

Beneath a High Pillow

a game of deals, power, and crime.

by Jason A. Petrasko
An entry for Iron Game Chef 2005.

Iron Game Chef 2005 **Theme (Historical Period):**

- **The roaring twenties.**

Iron Game Chef 2005 **Ingredients:**

- **Companion** - *as all players are part of a crime syndicate.*

- **Accuser** - *as in all players are evading the finger from the fuzz.*

- **Wine** - *as in the currency of the boss, prohibition era bounty.*

Iron Game Chef 2005 **Rules Restriction(s):**

- **Pregen Characters** - *as 18 known players.*

- **No character sheet** - *as player are defined by a mere two things and cards.*

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Introduction

"Look, I told the guy I was going for the chinese angle. It's not like I can just barge in and shoot the boss full of daylight, ya know? But rest assured someday I'll be the High Pillow"

- Bruno

"It takes a delicate touch doll. These guys are crucial. I can't run my show without them, but they can't get a bead on me either. While I watch their every move, I have to keep them happy. Sometimes it's jack they are after, other times dames, and often hooch."

- Mr. Singer, the current Boss

"I had him in my sights, gats blazing. I really thought he couldn't get away. That dutch is one hell of a lucky stiff."

- Gonsel

Beneath a High Pillow is a game that tries to capture the feel of the immortal power struggle. This particular one takes place in the roaring twenties, the prohibition era. The game's players all take on the role of major players in a crime syndicate active during the period. The focus of play is the struggle between the current boss and the players he uses to get the job done. It's a struggle to maintain the status que in an ever-changing environment of promises, lies, and wine as bounty. I'll introduce a selection of twenties terms first, then move on from there to game concepts. Here we go!

Twenties Terms

The game uses several terms from the twenties in the text, and encourages their use during gameplay to enrich the feel of the play. I stripped out a lot of terms to keep this short, and boldfaced the ones that are used in this text. Be forewarned, the list is still quite long. You may just want to skip it for now and jump to page 13.

Ankle: (n) Woman (v) To walk

Baby: A person, can be said to either a man or a woman

Bangtails: Racehorses

Barber: Talk

Bean-shooter: Gun

Beef: problem

Bee's Knees: An extraordinary person, thing, idea; the ultimate.

Behind the eight-ball: In a difficult position, in a tight spot

Bent cars: Stolen cars

Berries: Dollars or Something attractive; similar to "bee's knees"

Big Cheese, Big Shot - The boss. Someone of importance and influence

Big house: Jail

Big one, The: Death

Big sleep, The: Death (coined by Chandler)

Bindle
 - of heroin: Little folded-up piece of paper (with heroin inside)
 - the bundle (or "brindle") in which a hobo carries all his worldly possessions
 Bindle punk, bindle stiff: Chronic wanderers; itinerant misfits, criminals, migratory harvest workers, and lumber jacks. Called so because they carried a "bindle." George and Lenny in *Of Mice and Men* are bindle stiffs.
 Bing: Jailhouse talk for solitary confinement, hence "crazy"
 Bird: Man
 Bit: Prison sentence
 Blarney: derogatory term for an Irish person
 Blip off: To kill
 Blow: Leave
 Blow one down: Kill someone
 Blower: Telephone
 Bluenose: A prude.
Boiler: Car
 Boozehound: Drunkard
 Box: A safe or A bar
 Box job: A safecracking
 Bracelets: Handcuffs
 Broad: Woman
 Broderick, The: A thorough beating
Bruno: Tough guy, enforcer
 Bulge, as in "The kid had the bulge there": The advantage
 Bulls: Plainclothes railroad cops; uniformed police; prison guards
 Bump: Kill
 Bunk:
 - "Take a bunk" - leave, disappear
 - "That's the bunk" - that's false, untrue
 - "to bunk" - to sleep
 Bunny, as in "Don't be a bunny": Don't be stupid
 Bus: Big car
 Butter and egg man: The money man, the man with the bankroll, a yokel who comes to town to blow a big wad in nightclubs
 Button: Face, nose, end of jaw
 Button man: Professional killer
Buttons: Police
 Buzz, as in "I'm in the dump an hour and the house copper gives me the buzz": Looks me up, comes to my door
 Buzzer: Policeman's badge
 C: \$100, a pair of Cs = \$200
 Cabbage: Money
 Caboose: Jail (from "calaboose," which derives from calabozo, the Spanish word for "jail")
 Call copper: Inform the police
 Can: Jail or Car
 Can house: Bordello
 Can-opener: Safecracker who opens cheap safes
 Canary: Woman singer
 Cat: Man

Cat's Meow: Something splendid or stylish; similar to bee's knees.

Cat's Pajamas: "I think yer the cat's pajamas" - term of endearment translated in today's terms as "I think you are really really cool".

Century: \$100

Cheaters: Sunglasses

Cheese it: Put things away, hide

Chicago lightning: gunfire

Chicago overcoat: Coffin

Chin: Conversation; chinning: talking

Chin music: Punch on the jaw

Chinese angle, as in "You're not trying to find a Chinese angle on it, are you?": A strange or unusual twist or aspect to something

Chinese squeeze: Grafting by skimming profits off the top

Chippy: Woman of easy virtue

Chisel: To swindle or cheat

Chopper squad: Men with machine guns

Clean sneak: An escape with no clues left behind

Clip joint: In some cases, a night-club where the prices are high and the patrons are fleeced (Partridge's), but in Pick-Up a casino where the tables are fixed

Clipped: Shot

Clubhouse: Police station

Coffee-and-doughnut, as in "These coffee-and-doughnut guns are ...": Could come from "coffee and cakes," which refers to something cheap or of little value.

Con: Confidence game, swindle

Cool: To knock out

Cooler: Jail

Copper: Policeman or Time off for good behavior

Corn: Bourbon ("corn liquor")

Cush: Money (a cushion, something to fall back on)

Daisy: None too masculine

Dame: Woman

Dance: To be hanged

Dangle: Leave, get lost

Dark meat: Black person

Daylight, as in "let the daylight in" or "fill him with daylight": Put a hole in, by shooting or stabbing

Deck, as in "deck of Luckies": Pack of cigarettes

Dego: derogatory term for an Italian

Derrick: Shoplifter

Diapers, as in "Pin your diapers on": Clothes, get dressed

Dick: Detective (usually qualified with "private" if not a policeman)

Dingus: Thing

Dip: Pickpocket

Dish: Pretty woman

Dive: A low-down, cheap sort of place

Dizzy with a dame, To be: To be deeply in love with a woman

Do the dance: To be hanged

Dogs: Feet

Doll, dolly: Woman

Dope

- Drugs, of any sort
- Information
- As a verb, as in "I had him doped as" - to have figured for
- A person marked for a con or a gullible person.

Dough: Money

Drift: Go, leave

Drill: Shoot

Drink out of the same bottle, as in "We used to drink out of the same bottle": We were close friends

Drop a dime: Make a phone call, sometimes meaning to the police to inform on someone

Droppers: Hired killers

Drum: Speakeasy

Duck soup: Easy, a piece of cake

Dump: Roadhouse, club; or, more generally, any place

Dust

- Nothing, as in "Tinhorns are dust to me"
- Leave, depart, as in "Let's dust"
- A look, as in "Let's give it the dust"

Dust out: Leave, depart

Dutch

- As in "in dutch" - trouble
- As in "A girl pulled the Dutch act" - committed suicide
- As in "They don't make me happy neither. I get a bump once'n a while. Mostly a Dutch." - ??

relates to the police (Art)

Eggs in the coffee: Easy, a piece of cake, okay, all right

Elbow:

- Policeman
- A collar or an arrest. Someone being arrested will "have their elbows checked."

Electric cure: Electrocutation

Fade: Go away, get lost

Fakeloo artist: Con man

Fin: \$5 bill

Finder: Finger man

Finger, Put the finger on: Identify

Flaming Youth: The male counterpart to a flapper.

Flapper: A stylish, brash young woman with short skirts and shorter hair.

Flat Tire: A dull-witted or disappointing date.

Flattie: Flatfoot, cop

Flimflam: Swindle

Flippers: Hands

Flivver: A Ford automobile

Flop: As in "The racket's flopped" - fallen through, not worked out

Flophouse: "A cheap transient hotel where a lot of men sleep in large rooms"

Frau: Wife

Fry: To be electrocuted

From nothing, as in "I know from nothing": I don't know anything

Fuzz: police

Gams: Legs (especially a woman's)

Gashouse, as in "getting gashouse": Rough

Gasper: Cigarette

Gat: Gun

Gate, as in "Give her the gate": The door, as in leave

Gaycat: "A young punk who runs with an older tramp and there is always a connotation of homosexuality"

(Speaking)

Getaway sticks: Legs (especially a woman's)

Giggle juice: Liquor

Gin mill: Bar

Gink: Man

Girlie: Woman

Give a/the third: Interrogate (third degree)

Glad rags: Fancy clothes

Go climb up your thumb: Go away, get lost

Go over the edge with the rams: To get far too drunk

Go to read and write: Rhyming slang for take flight

Goog: Black eye

Goon: Thug

Goose: Man

Gooseberry lay: Stealing clothes from a clothesline

Gowed-up: On dope, high

Grab (a little) air: Put your hands up

Graft: Con jobs or Cut of the take

Greasers: Mexicans or Italians / A hoodlum, thief or punk.

Grift: As in "What's the grift?": What are you trying to pull?

Grifter: Con man

Grilled: Questioned

Guinea: derogatory term for an Italian

Gum: Opium

Gum-shoe: Detective; also gumshoeing = detective work

Gun for: Look for, be after

Guns: Pickpockets or Hoodlums

Gunsel: Gunman

Hack: Taxi

Half, A: 50 cents

Hammer and saws: Police (rhyming slang for laws)

Hard: Tough

Harlem sunset: Some sort fatal injury caused by knife (Farewell, 14)

Hash house: A cheap restaurant

Hatchetmen: Killers, gunmen

Have the bees: To be rich

Have the curse on someone: Wanting to see someone killed

Head doctors: Psychiatrists

Heater: gun

Heebie-Jeebies: The jitters.

Heeled: Carrying a gun

High-Hat: To snub.

High pillow: Person at the top, in charge

Highbinder: Corrupt politician or functionary
Hinky: Suspicious
Hitting the pipe: Smoking opium
Hitting on all eight: In good shape, going well (refers to eight cylinders in an engine)
Hock shop: Pawnshop
Hogs: Engines
Hombre: Man, fellow
Hooch: Liquor
Hood: Criminal
Hooker, as in "a stiff hooker of whiskey": A drink of strong liquor
Hop-head: Drug addict, esp. heroin
Horn: Telephone
Hot: Stolen
Hotsy-Totsy: Pleasing.
House dick: House/hotel detective
Hype: Shortchange artist
Ice: Diamonds
Jack: Money
Jake, Jakeloo: Okay Used like "cool" in modern slang.
Jam: Trouble, as in "in a jam"
Jane: A woman
Java: Coffee
Jaw: Talk
Jingle-brained: Addled
Joe: Coffee, as in "a cup of joe"
Johns: Police
Johnson brother: Criminal
Joint: Place, as in "my joint"
Jorum of skee: Shot of liquor
Joss house: Temple or house of worship for a Chinese religion
Juice: Interest on a loanshark's loan
Jujus: Marijuana cigarettes
Jump, The: A hanging
Keen: Attractive or appealing.
Keister, keyster: Suitcase / Safe, strongbox / Buttocks
Kick, as in "I got no kick": I have nothing to complain about
Kicking the gong around: Taking opium
Kike: derogatory term for a Jewish person
Kiss: To punch
Kisser: Mouth
Kitten: Woman
Knockover: Heist, theft
Lammed off: Ran away, escaped
Large: \$1,000; twenty large would be \$20,000

Lay

- Job, as in Marlowe saying he's on "a confidential lay;" or more generally, what someone does, as in "The hotel-sneak used to be my lay"

- As in "I gave him the lay" - I told him where things stood (as in lay of the of land)

Lead: "fill ya full of lead": the term used for bullets

Lead poisoning: To be shot

Lettuce: Folding(Folded?) money

Lid: Hat

Lit, To be: To be drunk

Looker: Pretty woman

Look-out: Outside man

Lousy with: To have lots of

Mac: a man

Made: Recognized

Mark: Sucker, victim of swindle or fixed game

Maroon: person marked for a con or a gullible person.

Meat, as in "He's your meat": He's the subject of interest, there's your man

Meat wagon: Ambulance

Mic: derogatory term for an Irish person

Mickey Finn: A drink drugged with knock-out drops or to Take off, leave

Mill: Typewriter

Mitt: Hand

Monicker: Name

Mud-pipe: Opium pipe

Muggles: Marijuana

Mugs: Men (esp. dumb ones)

Nailed: Caught by the police

Nance: An effeminate man

Nevada gas: Cyanide

Newshawk: Reporter

Newsie: Newspaper vendor

Nicked: Stole

Nippers: Handcuffs

Noodle: Head

Nose-candy: Heroin, in some cases

Number: A person, can be either a man or a woman

Off the track, as in "He was too far off the track. Strictly section eight": Said about a man who becomes insanelly violent

Packing Heat: carrying a gun, armed

Palooka: Man, probably a little stupid

Pan: Face

Paste: Punch

Paw: Hand

Peaching: Informing

Peepers: Eyes

Pen: Penitentiary, jail

Peterman: Safecracker who uses nitroglycerin

Piece: Gun

Pigeon: Stool-pigeon
Pinch: An arrest, capture
Pipe: See or notice
Pipe that: Get that, listen to that
Pipes: Throat
Pitching woo: Making love (Turner)
Plant: Someone on the scene but in hiding
Plug: Shoot
Pop: Kill
Pro skirt: Prostitute
Puffing: Mugging
Pump: Heart
Pump metal: Shoot bullets
Punk: thug or "A jailhouse sissy who is on the receiving end."
Put down: Drink
Put the screws on: Question or 'get tough with'.
Queer: Counterfeit or Sexually abnormal
Rags: Clothes
Ranked: Observed, watched, given the once-over
Rap: Criminal charge, Information, as in "He gave us the rap", or Hit
Rappers: Fakes, set-ups
Rat: Inform
Rate: To be good, to count for something
Rats and mice: Dice, i.e. craps
Red-light: To eject from a car or train
Redhot: Some sort of criminal
Reefers: Marijuana cigarettes
Right: Adjective indicating quality
Right gee, Right guy: A good fellow
Ringers: Fakes
Rub-out: A killing
Rube: Bumpkin, easy mark
Rumble, the: The news
Sap: dumb guy or a blackjack
Sawbuck: \$10 bill (a double sawbuck is a \$20 bill)
Scratch: Money
Scratcher: Forger
Send over: Send to jail
Sharper: A swindler or sneaky person
Sheba: A woman with sex appeal.
Sheik: A man with sex appeal.
Shells: Bullets
Shine: Black person or Moonshine, bootleg liquor
Shyster: Lawyer
Silk, as in "all silk so far": All okay so far
Sing: Confess, admit secrets
Sister: Woman
Skate around, as in "She skates around plenty": To be of easy virtue

Skirt: Woman
Slant, Get a: Take a look
Smell from the barrel, Have a: Have a drink
Smoked: Drunk
Snap a cap: Shout
Snatch: Kidnap
Sneeze: Take
Snitch: An informer, or, as a verb, to inform
Snort (as in of gin): A drink
Snow-bird: (Cocaine) addict
Snowed: To be on drugs (heroin? cocaine?); also "snowed up"
Speakeasy: An illicit bar selling bootleg liquor.
Soak: To pawn
Soup: Nitroglycerine
Soup job: To crack a safe using nitroglycerine
Spill: Talk, inform; spill it = tell me
Square: Honest; on the square: telling the truth
Squeeze: a female companion; girlfriend. Frequently used in underworld circles.
Sticks of tea: Marijuana cigarettes
Stiff: A corpse
Sting: Culmination of a con game
Stool-pigeon: Informer
Stuck On: Having a crush on.
Sucker: Someone ripe for a grifter's scam
Sugar: Money
Swanky: Ritzy.
Swell: Wonderful.
Swing: Hang
Tail: Shadow, follow
Take a powder: Leave
Take for a Ride: To drive off with someone in order to bump them off.
Take the bounce: To get kicked out (here, of a hotel)
Tea: Marijuana
That's the crop: That's all of it
Three-spot: Three-year term in jail
Ticket: P.I. license
Tighten the screws: Put pressure on somebody
Tin: Badge
Tip a few: To have a few drinks
Tip your mitt: Show your hand, reveal something
Tooting the wrong ringer: Asking the wrong person
Torpedoes: Gunmen
Trap: Mouth
Trip for biscuits, as in "You get there fast and you get there alone - or you got a trip for biscuits": Make the trip for no purpose, achieve no results
Trouble boys: Gangsters
Two bits: \$25, or 25 cents.
Under glass: In jail

Up-and-down, as in "to give something the up-and-down": A look
Wear iron: Carry a gun
White: Good, okay, as in "white dick" or Gin ("a gallon of white")
Wire, as in "What's the wire on them?": News, "What information do you have about them?"
Wise head: A smart person
Wooden kimono: A coffin
Wop: derogatory term for an Italian
Worker, as in "She sizes up as a worker": A woman who takes a guy for his money
Wrong gee: Not a good fellow
Ya Follow: do you understand?
Yap: Mouth
Yard: \$100

Concepts at a Glance

Clemenza: All right, you just shot 'em both. Now what do you do?
Michael: Sit down and finish my dinner. - The Godfather.

a High Pillow is built upon a set of concepts that must be grasped before we can continue. These will come into play again and again during the game, so learn them well. I'll lay all them out here with some detail and how they fit into play.

Currency / Cards: The currency of the game are cards. Each card needs to be a blank index card, since we will write on them during play. Cards are tradeable between players, given they maintain their type during the trade (trading with the boss is an exception here). On the bottom of every card is some hardship that befalls the owner if the card is played. I call these hardships Sticks and Stones, and I will introduce them later in this section. There are six types of cards in the game: Rap, Bulge, and Berries are held by the players. Promises, Lies, and Wine are held by the boss. These cards either work for the player and are positive, work against the player and are negative, or don't really work for them persay and are neutral.

Player: Each character in the game is a player, as is the person that plays them. If I have to specify a level of abstraction, I call the in-game player "player", and the person playing them the "player's player". Usually though I let the term work synonymously. Players (who aren't the boss) have three types of cards: Rap, Bulge, and Berries. Rap cards are negative currency, Bulge cards are positive currency, and Berries are neutral currency. Each player is defined by their taste and specialty.

The Boss: One player is the current boss of the crime syndicate. This player has a completely different role in the game. Simply put they work in subtle ways trying to hold onto their power. They have three types of cards: Promises, Lies, and Wine. Each of these is a positive currency for them, unlike the player's cards.

Taste: This is what appeases the player and gives the boss a method to sooth them. It's a kind of thirst or lust for something and grants the boss an angle on the player. Taste comes in three varieties: Jack, Dames, and Hooch.

Specialty: Each player has something they excel at, something that has made them worthy

of a powerful position in the crime syndicate. This ability, talent, or asset is called their specialty. When it's employed the player gets to roll better (more sides) dice for progress. The negative side is that embracing the specialty makes the player take an active role in the work- which could have side effects.

Sticks and Stones: These hardships are created when a card is issued to a player. Cards always have a source, which defaults to the boss if none is specified. The source is the person that creates the hardship. When revealed they are made into a stick or a stone by the whim of the boss. A stone is something that drops a point of progress from the current work, and a stick simply causes the target number for a die roll to go up one. Choosing when a stick applies is an important choice in the game's strategy. Choosing not to apply sticks turns them into stones later, but we'll get to that in another section.

Rap Cards: These cards represent the charges and criminal activities that the fuzz has linked to the player. Each rap card increases the chance of a player being sent to the big house if they are fingered.

Bulge Cards: Gaining advantage both within and outside the crime syndicate earns a player bulge cards. If your player had a 'strength' stat, this would be it. Bulge cards are used many ways in the game, but they can almost always be played for advantage dice (the best dice in the game).

Berries Cards: (AKA Berry Cards). When a player plays out their taste, indulges so to speak, they earn berries. These are like contentment or happiness cards. They don't do too much really, except in trade and conflict, but have some effect on game state as it relates to the player. More on this a little later.

Promise Cards: Each of these cards is written out on the top with a deal. Each deal is some trade that is held in wait, while something needs to be done. Any player can create a promise given it involves another player, but it's only a promise if it hinges on something in play. All promise cards are held by the boss, as they are most commonly employed by the boss. Promises should be encouraged by the boss using open trade (immediate, non-promise trades).

Lie Cards: These cards are only created by certain in-game events. Broken promises become lie cards. Other events also cause lie cards, often trashing player's cards at the same time. Once a promise is made a lie, no trade in the vein of that promise (boss chooses the scope of this effect) can be made.

Wine Cards: These are like Berries and Bulge cards for the boss rolled into one. The boss earns wine cards when he encourages players to 'take the lay' and do required work. He spends them to earn advantage dice in play.

Playing Cards: When a card is played both it's mechanical effect occurs (based on the card type) and it's flipped to reveal it's secret Sticks and Stones. If the sticks and stones breaks a promise, that promise becomes a lie. This is another important game method which needs to be embraced by the player. If a card is 'played down' it doesn't reveal it's Sticks and Stones, and instead just gets trashed, though it counts as played mechanically.

Trashing Cards: When a card is trashed it is literally tossed in the trash with no effect.

Presence: A type of point awarded to players that embrace the cliches of the game, and

that win conflict resolution. The player with the most presence for a story wins a 'spotlight'. You could use blank cards to denote presence points for players if that is easiest, or perhaps use a d20, or chips.

Cliche: Each is a "hackneyed theme, characterization, or situation" that fits in the roaring twenties. Working these into your story telling earns you presence. Multiple uses of the same cliché in a story earns no presence though.

Trust-Dice: Each die and roll in the game represents placing a degree of trust in either your own ability as a player, or in others to get your work done. Hence we call the dice trust-dice. The dice used to represent trust in the game are: d6, d8, d12, and d20. These are called low, normal, high, and advantage trust-dice respectively.

The Known Players

Don Corleone: What have I ever done to make you treat me so disrespectfully? If you'd come to me in friendship, then this scum that ruined your daughter would be suffering this very day. And if by chance an honest man like yourself should make enemies, then they would become my enemies. And then they would fear you.
- The Godfather.

There are eighteen known players in this syndicate that the game is portraying. Each has a specific taste and specialty, and comes with a little introduction as well. You do not make characters in this game, but instead select one from the list of eighteen. If your player is whacked, sent to the cooler, or is otherwise removed from play then you have to select a new player and re-enter play. Here are the eighteen known players common dope-sheets:

Bruno is Malcom Sage

Taste: Hooch - Specialty: Muscle

Bruno is a large, built man who has gone bald some time ago. He wears nice dark suits and frequents the best clubs. Bruno's specialty is muscle. He gets to use the high trust die for intimidation and fisticuffs.

Buttons is Oscar Sail

Taste: Dames - Specialty: Frame-jobs

Buttons is a police captain. He is in the business deep though, always there to bail out the players. Buttons dresses moderately and has a weakness for flappers. He gets to roll a d12 for avoiding the finger (instead of the normal d6), and never gets advantage dice. In their stead he earns high trust dice.

Derrick is Sanders

Taste: Jack - Specialty: Petty Crime

Derrick is a renowned burglar from across the Atlantic. He has taken up residence in the city and has thrown his hat in with the business. He always looks a little dingy and is

quite the miser. He gets high trust dice for criminal actions such breaking and entering, conning, etc. as long as they fall under the guise of petty crime.

Dutch is John Singer

Taste: Hooch - Specialty: Lucky Break

Dutch is by far the one player most often in trouble. However, in his defense he seems to be able to always find a break. If asked he claims his luck is actually incredible planning and forethought, though most doubt that. Dutch dresses top-notch and spends a lot of time in clubs. He and Bruno are fast friends. Dutch gets the high trust die when making narrow escapes and finding lucky breaks.

Fin is Derek Scarfe

Taste: Dames - Specialty: Schemes

Fin is most likely the best schemer about town. He can reportedly turn a Fin (\$5) into five centuries (\$500) in under a week. He always wears the best suits with the finest details. He earns the high trust die when employing money-making or overly complex schemes to get the job done.

Gunsel is Edward Miles

Taste: Jack - Specialty: Gats (guns)

Gunsel is just that, a fatical gunman. He believes in the strength of superior fire power, and earns the high trust die when making with the intense chicago lightning. Gunsel looks much like your average man on the street, with a large wagon that carries his arsenal. He is always on the lookout for more jack, since his hobby is rather expensive.

Hype is Otto Swift

Taste: Hooch - Specialty: Streetwise

Hype started running on the streets for the little movers. Later he worked his way up the chain and is now a made man. His motto is 'Dress sharp, be sharp.' Hype has a taste for fine wine and knows the streets in depth. He gets the high trust die when working the street, both for connections and employing known friends from it. Hype is fast friends with Fin but hates Dutch- he has no respect for the lucky break.

Ice is Reynold Times

Taste: Dames - Specialty: Commodities

Ice has made it big by dipping his hands into all the black business about town. He now has so many commodities that he earned the nickname Ice (diamonds). The problem he has is that all his money is tied up in stuff. Ice has a taste for collecting. He never gets advantage dice, instead he has the power to drag other players into his work. Any other player that has a taste for jack can be coaxed into lending him a hand. They can resist but suffer a rap, though if they don't resist they earn a berry.

Jasper is Burt McKee

Taste: Jack - Specialty: Goons

Jasper is a low-life nobody, nothing like the other players here. However his extensive army of street goons makes him a force that has to be recognized. In that way he has become a player in this business. He gets the high trust die when employing his mentally challenged goons for action. He is hated and hates most of the other players, but secretly

likes Hype and Dutch.

Mac is *Alfred Domine*

Taste: Hooch - Specialty: Transportation

Mac is a big man in the transport business. You need something moved and he can do it, both safely and discrete. Mac is probably the most calm and collected of the players in this business. He has extreme self-control and some wisdom. Mac gets no advantage dice, but can roll a high trust die to avoid succumbing to his taste.

Nevada is *Patrick Oreilly*

Taste: Dames - Specialty: Poison / Assassin

Sometimes called Nevada Gas based on his rather nasty use of cyanide. Nevada is a true assassin that takes pleasure in his work. He earns the high trust die when he employs poison and personally handled killings in his actions. Nevada is a tall thin man with a pale complexion and often wears whites. Nevada has a long standing feud with Buttons and rather likes Bruno (his methods).

Plant is *William Rekken*

Taste: Jack - Specialty: Subtlety / Stealth

Plant earned his name by his stealthy nature and hiding ability. He can virtually disappear in a room of people and often sneaks into the damndest places. Plant is an average height man of average appearance, he doesn't stand out at all. Plant earns the high trust die when employing stealth and subtle planning in his work. Plant is a fast friend of Ice and would like to prove Hype is nothing but a street punk.

Red is *Nicholas Tremaine*

Taste: Hooch - Specialty: Politics & Wisdom

Red is a big mover and greaser in the political segment. He is an aging man with wispy white hair and numerous wrinkles. Red has a taste for whiskey and is probably the wisest of the players in this business. He throws the high trust die when he can involve politics or timeless wisdom in his actions. Red is a mentor to both Mac and Plant, and has survived numerous attempts on his life from Fin who wants him out of the way.

White is *Terry Roth*

Taste: Dames - Specialty: Brewers

White is a middle aged man who knows all the right people. The right people to get you some moonshine anyway. He works a day job as a reporter and spends the nights hooking up the distributors to their suppliers. White has a taste for older ritzy chicks and gin (hence his nick).

Snow-bird is *Billy Korg*

Taste: Jack* - Specialty: Taking the heat

Snow-bird is considered a joke by many of the other players in this business. He tends to 'blow' all his money (on the snow/cocaine). Snow-bird is a young man, but is already looking rather raggid and old. His specialty is taking the heat, and he rolls a high

trust die everytime he can do that for the activities of another player or boss.

Joe is Frank Baldwin

Taste: Hooch - Specialty: None*

Plain Joe, as he is sometimes called is nobody at all. He's in the business because he knows White from when he (Joe) was but knee-high to a grasshopper. White wanted to hook him up, and he did. Joe's plain vanilla nature and clean-slate award him more trust than the others over all. When playing Joe, roll one trust level higher for low and medium trust dice- (making them medium and high). Joe gets no specialty though.

Dick is Ron Markoff

Taste: Dames - Specialty: Gumshoe

Dick is a man of moderate taste and awesome attention to detail. After quitting the force, where he worked as a detective, he now is a private dick for the business. He gets payed well and really likes to spend it on the girlies. Dick gets to roll high trust dice when he is doing his gumshoe schtick.

Eye-glass is Oxford Nells Kealing

Taste: Unknown* - Specialty: Unknown

Eye-glass is virtually unknown. He might be the one behind all the business in the city, or he might just be some powerful man trying to muscle into the scene. Whatever the case, He is never seen. Only by the presence of his henchman and his deeds is he ever detectible. In those cases strange things point back to a man with a penchant for wearing an eye-glass. Eye-glass never gets berries, instead they are counted as rap. He gets no high trust dice since he has no specialty. If he is ever fingered, he gets the big sleep (whacked). However, his stealth like style allows him to roll d12s (instead of d6s) for finger tests.

Setting up the Game

To play the game you'll need to gather the following things:

- A package (or more than 100) 3x5 index cards, either ruled or not
- A bold brazen marker and a more stylish pen
- Two or more sets of the following dice: d6, d8, d12 and d20.
- A medium-to-large play area that allows each player to lay 4 stacks of cards.

Now comes the hard part. You need to gather the players together and then let them select their player from the eighteen known ones listed previously. The first person to select a player takes on the roll of the boss, or you can roll off on the d20 where the highest is the starting boss. Once we know who the players are and who is the boss, then we need to give the boss one wine card for each player (except the boss). To do so, each player gives a wine card- they label the card 'Wine' on the back and write a Sticks and Stones entry on the bottom. The cards are placed bottom down on the table (not openly revealed) and slid over to the boss who collects them. I'll give examples of those Sticks and Stones entries in the forthcoming section of the same title. Now the boss has to shuffle out a single card to trash, pruning the cards down one. Perhaps even pruning an additional one per every three players if you prefer (keeps the boss in check).

Ok, so now before we can begin the gameplay, the players must all introduce themselves. This is a way to make sure everyone is on the same page before the game begins. The boss goes first, and needs to both name the city they are in and the current situation of the business. This 'newsflash' sets the tone for the game, a tone the players can enrich with their introductions. Once the introductions are carried out, then the game can get underway.

Structure of Play

Sonny: We don't discuss business at the table. - *The Godfather.*

The game is played in a sequence of rounds called stories. Each story centers on one player who is called the principal of that story. The other players become the cast, and the boss is just the boss- neither principal or cast. The principal is the main character for the story, and everything meaningful revolves around them in it.

The play of the game is round robin, with the current principal moving from the player at the boss' left clockwise around the table and then back again. The boss though never gets a turn as principal, instead he gets his 'spotlight' as discuss later. Any player can choose to select a replacement for their turn, another player to take their place for a given story. The target player need not agree, it's the current player's choice alone. Why do so? Because the principal of the story never gets the ability to do certain things, and this can allow a player to circumvent that if the need arises.

In between the story rounds there should be open table-talk. Make sure to give ample time between them so the matters of the last story get resolved in everyone's mind. Let player's settle down some, if needed. Examples of what I mean will come later, but basically use the table-talk time to make sure the tone is set and everyone has a good grasp of what just happened. Fill in missing details, etc.

Story Round Overview

Each story round begins with the Boss describing the lay. This is a crime job that the player can elect to take or pass on to the next player of the next story-round. Note that this occurs **after** the player has chosen a replacement for the current round, if they opted to embrace that ability.

After the lay is described, the current player that will become the principal elects one agenda from the three below for the story:

- **Take the lay:** Do the job as described by the boss. This earns the player bulge and the boss wine. You can't take the lay if you have more bulge than the boss has wine (a dynamic to inspire 'meaner' play - see below).
- **Put the screws on:** Put the pressure on another player with one or more rap. This earns that player more rap and possibly fingers them.

- **Tip your mitt:** Challenge the boss to a showdown that will decide who's dead and who's in charge! This is a final confrontation with the boss and a player who is ready to step up. One player here will be whacked and the other become/ remain the boss. There are some special rules for this story, detailed later.

Since the players begin with no rap and are in no position to tip their mitt, they have to take the lay. This makes the game begin with a natural flow, like your running a real business. Once things step up the best players will have to either tip their mitt or put the screws on because they won't be able to take the lay (the bulge vs. wine restriction). This makes for the start of the downward spiral into the deep power struggle I am emulating here. Tipping your mitt here is, of course, quite a show stopper and should happen rarely unless you want your player put down like a dog often.

A timeout: Agendas and Progress

Tom Hagen: [after finding out Tessio sold Michael out] Tessio. I always thought it would be Clemenza.

Michael: It's the smart move. Tessio was always smarter. - The Godfather.

Each agenda measures progress in it's own way. Progress in taking the lay has different mechanical effects from progress in putting the screws on. In a way I'm getting ahead of myself here, since we haven't talked about how to handle progress and trust-dice yet. However, I think we need to start from the goals and work back for a clear explanation of play. Here is a quick summary of what progress 'means' for each agenda:

- **Taking the lay:** Every 3 progress earns the player one bulge (from the boss). Every 2 progress earns the boss one wine (from the principal).
- **Putting the screws on:** Every 3 progress earns the target player one rap (from the principal).
- **Tip your mitt:** Every progress works to best a total of 4 (5 or more). If you get that much progress you've won against the boss and whacked him, becoming the new boss. If you don't the boss whacks you and remains the boss.

We'll get back to the general overview of play now, filling in the important concepts of storytelling.

Storytelling, Conflict, and Presence

Tessio: [realizing that Michael knows he was the traitor] Tom. Can you get me off the hook? You know, for old times sake?

Tom Hagen: [shakes his head] Can't do it, Sally. - The Godfather.

When the principal selects an agenda, they get to be the storyteller for the current story. They navigate their principal through the story, trying to do several things all at once. Important to note is the fact that they don't exist to oppose themselves, that is the goal of the other players as cast. If the principal's player isn't opposed ever, they get away with everything as planned

except where trust is concerned and the dice come into play. Here is a little list of the things that the storyteller wants to do in their stories:

- **Introduce cliches.** This earns them presence points, and lets the boss interject with their 2 cents. Additionally, with a limited amount of cliches the principal's player has the ability to get their first and employ them in a story.
- **Establish a trust scene.** They can't simply declare a trust dice roll, they need to reach a special point in the story called a trust scene. This lets them start rolling trust dice to earn progress. The boss wants to get them doing more than merely rolling trust dice, so he has the power to turn a trust scene into other types of scenes (discuss soon enough).
- **Gain cooperation.** The principal can use other players as a source of progress in a scene, and can make immediate deals at whim (though they need played out in the story). Using cooperation, between both the other players and the boss is a powerful tool.

Sometimes the cast speaks up and creates opposition to the principal. This can come in any logical form, anything that would impede the storyteller in their plan of action. This conflict can be announced by any cast member at any time, but is often dismissed by the boss as trivial. It's only genuine conflicts that are of interest in the game mechanics. Here is an example:

Bruno (Principal): *I head down to the shop of the best thief in town, jimmy.*

Dutch (Cast): *Wait. The door is locked and nobody is home.*

Mr. Sanders (Boss): *That's Trivial. Bruno simply goes home and gets on the horn to jimmy's handle.*

In this case the conflict was deemed trivial and resolved with no rolling or mechanic at all. The cast are always allowed to ask for help if they can't think of a genuine opposition, but cannot take back opposition that has been introduced. Regardless of the nature of the conflict the boss handles the fallout, describing what happens as a result. Mechanically, this does nothing for trivial conflicts. Genuine conflicts cause a Berries card to be played by the principal if they are ruled the loser. If the player has no such card they have to trade for one with an immediate deal or play a bulge card for no dice! (ouch). Now before we get in too deep and away from the overview, I'll move on.

Presence and Cliches

Emilio Barzini: [during a meeting with the Five Families] Times have changed. It's not like the Old Days, when we can do anything we want. A refusal is not the act of a friend. If Don Corleone had all the judges, and the politicians in New York, then he must share them, or let us others use them. He must let us draw the water from the well. Certainly he can present a bill for such services; after all... we are not Communists.

- The Godfather.

One of the ways to earn presence is employing the cliché, at least the first time for each in a given story. Here are 20 clichés listed that can be employed in a given story.

- **The high-speed chase:** Boilers race down the streets!
- **The carny:** A beautiful female singer rocks the joint.
- **The seedy bar:** A bar full of brutes and low-lives.
- **The corrupt fuzz:** Another dirty cop, who would have guessed?
- **The drunken brawl:** Ale and wine lead to violence, more common than dirt.
- **The squares bring us down:** Clean cut religious party poopers spoil the fun.
- **The untouchables are just that:** Some people don't get dirty when they roll in dirt.
- **Hollywood makes it's debut:** The silent screen ushers in a new era.
- **The government is owned:** The politicians are on sale, and we are buying.
- **Technology is coming:** We are paving the way for tech- radios and medicine are hot.
- **Supestition is the rage:** No dinner party is left without a touch of it.
- **The girl is bad:** Dame turns on you, nothing trite about that.
- **The family is strong:** Mafia at every turn interfering with your business.
- **Dicks are trouble:** Employing the gum-shoe often causes serious trouble.
- **Perfect timing? Probably not.:** When something seems too right, it probably is.
- **Somebody tipped the coppers:** Derrick? Was it you this time? Dammit.
- **Coppers shoot for shit:** *Bullets whizz by* Wait, that wasn't even close...
- **Green draws the girls:** Never ever happens. No really. I'm serious. Ok, not.
- **She stays at home:** The wife stays behind with the kiddies.
- **Snappy one liners backfire:** Taking the time to drop a line might get you dead.

There they are, a little list of creativity to pull from that earns you presence when employed. Regardless only one presence can be earned from a scene, so don't get into a trumping match.

Please, please take the time to craft more if you want to add more fun to your game session. The more cliches, the more the players have to pull from in the game. More cliches mean more brain-food and more creativity. All this leads to a more detailed and fun experience. Yay for fun!

Roles of Cast, Principal, and Boss in the Story

Well we introduced most of the role of the principal already, listing the three things they are doing with their story. The cast become active to oppose the principal, doing so allows them to achieve two things:

- **Get a chance to earn presence by cliché.** Earning the spotlight post-story is very important in the game. Being active allows you to do just that.
- **Cost the principal Berries Cards.** This is a reward in itself. Less Berries cards means a less stable player state.

This should make perfect sense, since both of these help the player. Now the boss is another story. They have little creative control, except with fallout but really pack a punch as the judge of conflicts. Also, the boss can steer the story when the principal calls for a trust-dice scene and drop in a replacement instead. Usually these are the scene-goes-wrong kind of deal.

The important thing to note here is the power of the deal. Nothing says the boss needs to be impartial. In fact, the game counts on them to be shrewd players doing their best to interfere with the plans of everyone else in the game. Making immediate deals with the boss is a good way to grease the wheels and get the conflict judgement or scene to go your way. Now I can introduce the idea of trust, and it's about time!

Trust: Dice, Scenes, and Runs

Mechanically trust is represented as dice. The more sides to the die the more trust. The more trust the more likely the trust action is to earn progress. Usually you roll trust as a run, meaning rolling the die again and again until it fails or you call it quits. A point of progress is earned in a trust die roll based on the following rule:

- The die must come up 5 or more to succeed otherwise it is a failure.

If you are rolling a run, the first failure ends the run. In this case some serious problem is encountered and the run is ended. This can cause special, nasty kinds of fallout as described later.

Trust scenes are used to start runs. The trust scene either showcases the character acting out their specialty, or the player contracting another to do the work for them. In the latter case the source they get to do the work determines the type of die for the run. In the former case the die is a high trust die (d12).

Working the Angles

Malone: Don't wait for it to happen. Don't even want it to happen. Just see what does happen.
- The Untouchables.

Every source of trust for progress in a given story must come from a different type of source. This is called the angle of the trust. Working all the angles is a common method to get the most progress for a given agenda during a story. The fallout from a failed trust run depends completely on the angle of it. Here is a list of the angles that are allowed in play:

- Normal Trust (d8)

- **Inside Jobs:** This angle takes a lot of planning, but offers a good chance of success. Fallout from a failed run here means playing a bulge card for no dice.
- **Political Wheels:** This angle takes a lot of grease in the political arena to make the angle fruitful. Fallout from a failed run here means playing a rap card.
- **Highbinders:** This angle takes support from your boss. Fallout from a failed run here means losing all gained presence and earning a tail (chance of being fingered).

- Low Trust (d6)

- **Outside Jobs:** Contracting out to the families, or employing any real outside help is an outside angle. Fallout from these jobs earns you a tail.
- **Calling Cards:** You are a powerful man with many friends. Calling in a card from one of them is easy enough. Fallout from these jobs earns you a rap card from the boss.
- **Taking it to the Streets:** Opting to employ the Chicago lightning or using intimidation covers this angle. Fallout from these jobs causes the boss to lose a wine and you to both pick up a tail and a rap card.

All trust scenes must begin with one of these angles. If the principal opts, they can apply their specialty to a trust run once per story and use the high trust die (d12) instead of the listed one above for that run.

Trust Scene Derailing

Sonny: Hey, listen, I want somebody good - and I mean very good - to plant that gun. I don't want my brother coming out of that toilet with just his dick in his hands, alright?

Clemenza: The gun'll be there.

- The Godfather.

The boss need not let a trust scene really get underway. Instead they can opt to derail it and turn it into another kind of scene. There are three types of scenes into which a trust scene can be derailed, but there are ways to escape each. Regardless, the angle for the scene is already counted as used even if the scene is derailed.

- **Setup Again?** Someone has setup the principal to take a fall. Either a cast member can step up and claim responsibility, or it can be anonymous. If the cast is at fault, then a promise can be struck between them and it will be averted. Otherwise the principal's angle is closed and they must play a berries card.
- **Meet the Boss.** The principal is called to a meeting with the boss, in person! In this case the principal either chooses to abandon their angle for a berries card, or sacrifice the angle for a little help from the boss. This means they get a free progress point but no trust run for that angle.

- **Cool your heels.** The principal is arrested and sent to jail, do not pass go and do not collect 2 centuries. It only works against principals with rap cards, and then causes them to trash both a rap card and a berries card.

Derailing is a powerful feature of the boss, and part of the reason they have so little input in the other areas of a story. Using derailing can really crimp the principals style, though as you can tell there is a way out from each based on its specific rules.

Stepping outside your Role with Features!

Both the principal and the cast can step outside their normal role in a story by using the features offered to them. These are special mechanical abilities that give them new ways to interact in a story. Here are the features for cast:

- **Cameo:** The player can make a cameo in the story. Now they can either lend help or hinderance to the progress of the principal. Making a cameo earns them a berries card from the boss. Mechanically they use a trust-die run based on the normal trust die and apply the success to progress of the principal as either a bonus or a penalty. A failed run here means earning a rap card from the principal. Each cast can only make on cameo per story and the boss can veto it at whim if they have more wine than the player has bulge.
- **Meddle:** The player can apply low trust-dice rolls individually against rolls of the principal, or for rolls of the principal. They can do this in a given story as many times as they have bulge in one story. If the meddle is against a roll, it must meet or exceed the total to cancel it (not a failure, but no progress earned). If the meddle is for a roll, it replaces it if higher (can avoid a failure).
- **Face Off:** When a trust run fails, instead of the regular effect sometimes another player can interject a face off instead. The restriction is that the interjecting player must have more berries than the principal. If a face off occurs the players engage in battle. Neither player will be killed, but if the cast wins the battle the story is ended right there. A successful face off during tip your mitt is quite deadly. To resolve the battle the players tell the story using the boss as a conflict resolver and each roll off. The player with the most bulge rolls a d8 and the other a d6 where the highest wins. We'll come back to this later in it's own section.

Now there are somethings the principal can do as well, outside their normal role. Here are the things they can choose to embrace.

- **Daring Do:** A principal can raise the stakes and publicly take part in the current action. This makes the current die roll (any) become an advantage trust-die (d20) but earns them an automatic tail.
- **Take the Stick:** A principal can trash a Stick in play for a -1 penalty to the current die roll (after the roll is made). Remember, wise of this can avoid Sticks becoming Stones at the end of the story!
- **Drink Deeply:** A principal can earn a berries card if they have less than the boss has wine. To do this they simply indulge in their taste in the story and spend a presence point. Doing this more than once per story requires boss approval.

Now why do I have these options in the game? Because they let the players take action that affects things mechanically, something the normal storytelling does only through presence. Speaking of which...

Winning Presence and earning the Spotlight

Mountie: I do not approve of your methods!

Eliot Ness: Yeah, well... You're not from Chicago. - *The Untouchables.*

If presence was earned during a story, then someone will win it. This player gets to create a special interlude of their choice post-story, before everything is wrapped up. The player with the highest presence wins the spotlight, and the boss decides in case of ties. Here is what the spotlight player can do, based on their card strengths:

- **Finish Them:** If the player has more bulge cards than the principal has bulge and berries total, they can finish off the principal. This causes them to either take the big sleep or get sent to the big house, boss's choice. The spotlight player gets to craft the details. The boss can offer the player protection and cancel this effect by sacrificing a wine card and describe the way they intervene.
- **Finger Them:** If the player has no rap cards, they can finger the principal given they have one or more. The rules for handling fingering are forthcoming in this text. The boss can't protect them from this fate.
- **Drink with Them:** If the player has less berries than the principal, he can earn one more berry card from the boss by indulging with them in a display of companionship.

If the principal earns the spotlight it's a special case- 'a pat on the back', and they get to earn a card of their choice from the boss.

Wrapping it up, Part 1: Tails and Fingering

Sonny: Goddamn FBI don't respect nothin'! - *The Godfather.*

Post-story and after the spotlight, we need to take care of all the mess that might have been built up. The first part of this is doing the finger tests. These are handled with d6s unless something changes that. First of all, if the player in question has no rap, you can skip this step. That being said let's talk about tails and fingering.

For every tail a player gained during a story, roll a die. If it comes up a 1 then they have been fingered. If all the tail dice are rolled and none come up 1, the player escapes the finger. Once fingered, the player needs to see if the charges stick. If the player can't trade away his rap cards right then, he must roll one die for each. If any come up 1 the charges stick and the player is sent to the big house. Time to find another player from the remaining ones and re-enter play!

Wrapping it up, Part 2: Progress vs. Sticks & Stones

After we determine if the player escapes the finger and possible removal from play, we have to figure out the progress made during the story and its effects. Before we can count any progress as valid, we must handle all the sticks and stones still in play for the principal. Sticks and stones still in play for the other players stay there until they wrap up their next story.

Every stick becomes a stone during this stage, and all stones act as a progress point penalty. They each remove a point of progress made during the story. If the total ends up less than zero, the player has to trash a berry card if possible.

Wrapping it up, Part 3: The time for table-talk.

Now it's time to make sure everyone knows where they stand. Deals can be made before the next story, as well as promises. Use this period to make sure all the little details are worked out, like how the unused sticks and stones fit into the story, etc. Once everyone is ready let the next player in line take their turn as principal or throw it on someone else.

The Power of Cards, Part 1: Bulge & Rap

Frank Nitti: I said your friend died screaming like a stuck Irish pig. Now you think about that when I beat the rap. [Ness, enraged, grabs Nitti and throws him off the building ledge. Nitti wails as he falls]
- *The Untouchables.*

Playing a bulge card can turn any die roll into an advantage die roll during a story. This causes the card to reveal it's Stick and Stones of course, but a d20 is a hell of a nice die! Note that this only turns a die into a d20, and does not create a new opportunity to roll.

Playing a rap card during a story causes the player to earn 1 tail. This causes the card to reveal it's Stick and Stones as well. Nasty is this cards middle name.

The Power of Cards, Part 2: Promises & Lies

Playing a promise card during a story causes the boss to earn one wine, from the principal. This causes the card to reveal it's Stick and Stones as well. Promise cards are 'played' when the promise is fulfilled.

Lie cards are never played, but having more lie cards than promise cards in play gives the boss a certain edge. If this is the case the boss can meddle in play like the cast, using their wine as the limit to the dice applied. Openly breaking promises, or Sticks and Stones breaking promises turn them into lies. If a principal really wants, **they can trash lie cards of the boss instead of earning bulge card after a successful take of the lay.**

Promises in Detail

The boss will encourage you to make promises. The boss will encourage you to break promises. Why? Well first off all having more lies in play than promises allows the boss to meddle opening in the game like he was cast. Secondly, playing promises earns the boss wine.

So what makes for a promise? A promise takes the following as ingredients:

- **A trade, A restriction, and A connection.**

The trade exists as 'I, <me> gives <them> <this> for <that>'.
The restriction is, 'Only if <this> is done/occurs.'

The connection is something in play that glues the deal together. This can be a mutual friend, a particular place, etc. It's something that connects the deal to the story. The connection is what the sticks and stones can be targeted to break, since it must be a connection to the players. The connection is needed for the transaction to occur, if it's lost the promise becomes a lie. The boss always creates the connection for a promise.

Sticks and Stones in Detail

Al Capone: You can get further with a kind word and a gun than you can with just a kind word.
- The Untouchables.

Well so we have these hardships on the back of cards. You can get really creative with them, adding color to the game. You must remember that the hardship must not link to only on player, since it could be traded along the line. If you want, simply writing one of the following down counts as a valid hardship:

- **Bombs Away!** Someone the principal cares for is bombed into bits.
- **Harlem Sunset!** The principal is badly injured in a fight.
- **Et tu Brute?** A close friend or lover betrays the principal.
- **Swing and... Whiff!** Incompetence comes into play, usually an underling.

Sticks and Stones only apply to the principal. If cast or the boss play cards, their revealed sticks and stones won't apply until it's their turn as principal. They simply lie in wait for that time. Sticks and Stones, like every other card, are tradeable.

Don't Forget the Missing Story!

I've dropped pretty much (except a few minor points) the entire mechanics of the game on you in the last few pages. The critical missing point is that all the mechanical events tie into the story. When a stick applies, or a stone is taken off of progress at story end, they need to have story events that relate. These story events are crafted by the boss, or the player of the card. Each doesn't need to have intense, vivid detail, or player interaction, unless players feel that is warranted. It's just important that they connect in a meaningful manner to the budding story the game is telling.

Face Offs in Detail

Jim Malone: Isn't that just like a wop? Brings a knife to a gun fight.
- The Untouchables.

We mentioned on page 24 that we'd come back to the rules for the face off, since it's a touch out of place in the features introduction. This special type of play works much like the principal's storytelling, with the players working towards a tug moment instead of a trust scene.

Imagine it is a tug-of-war between the players. The first one to earn two tugs in their direction wins, or doubles the roll of the other (usually happens first).

Each tug moment is a moment of conflict between the two players in the face off. Any moment of conflict can be a tug moment, and that's up to the boss. The boss wants to make sure the players are really into the face off, so he gets to pick which conflicts are tug moments.

Tugs are resolved by the player with the highest bulge rolling a d8, and the other player rolling a d6. If they are tied, both roll d6s. The winner tugs the rope one point/segment/unit in their direction. If it ever gets two such units that way they win. If a player exceeds the others roll by a factor of two (doubled) they win the face off right at that moment.

Now, this is a die roll like any other so bulge can be played to make it into a d20. In this case the dice rolled is adjusted accordingly, such that it may change the scales. Sticks can apply to these rolls, etc. Treat this as a normal trust-die run with special rules.

Trading with the Boss

Since the boss and players hold different cards, how can they trade? Simple. The Bulge cards and Wine cards are interchangeable in trade. These simply change to the appropriate type when exchanged: Wine cards traded to players become Bulge and vice-versa.

Special Rules for Tipping your Mitt

Capone: Somebody messes with me, I'm gonna mess with him.

- The Untouchables.

When a player decides to challenge the boss, they are taking the biggest risk they can take. This means they have to make sure they are in good standing with the general criminal populace. If they have more rap than berries, they have to:

- Trash one bulge for each rap in excess of their berries. For each bulge trashed, trash a rap too.

In this way, you enter play in the Tipping your Mitt story with rap equal to or less than your berries, and it costs you Bulge to balance the scales. You could picture this as pay offs, little jobs for buddies, etc. All to keep the boss from working the criminal faction against you during the showdown.

In addition, the boss cannot derail trust scenes in this story without playing two wine cards. Also he can't do this more than three times (to avoid making it impossible to succeed).

Variants on Play

You can play the game in an ever-flowing cycle of bosses, if that is your goal. Perhaps though, **Rise and Fall of a High Pillow** is more to your liking? In this game, we shrink the play to fit story confines. Or, sometimes perhaps **Ugly Face of a High Pillow** is more graphic and

subtle? Here are the rules for these two variants. The latter of which uses an additional rule to make things a bit more... brutal.

Variant: Rise and Fall of a High Pillow

This game plays out just like the regular rules describe. However, it has both a very defined beginning and end. In addition you could say it has a winner. The play of this game ends when a player successfully tips his mitt and whacks the boss. It only entails the rise and fall of a single high pillow.

Variant: Ugly Face of a High Pillow

Al Capone: I want this guy dead! I want his family dead! I want his house burned to the ground! I want to go there in the middle of the night and piss on his ashes!

- *The Untouchables.*

This game adds an additional rule inspired from the special rule of tip your mitt. This make the world a brutal place for the players. Expect players to take the big sleep more often, much more often, in this version.

To make the change, we simply add one more step to Wrapping it Up. This final step details out the criminal factions reaction to player's state. If the player is exposed, meaning more rap than berries, they need to roll dice to see if they get whacked. If this is so, then the organized crime of the city has deemed them dangerous to operations and took them out! The dice work just like finger tests, and use d6s.

The Boss as Principal

Michael: My father is no different than any powerful man, any man with power, like a president or senator.

Kay Adams: Do you know how naive you sound, Michael? Presidents and senators don't have men killed.

Michael: Oh. Who's being naive, Kay? - The Godfather.

The boss never gets a turn as principal. He is not a player, but the High Pillow. As such, he isn't concerned with taking the lay, putting the screws on, and he is already the boss so no need to tipp his mitt. Instead of taking a turn as principal, the boss has a little spotlight of his own.

During this spotlight he selects a player and then either embraces or refutes them. This either inflates or deflates their place in the crime syndicate, and so adjusts their cards. For free the boss can give the player any card of their choice, cause them to play one with no benefit, or cause them to trash one. If the boss wants to play wine, he can do the same thing once more for each wine played.

Sticks and stones never apply to the boss, since they are never principal. Ok, I lied. Sticks and stones apply during the crucial tip your mitt story, working for them just as they do for the principal.

Appendencies

The rest of this document has a few pages of guides that can be handed out during play. They let the players know what to do when, and basically how to do it. Honestly, if one person reads this set of rules and hands the sheets out it could be enough to play the game. In that case though there will be a little trial and error on the part of the others (though that tends to happen anyway).

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Visuals of Play

I've decided that adding the examples in their own section will keep the rules text clean and lean. Here are examples of the various rules presented before hand. For each I present the situation, then the mechanics, and how it's all presented in-game.

The game has played for a while and Bruno is getting quite powerful. His bulge exceeds everyone at the table, even the boss' wine. Derrick decides that something needs to be done. He thinks promises are in order, so he decides to craft one:

Derrick's Player (To Fin): "Hey, how about you put the screws on Bruno next. If so, I'll give you one of my berries?"

Fin's Player: "Sounds good to me. It's a deal."

Mr. Sanders (boss): "Alright, recording that promise card. The known informant Kyle will meet with Fin at the local coffee shop to deliver some goods on Bruno."

So, the boss filled in the connection. The deal is pretty cut and dry, a payment for trying to put some pressure on another player who is getting to far ahead in the organization.

Later in the same game, Bruno is the principal and decides to put the screws on Fin. The story has played out a bit and he has reached a trust scene point.

Bruno's Player: Ok, so now that I'm on the horn with Fin's bodyguard, I'm sweet-talking him into a deal that could set him up for life.

Mr. Sanders (boss): Wait, don't get ahead of yourself. There is a knock at the door of your office. It opens suddenly and there stands Mr. Harry Bryant, the famous city detective. "Bruno, I think you and I have a meeting downtown. If... you know what I mean." He pulls out the cuffs and approaches. BTW, cool your heels pal.

Here, the boss has derailed the trust scene using the 'cool your heels' option. Now Bruno has to trash both a berries and a rap card and the angle he was using 'inside job' is closed for this story.

Fin's turn has come and he decides to put the screws on Bruno, as promised.

Fin: Ok, I'm putting the screws on Bruno. Derrick?

Mr. Sanders: Derrick, if you don't give Fin the berries card, I'll give you a bulge.

Here we are, a sly boss tries to earn himself a lie! If Derrick accepts the boss will trade in a wine and he'll get a bulge card for it.

Derrick: Mr. Sanders, I like the way you think. I gladly accept.

Fin: **frowns** Ok, be that way. You just wait. You'll get the Broderick yet.

So we have the play continue, the boss has turned a promise into a lie and with more lies than promises he can meddle openly. This puts him in an even more powerful state.

An informal talk about Playing the Boss

The boss is not particularly easy to play. If played wrong (and you can easily do so) the game turns into a tragedy. The boss is not there to crush the players. He is there to promote play. The difference is how they choose to handle their relationships. The boss needs to **both** approve and disapprove of players and their actions in the game. In a way, they need to decide on how they want their organization run. Then they can reward and penalize players based on how they fit in their criteria.

A little rule can be added that will encourage this, if it does indeed need encouraging in your games. Any round of stories that make less than half the players in wine for the boss (rounded up) is a failed round. The boss gets no spotlight for this round and instead has to play a wine card for no dice. This is in response to pressure from the outside to keep his business running smooth. I don't know if I want to add yet another rule to the game, but if I did do that, this would be the rule.

Anyway, the role of the boss is to be not impartial but driven by some goal that fits the style of the game. The goal needs to encourage play and not crush the players at every turn. Since the game has not yet been tested, I can only surmise that some additional rules regarding the player-boss interaction are required. Time will tell, since I plan on testing it at some point soon.

Principal's Role

- **Introduce cliches.** This earns them presence points, and lets the boss interject with their 2 cents. Additionally, with a limited amount of cliches the principal's player has the ability to get their first and employ them in a story.
- **Establish a trust scene.** They can't simply declare a trust dice roll, they need to reach a special point in the story called a trust scene. This let's them start rolling trust dice to earn progress. The boss wants to get them doing more than merely rolling trust dice, so he has the power to turn a trust scene into other types of scenes (discuss soon enough).
- **Gain cooperation.** The principal can use other players as a source of progress in a scene, and can make immediate deals at whim (though they need played out in the story). Using cooperation, between both the other players and the boss is a powerful tool.

Principal's Features

- **Daring Do:** A principal can raise the stakes and publicly take part in the current action. This makes the current die roll (any) become an advantage trust-die (d20) but earns them an automatic tail.
- **Take the Stick:** A principal can trash a Stick in play for a -1 penalty to the current die roll (after the roll is made). Remember, wise of this can avoid Sticks becoming Stones at the end of the story!
- **Drink Deeply:** A principal can earn a berries card if they have less than the boss has wine. To do this they simply indulge in their taste in the story and spend a presence point. Doing this more than once per story requires boss approval.

The Angles:

- **Normal Trust (d8)**
 - **Inside Jobs:** Fallout from a failed run here means playing a bulge card for no dice.
 - **Political Wheels:** Fallout from a failed run here means playing a rap card.
 - **Highbinders:** Fallout here means losing all gained presence and earning a tail.
- **Low Trust (d6)**
 - **Outside Jobs:** Fallout from these jobs earns you a tail.
 - **Calling Cards:** Fallout from these jobs earns you a rap card from the boss.
 - **Taking it to the Streets:** Fallout from these jobs causes the boss to lose a wine and you to both pick up a tail and a rap card.

Cast's Role

- **Get a chance to earn presence by cliché.** Earning the spotlight post-story is very important in the game. Being active allows you to do just that.
- **Cost the principal Berries Cards.** This is a reward in itself. Less Berries cards means a less stable player state.

Cast's Features

- **Cameo:** The player can make a cameo in the story. Now they can either lend help or hinderance to the progress of the principal. Making a cameo earns them a berries card from the boss. Mechanically they use a trust-die run based on the normal trust die and apply the success to progress of the principal as either a bonus or a penalty. A failed run here means earning a rap card from the principal. Each cast can only make one cameo per story and the boss can veto it at whim if they have more wine than the player has bulge.
- **Meddle:** The player can apply low trust-dice rolls individually against rolls of the principal, or for rolls of the principal. They can do this in a given story as many times as they have bulge in one story. If the meddle is against a roll, it must meet or exceed the total to cancel it (not a failure, but no progress earned). If the meddle is for a roll, it replaces it if higher (can avoid a failure).
- **Face Off:** When a trust run fails, instead of the regular effect sometimes another player can interject a face off instead. The restriction is that the interjecting player must have more berries than the principal. If a face off occurs the players engage in battle. Neither player will be killed, but if the cast wins the battle the story is ended right there. A successful face off during tip your mitt is quite deadly. To resolve the battle the players tell the story using the boss as a conflict resolver and each roll off. The player with the most bulge rolls a d8 and the other a d6 where the highest wins. We'll come back to this later in it's own section.

Boss' Role As Encouragement

- **Both encourage promises and breaking them.** This gives the boss more cards, more wine, and the ability to meddle if they can accomplish the right balance.
- **Encourage players to take the lay.** Earns more wine. 'nuff said.
- **Encourage players to put the screws on the proper player.** When putting the screws on, you want them to hurt the dangerous high bulge players.
- **Balance things to maintain the status quo.** Keeps you the boss.

Boss' Guidebook

Trust Scene Derailing Options:

- **Setup Again?** Someone has setup the principal to take a fall. Either a cast member can step up and claim responsibility, or it can be anonymous. If the cast is at fault, then a promise can be struck between them and it will be adverted. Otherwise the principal's angle is closed and they must play a berry card.
- **Meet the Boss.** The principal is called to a meeting with the boss, in person! In this case the principal either chooses to abandon their angle for a berries card, or sacrifice the angle for a little help from the boss. This means they get a free progress point but no trust run for that angle.
- **Cool your heels.** The principal is arrested and sent to jail, do not pass go and do not collect 200\$.

So what makes for a promise? A promise takes the following as ingredients:

- **A trade, A restriction, and A connection.**

The trade exists as 'I, <me> gives <them> <this> for <that>'.
The restriction is, 'Only if <this> is done/occurs.'

The connection is something in play that glues the deal together.

This can be a mutual friend, a particular place, etc. It's something that connects the deal to the story. The connection is what the sticks and stones can be targeted to break, since it must be a connection to the players. The connection is needed for the transaction to occur, if it's lost the promise becomes a lie. The boss always creates the connection for a promise.

Trading with the Boss

- Since the boss and players hold different cards, how can they trade? Simple. The Bulge cards and Wine cards are interchangeable in trade. These simply change to the appropriate type when exchanged: Wine cards traded to players become Bulge and vice-versa.

The Cliches Reference

- **The high-speed chase:** Boilers race down the streets!
- **The carny:** A beautiful female singer rocks the joint.
- **The seedy bar:** A bar full of brutes and low-lives.
- **The corrupt fuzz:** Another dirty cop, who would have guessed?
- **The drunken brawl:** Ale and wine lead to violence, more common than dirt.
- **The squares bring us down:** Clean cut religious party poopers spoil the fun.
- **The untouchables are just that:** Some people don't get dirty when they roll in dirt.
- **Hollywood makes it's debut:** The silent screen ushers in a new era.
- **The government is owned:** The politicians are on sale, and we are buying.
- **Technology is coming:** We are paving the way for tech- radios and medicine are hot.
- **Supestition is the rage:** No dinner party is left without a touch of it.
- **The girl is bad:** Dame turns on you, nothing trite about that.
- **The family is strong:** Mafia at every turn interfering with your business.
- **Dicks are trouble:** Employing the gum-shoe often causes serious trouble.
- **Perfect timing? Probably not.:** When something seems too right, it probably is.
- **Somebody tipped the coppers:** Derrick? Was it you this time? Dammit.
- **Coppers shoot for shit:** *Bullets whizz by* Wait, that wasn't even close...
- **Green draws the girls:** Never ever happens. No really. I'm serious. Ok, not.
- **She stays at home:** The wife stays behind with the kiddies.
- **Snappy one liners backfire:** Taking the time to drop a line might get you dead.

Presence Won Spotlight Uses

- **Finish Them:** If the player has more bulge cards than the principal has bulge and berries total, they can finish off the principal. This causes them to either take the big sleep or get sent to the big house, boss' choice. The spotlight player gets to craft the details. The boss can offer the player protection and cancel this effect by sacrificing a wine card and describe the way they intervene.
- **Finger Them:** If the player has no rap cards, they can finger the principal given they have one or more. The rules for handling fingering are forthcoming in this text. The boss can't protect them from this fate.
- **Drink with Them:** If the player has less berries than the principal, he can earn one more berry card from the boss by indulging with them in a display of companionship.

If the principal earns the spotlight it's a special case- '**a pat on the back**', and they get to earn a card of their choice from the boss.

Agendas and Progress

- **Taking the lay:** Every 3 progress earns the player one bulge (from the boss).
Every 2 progress earns the boss one wine (from the principal).
- **Putting the screws on:** Every 3 progress earns the target player one rap (from the principal).
- **Tip your mitt:** Every progress works to best a total of 4 (5 or more). If you get that much progress you've won against the boss and whacked him, becoming the new boss. If you don't the boss whacks you and remains the boss.

Optional Rules

Outside Pressure: (The optional rule from the informal talk on playing the boss) If during a story round, less wine is earned than half the players rounded up, the boss gets no spotlight and instead must trash a wine card for no dice.

Bloodthirst: (a supplement to 'Finish Them') The player that finishes the principal gets one of their bulge cards.

Can't beat the rap: (a subtle play change) Rap cards from players that are removed from play not by fingering are distributed between the remaining players equally. If someone needs to take one more, the boss selects who.

Sweet, sweet Berries: (more functional berries) Berries cards can be played to reroll failed rolls. An angle can be willing closed (before the trust-die run begins) to change a Bulge into a Berry card.

Showboating Boss: (boss gets to cameo) The boss can cameo if he has more wine than the principal's berries. Work this just like the cast's cameo, though the boss earns no berries cards and gets no tails.

Trust-dice Reference

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| - Advantage, Utmost Trust | d20 (bulge/wine cards played) |
| - High Trust | d12 (specialty) |
| - Normal Trust | d8 (inside jobs, political wheels, highbinders) |
| - Low Trust | d6 (outside jobs, calling cards, taking it to the steets) |

- Success: 5 or better on the roll, otherwise failure.