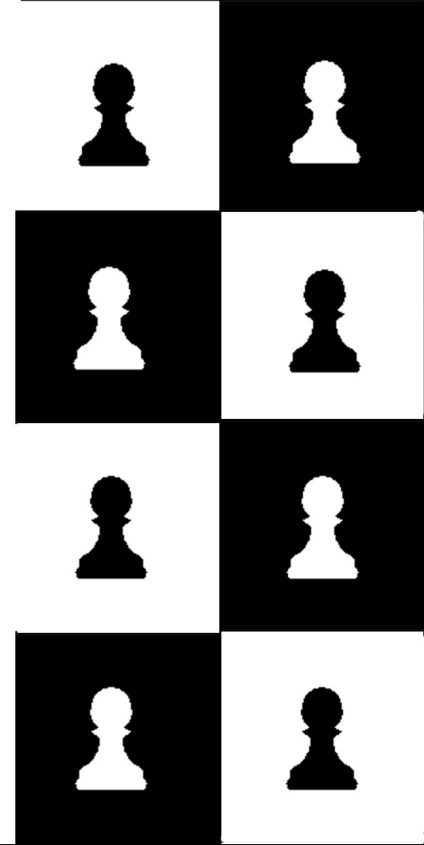


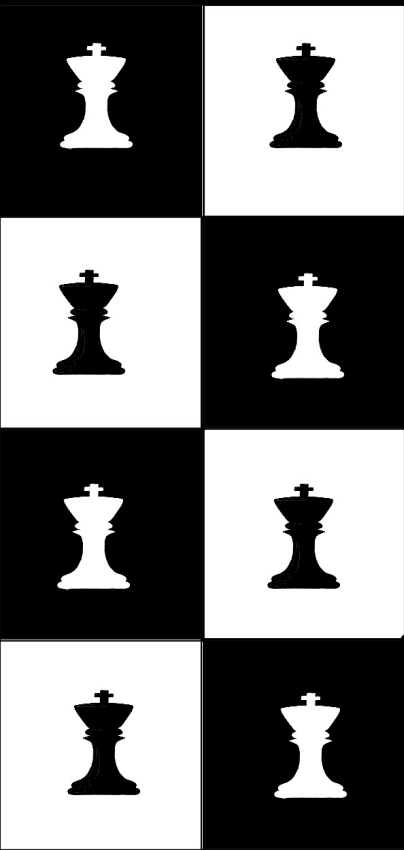
we are all pawns



the *operation*



we are all kings



Special Thanks

A special thanks is due to my family, my mother Teresa, my father David and my brother Daniel. I love you all very much and you inspire me daily.

I would also like to thank everyone at the Forge, a fantastic website and forum for the independent roleplayng game community. The Forge can be found at www.indie-rpgs.com

Note:

This game was created as part of the second annual 24 hour rpg event. This even, originally organized by Philip J. Reed (www.philipjreed.com) was founded as an exercise in creation. All games are created from conceptualization through to final text and design within one 24-hour period.

A roleplaying game of espionage , intrigue and action

Created by
Michael P. O'Sullivan

the *operation*



Chapter Zero: “A” is for Armageddon



The gun suddenly felt cold and terrible in my hands. I stared across the terminal floor at my target, a rogue agent, and the civilian that I have just accidentally shot. Thick splatters of blood and gray gore rain down over the target, slicking in his hair. He throws the civilian aside and opens fire with his sidearm, shattering glass around me as I dive for cover. I roll across the ground and pull myself up behind a kicked over table in the food court.

My eyes close for one blink, two, and I can't get the image out of my head: the civilian, her head separating into mist as my bullet tears through skin, skull and gray matter.

I come back around as a bullet tears through the table three inches from my head, splinters of wood digging deep into my cheek. I spin around the left side of the table and get a quick look down the line at the target. I take a mental photograph and turn back around, pulling myself back into the cover of the table. As I slide a new clip into my sidearm I examine the mental photo I took. The target is cowering behind the enemy agents, struggling with a gag that was hastily shoved down his throat. Two enemy agents stand between him and me. No civilians are left, having either fled the premises or been shot in the crossfire.

I quickly pop out from behind the right side of the table and, without even really lining up a shot place a bullet in the left eye of one of the enemy agents, the one wearing the dark Gucci jacket and has the pale skin on the ring finger left behind by a wedding band. As the first enemy agent slumps to the ground, he second agent fires off three quick shots, forcing me back behind the table.

I lean back against the table and take a slow breath, steadying my hands. I could hear someone talking beyond the table, back by the asset, kinda mumbling something. Then I heard a couple of shots, but none of them were fired at anything even remotely near me. I peered through one of the bullet holes in the table and saw the second enemy agent twitching on the ground, arms and legs flailing out spastically. The asset was standing over him, talking, and looking befuddled.

I could feel something warm and sticky running down my cheeks from my eyes. My vision started to go blurry and red.

I pull out my cell phone and press the special key at the center of it.

“Code in” I hear a prim, young woman with a slight British accent say.

“6162,” I shout into the small phone. “Why the fuck are my eyes bleeding, Control?”

“Hold on, let me pull up your activities file.” I hear the click-clack of computer keys for a moment. “Oh, shit.”

“No, Control!” I yell as I smear red stuff away from my eyes. “That is not the answer to my question?”

“Calm down” Control asked of me. “The asset you were assigned to take in is a meme carrier. He has been programmed with an alien word virus. His recitation of the alphabet could make peoples heads explode.”

“So, how do I fix this?” I say, the phone feeling slick in my had from the blood that has run down it from my ear.

“You don’t. As long as he can keep talking, he can continue to transmit the vir—” Control was cut off by the sound of gunfire. I sit back down and place my gun down on the floor beside me, a little wisp of smoke curling at the barrel. I use my tie to start daubing at the blood on my cheeks and neck.

“Problem solved, Control.”

Chapter One: The (Post-Modern) Art of War



Chapter Two: Information Control



What is the Operation?

The Operation is an international espionage agency that acts independently from any world power or government. It exists to ensure the safety and security of the public without falling into the manipulations and backroom dealings that are part of the daily routine of governments and global corporations. Its Operatives are culled from the best and brightest of the world's military, intelligence and academic communities.

Unlike other intelligence agencies throughout the world like the British MI-5 and MI-6 and the American CIA, the Operation is a completely unknown entity to the public.

The Birth of the Operation

The genesis of the Operation can be found in the 1960s. The international arms race that resulted in events like the Cuban Missile Crisis were only the tip of the iceberg of what was really going on between these two warring powers, as well as other governments and institutions throughout the world. Information was becoming the chief weapon in this new world of post-modern war and governments were training their finest soldiers and thinkers to become spies.

This new breed of spy was much more advanced than those employed by armies throughout the previous centuries. They were capable of infiltrating enemy locations, blending in to the local community and doing anything that was necessary to accomplish their missions. Their training ran well beyond basic martial skills, requiring agents to become fluent in a number of languages, understand codes and ciphers, and to be able to blend in with the general populace, becoming like smoke in the air. They should be smart, deadly and completely untraceable.

It was one of these agents, so it is said, that started the Operation. The intelligence community is ripe with gossip and rumor about Robert Graves, an agent for the British intelligence group MI-6. It is said that he was assigned to retrieve information from an American facility. He was given a cover identity that placed him in the heart of a suburban community just outside of Washington D.C. and was placed into a job within said facility.

The Cell

What It Takes

The Operation chooses its Operatives from the best and brightest of the world's Intelligence, Military and Academic communities. The Operation headhunts within these groups, looking for people that have skills that the Operation would find useful. Candidates must also be psychologically stable enough to be considered for engagement.

The Operation wants operatives that will think "outside of the box". It has been found that candidates with a certain amount of dissatisfaction with their government or employer are easier to approach about becoming Operatives. As such, most candidates could be thought of as a little rebellious by their previous employers.

The Operation does not do much in the way of training its Operatives, as most Operatives are both already trained and brought into the fold for skills that they already possess. If necessary, newly acquired Operatives will be given basic training in martial skills, including hand-to-hand combat and the use of firearms.

Purpose

Organizing the Operation

Like most other intelligence agencies, the Operation is an organization, a bureaucracy, though there are very few levels within it. In truth, there are only two: Control and the Cell. This is to prevent information from getting gummed up within the bureaucratic works and impeding good forward movement.

At the top-most level of the Operation is Control. Control is a group of personnel that orchestrates the actions of the Operation on a global scale. When a mission is undertaken by the Operation, it is Control that assigns Operatives to it and relays information and communications between all Cells of Operatives.

The Cell is a group of Operatives that have been assigned to a specific location by Control. Though there are different types of Operatives within a Cell, most are considered of equal ranking except for one. This Operative is referred to as Command and is the person in charge of delegating orders on a local level. The position of Command is not permanent. Instead, it is granted on a case-by-case basis, depending on the objectives of the mission at hand and the training of the various members of the Cell.

Field Operatives

The Cell is made up of a number of Field Operatives. There are three different types of field Operatives.

Alpha Operatives are the front line of the Operation. These Operatives are permanent members of the Operation and are the ones most often engaged on missions. Their skills and training are adaptable enough that they are found to be useful under most circumstances.

Chapter Three: Operatives



The next few pages will take you through the process of creating an Operative.

Conceptualization

The first step to creating your Operative is to think about what kind of person you want to portray.

Take a couple of moments to think about the type of character you would want to play. Decide on a few traits that define your Operative. Start with broad strokes. Figure out what kind of character you would like to play in general. Do you want to play a thinking man type of character? Do you prefer to shoot first and ask questions later?

After you've taken a moment to come up with the broadest of details about your character, you should take those thoughts and refine them, working them into the setting and creating a resonance between the two. This will give your character more depth, as well as give yourself and Control some interesting tidbits about the character that could be used to fuel future storylines. You should think about how old the character is and where he was born. Consider the kind of training that the character has received and where he got this training. Perhaps most importantly, you should decide why your character chose to align with the Operation.

Field of Expertise

Emerging directly out of your Operative's concept is his Field of Expertise, or F.o.E.. This is the special training that your character possesses that brought you under the discerning eye of the Operation in the first place and is the reason that you are with them now.

Your Operative's F.o.E. is a phrase that best encapsulates what your character does best. Perhaps you are playing a Computer Hacker, a Combat Expert or a Driver.

It is best to make sure that your F.o.E. isn't too specialized. An Expert Swordsman will find that his skills won't be used all that often.

- *All Operatives must select one Field of Expertise during character creation.*

Assigning Characteristics

The previous choices made during the character creation process form a framework, a skeleton upon which the character can be fully fleshed out. This fleshing out can be done in the most obvious and immediate way through your choices in Characteristics.

Characteristics represent an Operative's training, skills, knowledge and aptitudes. This is where you can decide exactly in what fields and talents the character excels, and by how much.

Your selection of Characteristics is not hampered by a specific "skill list". Instead, players are encouraged to create tailor-made Characteristics that will best suit the character, as well as help bring the character to life.

Characteristics can represent a great range of different things, from the tangible to the esoteric. Some characters may be very "Handsome" or "Strong". Others might have great skill as a "Musician", or extensive "Small Arms Training".

While it is wise to keep the names of your Characteristics concise, the way in which you name your Characteristics can add a great deal of personality to your Operative. A character doesn't have to be just "Strong", he could be "Built Like a Bull" or a "Brick Shithouse". All three Characteristics have the same overall effect, but the latter two add a sense of style to the character. Why be handsome when you can have "Devilish Good Looks"?

All Characteristics are rated with dice types. The higher the dice type, the better the Operative is at the Characteristic. The ratings are as follows:

D4:	Futile
D6:	Average (default)
D8:	Proficient
D10:	Expert
D12:	Master

Whenever a character attempts to do something challenging, the player will roll one dice of the dice type that correlates to the Characteristic of the character.

Operatives begin with three Characteristics rated at Proficient (d8), two Characteristics rated at Expert (d10) and one characteristic rated at Master (d12). If a character does not have a Characteristic listed on his character sheet with a rating assigned to it, it is considered to be at Average (d6).

A player may decide that he needs to raise one of his characteristics to a level higher than what he has now, or wants to select an extra Characteristic. In these instances a player may decide to take a new Characteristic rated at Futile (d4). For each Characteristic taken at Futile, another Characteristic can be raised by one rank. A Player may opt to take up to three Characteristics at Futile, but it is suggested that a player take no more than one. Any more and the operative may have too many faults and will find himself

severely hampered in the field.

- *Beginning Operatives select three Characteristics at the Proficient (d8) level, two at the Expert (d10) level and one at the Master (d12) level. Beginning Operatives may also select up to three Characteristics to have at the Futile (d4) level, granting him one extra rank increase for Characteristics per Futile Characteristic taken. No beginning Characteristic can start higher than Master (d12).*

Edge

Your Operative's Edge rating is a measure by which you can judge the mental stability and overall humanity of the character.

This rating is a representative of what your character has done, not what he will do. The only things restraining an Operative's actions are the morals that the player intends for the character to have and the decisions that the player wants the character to make. A character's Edge rating cannot and will never dictate the actions that a given character can take. Edge represents the repercussions of those actions on the character.

Edge is rated on a scale of one through ten. The lower the Edge rating, the more sound, humane and, in some instances, sane the character is. The higher the rating, the more vicious, cold or distant the character may seem to others. Most regular, everyday civilians have a rating of two or three in Edge. Beginning Operatives will have a five in Edge.

Edge is also broken down into four tiers, each increasing tier representing how far removed from the rest of humanity the character is. The first four points of Edge are contained within tier zero, points five through seven are in tier one, eight and nine in tier two and the tenth point of Edge is in tier three. Most civilians will never see their Edge rating rise up beyond tier zero. The calmest and most collected of agents and Operatives will hover throughout tier one. Those with act with severe malice will have an Edge floating in tier two. Only the most horrific and morally reprehensible of characters will have an Edge rating that gets them into tier three.

As an Operative commits more morally reprehensible acts, his Edge rating will increase. The higher it becomes, the harder it will be for others to interact with the Operative. When interacting with others, the character will have a negative modifier equal to the tier that his Edge is on.

- *All beginning Operatives start with a rating of five in Edge. Operatives may, with the permission of Control, begin play with a higher Edge rating, though an Operative will never start off with a rating lower than five.*

Cover Identity

Not only does the cover identity of an Operative offer a place to hide from enemies and throw off any one tracking them down, it is also a way for an Operative to recover from the hardships of his life.

The cover identity of an Operative is the most likely way in which an Operative will interact with civilians. For

this reason, many Operatives create a very detailed “home” to return to after going on mission. Names, identification, imaginary family members, fake childhood photos, a job; all of these things have been created to help an Operative’s cover identity seem more real.

Cover identities are also used for a much more field-oriented purpose: useful cover identities can be employed by the Operation to insert Operatives into enemy territory. Operatives with a cover identity that has a job in the information technologies field could find himself employed at a corporation that the Operation wants to infiltrate. Someone with a background in the arts may be used to set up the art-loving wife of an important dignitary as an asset.

- *Beginning characters start play with one Cover Identity, fully fleshed out and supported by the Operation, including appropriate identification and papers. Flesh this cover identity out as much as possible. Create a name, birth place, home life, occupation and any other information that you feel is important to the identity. The character will also start with one Characteristic at Proficient (d8) that is related to the cover identity.*

Drama Points

Drama Points are a certain kind of game currency that allows players to change the outcome of certain events throughout the course of the game. Drama Points can be spent to increase your chances of succeeding at a given task, create a favorable “plot hole” that produces a much needed piece of equipment or even save your character from certain death.

Drama Points are awarded by Control as an incentive to portray your character well and to come up with fun and interesting ideas during the game. Players may also be rewarded Drama Points if the plotline of the story logically requires your character to undergo some great misfortune as a sort of payback for the way they have been treated.

For more on the use of Drama Points, see Chapter 5.

- *All new Operatives begin play with ten Drama Points. This number will fluctuate greatly during gameplay, but a new Operative will always start with ten Drama Points.*

Finishing Touches

Playing a Civilian

Some players may wish to play someone who is not a member of the intelligence community.

While these characters will be comparatively underpowered when held up to the standards of the Operation or most other agencies, the challenge of playing a civilian caught up in the action and intrigue around them may well be reason enough for some players to do this.

Civilian characters begin play with no Field of Expertise. Civilians start with three characteristics rated at Proficient (d8) and one ranked at Expert (d10). All Civilians start play with an Edge rating of two. Civilians also begin play with fifteen Drama Points rather than the usual ten points that starting

Operatives receive.

Chapter Four: Operating Systems



Conflict Resolution

There are certain points when playing a game of the Operation that the outcome of an action will be considered in question. Maybe a character is trying to hack into a high security government mainframe, seduce an asset or fire at a moving target.

The rules system that follows is a tool to help players and Control determine the outcome of these kinds of conflicts. As a tool, it should be used to enhance gameplay, not to hinder it. The rules below should only be used if the perceived conflict is both important to the developing storyline and the outcome is in question.

The Operation uses a set of standard gaming dice, as can be found in most role-playing and hobby stores. The dice needed are d4, d6, d8, d10 and d12.

When to Roll

Time and Conflict

Sometimes during gameplay it will become important to note how much time is passing in game or to place an order on things in an attempt to organize conflicts and make them easier to adjudicate. This is most often required during any sort of combat, though there are other times as well.

When necessary, Conflicts can be broken down into segments of time called Phases. A Phase is a span of time that measures how long it takes to resolve one conflict. The length of a phase can change, depending on what kind of action is being taken. Some conflicts take many hours, days or even longer periods of time to resolve while others happen inside of seconds.

Control decides the length of any given Phase. The Phase can encompass anything from the complete translation of an ancient manuscript to one exchange of blows between two swordsmen. Indeed, entire wars can be fought using only one Phase.

Initiative

Most of the time Initiative can be determined through common sense. Ambushing characters will act before the ambushed. A

character at range and with a firearm will have the opportunity to fire at least once before his opponent with no weapon can close the distance.

In circumstances where the order of actions seems a bit unclear you may have to go a different route. To determine Initiative, each character should roll the appropriate dice of the highest-ranked Characteristic that they have that is related to speed and reaction time. If they do not have an appropriate characteristic, they Default, rolling a d6.

Declaring Intent

The first step of conflict resolution is declaring intent. Everyone that is involved in the conflict will have to do this at the beginning of each Phase. Your Intent is simply a statement of what you plan on having your character do during the current Phase.

Your Intent should have some level of detail to it and flair to it. Rather than simply saying “I try and shoot the guard,” a player might instead declare “I pull out my Walther PPK and line up a shot on the guard’s chest.”

Remember not to use too much detail, as you will have the opportunity to narrate the outcome of your intended action at the end of the Phase. That is the point where you’ll really get to add personal touches.

Choosing Characteristics

Whenever your character finds his actions in conflict, he will have to chose a certain Characteristic to use during that conflict. You should always choose the Characteristic that is most appropriate to the conflict at hand.

The Dice Roll

When two opponents are engaged in a Conflict, they roll the dice from their most appropriate Characteristic. The character with the higher roll is considered to be Victorious, while the character with the lower roll has Failed.

If a character does not have an appropriate Characteristic on his character sheet, this doesn’t mean that the character has no chance of attempting the task. Characteristics only list the training that a character has that puts him above, and occasionally below average. As such, any attempt to accomplish an action that doesn’t have a matching Characteristic Defaults, meaning that the character will roll the Average (d6) level Characteristic rating

Modifiers

Sometimes a character will have something that gives him an advantage over his adversaries or may hinder his actions. These things grant Modifiers.

Modifiers are simply a number, granted by Control, that is either added to or subtracted from your dice roll.

Advantageous things such as high quality weapons, advance planning, a car with very tight handling and night-vision goggles will grant a Positive Modifier under the appropriate circumstances, adding anywhere from one through three points to your dice roll.

Things that put you at a disadvantage, such as having your arms tied up during a fight, trying to find someone by sight alone in a very dark room or trying to drive a car with a blown tire can grant Negative Modifiers. These range from

one to three points as well, but are subtracted from your roll.

Positive Modifiers

Slight Advantage	+1
Significant Advantage	+2
Great Advantage	+3

Negative Modifiers

Slight Disadvantage:	-1
Significant Disadvantage:	-2
Great Disadvantage:	-3

All modifiers are applied before calculating your Degree of Success (see below).

Opposition

Difficulty Dice

Relative Success

In this system the old adage applies “One man’s victory is another man’s failure”. Success is a relative thing. If you and another person are competing at the same thing and you come out on top, in your eyes you will seem victorious while your opponent will see himself as failing. This is called Relative Success and is the concept at the core of the conflict resolution system used by the Operation.

Imagine that you in a race with someone. The two of you got off the starting blocks just as the trigger was pulled on the gun that signaled the beginning of the race, yet you have been able to pull ahead. You stay close to the inside of the track and you pull out in front of your opponent, taking a definitive lead.

Now imagine that you are the other person in the race. You pushed off of the blocks really hard and you thought you had a really great start, but you start to feel winded almost immediately. You pump your legs as hard as you can but you see your opponent pull ahead of you and really start to make a break for the finishing line.

Two sides of the same action, viewed from both the Victorious and Failing sides of the story.

Degree of Success Effects

Success Level	Effect
Supreme Victory	A truly astounding feat, the best of the best
Major Victory	A great victory with plenty of style and flair
Complete Victory	A solid, uncomplicated victory with no bells or whistles
Minor Victory	A hair’s breadth away from failure
Tie	A face off, neither gaining the upper hand
Minor Failure	A misstep short of victory
Complete Failure	A total, but not totally horrendous failure
Major Failure	A resounding defeat
Supreme Failure	A crushing defeat, one you will likely not recover from soon

The Relative Success Chart

Just as success can be viewed in two different ways, Victory and Failure, it can also be seen in different grades, or Degrees. And just as you see yourself in relation to the opposition, in that fashion degree of success can also be viewed relatively. While something may look like an immense victory to one person, that same action will seem like an absolute failure to another. All outcomes of Conflicts can be placed into one of five Degrees: Tie, Minor, Complete, Major and Supreme. There are two versions of each degree (except for Ties), one each for Victories and Failures. Just as there is a Minor Victory, so there is a Minor Failure.

These degrees chart how well one opponent did compared to the other. Ranked from lowest to highest, the degrees of success are

Relative Success Chart

Rank	Success Level	Dice Comparison
+4	Supreme Victory	greater than or equal to 4x opponent's roll
+3	Major Victory	greater than or equal to 3x opponent's roll
+2	Complete Victory	greater than or equal to 2x opponent's roll
+1	Minor Victory	greater than opponent's roll
0	Tie	equal to opponent's roll
-1	Minor Failure	lesser than opponent's roll
-2	Complete Failure	lesser than or equal to 1/2 opponent's roll
-3	Major Failure	lesser than or equal to 1/3 opponent's roll
-4	Supreme Failure	lesser than or equal to 1/4 opponent's roll

Finding Your Level of Success

To find the Relative Success of the action, the characters compare rolls as follows.

- If the character rolls higher than his opponent but not double his opponent's roll or higher, he has scored a Minor Victory.
- If the character rolled double or higher than his opponent, but not more than three triple the opposing roll, he has scored a Complete Victory.
- If a player rolls higher than his opponent during a Contest, the player has scored a Minor Victory.
- If the player's dice roll comes up to be twice or higher than that of his opponent's, it is considered a Complete Victory.
- If a player's dice roll is three times or higher than his opponent's dice roll, he has scored a Major Victory.
- If a player's dice roll comes up four times or higher than that of his opponent's, he has scored a Supreme Victory.

Applying the concept of Relative Success, one player's type of Victory becomes another player's type of failure. In the interest of cutting down on the math that a player has to do

while playing a game, the Failing player simply has to apply the inverse of the Degree of Success that the Victorious player has received.

- If your opponent scored a Minor Victory, you have scored a Minor Failure.
- If your opponent scored a Complete Victory, you have scored a Complete Failure.
- If your opponent scored a Major Victory, you have scored a Major Failure.
- If your opponent scored a Supreme Victory, you have scored a Supreme Failure.

Two Sides of the Same Coin:

An example of Conflict Resolution from two opposing perspectives

Example One:

Jack is playing Johnny Cole, an Operative that has gone rogue in Danny's operation series. Johnny Cole is attempting to break into a secure Operation Control Node, a secret operations center that stores some very important top-secret information. He has been lucky so far and has gotten through most of the building just fine but has one last hurdle to cross, a guard posted in the hall outside of the computer storage room.

Danny: "Alright, Jack, what's your intent here?"

Jack: "I think I'm going to just try and stick close to the walls and sneak into the room without the guard noticing. I used to work with these guys and I'd prefer to not kill them if I didn't have to."

Danny: "well, roll your Intrusion Characteristic, I'll roll for my guard."

Jack picks up a d8 for his character's Intrusion skill, while Danny secretly rolls a d10 for the guard's Keen Hearing Characteristic. Jack rolls a 4 while Danny rolls a 6.

Jack: "ah, crap, only a four."

Danny: "Sorry, man, I've got you with my six with the guard's Keen Hearing. Not a resounding Victory, but a Minor one for me, meaning a Minor Failure for you. So, tell us what happened."

Jack: "Alright, well, I go creeping down the hallway, my back pressed up against the wall. I sneak past the guard's desk and slowly sneak up to the final door. I reach into my pocket and pull out the cardkey decrypter and get ready to run it on the cardlock when I accidentally drop the card part of it on the floor. It lands and a little echo trails down the hall. The guard stands up, saying "huh?" and starts to walk down the hallway."

Danny: "Cool. The guard starts to walk down the hallway and reaches down for his regulation sidearm..."

Example Two:

Now let's say the roles are reversed. Rather than Jack being a player, let's say he's Control and Danny is playing Bryan "Cheetah" Neswick, a security guard at the local Control Node in Prague. All of the guards have been placed on full alert as Johnny Cole, an Operative agent that used to work in this area, has gone rogue and may come to the Node for some information.

Jack: "Okay Danny, What's Cheetah up to?"

Danny: "Well, I think that I'd be standing around at the end of the hall, scanning back and forth as much as possible, trying to make sure no one gets past me."

Jack: "Well, let's see how good you are at that whole "noticing" thing. Gimme a roll of your Keen Hearing Characteristic."

Danny grabs a d10 for his character's Keen Hearing while Jack grabs a d8 for Johnny Cole's Intrusion Characteristic. Danny rolls a 6 while Jack only rolls a 4.

Danny: "well, I came up with a six. Not too bad."

Jack: "and better than my four"

Danny: "I don't double you, so it's only a Minor Victory, but hell, it's not too bad."

Jack: "Well, tell me what happens, will you?"

Danny: "Of course. I stand around, feeling a little antsy honestly. It's been a couple of hours and I haven't heard from anybody or seen anything yet. I look down and check my watch, hoping that time will have moved faster and I'm almost done with my shift. As I look back up I hear a sound from behind me, like a pencil clattering to the floor. I turn around slowly and look down the dark hallway, trying to find out what made the noise. I reach down to my side and start to unclip my pistol from its holster."

Jack: "well, as you reach down for your pistol you hear the unmistakable sound of the hammer on a pistol being pulled back and locked into firing position..."

From the opposing character's perspective a Push will seem like a Pull, dragging him down the Relative Success Chart a number of points equal to the number of DP that the other player spent on his Push.

Example:

Danny has gotten himself into a bind.

Johnny Cole has his gun drawn and has just fired off a shot at Cheetah. Danny and Control rolled their dice and, unfortunately, Danny only rolled a 2 on his Nimble Characteristic while Jack rolled a 7, thus coming up with a Major Failure. Danny looks at his pool of Drama Points and sees that he only has a couple left, definitely not enough to turn the tables completely but good enough to put him just over the top.

Danny: "I'm spending four DP for a Push 4. That'd put me at a Minor Victory, right?"

Jack: "Yep, and Johnny here at a Minor Failure. Spend the points and gimme the resolution."

Danny: "Hm. Okay, Johnny and I square off for a minute, staring each other down. I study his movements, his body language, waiting for the moment to pounce. This guy is really good though and doesn't give away his intent until the last possible second. He whips his gun up and cracks off a quick shot just as I jump off to the side. I crouch low as the bullet ricochets off of the wall behind me. I was hoping to get myself into a position where I could close the gap between the two of us, but I'm just thankful that I could get out of the way of that bullet."

Push and Pull

It isn't the dice themselves that can influence the outcome of an action. Characters that are integral to the story of a series, namely, the players' characters, often seem to come out on top. Things can kind of happen in their favor. What once seemed bleak, through some twist of fate becomes an opportunity for achievement. Call it luck, drive, moxie, what have you, but this game calls it Drama Points.

Drama Points are a sort of game currency that the players can collect and spend to impact the outcome of gameplay. While there are multiple ways that Drama Points can be used, the most common form is called Pushing.

There will be instances during gameplay that a player will want his character to be more successful on a given action than his roll allows. Perhaps the player has rolled really poorly and come up with a rather Major Failure. Perhaps the character has rolled well, but not well enough, and wants to come up higher than his Minor Victory. In these instances, a player can spend one DP per level that the player would like to "push" his success up the Relative Success Chart. When doing this, the character simply spends the number of points that he wishes to and declares a push to Control equal to the number of DP spent.

Outcome

Combat

Damage

Why is there no weapons list?

While most spy and espionage fiction tends to make fetishes out of various different kinds of weaponry as each author leans toward a favorite or signature weapon (the Walther PPK of James Bond, the improvised weapons of Jason Bourne), all of these sources seem to agree on one thing: it isn't the weapon that is dangerous, it's the hands of the man that the weapon is in that makes it dangerous.

A gun is likely to kill a man, yes. But a gun in the hands of a trained killer is more likely to kill a man than in the hands of a complete novice, and it doesn't matter what type of gun it is. Give a properly trained operative a zip gun or a long-range sniper rifle and he will find a way to create the effect that he wants: your demise. A really deadly assassin is just as likely to kill you with a rolled up travel section from the newspaper or a pepper crank as he is the knife tucked into his belt.

When looking at weapons in this fashion, it isn't important what is used, but how it is used. The Intent step of Conflict Resolution becomes incredibly important at this point. If a player only declares that he wants to whack his opponent with the butt of his gun, then the damage coming from that attack will be rather slight, at most knocking the character into rather hefty unconsciousness. If the player intends to shoot at his opponent, combat becomes inherently deadlier.

Control may allow players a special bonus when using a personalized or signature weapon. In these cases, Control may grant a +1 modifier to all attacks using that weapon. This is why Bond always uses that old, out of date Walther as opposed to bringing along something newer and sleeker: he's become used to it. It's a weapon that he's grown so in tune with that he always performs better with it.

Chapter Five: A Blade Too Sharp



What Does Edge Mean?

At its most basic, Edge is a rating that determines the humanity of a character. Those with a higher Edge are thought to be losing a part of themselves, having committed a number of actions that change them, making them somehow less human. Lower Edge ratings represent those people that have lived compassionate lives, trying their best to help their fellow man without taking lives or harming others.

Truly though, Edge is a question. It asks of the players, “What is humanity?” “What is morality?” It is the easiest way for a playing group to define what their game of the Operation is all about. The meaning of Edge is left deliberately vague, allowing Players and Control to decide what they want it to represent and how they want it to impact gameplay.

Through gameplay, Edge could be defined as the loss of humanity that occurs when taking lives. This means any life, the good ones and the bad. In this sort of game players must be wary, as just about every mission may bring with it some Edge points, further removing the characters from their own Humanity. This game will bring with it the exploration of what it means to take a life and what ideals will justify this act to each character.

It could also be decided that Edge is the loss of Innocence. In these games, players will find that betrayal and heartache are just as important as death. As a character becomes more hurt and jaded, he simply fades away from his own humanity, becoming an empty shell.

At the beginning of each Series, the players and Control should discuss what kind of game they want to play and how Edge can be used during it. If players want high octane action with lots of fun car chases and big budget action movie special effects, the players may decide that Edge be toned down, used only when a character commits the most heinous of crimes. Other groups may want to really explore the state of mind of their Operatives, requiring lots of fluctuation in their Edge scores and lots of opportunities where it could go up.

Interaction and Edge

The most obvious way in which a character's Edge rating will impact gameplay is during character interaction.

Characters with a higher Edge rating will seem somehow different from most other civilians. Some may seem to be cold or detached. Others will come off as manic or deranged. Some civilians may simply get the feeling that they are in a room with a lion, standing next to something that is a natural predator.

When interacting with characters in an attempt to calm, cajole, ingratiate, seduce or interact with others in a positive way, the characters involved must compare Edge ratings. If a character's Edge rating is higher than those he is attempting to interact with, then the tier ranking of that character's Edge is used as a negative modifier on all checks made to attempt the action.

On the flipside of this, a high Edge rating can be very useful for putting fear into people's hearts. Whenever a character is attempting to intimidate, scare or interact with another person in a negative way, the player should compare his Edge rating to those he is interacting with. If his rating is

Example: Ryan's character, Brant is attempting to ingratiate himself with a secretary at a law firm so that he can later get some information out of her. As Brant and the secretary sit over some coffee at the local Coffeebar Plus and sip on a little tea, Ryan prepares to make his check. He tells his Control, Samantha, that he has a Characteristic "Devilishly Handsome" with a d8. Samantha tells him to roll that, but first she compares their Edge ratings.

Brant has an Edge rating of 7, compared to the secretary's Edge rating of 2. Samantha tells Ryan that he's got to take his Edge tier as a negative modifier. Ryan takes a look at his character sheet and notes that Brant is on Edge Tier One, thus having a -1 modifier to all of his attempts to get in well with her.

Ryan rolls his d8, coming up with a 5. Subtracting his Edge modifier from his roll, Ryan's final "Devilishly Handsome" check comes up as a 4. Samantha compares that to her roll for of 2 for the secretary, and tells Ryan that he's got a Complete Victory.

Control is always the final word on all Edge losses and gains.

Increasing Edge:

- Killing someone
- Torture
- Sacrificing your beliefs

Decreasing Edge:

- The easiest way for a character to get his Edge down is through positive interaction with other civilians. This is why cover identities are so important; they are often the only way that an Operative can interact with regular, everyday humans. Whenever a character has meaningful, long-term interaction with a civilian, the character's Edge rating may be reduced by one point.
- Characters Edge ratings may be decreased through acts of kindness or selflessness. A character that allows himself to be captured rather than let a hostage die may have a point of Edge removed.
- Therapy might also be of use. Characters that enter into long-term psychological therapy that discusses their actions and their subsequent impact on the character may have their Edge reduced by one point for every month spent vigorously working towards recovery.

Increasing and Decreasing Edge

The reason for the ebb and flow of Edge is a hard thing to quantify. Where as some groups will have a play style that rarely sees their Edge ratings change, others will have it be constantly in flux. Decreasing a character's Edge rating is much harder than it is to increase. It's easy to act inhumanely, to take what you want and do what you like. It is a much harder, and greater thing to try to redeem yourself. The following are examples of ways that Edge may be decreased.

Remember, it is the group that defines what Edge is, so it must be the group that also defines how it is accumulated and lost. While Control is normally the one that gives out and takes away points of Edge, players may also do this for their own characters. If a player feels that his character acted in an inhumane fashion, he may request that he receive a point of Edge.

Chapter Six: A License for the Dramatic



Escaping an explosion by the skin of your teeth. Dodging bullets. Finding that one tool you need to disarm the bomb just when you need it the most. Recovering from a mortal wound in moments. These sorts of things don't just happen in the movies, they also happen in the Operation.

The players' characters are the center of the story, the main characters of their own movie or series of novels. As such, they tend to receive certain preferential treatment, allowing them to pull off the miraculous. To help the players do this they have Drama Points.

Drama Points, or DPs, are a form of game currency, awarded by Control, that allows players to directly manipulate the unfolding storyline. You may want to think of DPs as a sort of "cheat code", a way of rewriting the game reality in minor ways, allowing a player to come out on top or get what he needs, even if he didn't have it before.

Below are the most common ways that Drama Points can be used to affect gameplay.

Pushes

As Discussed in chapter 4, Pushes are a way for a Player to affect the outcome of a roll, allowing a character to succeed in an action where he would have actually failed.

For every Drama Point spent, the character receives one Push up the Relative Success chart, in turn Pulling his opponent's success down the Relative Success Chart at the same time. A player can Push at any time after the dice have been compared, but cannot Push after the winner has begun to narrate the outcome of the action.

Resources

Chapter Seven: Active Management



Play Styles

The Man From O.P.E.R.A.T.I.O.N.

The Invisible Operation

Prisoner of the Operation

24-hour Operation

The Operation Memorandum

Creating NPCs

Appendix

Example Characters

John Huer
Joshua Storm