science of mystic ley lines and parallel dimensions. Astrology deals with their heavenly counterparts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Glib fortune teller• Fallen psychologist• Still vibrating from a cosmic experience• Sky watcher
Geomancy Talents	<p>Understanding of parallel worlds, alternate realities and the points at which these intersect. This talent is important for locating and utilizing ley lines, harvesting their power for ZODIAC and preserving them from mystical attack. This is the companion talent to <i>Astrological</i>, talents which deal in the heavens where Geomancy deals with the earth and <i>Ecological</i> talents which deal in scientific facts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expelled student of the Institute• Gnarled geomancer and mah jong addict• Singer of earth songs• Eidos electronics expert



Character Example:

Big Bob McMurcheon "The Discobobulator"

A beginning agent gets two talents at +2 and two decans/talents at +1.

Finishing Bob off, Raoul decides that this is how his talents should look:

Talents	Label	Points	Total
Networking	Glad hander	2	[7]
Organisation	Boss of the Lovelies	2	[7]
Firearm	Loves big pistols	1	[5]
Commando	Vietnam vet	1	[5]



5. Character Creation

It is best to begin with a ZODIAC Agent level character first. Later on you might like to make up versions of the character as a Super Spy and as a member of the ZODIAC elite – representing your character at different times in their career. It is entirely possible for a *Casefile: ZODIAC* campaign to shift back and forth between different periods in your character's careers - possibly back into previous incarnations.

For a beginning ZODIAC Agent...

Spy rank: 1
Elements: Spy Rank + 6 points to divide between 4
Signs: Chose 1 primary (Element + 2)
2 secondary (Element + 1)
Decans: Sign+
Place 2 points in decans under the primary sign
one in each secondary
3 misc points to place anywhere,
no decan can be higher than 2

Examples include The Discobobulator (you know him already), Asha Strange, Cupcake Endo, Udo Gronkheimer, Herb Johnshon, Twiggy & Harlon and Yuri Bolstavich (see Chapter VII).

For a Super Spy...

Spy Rank: 2
Elements: Spy Rank + 8 points divided
Signs: 1 primary (Element + 3)
2 secondary (Element + 2)
2 tertiary (Element + 1)
Decans: 2 at Sign +2
2 at Sign +1

Examples include RW Bangstroller, Onke Signusson, Greyham Nemo, Apiary Cheval and the Beemaster (see Chapter VII).

For a member of the Zodiac Elite ...

Spy Rank: 3
Elements: Spy Rank + 10 points divided
Signs: 2 primary (Element + 3)
3 secondary (Element + 2)
2 tertiary (Element + 1)
Decans: 3 at Sign +3
3 at Sign +2

For examples look to Dr Moog Swing, and the villainous Eleanor Goodwife (see Chapter VII).

For comparison...

An ordinary person has only decan points to spend - no spy rank, elements or signs and 0 or 1 in a few decans (total combat expertise is 0-1, most likely 0). In fights they need to rely on situational advantages or, most likely, running away.

Barbie or Ken

Earth 0 Fire 0 Air 0 Water 0
One decan relevant to career: 2
Two other decans: 1
All other decans: 0

A generic thug will usually have 1 earth, and 1 decan in a combat form (total combat expertise is most likely 1 or 2). Most generic specialists will fall into this category, so a generic scientist will have a Lab expertise of 1-2 as well.

GI Joe

Earth 1 Fire 0 Air 0 Water 0
Two Taurus decans at 2 the other at 1
Endurance 2
All other Earth decans: 1
All other decans: 0

This system is designed to approximately balance characters against each other and thereby to give the Ref a chance to come up with challenging foes and situations. If as a group you decide that you want to give all your agents the power to teleport (like the mysterious Paisleymen) or change into lavalamp entities – feel free.

Remember that in play, you need only to keep track of your four element values and your expertise value totals. You do this by marking (and erasing) tallies next to your total score which indicate temporary penalties.

What then is the point of Spy Rank, House & Decan scores? While they do not have a mechanical effect on play, each of the components of expertise will tell you something about your character, their background and areas where they might have some influence.

Spy Rank is a general measure of fame and notoriety. In general people of higher ranks can order around the lesser agents.

House lets you know your relationship to the divisions of Zodiac. The House with the highest value is the one where you have received most of your training, the one where you will have the most contacts and influence. Your House will shape your worldview, but not always in conformity with the others in the division. Perhaps you have rebelled against their ideology.

Decan tells you of your agent's obsessions, the specific training they have undertaken to hone their specialised skills. Any area you have points in is one where your agent's training regime or field experience have changed them in a significant way – you don't learn about Terror or Ecology in a vacuum. Two or three points in a Decan demonstrate even more influential experiences as well as a reputation as a specialist or even master of the field. The *label* which you have given to your Decan should reflect this.



6. Soundtracks

"Close your eyes and open your brain, sway to the strange rhythms in your head, feel the funk in your spine" – *Dr Moog Swing*

Once you have developed your character's expertises, you are almost ready to play. In *Casefile: ZODIAC* your character's expertise values remain fixed, although you may later have the option to play Super Spy and Elite versions of the character who will have higher expertise levels.

There are no intermediate ways to change your character's expertises, unlike other games you do not stockpile experience points to use by spending on increases in skills and aptitudes. The concept of gradual improvement does not really apply in this genre, James Bond seldom seems to demonstrate noticeable differences in his competencies (well, there is the whole Roger Moore, declining seduction thing...).

Instead of building a character's skills, you are able to develop thematic *Soundtracks*.

A soundtrack based around one central theme, such as revenge, chivalry or defiance of authority. Within a soundtrack you can develop individual 'tracks' sub categories of this general theme (each with a rating of one to six). Soundtracks can come from a diverse set of drives, passions, motivations or ideas as long as they are arranged under a broad umbrella - just think about compilation albums such as "Sexy Disco Hits" or "Trucking Songs of the Ozarks".

A new player's soundtrack starts with two tracks and three points in each.

Some examples of soundtracks:

- Stickin' it to the man
- A knight in tarnished armour
- The ladies' man
- A killer with class
- Underdog's revenge

The soundtrack comes into play whenever the themes are reflected in the characters' situation. A player may elect to use the soundtrack to boost their chances of success, the overcome setbacks or to bluff their way when all else fails. It is important that the player can justify why the track, and the soundtrack generally is relevant for that situation.

You can do the following with tracks (mark a tally to the track to use it, temporarily reducing its potency):

- Add one additional dice to a roll after you have made a roll
- 'Comeback' - Remove one tally from an expertise
- Up to three points can be used added to a target value as part of its external component
- Introduce a plot element, character, object or whatever which is related to the Soundtrack theme.

If appropriate the character can give a rousing speech and transfer the one of the above benefits to another character, the person owning the soundtrack still has to mark the tally.

Soundtracks are developed from session to session. After each game session each player gets one 'hit' which can be used to add a track to a soundtrack, or to increase the rank of an existing track by one. Tracks



should be kept general enough to use in different situations and by different characters of a similar inclination for situations in which you are not playing your main character in a scene (see below).

It is more difficult to increase tracks to the highest levels. In order to improve a track to 4 or 5 you need to demonstrate that the theme was central to a scene in the story you just played. In order to improve it to 6 it has to be the central theme of the entire story. This should not be an adversarial concept and the Ref and other players should co-operate with you in realising thematic fit.

So a ***Fight the System*** Soundtrack might include:

- There's a riot goin' on (3)
- United we stand (2)
- Shady deals (2)
- Stick it to the authorities (1)
- Stand up for my brothers and sisters(1)

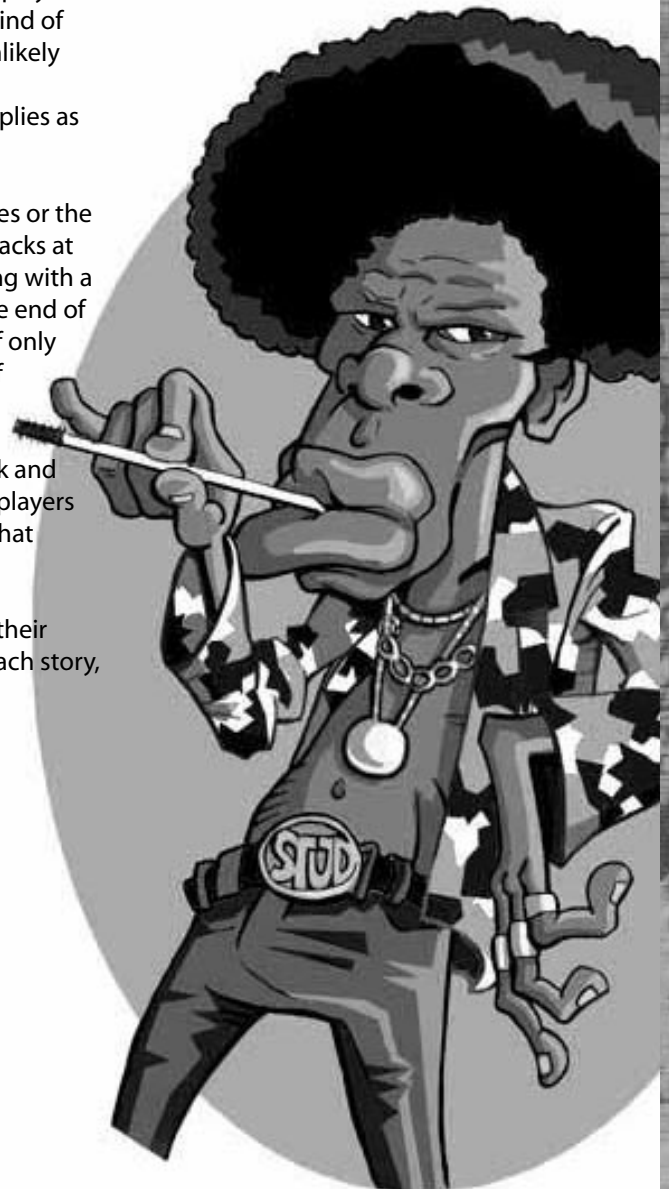
You may wish to use real song titles from the period to give your soundtrack flavour, although some might need subtitles to clarify what they actually mean (eg *Bohemian Rhapsody* could be a track for 'friends in crooked places', 'teamwork' or 'ponderous art'). You may wish to do this anyway, to clarify what cool sounding tracks are actually good for. If you have access to a cd burner or even an 8 track, make yourself a compilation for play.

The Soundtrack is owned by the player, not the character. Thus it can continue to be developed once a character has died, or when the player plays different characters as long as three continues to be some kind of thematic resonance, even if it reflects a previously unknown or unlikely aspect of the character. The Ref may wish to run a session where everyone plays henchfolk or ordinary people – the soundtrack applies as usual.

The ref has soundtracks of their own , keyed to overall story themes or the passions of villains. Unlike players, they can use multiple soundtracks at the same time (they get to use one soundtrack per player, beginning with a level three track in each) and get to assign one hit *per player* at the end of a session. If at some point someone else takes over the Ref role (if only to give the regular Ref a break), the original Ref can choose one of their soundtracks to play with.

There is nothing to stop players having more than one soundtrack and choosing which one to "put on" during a game session. Likewise, players might like to exchange soundtracks from time to time, provided that everyone is down with it.

At the end of each scene, players who have been consistent with their soundtrack may erase one tally against one track. At the end of each story, all tallies on the soundtrack are removed.



Soundtrack examples:

It's Payback (revenge for a specific wrongdoing in the past)

You never shoulda messed with me
This is for my brother (or whoever)
Stand down little sister, you don't want to become like me
Stoic to the last

R.E.S.P.E.C.T. (Women proving they can do it better than any man)

Don't you be sticking your tongue in my ear
Get your hands off me
I don't care who you are
Sisters united

Danger Man (risky stunts and outlandish risks)

Just another day on the job (improvise skills)
Merely a scratch
...And loving it
I'm sexy when I sweat

Shag Pile Songs (Make luuurv, not war)

Get down with me, baby
Me and my groovy companions
My face opens any door downtown
Don't hit me, I'm too beautiful

Best Kept Secrets (an obsession with espionage and deceit)

Bug paranoid
You can tell me, I won't spill the beans
So secret I don't even tell myself
Good with combinations

Mean Streets (urban chivalry in the Hammett/Chandler line)

Incorruptible
I will find your guilty secrets
I know a guy in the bad part of town who owes me one
Bad guys always sell each other out

Funked Up Cosmic Jive (Mystic secrets ala Parliament and Scorpio Division)

Clear your uptight mind
Unlocking mysterious secrets
Call in the Men from F.U.N.K.L.E.
Let your mind go and your body will follow

Music for World Domination (good for megalomaniacs)

The Man who Sold the World
Disposable henchmen
My new device
I laugh at certain death

Don't look at my face! (tapping the thematic power of disfigurement)

My handicap becomes a weapon
You did this to me
They laughed at me and said it couldn't be done.
Soft spot for a fellow hard-up case

Character Example: Big Bob McMurcheon "The Discobobulator"

Bob wants his soundtrack to reflect his position as the guardian angel to his group of gorgeous assistants. He would like the theme to help them in their actions, rather than necessarily to apply to him directly. The Ref rules that 'teamwork' is an appropriate theme which could be useful to both Bob's Lovelies and Bob's fellow agents. As his first track Bob selects "the girls are on the ball" which he explains as a general alertness, to spot clues and be wary of assassins. Given that these are hench characters and hairdressers rather than rocket scientists, Bob thinks they need all the forensic help they can get. For his second track he chooses "Just a Girl" which encourages foes to underestimate one's prowess and cunning based on the amount of product in your hair. To connect this to the theme, Raoul suggests that while individually they may not be a match for the forces of Astrolabus, by working as a team they can draw on each other's strength.

Soundtrack: Leave it to the Team

The girls are on the ball (3)
Just a Girl (1)

For further tracks Raoul may choose "Heard it on the Grapevine" (to give access to information sources) or "Two is Better than One" (which increases the appeal of group activities and fun).



7. Some Character Profile Questions:

(From the ZODIAC routine psychology unit questionnaire XXI, pink copy)

1. What is your favourite song?
2. Are you a Beatles person or an Elvis person?
3. Are you an *Addams Family* person or a *Munsters* person?
4. Are you a Jesus person or a Santa person?
5. What do these inkblots suggest to you?
(Subject is then shown various pictures from anatomical textbooks and European "health" magazines)
6. If you were starting a band, what would it be called?
7. What secret shame do you conceal?
8. Who is your great nemesis?
9. Who is your mundane, petty enemy?
10. Draw a tarot card. Explain how this relates to you.
11. Who was your first love?
12. What is the scariest dream you have ever had?
13. If you were a famous person in a past life, who would it be?
14. If you were an animal, what would it be?
15. What is the most traumatic thing to occur in your childhood?
16. Clip three images from magazines which best represent yourself (if you can find 1970s mags, all the better)
17. Write a haiku about your day today
18. What music would you put on to seduce someone to?
19. What sun sign are you? How does this relate to the division of ZODIAC you were trained in?
20. If they made a movie of your life, who would play you? Why would someone want to make a movie about you?
21. What would you say if I suggested that the this questionnaire was the result of infiltration of ZODIAC by the Radical Authorities?
22. If you gave up the life of espionage, what would you do with your time?
23. Are sideburns sexy?
24. Would you leave your body to science?
25. Describe your ideal outfit for a day outing at ZaniLand?
26. If you had to lose a finger or a toe, which one would it be?
27. Which magazine, MAD or Hustler?
28. Which is scarier, nuns or clowns?
29. Have you ever experienced unexplained phenomena, alien abduction, knocking ghosts, fairies in your cereal?
30. If you could be king for a day, what law would you pass?
31. What holiday destination would you most like to go to? Who would you take with you?
32. Who is standing behind you right now¹?

¹ Kudos to Mr L Snickett for this provoking question

Dramatic Theme Music



SECTION II: Resolving Conflicts

When danger rears its unattractive cranium there are several ways to decide who gets to have their way, whether your opponent be a criminally insane genius or a small container of UHT milk.

0 The Role of the Ref In Conflict Resolution

Casefile: ZODIAC allows players to describe the outcomes of the conflict within the parameters of the rules and the support of the Ref. First the player describes what they want to achieve in general terms. Then the ref decides which of the three conflict resolution options to use (described in this section), and this is then implemented. Once the result has been determined, the initiating player describes the result of the conflict with the input and reactions of the other players and their characters.

It is up to the player to tell a good story, to describe what their character is doing in the most flamboyant and entertaining way. The Ref has powers and responsibilities specific to their role if keeping the story going and making sure players don't get too carried away.

Responsibilities of the Ref:

- To keep the story flowing (depending on play style the Ref may have a detailed written plot or might be improvising from elements introduced randomly or by the other players)
- To keep track of and describe the other characters in the story which are not controlled by players
- To decide which is the appropriate method of conflict resolution (see below), fitting the demands of the story and the group
- To let players know the general margin of success/failure so that they can then narrate the consequences
- To arbitrate in arguments between players, and to quickly resolve group discussions, such as whether or not a soundtrack can apply to a situation

Powers of the Ref :

- To make **Quick Rulings**
- To allow or disallow edges and other external factors
- "Whoa, Nellie" – the power to veto any description of results that has gone too far outside the bounds of the result
- The Power of God – arbitrate on what is possible and what is not possible given the setting. Some of these issues will need to be discussed at some point by the whole group ("Can powerful martial artists fly?") but, in the middle of an episode, the Ref makes a ruling and may reserve part of the decision for later discussion ("Yes Xen Ko can fly but we will decide later if it is due to her 'self denial arts' or because of some kind of gadget or super virus")

Like everything else in this game, you can change these rules, ignore them – as long as this is done with group consent. It is quite acceptable to shift some of the Ref's responsibilities around the group. For instance Jane might like playing minor character Jodie the Snitch and have an amusing repertoire of twitches and afflictions to ham act her way through Jodie's conversations. During a scene where her character is absent, she can play Jodie but may have to defer to the Ref on some issues, eg 'does Jodie know where Natalia "The Stinky Juggernaut" intends to strike again?' This can be done with a quick question without breaking up the flow of this eccentric performance. The Ref may want the player to keep improvising if the issue is not one crucial to the story or just be willing to see where things end up.



Remember the rules of improvisation – once something new comes up try to incorporate it into play. The world of *Casefile: ZODIAC* is based on the 1970s but it is not supposed to be the real world – it has giant robots, rampaging demons and Kittyboys, after all. If someone decides that Sofia Loren has been beatified as a saint, go with it.

1. Aim for the Kill: Figuring out the Target Number

All conflicts in *Casefile: ZODIAC* depend on one important number, the target number which quantifies an agent's chances of success and, if a dice roll is used, sets the goal for the player to roll under, but as close to as possible. The target number is based on two factors: the internal 'expertise value' of the agent and the external factors which are determined by the situation at hand. Each of these two values lies somewhere between zero and twelve, with a total that lies between zero and twentyfour.

Expertise Values are calculated in the manner discussed in the character generation section. During the course of a game session, failures and Faustian compacts (discussed later) reduce individual expertise values and this is recorded by marking a pencil tally against the expertise. These tallies are erased as characters recover from setbacks.

The external factor is, like the expertise value, composed of four elements ranked from zero to three: Edges (situational advantages), Cosmic Factors (the influence of the stars, Eidos power or other factors), Soundtrack (situations with individual dramatic resonance for a player's soundtrack) and Vehicle (when the use of an agent's personal spy vehicle makes success more likely). In most circumstances it is up to the player to argue why and how each of these factors comes into play. Ordinary people frequently have expertise values of zero and external factors are very important for them.

An **Edge** is a general term which covers any kind of advantage which an agent might have. Like other external factors, edges are 'capped' at three points beyond which further edges do not provide further bonuses. Examples of fighting Edges are given in the section concerning fights. Edges generally apply each time there is an argument that the character has some substantial situational advantage over their opponent: much better resources, more time for

preparation, superior numbers.

Cosmic Factors generally flow from astrological and geomantic influences discussed in Part III Magick. Astrological conjunctions provide a variety of general bonuses relating to different specialties, these apply to friend and foe alike. Geomantic influences provide bonuses for those attuned to local earth influences, such as ZODIAC agents fighting on their home bases. Cursing your opponent is another way in which you can gain a Cosmic advantage over them. Up to three points of cosmic forces (however derived) can contribute to a target number, any excess is not counted.

Soundtrack points can be spent (by recording tallies against a Track) to add up to three points to the target number when the Soundtrack's theme is important in a scene. Thus an agent consumed by revenge (Soundtrack: 'I'm gonna get you, sucka!') can use Soundtrack bonuses in any situation where they are facing their opponent or stand a chance of pursuing their vengeance.

Vehicles are discussed in Chapter IV and give agent's bonuses to their target number, but only in situations where the vehicle can be used. Like Soundtracks, vehicle bonuses can only be used a limited number of times and require recording of tallies, thereby reducing the vehicle's Element values. Unlike Soundtracks there may be an opportunity to 'refuel & reload' in a game when the vehicles spend some time in the lab and come back as good as new.

Elements of a Target Number

Internal Components	External Components
Expertise Value	Situational Factors
Spy Rank	Edges
Elements	Cosmic Factors
Zodiac House	Soundtrack
Decan Talent	Vehicles

2. The Three Methods of Conflict Resolution

Quick Ruling
Random Roll
Doing a Deal

In the first of these methods the Ref can make an arbitrary decision comparing the agent's expertise level to the **quick ruling values** below. This is usually appropriate with more ordinary activities for which rolling would be tiresome (different players have different thresholds to dice boredom). "If you have a covert expertise of 3 or higher, you can get past the dozy security guard.

Second, the GM can ask the agent to make a **random roll**, testing their expertise against the roll of an opponent, be it the expertise of a rival or the difficulty of the task (use the quick ruling values to estimate task difficulty). "Roll against the Bee Thug's covert to sneak into the secret lab."

Third, the agent may elect to bargain a tally mark to initiate a **faustian compact** – to activate a special effect or event relating to their expertise, such as pull out an instant disguise or allow agents to avoid the risk of rolling, such as using your *commando* expertise to knock out a security guard without rolling and possibly stuffing it up. "Mark off a tally on *disguise* to pull a Nixon out of your instant disguise kit, the security staff will nod as you walk by".

You can usually make a random roll to get the same result without the need to make a faustian compact and mark off a tally. However, sometimes you will want to make sure you do not fail, as you do not want to spend the rest of the session chasing down the screaming cinema usher which you incompetently coshed with a bag of Danish marital aids.

a) Quick Rulings:

For quick rulings the Ref sets the level of expertise required to meet the challenge, based on the table below. Agents may wish to use their soundtrack to temporarily boost their expertise for quick ruling tests.

1	A fairly ordinary crisis, even an untrained person has a small chance of success.
3	A typical crisis for a zodiac agent
6	A situation which needs an expert, a task for an agent operating in their area of expertise.
8	A really tough task
10	Impossible for most people
12	An epic task which even the elite agents have only a 50/50 chance of making it work.

Example

The agents are briefed by their controller, RW Bangstroller, that Astrolabus agents are set to disrupt a visit from the Royal Family of Sputavia, to be received at a soiree at Buckingham Palace. This event is set to be well attended by celebrities, Mick and Bianca Jagger, Francis Bacon, the guys from Mott the Hoople and a handful of furry-sideburned soccer players.

Bangstroller has information that Sea Dog, a notorious pirate and mercenary, has been employed by Astrolabus and has replaced the Queen Mother of Sputavia with a combat android programmed to assassinate Princess Touretta. He gives the team a special gadget which, when placed on the skin, determines if someone is human or a robot. This is to be discretely placed against the Queen Mother's skin to test the information.

The agents get ready to infiltrate the soiree. The Ref decides to make a Quick Ruling on how well the agents can pass themselves off as celebrities or members of the fashionable set in order to sneak into the party. Checking the characters' *Diplomacy* expertises, the Ref decides that Asha (*Diplomacy* 4) will have no problems, Udo and Bob can get by (*Diplomacy* 3) but Twiggy and Harlon are not quite fabulous enough to pretend to be guests (*Diplomacy* 2). The group decide to pretend that Harlon is Asha's personal photographers and that Big Bob is a wealthy Texan oil baron and quite devoid of couth, even though his *Diplomacy* score is fine, experience has proven that Bob often needs excuses to be made for him.

b) Random Rolls

When the player announces their intention to do something, the Ref will make a ruling on how difficult the task is, based on a rival's expertise or the general degree of opposition to the agent (based on the quick ruling chart). In this game, two rolls are made in any crisis, one for each side of the conflict.

Both sides decide how many dice they want to roll, there are no limits at this point. This decision is made simultaneously. If you want to see how many dice your opponent is going to use, you must cede them the initiative (ie an Edge). Once rolled, the dice are added together and compared to the target number. If you want to add more dice once you have made your roll, you will need to score tallies against your soundtrack.

Both sides roll and add up their totals. If they are equal to or under their expertise score they have succeeded. If they roll over they have failed, 'gone bust', their roll is effectively zero.

The highest total wins, the difference between the two rolls is the margin of success. The Ref figures out success or loss by subtracting the opposition dice total from the agent's total and then turns over to the player to narrate the outcome, the description of how the conflict is actually resolved. The size of the margin, gives the player a rough indication of how good or bad the situation is.

One common situation is the resolution of a fight when the player does not know how much expertise/element an opponent has and therefore needs to know how significant a success they have scored (if they lose of course they will know exactly by how much as they mark off tallies). The Ref, or the person controlling the other character needs to relate whether the success has incapacitated, wounded, scratched, irritated or whatever so the player can decide how to narrate the action. In all player narration and description the Ref retains the 'Whoa, Nellie' power, a veto on narration that goes too far.

Tallies & the Dreadful Crippling

If you fail a roll, mark a tally against the expertise value on your sheet (in pencil). This reduces your expertise total by one. If the total expertise reaches zero you cannot use that expertise based on that talent to initiate conflict, but someone else can try to get you during your time of weakness. If you take another tally when the expertise value is at zero (for instance, you are shot at while your firearms expertise is low

or at zero), further tallies are instead marked against the relevant **Element**. If an element reaches zero, you lose the ability to use all expertise under the same specialty/element. The element becomes **crippled** until you can recover, see the table below.

The tally represents a loss of confidence, of edge. Note that ZODIAC does not use a 'damage' system per se, which is why agents can bounce back from torture or beatings, as long as their confidence returns.

You may have beaten your opponent or the task by a margin of more than one, Extra points can be used to remove tallies against your expertise (not elements), or to inflict extra tallies against an opponent. This will most often be used in combat, where the aim is to reduce each of their fighting expertises to 0, and to cripple their Earth element.

Modifications to Rolls

Soundtracks

Once you have rolled your dice, you may decide that you have rolled too low and want to add more dice in order to be more successful, even though you are running the risk of going bust. As long as your action is thematically consistent with one of your tracks, you can record a tally against it to roll another dice and add to the total. You can keep doing this until you run out of track hits or you go bust.

Matches

Rolling multiples of the same face number on different dice gives you a small bonus, equal to the number of dice which match. Roll two 5s and you get +2, roll three 1s and get +3.

Example

Later, with the party in full swing, the agents split up and decide to investigate. Asha sticks to the young Princess keeping an eye out for danger. Twiggy & Harlon slip away to check the guest rooms. Udo wants to slip closer to the Queen Mother and hopes to stick the gadget on her somehow. Bob takes an interest in the Royal Family's female Dragoon soldiers introducing himself as "Mr Allcock". The Ref decides that each of these tasks requires a Random Roll.

The Ref asks Asha to roll on her *Diplomacy* expertise (4) and she rolls a four on one dice. The Ref rolls against the princess's *Diplomacy* as a resistance value (also 4) and rolls a 2 – not as large a success as Asha who wins with a margin of 2. She notices that the princess is wearing a wig. Very curious. Given the circumstances the Ref decides that this is not the kind of contest where the loser is required to mark a tally.

Twiggy and Harlon (psychically connected 'Beast Agents' – a ferret and her human) roll on their collective *Covert* expertise (3) to sneak away unnoticed. Again they roll one dice and fortunately score a 1, the Ref rolls a 6 for the difficulty (a resistance of 3) which is a bust. Not the best success but in this situation it is enough.

Udo could roll on his *Covert* (3) to slip through the crowd or his *Diplomacy* (3) in order to get himself introduced properly. He decides to follow the covert route and rolls a 4 – a bust. The Ref sets the difficulty at 3 and also rolls a 4, another bust. While Udo has gotten no closer, he at least has not been noticed as behaving suspiciously. In this situation the Ref deems that it is appropriate that Udo records a tally against his *Covert* expertise (reducing it to 2) as the failure would effect his confidence. Udo can't use his Soundtrack to re-roll as his theme,

"Sordid Chivalry" is not consistent with stalking old ladies, even if they do eventually turn out to be cybernetic killing machines.

Big Bob decides to try and hit on one of the female dragoons. Big Bob is using his *Seduction* phantom expertise (which is, surprisingly as high as 3 but he is, after all, wealthy). He has no chance to use his soundtrack to enhance his chances as it is based on teamwork and he is ignoring the team to follow his own sordid impulses. He rolls a 5, a bust. The Ref rolls for the dragoon's *Seduction* (a 4, which Bob was not expecting) and gets a success at 3. Bob is not simply rebuffed, he becomes the seducee. He records one tally for the loss and an additional three for the margin of success. Bob's *Seduction* expertise is crippled and cannot be used again, worse he has also lost a point of Fire. In the next exchange the Dragoon presses her advantage (her *Seduction* of 4 against Bob's 0) and cripples his Fire. Soon he is babbling about secret missions, princesses and pirates.

Effects of crippled elements.

Element	Effect of Crippling	Recovery
Earth	Messed up badly. The agent is wounded and has difficulty moving, cannot perform physical feats at all.	Medical care
Fire	Shaken. The agent's nerve has gone, now rambling and mumbling. They cannot communicate on any but basic level and deceit is not an option.	Sleep and rest (perhaps a visit to a health farm or a holiday resort?)
Air	Insanity. The Agent has burst something in their brain, is a functional dullard and cannot think clearly.	Therapy or contemplative research. Magickal aid.
Water	Cursed. Bad mojo is heaped on the agent who cannot use any occult skills and is plagued by bad luck, delusions and hallucinations.	Restorative rituals.

C) Doing Deals

Sometimes you will want to do something that the rules for conflict resolution don't exactly cover. That's OK, as long as you can convince the group to agree. Generally you do so by offering a *Deal*, you agree to score a tally against an appropriate expertise, bargaining it away for the effect you want.

The group decides on Deals, with the Ref retaining their "Whoa, Nellie" power of veto. While we do not want to turn the resolution of actions into a legal process, decisions will set precedents which are useful rhetorical devices

to later argue why your Deal should be allowed by the group.

Below are some common examples of Deals that the group might like to include in their 'caselaw' of precedents, but beware of your game turning into a session of *Litigator: The Objection*.

In section 4. we will see that you have plenty of opportunity to recover tallies, so Deals are a better deal than they might at first seem.

Suggested Deal Precedents

Arcana	I just happen to have the right spell on me without having to go away and research it (of course it will still required a <i>Rituals</i> roll to cast it).
Commando	Knock out or kill one ordinary enemy, provided you have taken them by surprise. The Ref may veto this for significant characters.
Diplomacy	Recall one language you just happen to know
Disguise	Create an instant disguise, "here's one I made earlier".
Gadget or Rituals	Produce just the right Gadget or Talisman for a situation. This may demand more than one tally 1 Tally – replicates ordinary object of similar size but concealed. e.g. A ring which is also a cigarette lighter. 2 Tallies – replicates the effect of a larger ordinary object e.g. A cravat with a hidden arc welder. 3 Tallies – performs impossible, fringe science functions eg A bangle of flight, or a kaftan of invisibility
Martial Arts	Knock out one enemy, subject to veto.
Endurance, Martial Arts, Firearms, Vehicles	Perform a STUNT, see section 4 for some examples. Mark a tally to gain an edge. or remove an edge from an opponent.
Organisation	Obtain the assistance of one normal agent. More agents can be called for multiple tallies. Requisition one normal object, it may cost more than one tally if it is expensive.
Sufism	Remove a tally from martial arts or armed combat through meditation

Example

Back at the party, the Princess excuses herself from a discussion with Asha and a nervy performance artist to go speak with one of her Dragoons – the one who has Bob wrapped around her finger. Asha want to hear what they are talking about but does not want to blow her cover. She asks the Ref is, by a Deal she can mark a tally against her *Covert* to overhear the conversation without running the risk of making a roll. The Ref agrees and Asha hears the end of a conversation which mentions Sea Dog, an assassination plot and the meddling of ZODIAC.

Twiggy has found a locked door in the penthouse and wants to get in without running the risk of a *Covert* failure. Worse still, the Ref has told her that it looks like a difficult lock, her *Covert* expertise of 3 may not be enough. Twiggy offers a *Gadget* tally as a Deal in order to produce an 'instant lockpick' which she had secreted in her tiny waistcoat. The Ref agrees and Twiggy enters the darkened room, seeing a man tied to a chair and gagged. Harlon turns on the light in order to free the prisoner and discovers, to their shock, that it is their controller, RW Bangstroller, with a few days beard growth. Something is horribly wrong...

Ignorant of this, Udo moves to get the 'android detector' gadget on to the Queen Mother. Not wanting to risk another setback, he too offers a Faustian Compact, a *Covert Tally* for an automatic success. The Ref considers this and agrees – the Queen Mother is elderly and this success has a sting in the tail as the gadget is actually a compact electric shock device. Udo is left standing over the twitching, convulsing body of the Queen Mother of Sputavia as the music stops and all eyes turn toward him...

3. Recovering Tally Marks:

1. At the end of a scene you can recover one tally mark on one expertise in each element (not each expertise), provided you get a short rest, or better yet, a make-out scene.
2. You can mark Soundtrack tallies to remove an expertise value tally, given the right thematic resonance
3. If you succeed in a random roll challenge, by a margin of one or more, you can choose to remove tallies. This has to be a real challenge, you can't just go arm wrestle children to recover your martial arts.
4. All tallies are removed at the start of a new story

4. Fights

"I ain't here to dance, but its only fair to warn you that I'm wearing my nine inch platform disco pumps anyway" – *Asha Strange*

Fights are conducted like other challenges. We wanted to avoid realistic damage charts, anal lists of weapons and imponderable armour issues. There are some optional rules which you might want to use if they spice up the fights. Please ignore them if you find they make fights drag like the ones in the Roger Moore *Bond* films.

In brief:

1. Select the expertises used by both combatants (dictated by what weapons they have) You can use any one of the three Taurus expertise values against each other.
2. Calculate external factors and total target number
3. Both sides select and roll dice and then add up their totals. Anyone who rolls over their target number goes bust and their total becomes zero.
4. Compare the values, the person with the highest number of goals wins this bout. The loser records a tally against their expertise.
5. The Ref determines the margin of success. This is the number of extra points which may be used to increase the loser's tallies or recover (ie remove tallies) for the winner.
6. If the loser's expertise value is reduced to zero (ie expertise value - total number of tallies=0), further tallies are recorded directly against the element, Earth. The loser can no longer initiate conflict with that expertise but may switch weapons and expertise if the weapons are available. Therefore if no guns or other weapons are available, a fighter will be out of the fight when they run out of *Martial Arts* expertise. When Earth reaches zero, it is *crippled* and the combatant is out of the fight.
7. The player narrates the outcome.



Fighting Edges

Casefile: ZODIAC has a fairly abstract system which doesn't take into account weapon types, armour, ammunition, range or even wounds as such. This may be just too abstract, and that's just too bad. You can introduce a tiny bit more detail through the *edges* rule. You may well have multiple edges (up to three), each will add another point to the target number. On the other hand the other side may have edges as well.

Some Edges for fights:

- You have substantially better weapons than your foe.
- You have firearms and your opponent has only hand to hand weapons or martial arts
- You outnumber your opponent significantly, by more than 2:1
- Your opponent has very limited ammunition.
- You are wearing some kind of armour and they are not.
- You are fresh while your opponent is weary.
- You are fighting on your home turf
- Your opponents have been demoralised.
- Your opponent has been poisoned or is suffering the effects of strange drugs
- You have used a stunt (see below) to reach a position of advantage and therefore gain an edge during this fight.
- One fighter wanted to see how many dice their opponent would chose and thereby ceded initiative to that opponent.

Edges may be used in any situation, they are not just limited to fights. There is no such thing as a 'negative edge' – if you are at a disadvantage, your opponent (or the obstacle) gets an edge dice instead.

Stunts

Stunts are the results of Faustian Compacts made on one or the other of the fighting expertises. or *Endurance*, if relevant. In much the same way that you can mark a tally to pull out a gadget, you can tally to pull off a stunt. A stunt gives you some kind of advantage in a fight which you do not need to roll for. The GM should be generous (to a point) as you are decreasing your overall fighting prowess by one point. The knockout special effect of martial arts or commando could be considered a type of stunt.

Some examples of stunts:

- Hitting the button to deactivate the rock drill
- Leaping up onto a sliding rail allowing you to hit the temple guards and evade their attempts to capture you (add an edge)
- Shooting out the rope by which poor Pollyanna is dangling over the crocodiles
- Severing Dr Krabbmeat's robotic claw
- Swinging on a handy passementerie and getting away from the group of security guards with guns or from the terrifying Stinkator.





As with other Faustian Compacts there are no limits to what you can come up with stunt-wise, but here are some suggestions of the game effects:

- Gain an edge for the duration of an exchange
- Escape from overwhelming numbers or a fierce opponent.
- Knock out a weak opponent instantly.
- Hit a small target

Below are some examples, specific to different types of expertise:

Kungfu Stunts

- A fierce display of forms. This lowers the morale of a group of henches. Confident henches become wary, wary henches become panicky (and subject to a loss of edge if you are using those rules), panicky henches become routacious. See also Lewd display – lowers the morality of a group of henches. Less said the better...
- Striking paralysis points or the infamous bladder pop strike (and its nasty bowel variation)
- The Touch of Death. Other touches include – stupidity, tastlessness, stinkiness, anguish, girlishness, ennui.
- Catch arrows knives etc., especially those meant for someone else such as a victim of assassins.
- Disarm – make them fight using martial arts!

Gun Stunts

- Imponderable shot
- Covering fire, allow allies to get to safety or a position of advantage (ie transfer an edge to an ally).

Vehicle Stunts

- Escape. Used in chases to evade pursuers who have to match stunt or be left behind. These might include a ramp jump, a 2 wheel manoeuvre into an alley, a charge into a supermarket, a wild dive and other wacky stunts. The idea is to whittle down the opponent's expertise by bidding away stunts so that they are easier pickings when the time for a roll comes around.
- Danger. As above but putting both yourself and someone who wants to match the stunt and keep up into a situation where you both have to make an expertise check against the level of the peril or be damaged/injured as a result. Examples include zooming under a truck, jumping over a pit of molten metal, flying through a crevice in the matterhorn. Note that if you succeed in this roll, you can recover the *Vehicles* point which you bargained away.
- Attack. This is similar in resolution to 'Danger', above. With this kind of stunt you use a piece of the surroundings as a weapon against your foe. You might wish to blow up the nearby petrol tanker or knock over the precarious building on your enemy.

Gangs – Multiheaded Minions of Doom

There will often be times when the agents are faced with swarming minions, henchfolk or xmas sales riots. Rather than fight each one individually, the Ref may decide to join them together into single sets of statistics. Simply add together their fighting expertises (usually 2 for a typical minion).

Up to three brawlers can feasibly gang up on one opponent the equivalent of a fighter with an expertise of 6. Given the right amount of space, an extremely large group of guys with guns can do so as well. Even in the latter situation, the maximum expertise is twelve, but they would also have an edge given the weight of numbers.

Surplus minions go into a reserve pool. For every two tallies a fighter inflicts on a gang, one of the reserves is 'consumed' as they step up to take the place of their comrade. It is only when the reserves are exhausted that damage can be struck against 'the heart of the beast'.

Sniping

Sometimes agents will want to shoot an unaware opponent from the safety of a sniping post. This is achieved by a contest of *Commando* expertises. The attacker is trying to stay cool, and get a bead on their victim. The victim is waiting for their sixth sense to kick in and tell them that some cowardly SOB is trying to blast them back to the stone age. Each 'exchange' represents a battle of nerves (narrate the sweat trickling). If the sniper wins, they can deduct extra points from the victim's commando expertise value and then earth element with intent to cripple (ie blow their brains across the wall). If the snipee wins, they realise what is up and where the sniper is, perhaps catching a glimpse of light reflecting off their scope.

Fight Example

Having just given an extremely dangerous electric shock to the Queen Mother of Sputavia, Udo finds himself surrounded by a group of Dragoons armed with nightsticks. Udo snaps off a table leg (there goes the smorgasbord) and prepares for a beating. Udo has a *Martial Arts* of 8 (the Ref agrees that a table leg could be used in *Martial Arts* or *Armed Combat*) and the Dragoons all have *Armed Combat* at 2, except for Bob's friend Sal who has *Armed Combat* at 4. As only three can fight Udo at once, including Sal, their total *Armed Combat* is therefore 8 (4 + 2 + 2) with six reserves waiting in the wings.

Asha (*Martial Arts* 6) is not entirely surprised to find herself fighting the Princess (*Martial Arts* 7) who is backed up by three Dragoons (*Armed Combat* 2) – their total expertise value is 12 (including +1 for weight of numbers) which has our ebony avenger a little concerned.

Meanwhile Twiggy and Harlon attempt to free Bangstroller and wonders who they actually got this mission briefing from. Bob hides under a table, terrified that Asha is going to kick his podgy white ass up and down Mayfair.

Udo is fighting the Dragoons. He has no external factors to help him, the Dragoons have the weight of numbers +1 and are using the Ref's Soundtrack (themed on loyalty) to get a +1, their target is now 10 and the Ref marks a tally against the track.

In the first exchange Udo rolls 2 dice and gets a 7, the Ref rolls 3 dice (the Dragoons are very cocky) and gets an 11, a bust. The Dragoons are inflicted with eight tallies (the one for failure plus Udo's success margin which he uses against them) and now take the hulking Scandinavian a bit more seriously. Four dragoons are knocked out but there are still enough reserves to take their place.

Asha realises that she is in trouble and decides the only way that she has a chance of success is to even out the odds. Using a Deal she wants to use a Stunt to get up onto the balcony and away from the group. She argues that she can use her *Endurance* expertise and mountain climbing experience to run up the ice sculpture using her heels as cleats. The Ref agrees and Asha records a tally. The princess does likewise but, in the process loses her wig and reveals her closely cropped punk hairdo with a jolly roger shaved in the side!

The Dragoons decide not to follow and join the reserves of the mob which is advancing on Udo.

Now it is one on one between Asha and Touretta – bring it on, sister!. There are no external factors to consider. Asha rolls a six on two dice (a risky thing to do) and Princess Touretta – or Sea Dog, rolls a five. Sea Dog marks two tallies, one for the loss and one for the margin. Her *Martial Arts* is now five so she picks up sabre from a decorative suit of armour and uses her *Armed Combat* of six, plus she will now have an Edge for being better armed than Asha for a total of seven.

In Udo's second exchange the Dragoons roll a little more cautiously. Udo rolls a 4 and the Dragoons roll a 5, both successes but the Dragoons win. Udo records 2 tallies, one for the loss and one for the margin of difference. His *Martial Arts* is now 6.

Round two for Asha and Sea Dog. Asha rolls a 1 on one dice, and spends a soundtrack point (in R.E.S.P.E.C.T.) to roll another dice, getting a 3 for a total of 4. Sea Dog rolls a 7 on two dice and still wins this exchange. Sea Dog uses two of the margin points to remove the tallies against her *Martial Arts* and uses the other one to inflict an additional tally on Asha, for a total of two. Asha's *Martial Arts* is now 4, Sea Dog is as fresh as a daisy.

In Udo's third exchange, disaster strikes. He busts out rolling a total of 9 (a six and a three). The Dragoons roll four, enough to pretty much knock him out of the fight. Realising that Asha will be in deep trouble without him protecting her back. He invokes his soundtrack for a re-roll - Udo's "Sordid Chivalry" soundtrack concerns redemption for his past sins and one of his tracks involves a kind of chauvinist chivalry. He rolls another two dice and gets two 3s, turning the bust into a success at a new total of 6. He has also rolled doubles (two 3s) and gets a bonus +2 that does not count against the risk of going bust so his total is now 8. Another two reserves out of the fight (and a tally left over which the Ref notes next to the reserves) and Udo has to take two points off his Track. Fortunately he has enough track points to do this and does not cripple his soundtrack, but will not be using the 'Here's one for the ladies out there' track again this session.

The Ref suggests that Udo, through invoking his Soundtrack, has thrown himself onto the only stairway that links the ground floor to the balcony in order to protect Asha from the mob. Udo agrees and suggest that his hairy chest should be busting out through tears in his nylon shirt. The Ref laughs and then tells him that this seems to enrage the Dragoons to further bloodthirstiness. Four more reserves have come into the room from downstairs, Udo is facing Sal and her two current assistants plus reserves of another seven. Their briefing said nothing about this number of guards!

In their third exchange Asha, in desperation, tries to provoke her opponent. "What have you done with Princess Touretta, you bitch." Sea Dog laughs, "Dumbass, I am Touretta and you and your ZODIAC bosses will find I am harder to assassinate than this - next time bring an adult along with you".

There is a pause for a moment of confusion and muttering among the assembled beautiful people at this outrageous identity mixup. Meanwhile, a dishevelled Bangstroller comes into the room pointing wildly at Sal "There she is, the Astrolabus psycho who grabbed me in the porno store. You have to get her skin - grab every fur coat or leather jacket."

It is too late. Snarling, Sal leaps into the cloakroom, pulls on a slightly tattered looking fur coat, transforms into a wolf and leaps through the window with a shattering of glass. The screeching of traffic from outside indicates that she has made good her escape into the night.

Sea Dog is somewhat deflated by this treachery from her first mate. She looks aghast at Asha, "Shit..."

"I think your Grandma needs an ambulance."





SECTION III - MAGIC

1. You Put a Spell on Me: Magickal Rituals

When using the Dark Arts, players use a combination of *Arcana* expertises (the theory of magick) and *Ritual Magick* expertises (the practice, sets of spells, formulae and incantations). Rituals can take many forms, but there are three primary game mechanics, spells which are used to create a specific magickal effect, talismans (magickal gadgets) and curses (magickal combat). In Section 2, spirit magicks and thaumaturgy are discussed.

The Laws of Magick:

- The law of balance: for every action, there is an opposite an equal reaction, somewhere in the cosmos.
- The law of sympathy: A part reflects the whole.
- The law of properties (or the law of theft): Every property gifted through magick, is taken from somewhere else. You gain the gift of flight, but it is taken from a bird, a wasp or a passenger flight over Chile.
- The law of destiny: On occasion, Magick seems almost personified, and it goes for cheap dramatics. That passenger plane, it had your Aunt Maybeline on it. This could be a good thing or a bad thing.
- The law of morality: Do what thou wilt. (OK, not really a law then)
- The law of Murphy, messing with magick usually opens Pandora's Box.

Spells

Sometimes players will seek a specific spell, by research, barter or sale. These can be creative solutions for a specific purpose (descending a cloak of darkness upon the kindergarten) or in response to game events (finding the spell to close the Gate of Izziphar). Once a spell is located using *Arcana* expertise (or a Faustian Comapct), the Ref should decide on the difficulty of the spell (which determines its own 'expertise value') and get the player to roll against the spell's roll (rolled by the Ref). If the player fails tallies are marked against their *Ritual Magick* expertise and the spell may simply fail to work, or may run out of control, Ref's whim.

Spell level 3 – A mundane miracle. Turning toilet duck into crème de menthe (or vice versa)

Spell level 6 – Significant sorcery.

Superpowered stuff. Flight, invisibility, teleportation.

Spell level 9 – Thunderous thaumaturgy.

Includes simpler magicks on a much bigger scale such as creating unnatural earthquakes and rains of fox terriers.

Spell level 12 – The impossible. Time travel, raising the dead, getting Jimmy Carter elected.

Counterspells are based on the level of the original spell +3 and do not require specific research (although research will remove the +3 extra difficulty).

Spells take a long time to cast and leave people open to attack. In combat, curses are far more effective.

Talismans

Talismans work in the same way as gadgets but are of arcane origin rather than fringe science. See *Faustian Compacts* for some guidance.

Curses

Curses are magickal combat, used to attack someone's elements directly in the midst of a fight or even remotely. A curser needs to see the victim or have a sympathetic connection to them (hair, item of property – the things found in basic sweep done by arcane forensics). Curses can target any element.

Curses are resolved by a conflict of the curser's *Ritual Magick* expertise and the victim's *Ritual Magick* expertise. Even if the victim doesn't know you are attacking them, most sorcerer's cast Arcane Counter Measures (ACMs) each day and even unskilled people observe superstitions which give them some protection against curses.

The success margin is recorded in tallies against the loser's Element (the one under attack for the victim, water for the curser), when element reaches zero, all expertise's related to that element is crippled as per the usual rules.

As you can see from this, curses can rebound against the curser. If the curser's Water is crippled and there are success points left over, they will be applied against other elements. Cursing is a dangerous business.

Curses can be thrown in the heat of battle and represent a kind of Stunt. The curser records one to three tallies against their *Ritual Magick* in order to gain an equivalent 'Cosmic Forces' advantage over their opponent for a round.

2. Its Witchcraft: Thaumaturgy and Spirit Magick.

Before you summon a spirit, you need to figure out what tasks you want it to perform. Assign a numerical value to each task based on the Quick Ruling table above. For very simple tasks (eg "give me the cell key") the minimum number is still one. If the spirit is required to defeat someone in combat, add their relevant fighting expertise. Add these up and the total is the *power* of the spirit you need to summon, which dictates the *price* (which will be described in a moment).

The actual summoning is conducted as a normal random roll challenge against the power of the spirit. If you beat the spirit, the difference between your rolls is deducted from the price, making it karmically cheaper, but the price can never be lower than one.

If you fail to summon, the spirit may well make you an offer – usually doubling the price. The summoner does not have to accept, but circumstances may mean that it is your only option. A failed summoning results in tallies equal to the margin of loss against your *Thaumaturgical* expertise.

Every arcane action comes at a price. The summoner must agree to perform a task for the spirit of equal difficulty/effort as the one requested. This can be negotiated to something within the summoner's ability to achieve and may be postponed to a later date.

If the summoner reneges on the price, the spirit will return for revenge, usually at the most inconvenient time at a power level equal to the defaulted price. Unimaginative spirits will manifest as monsters (fighting expertise = price) aiding the villains in a climatic fight. Many are much, much more devious.

Some Prices

- Price 1** – A simple task or ritual venerating the spirit. Writing the spirit's name in graffiti twenty two times. Burning Ninety Seven Big Macs on a sacrificial pyre.
- Price 2** – A task challenging to most people. A regular ritual in favour of the spirit to be performed every day without fail. Performing a pilgrimage.
- Price 3** – Something impossible for ordinary people but within the ability of a ZODIAC agent. Performing complex, time consuming and difficult research

using ZODIAC arcane resources. Cursing an Enemy.

- Price 4** – At this level prices become more complex and will usually demand some personal sacrifice or some task which will be an adventure in itself, or at least a subplot in an adventure.

Like Ritual Magick, summoning is a lengthy process which usually requires components, diagrams and all kinds of occulty stuff. If these are not present, the spirit may be affronted and add one to the price.

Sometimes a spirit will demand a task lower than the price, this usually means that there is a sting in the tail and the task will inadvertently bring some misfortune on the summoner or be one that has undesirably consequences. Others will divide the price into smaller tasks, but these will usually total more than the original price.

Example:

Herb has been captured by the Bee Master and locked in a cell in the demented genius' secret hive. The Bee Master has gone off to 'make honey' (you don't want to know) leaving Herb locked in a cell, guarded by one of the Bee Master's personal 'special forces drone' thugs in a humiliating striped jumpsuit. Herb needs to summon a spirit to a) knock out the guard (expertise 3) and open the cell door from the outside (a simple task, +1). This means a total power/price of 4 is required, Herb intones the unspeakable words to summon Gnottatoi, Demon of Plastic Bag Suffocation. Herb rolls a 4, Gnottatoi gets only 3 so the summoning succeeds at a price of 3 [price 4-1 (Herb's Roll 4-Gnottatoi's Roll 3)]. Soon the guard has turned blue and the door is open. All Herb has to worry about is performing a task "typical of an arcane agent", perhaps locating some arcane lore or perhaps cursing one of the demon's enemies, consumer rights activist Darcy Bloom.



3. Using Water for Luck

Sometimes you just need a coincidence to help you out. The GM may let players score a tally against their water in order to force a coincidence and or a plot device. This can not be done if it would cripple a player's water element. For really outrageous coincidences, the Ref may require more than one tally, or tallies from more than one player.

4. Cosmic Forces: The Influence of Planets & Heavenly Bodies

At the start of each session, nominate one expertise which falls under the sway of each heavenly body. For the duration of the session, all rolls in that expertise where the character has at least one point in decan/talent (friend or foe) gain one Cosmic Forces advantage, except the sun and moon which are very auspicious and confer two edges. This can be done by group agreement (if the agents are able to chose their timing of the operation) or by Ref rule (if the timing is outside of the agents' control). Remember that the modifiers effect everyone's expertise, friend and foe, just as long as they have some talent in the field. The Ref may wish to require that all edges are justified by reference to the planets' spheres of influence.

Handy Planetary Chart (make as many copies as you like)

Planet	+	Sphere of Influence	Expertise Effected This Session
Sun	2	Violence, dealing with the elite, diplomacy	
Moon	2	Magick, the sea, fertility, seduction, emotions	
Mercury	1	Lies, books, animals, travel, vehicles	
Venus	1	Entertainment, romance, money, oral history	
Mars	1	Accidents, war, fire, hunting, conflict of any kind	
Jupiter	1	Deals and contracts, law, science, wealth, scholarship, religion, intellect	
Saturn	1	Death, enemies, secrecy, imprisonment, sorrow	
Uranus	1	Intuition, invention, technology, radicals, dictators, computers	
Neptune	1	Creativity, glamour, illusion, subversion, sleep, dreams, drugs	
Pluto	1	Obsession, control, regeneration, kidnapping, terror, secrets, the masses	



5. Geomancy - Earth Magick

"Sweet Mothership Earth, extend your gentle wings and give your blessing to the Afronauts who sail on your bossom, on the crest of groovilicious soul lovin'. Cast asside the uptight and the minions of Anti Love and put some Funk in their sad sorry asses."

"Will someone shoot him? ... Today!"
Dr Moog Swing and Eleanor Goodwife

Have you ever heard a rainforest breathe? It is a spectacular and humbling experience. Even in the city, late at night, when the traffic hum dies down, you can listen to the pulse of life reverberating so strongly that it can never be concreted over. This flow of life gathers in pools here and there, but is part of a much larger network of streams and rivers of energy which cover the planet.

Since the earliest days of humanity (and possibly before), geomancers have been acutely aware of this web of life energy and have attempted to map out its reach in sacred places and in power conduits – whether they be called ley lines, dragon lines or song lines. From the late days of the nineteenth century scientists have attempted to scientifically measure and harness this power as an alternative energy source. In the 1950s, this may just have happened at the Para-Institut of Geomancy in Hawaii, but no one survived the blast to provide any definite conclusions.

Geomancy is a para-science concerning earth power and the networks by which it connects all living beings on earth. Living creatures possess a form of energy which has been called Eidos energy - it transfers from prey to predator and then on to other predators or back into the earth when the last being in the chain dies of other causes. This deep reservoir of power which deChardin described as the 'noosphere', is the raw material of life which is recycled through the succession of life and death.

Geomancy concerns the perception and manipulation of this energy and it has been applied in several spheres of power: psychogeography, dimensional travel, oneirology, necrology, and the rather less scientific 'funk mastery' of which Dr Moog Swing is a vocal proponent.

Psychogeography is the study of the links between place, mind and mystical energies. This is largely a sensory sphere and practitioners become skilled at reading the psychological influences exerted by a place (or by architecture), looking for dimensional rifts and other anomalies and seeing entities such as ghosts (literal and figurative). Skilled masters can often deliberately shape and environment to create a specific effect on the people living in it. When this goes wrong, it goes very wrong...

Dimensional travel is hardly an exact science and regular teleportation is never a very good idea, especially given that Geomancy always has some kind of side effect. The ancients were believed to have better mastery of dimensional travel having built dimensional gates and interstellar craft such as the pyramids (which no-one has managed to reactivate). Geomancers can also use their powers to become intangible and pass through walls like a ghost, but this runs the risk of attracting the attention of extra-dimensional creatures.



Oνειrology is the science of dreams and hallucinations, an attempt to quantify these phenomena through quantum physics. Dimensional travel techniques seem to be able to open gateways to the world of dreams, but it is difficult to find many people willing to explore these spaces. Geomancologists become skilled at projecting dream images and hallucinatory phantasmagoria.

Necrology concerns the study of the elements of Eidos energy which are not readily absorbed back into the noosphere on death. Geomancologists have been experimenting with contacting the essences of the dead for advice and channelling their skills. The Eidos network which connects all ZODIAC agents seems to continue to connect them post mortem – especially the elite agents who seem to ‘live on’ in the network along with the primordial ‘giants’ or archetypes of myth. Unfortunately a high proportion of the essences available for contact are insane, traumatised or otherwise dangerous – those who die at peace are readily re-absorbed into the noosphere.

One argument links necrology and oneirology, suggesting that the ‘world of dreams’ is a fusion of these fragments of experience, memory and personality. Where strong passions or horror accompany death Eidos energy can become tainted and the noosphere often places a ‘protective skin’ over a fragment of life energy, waiting for it to break down of its own course before being absorbed back into the lifestreams. This may account for stories of ghosts and monsters. Where horrors occur on a massive scale these fragments become fetid pools of tainted Eidos with only a thin skin keeping it in. It can take a geological era for bad Eidos to decompose.

Funk Mastery is a recent development which explores the connections between Eidos energy and music. As with other elements of Geomancy, Scorpio division has been very active in experimenting and pushing the envelope further. Music, particularly funk music, seems to exert important spiritual energies and seems to provide a barrier against the control of malign influences and spiritual illnesses. More sober scientists warn that long term exposure to Funk seems to make other changes to the human brain but are unable to even begin to explain what these are.

Unlike other more stable para-sciences (or magicks), Geomancy has always been accompanied by a chaotic factor, one reason why it has never been a reliable energy source.

Whenever a character uses their Geomancy expertise, the Ref should randomly select a word, perhaps by flipping open a dictionary and stabbing it with a pin. This word becomes a conceptual flavour for the magickal effect, it could be an enhancement or a limitation, a cost or simply a weird detail or side effect. If a player busts a roll, a word should be selected but in this case the Eidos energy runs out of control and should at least be inconvenient. Once you invoke Eidos energy it never simply fails to work.

Geomancological forces can also contribute to the ‘Cosmic Forces’ external component of a target number. Just as the influence of the stars can shape destiny, the power of the earth can also be tapped by a canny agent.

Cosmic Forces (maximum of +3)

+1 operating on a site of great earth power which you have become attuned to through a ritual process

+1 if you have had the time and resources to shape the psychogeography of an area to suit the particular magickal purpose.

+1 using an Eidos enabled device such as a spirit gun or an Eidos networked computer. These are quite rare and are only given to senior ZODIAC agents. The elite may have access to legendary +2 Eidos weapons such as the Grasscutter sword (the one in the museum is a fake) or the Spear of Longinus.

+1 for tapping directly into the networks of earth power, this requires the agent to mark one tally against their Geomancy expertise.

+1 for invoking an archetype or the Eidos ghost of a specialist in the field, mark one tally against Thaumaturgical or Geomancy expertise.



SECTION IV: BASES AND VEHICLES

IV - Bases and Vehicles

"Cupcake! Did you have to bring that damn robot again!" – Herb Johnson

Where would spies be without their vehicles and secret bases? More to the point, what would happen to the entire economy of contractors, subcontractors, futurist interior designers and their families if the espionage industry opted for a Spartan, sensible approach?

In game mechanic terms, bases and vehicles give players extra resources to draw on during a session, in the form of extra equipment, henchpower, weapons, information and so on. Bases provide resources for the whole team while vehicles are specific to each player. By Faustian Compacts players can spend tallies (of the vehicle or base's own elements) to obtain resources or to aid in dice rolls.

The golden rule here is that the player needs to justify just *how* they are being aided by their vehicles or bases. The explanations can be outrageous, unlikely or uncanny, but the player must fit the game mechanic into the story.

In addition, each story should have at least one 'car chase or monster battle' a section or scene which enables the players' vehicles to hog the limelight – a car chase, tailing a suspect or fighting a giant radioactive taco fiend. All vehicles should be refitted and refuelled before this scene (ie have all tallies erased).

1. Bringing the Blueprints to Life

Bases and Vehicles are created with elements like characters, Bases get 0-12 points in each element, Vehicles get 0-6 points.

Bases get (total of all agents' spy ranks) x 4 to spend. Bases have advanced facilities for one training division.

Vehicles get the agent's spy rank x4 to spend, divided among the elements.

These elements can be used in the following situations:

- Earth: Defence and offence, weapons and armour
- Fire: Communications, surveillance, accessories, equipment and money, seduction
- Air: Knowledge, technology, databases, gadget options
- Water: Mystic capacity, charms, luck

Bases have a secret cover. Vehicles (apart from Robots) have a mundane appearance which transforms when necessary.

Vehicles can be any size, there are advantages and drawbacks to any size, see the Scale chart, below. When in conflict with individual people (not other vehicles) the opponent's expertise may be reduced.



Scale of vehicles

Size	Example	Effect
Accessory (not a vehicle as such)	Sword, Book, Mirror	Cannot be used in car chases or monster battles but can be carried on missions.
Small Vehicle	Motorcycle, glider, flying broom	An individual opponent without at least a small vehicle has their expertise halved. Can go many places other vehicles cannot but can only take one or two passengers
Standard Vehicle	Car	An individual opponent without at least a small vehicle has their expertise halved. +1 edge. Standard vehicles, mostly limited to roads or larger thoroughfares.
Big Vehicle	RV, Boat, Jet fighter	An individual opponent without at least a standard vehicle has their expertise halved. +2 edges. A conspicuous vehicle, but can contain several people and some base-like facilities.
Giant	Giant robot, Ocean liner	Vehicles of all other scales have their expertises quartered against the Giant vehicle, Individual people cannot fight against it (they just get squished) Very dangerous, impossible to use subtly.

In some series, Ref & players may agree to have vehicles which combine into one giant vehicle to fight. Simply add all the elements together (max 12), scale is Giant.

2. Using Base & Vehicle Resources

Vehicles can add advantage points to the target number in a way similar to Edges. The agent can use up to three points in an contest and an equivalent number of tallies are scored against the vehicle's relevant Element. This can happen as long as it can be explained in a way that makes sense. One common example is driving your vehicle into combat and using its earth to boost your fighting power.

This may also apply to bases when agents are performing challenges inside the base.

Bases can be drawn on by all players, Vehicles only by the specific player who owns it. Once the pool is spent it does not recover until the next session (like ammunition getting exhausted for the vehicle or weapon's "special attack" has run out of mystic jam).

Some examples:

- "I am driving my combi van into the graveyard and using it's mini missiles to clear out the groovy ghouls" (adding earth bonus to *firearms*)

- "I am calling the lab guys and getting the skinny on these weird footprints" (adding air bonus to *laboratory* or water to *arcana*)
- "I am using the inbuilt 8 track attention jammer to sneak past the security gate" (adding fire to *covert*)

Bases and Vehicles can also spend tallies for Faustian Compacts in the same way as characters can, tallied against the element itself as bases do not have talents. Base elements may also be spent to get access to flunkies who can be used at the players' disposal for the session (1 per point) drawn from the henchman services pool. Of course bases employ many more henchmen than this rule suggests, but most are required for regular duties – patrolling, checking the flashing lights on equipment, laundering the silver jumpsuits.

One common use of the Faustian Compact is to spend vehicle Air tallies to add gadgets which modify the whole vehicle, eg submersible cars, turbo jumping vespas and so forth. These last for the duration of the session.

Using a vehicle via remote control counts as a gadget, tallied against its Air. When choosing gadgets, remember an onboard computer is a gadget - a computer normally occupies a whole room (a 'personal computer' does not feature even in scifi until the 80s) and a carphone is very high-tech piece of mundane equipment.

To restate the Golden Rule: players must justify how a rules bonus works in terms of the story. So you can use the Fire of your flashy sports car to seduce the easily impressed, but not necessarily in order to stealthily follow someone into a supermarket...

3. Car Chases & Monster Battles.

At least once each game session the Ref might like to devise a scene which calls upon players to use their vehicles in a stunt filled extravaganza. It can be short or long, plot focussed or arbitrary. Vehicles are an important part of a ZODIAC agent's identity (particularly the boys...) and they should have an opportunity to flaunt their stuff.

These scenes can take various forms, some example:

- A car chase (*Vehicles*)
- Tailing a suspect (*Stalking*)
- Fighting a monster (*Vehicles or Firearms*)
- A mystic vehicle battle of curses (*Ritual Magick*)
- Hide and Seek using sensors (*Laboratory*)

At the start of the scene the Ref sets objectives for each side, a certain number of success margin points which must be accrued in order to win. 12 is a good number.

Objectives might include catching a fleeing enemy (or evading capture yourself), tailing an enemy vehicle back to its base without being seen, destroying something which the enemy vehicle is protecting.

Each round the Ref sets a challenge (with input from the players), an expertise roll for everyone involved. The two best rolls (one for each side) are compared. The difference between these gives an advantage to the winning side which can be used to accrue points or reduce the points of the opposition. During each exchange players can initiate one of the following tricks:

- Perform a stunt that the other side has

to match. For example if you are being chased, you can jump a canal over a ramp made of empty cardboard boxes, if they want to follow they will have to match it. Choose the difficulty of the stunt yourself. and the Ref rolls for the stunt. If you fail, you must record tallies against your Earth **and** goals. Then all members of the other side must roll. If members of the other side fails they lose Earth and goals and may have to abandon the chase. More vehicle stunts are mentioned in Section Four.

- Use gadgets to change the conditions of the contest. This may require the other side make a roll (difficulty set from the Quick Results table) such as having to evade a smoke screen or it might force them to match the gadget, such as suddenly turning your car into a hydrofoil and taking off into the bay.
- Use magick to curse your opponent, successes deducted from their goal points or edges they have created, for example by unleashing gremlins in their gadgets.

Vehicles, Robots and Bases can be repaired (that is, have tallies removed) by an agent recording tallies against their respective expertises, on a one-to-one basis. Robots get to double dip and count as both Robots and Vehicles, but are otherwise penalised as they cannot transform to a mundane appearance.





Part B: The World of Caserfile: ZODIAC