SECRETS OF THE CITY
A role playing game
By Craig House

INTRODUCTION

Secrets of the City is a role-playing game set in a city filled with cults, rituals and musty old books. It departs from other role-playing games in many ways.

The first of which is that instead of a class, characters select an "advantage". They make their own advantage from a list of categories like talent (eg. con man), Skill (Chemist), possession, and others. They use this to give them advantage powers, which are like class abilities. There are no levels or experience.

The next is the combat system. Actions take a certain number of seconds and when the seconds are up, it happens at the end of the second. You can pick from a list of actions or make your own. You can either guess at how long the action would take, or you could do it in the air and time it. Characters in this role-playing game are fragile just like people in the real world. The characters are not supposed to just try to kill things like in other role-playing games; neither are Game Runners (GR) supposed to put something in their way just to kill.

The last major difference is that there are no adventures. The GR makes a story or situation with something like cults abducting people or a plan to summon a demon. The GR then is either "passive" and improvises with the information he has prepared while the characters follow their own plan or "active" where he gives the characters things to get them into the story. When the story has ended after a few gaming sessions, it is over; unless the players and GR want a sequel or want to use the characters and the city over again.

I find that an adventure in a role-playing game consists of a series of places to go and things to exchange attack roles with. The actions of the players affect nothing; they will go to each event and talk, attack or solve some kind of simple problem. I hope you enjoy my attempt to break away from this.

CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION

FIRST STEPS

You will need paper and a pencil to record your characters information.

The first thing your character needs is a concept. This is basically the plan for your character. It is often but not necessarily an adjective followed by a profession. (i.e. tough cop).

You will then name your character. After that include any notable things about your characters height, weight, age, etc.

Your character then gets a description. A description is a group of 4-8 points about your character. A point is a dash followed by something about your character. You could include anything about the character's personality, appearance, behaviours or anything that describes the character.

The next step is to give your character "notable possessions". Write down anything your character would reasonably have or could reasonably get (eg. binoculars, a gun, walkie talkies, etc.). You have three 20% chances to have something exceptional like a car stealing kit or a bomb. You may try more than once for the same thing.

You will now give your character an Advantage.

ADVANTAGES

An advantage is exactly that, something to give your character an advantage. Characters pick a category from the list and make their own advantages. The player then makes advantage powers. An advantage power is something the player can use like a button and some effect happens. Percent chances are often included when there is uncertainty. The procedure for making advantage powers is different for each category. As there are few opportunities to get into combat, the players success doesn't depend on combat, and the players getting "treasure" or other kinds of loot is not an issue, the "powerfulness" of the character is unimportant.

Category	*Explanation*	*Examples*
Talent	Some innate ability the character has	Conman, Sneaky, Rambo
Skill	Knowledge of how to do something	Chemist, How to commit and and get away with crimes
Possession	Something the character owns	Wealth, Musty old book library, Army surplus collection
Power	The character has a super natural power	Rituals, Attuned to dreams, Runes

Affiliation   The character belongs to some organization Police, Cult

        A talent has 3 – 5 things the talent can do. Each power has a percent chance set by the GR. The GR should set this with the uncertainty of it working, not to "balance" it.

        A skill has 5 – 8 things they can make or plan. If they can not make or plan anything, then put something they can otherwise perform. Do not give a percent chance of them working, except in rare circumstances when there is uncertainty involved. The thing made or planned must be something specific. For instance a chemist could make a bomb, not "use household chemicals".

        The advantage powers for a possession are specifications for what the possession could do. For instance, how good is my old book library? It has a 60% of knowing about some word heard by the players, 80% of knowing about some super natural thing, etc. Fully describe the possessions ability to do everything it could be used to do.

        A power's powers are simply a list of all the spells, rituals or things the power can do. If the power does not have discrete abilities like spells or rituals, then describe the power with points like you used in your character's first steps and let the GR judge if your character can do it. Give your character as many powers as a person who has the advantage would reasonably have.

        An affiliation has 5 abilities. First, give your character either a power, something your character has access to, or some "perk" of being in the organization. If you can not think of enough powers, then think of a trait that a person in the organization might have and give yourself advantage powers with percents like a talent power. For instance, A cop may be tough, so he has a 50% chance to intimidate people into telling him what he wants.

        This completes the character creation process.

CHAPTER 2: RULES FOR PLAY

DICE

      To play this game you will need two 10 sided dice that you can probably buy at a nearby hobby store. You will need to roll two together to determine a percent chance and one to roll if your character gets into combat to see if he hits, or to determine the wounding if a hit is scored. Percent chances are used often in this game.

UNCERTAINTY

      In playing a role-playing game, you will often come across a situation where it is uncertain what will happen. Will the store have it? Will he hit is with his gun? Who will win the game? These situations are resolved by the GR giving a percent chance for it working and then rolling dice

PLAYING A ROLE-PLAYING GAME

      If you are unfamiliar with how a role-playing game is played, then I will explain it here. The players control a character and they declare actions and things the character says. The Game Runner creates the details of the setting and drives the story. He controls everything not controlled by the player. This game is played entirely in you imagination.

CONTROLLING CHARACTERS

      There are three things that you can tell your character to do in this role playing game. They can take a action, speak, declare what there characters will do like programming.

CHAPTER 3: COMBAT

OVERVIEW

Combat is not intended to be a major part of this game. However, there will always be situations where people would want to kill or otherwise wrangle with the characters.

Combat basically works like this. When the combat situation erupts, the GR draws the obstacles and things present in the place of the combat with a "five feet ruler". This can be a piece of torn paper with marks on it or an interval on an actual ruler. Little markers or pieces of paper are placed where the people involved are.

The characters declare actions, each of which takes a certain amount of seconds. The GR says each second and any finished actions happen at the end of the second. The characters and their opponents can pick actions from table 1, or make their own. If they make their own, either the GR gives a number of seconds or the action can be done in the air and timed. The GR uses the 5' ruler when distances are needed to be known

A player may opt at any time to change their action, no matter how many seconds they have left to complete an action.

TIME

When struck by a weapon, people cringe or at least are impaired a little from what they are doing. Thus when struck with a weapon people expierience "back up time". This time is subtracted from how far along with their actions they are. Then for the remaining time of the incurred back up time they can do nothing. If struck, a player may opt to try to do something different then what they where doing. If a player opts to do this, they can do nothing for the duration of the whole back up time. If the action was something that after being struck they could come back to (like a keypad), then the time to complete it is what remained before the strike.

People may be in "states". Game Runners make their own conditions people are in. Examples are being on the ground, limping, on furniture etc. Each state has an effect both on time to perform an action and it imposes limits or possibly improves on what actions they can take. For instance, a person who is knocked down takes 3 seconds to get up and can't do anything else.

WEAPONS

Weapons fall into a category given in table 2. Each weapon has the time to use it next to it. When an attack happens the attacker rolls a ten sided die and compares it with the number needed to hit it. All hand held weapons hit if the result is 9 or lower, as it is

hard to miss with such a weapon. For long range weapons, the number to hit them depends on the range given in table 3.

When someone is struck with a weapon, a 10 sided die is rolled and the result of the hit is given on table 4. Each entry has the back up time scored as well as % death. The percent death is subtracted from 100%. When a person has 0% death, he dies. As a person gets more injured, he is subject to the effects on table 5.

If weapons are improvised, such as a chain saw, the GR quickly draws a damage table for it similar to table 4.

COMBAT TABLES

TABLE 1

Action	Time
Walk 4'	1s
Run 7'	1s
Speak (per sentence)	2s
Get off chair	1s
Get up, lying down	3s
Open door	1s
Throw	1s
Drive 13'	1s
Look at some detail	2s

TABLE 2

Weapon Kind	Use Time
Sharp	2s
Heavy, Blunt	3s
Bare Handed	2s
Hand Gun	1s every 5ft. away
Shot Gun, Rifle	2s, +1 every 5ft. away
Military Hardware	2s, +1 every 5ft. away

TABLE 3

Range	To Hit Number
> 5ft	9
5ft - 8ft	7
9ft - 12ft	5
13ft - 16ft	3
17ft - 20 ft	1

TABLE 4

Result	Sharp	Blunt	Hand Gun	Rifle/Shotgun
1	8% / 2s	2% / 0s	16% / 2s	17% / 3s
2	15% / 3s	8% / 0s	22% / 4s	27% / 4s
3	21% / 3s	13% / 1s	27% / 4s	35% / 4s
4	28% / 3s	17% / 2s	32% / 4s	50%/ 5s
5	38%/ 4s	22% / 2s	37% / 5s	65%/ 6s
6	48% / 5s	26% / 2s	46% / 5s	73%/ / 6s
7	59% / 5s	30% / 3s	67% / 5s	87% / 6s
8	73% / 6s	44% / 4s	74% / 5s	*death*
9	93% / 10s	48% / 4s	89% / 6s	*death*
10	*death*	*54% / 4s*	*death*	*death*

Result	Hands	Miliary Hardware
1	1% / 0s	20% / 3s
2	3% / 0s	30% / 3s
3	5% / 1s	40% / 4s
4	6% / 1s	55% / 4s
5	7% / 1s	65% / 4s
6	9% / 2s	75% / 5s
7	11% / 2s	88%/ 5S
8	12% / 2s	*death*
9	14% / 2s	*death*
10	16%/ 2s	*death*

TABLE 5

% Death Categories	Results
76%-67%	Every other action requires one more second
66%-55%	Every action requires one more second
54%-45%	Every action requires two more seconds, speeds for walking is 3ft, can't run
44%-38%	Limping at 2ft a second, actions need two more seconds
37%- 20%	Limp at 2 ft a second, actions need three more seconds
19%-8%	Incapacitated, crawl at 1 ft a second only
>7%	Can take no action

CHAPTER 4: GAME MAKING AND RUNNING

CITY CREATION

The events of Secrets of the City are set in a city that the Game Runner creates. This could be the city you live in or in the suburbs of, or it could be another city.

The first step to making a city is to make a story or situation like " A wealthy business owner is trying to summon a powerful demon who he thinks will grant him great power.".

The next step is to add more factions. A faction is like a character in the story, only it most often consists of more than one person. Make them by adding clauses onto your first story like "He is trying to be stopped by…" or "He needs something from ….". There should by 4 – 5 factions in your story.

You are now ready to make your city. For each faction make 5 – 10 places or people related to the faction. You are not making the faction, you are making places and people that can be used for the story. Examples of places for a faction would be where what it wants is hidden, where a member is hiding or where they are being staked out. For each person made, give a one line description and note what they want. For each place, simply give a one line description of it. Try to be creative, don't simply make where the faction is set up and the people in it.

If a faction is not sitting there doing nothing, then make a "calendar" for it. A calendar is a plan of what will happen in time that is either a week or a month long. Put on it actions the faction will take and things it does regularly like meet or get a message. Calendars can be simple with one or two events or they may have five or six things on it

RUNNING THE GAME

Before you start running the game, you need to make the story for the characters to get involved in. The first thing that needs doing is their group needs writing into the story. Perhaps they are all members of an old book club. Perhaps no one believes the threat they know about.

The next thing the characters need is to have something to strive for, some goal. This could be to stop cult abductions or find an ancient artifact. When you give them this goal, you should also tell them enough to go and do things in the city. If you simply tell them to find an artifact and tell them nothing else, what are they supposed to do?

If they go and start implementing a plan when their goal is in sight, then great. Simply improvise what happens with the city you have prepared and the people whom who have recorded their interests. You are now a "passive" GR

If they scratch their heads and do not know what to do, then create some event that makes the story come to them. This event should do one of three things. It should give them something to go do, tell them more information that allows them to come up

with a plan or introduces them to something else in the story that they can plan about.
You are now an "active" GR

CHAPTER 5: THE SETTING

THE PARANORMAL

The magic controlled by humans dates back to the ancient druids, which little is known except that they claimed to understand the flow of nature and its existence. There are two main uses of magic, namely runes and rituals.

A ritual is a series of ancient words and an action such as chopping with a knife. Rituals require a set amount of people to do peculiar things and last around twenty minutses. A lot of rituals require exotic things such a blade buried for a year. The effects of rituals vary, but they can do the following things. They can effect chance or the outcome some event (eg. Make a car crash), they can control the minds of people done on them, they can predict the future, they can give people temporary powers, and can empower items to do something at the will of the person who has it.

A rune is like a ritual that only takes at most thirty seconds to perform, only the result is a glyph that can only be used once. Each rune may be triggered by some event, such as a person reading it or walking on it. The powers are close to the same as rituals.

Another source of the paranormal are dreams. What dreams are, no one knows exactly, but they have many supernatural powers. Dreams for most people can give visions of the future, let them unknowingly communicate with people and give them advice in the form of a lesson. A few people are "attuned" to dreams, that is they have such dreams often, and unknown to most of them, they can willingly give them such dreams. People extremely attuned to dreams can affect the real world a little in dreams and can alter events in the future by moving or pushing things from the dream.

The "other realms" are a source of the supernatural. The demons of the Neither kingdom are a often a menace. The realm is a world of black iron chains, blackened walls and stone. Demons vary in appearance, but are usually demonic with goat, ram or other animal features. Demons all possess magical powers ranging from telekinesis and mind control to the ability to make things appear in reality. They are all evil and have no care for human life.

Another "other realm" is the realm of lightedness. This realm is occupied by the lightful. The realm is an ever shifting place of beautiful buildings and paradise. The place shifts with the whims of the lightful. In their natural form, the lightful are a ball of radiant light. When they are communicating with humans, the ball is often surrounded by a human form in white clothing. The lightful are good and will assist attempts to stop evil or to help someone desperately in need. The lightful have powers over the minds of others and to predict the future. The lightful do not like being summoned for little reason.

The last known other realm is the Grey Fields. This place's landscape is affected by the mind or minds of the people in it. It is always a reflection of the moods, expectations, and thoughts. However, the result is always bleak, mundane surrounding that rarely has any colour brighter than grey or brown. It is the home of people who die extremely attached to something or who wish something very badly as they die. Those

dead can, with great effort, view and effect things in the real world. This has given rise to the belief of ghosts. There are very few ghosts in a given city, maybe as many as ten.

PERSONALITIES AND ORGANIZATONS

The first knows cult was known as the great tide, which operated in the 1450's. It used rituals and runes to do terrible evil and was eventually discovered and destroyed. How the tide came upon their magic was unkown. Small remaining fragments started other similar cults, many of which are alive today. Today, not all cults are evil. Some wish to discover more lore of the super natural or are simply fond of performing rituals.

In modern times there are three large cults with more than one thousand members. The society of the black rose, the circle of control, the dark returners. There are numerous smaller cults

The investigators of the supernatural, as the name is translated in English, is based in France and has a little knowledge of the supernatural, though has no proof.

Nearly one hundred books where the life work of Alvin A. Falves, a person who did much research and investigation through 1770 – 1820 on cults, rituals and ancient writings. Many of them survive to the modern times

The Mayans, Sumerians and ancient Egyptians all probably possessed magical knowledge.