

Air Patrol

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Created for submission to the Ronnies.

"It's a strange world out there. The old timers tell stories from the previous century, of great submersible ships exploring lost sunken cities and huge aerial vessels journeying across the face of the world. Those were just stories to most people, though, unril the Great War. Only just over twenty years ago, it was when everything changed. Sure, the Wrights had led us into the sky, and Ford's cars were already crowding the cities, but the real breakthroughs came when the aliens, in their monstrous towering contraptions landed on that day in the summer of 1917. The war ended right there, as both sides immediately had bigger problems to deal with. Shoulder to shoulder, the countries around the worl fought the alien invaders.

"Things looked bad at first, as the invaders' death rays slew men and armoured tank alike, but humanity held and held, until the Germans broke the stalemate. Yellow clouds appeared on the horizon as they released dealy mustard gas into the war zone. It was an indiscriminate killer, and many a soldier still has nightmares of that day, but it broke the alien lines. Within hours their machines had stopped moving. We had won. The war never started back up, what with the nations of the world temporarily being more interested in what they could learn from the technology scattered



Paris, France, 1937, during the Nuit du Sang ('Night of Blood'). French special gendarmes interrupted some sort of ritual to an ancient goddess.



Officer Hamilton Locke, NYC Air Patrol, ready to take flight with his Tesla Zephyr flight pack. Can fear maintain it's hold on our fair city for long with the Air Patrol fighting crime in the skies and on the ground?

around the field of corpses. Tesla made the first breakthrough. He had been claiming he could build a ray capable of making an end of war. With what the aliens left, he was soon able to show he was partly right. He could make a death reay. It wasn't an end to war, however, and the Spanish can attest.

"Since that time technology has been racing forward. Death rays, flying packs, computation devices, robots, where will it end? I barely recognize the world any more."

- Allen Stacy, The Bugle

History

1908: A huge explosion flattens a forest at Tunguska. Years later it is revealed the Russians destroyed some sort of alien ship. Everyone who saw it happen dies within a year.

1917: The end of the Great War as alien forces land in Europe.

They do not respond to attempts to communicate with them and none survive the gas attacks. It is not known where they came from, but it is likely somewhere within the Solar system. The Great Technological Revolution begins. It is still go-

ing on today.

- 1928: The Air Patrol is founded in New York City after normal police units prove unable to stop Dr Royhawk's flooding of half the city with a tidal wave triggered by an undersea device. The Air Patrol is a dedicated fast response unit tasked with investigating strange occurrences and stopping any further dangerous events.
- 1937: The Night of Blood in Paris. Hundreds are killed as cultists attempt to bring their goddess to this world. It is publicly assumed to be the work of the insane, but there are persistent rumours that they may have been partially successful.

1939: The New York World's Fair.

The Air Patrol

Air Patrol is a game intended to help recreate those old serials and pulp action settings, focussing on a group of special police



The Zephyr, lastest model flight pack from the minds at the Tesla corporation. As fast a some aircraft, the pack is shown with it's winglike control vanes folded back for maximum thrust. The electrical discharge is due to the energy levels produced when the engine runs at maximum output. In an emergency a Zephyr pack within 5 miles of headquarters can be fueled by energy projected from the HQ's flight tower.



The Edison company's Firefly, the working man's jet pack. Available in wood finish or burnished aluminum.

who ride ion projection wings and protect the world from cultists, aliens, mad scientists, mobsters, and whatever else the Game Moderator (GM) comes up with. The characters are heroic and highly capable, in the pulp tradition, but leaning more toward the Rocketeer and Doc Savage than the Shadow or the Spider.

It's probably best to approach this game from that idea of the old cliffhangers and serials. Investigations and chases and fights, eventually leading up to a confrontation with the villain and his or her likely downfall. It's less about pragmatism and more about coolness and dramatic scenes.

Settings

I don't hav ethe time in this version to include a full setting writeup. It may appear in a later version, but the setting could be any large city. New York is the one used in this version, but CHicago would be another decent setting. If you wanted a more European feel, London would be a good idea. If you wanted more glitz and flash, Hollywood might be what you want. Crime and wierdness is found in all places.

Technology

Technology is a mix of actual 1930s technology (cars, steamships, dirigibles, and propellor-driven aircraft) with the futuristic (flight packs, death rays, robots). I'd like to go more into this, as technology is very important part of the setting, but I'm afraid this is the last section I had time to work on. It will be filled out more in the next version.



Tesla-Westinghouse's Zeus projection pistol. Capable of being connected to the Zephyr pack to draw it's energy from the pack's systems.

Sample Characters

I had intended to provide ideas for villains, henchpeople, and mooks here, but it became a sacrifice to the gods of time. I prepared some pictures when I started this morning (I know, my priorities need work), so they'll have to do for now.



Guns Moran, after the Red Alley Slaughter. He posed for the picture, then let the photographer go.

The only remaining picture of Nicolas Black, a founding member of the Air Patrol. It is unknown what caused his departure, but it is believed he may be behind recent aerial attacks on government personnel.



One of the breed of men and women now calling themselves science heros or mystery men. His name is currently unknown.





The Basics

Before we get to character creation, here are a few basic concepts that are described in more detail in the rules section.

Skill Levels

Skill levels range from 0 to 7 and describe how good your character is with that skill.

- The skill levels are:
- 0 Untrained
- 1 Minimal competency
- 2 Competently trained
- 3 Well trained
- 4 Expert
- 5 Among the best in the world
- 6 A true master
- 7 The best there has ever been

Skill Checks

Skill checks compare your character's skill level to a difficulty. If their skill level is high enough, they succeed. If the difficulty is high, they may need to roll some Risk Dice to have a chance to succeed.

Risk Dice

If your character needs to do better than they normally can, you call upon risk dice. Risk dice are standard six-sided dice. Each one has a 50% chance to add 1 or 2 to your character's skill for the action in question, but also has a small chance to create a complication for your character. The more dice you roll the greater the chance of a complication. The greater the number of complication results, the worse the complication is.

Hero Points

Hero points are special points used to affect the story to the benefit of your character and their allies. They are gained by doing cool and dramatic things, and by engaging your character's Weakness. Hero points are of particular use during a Denouement.

Denouement

If your character and their allies are beating the villain, their henchmen, or a group of mooks, at a certain point the enemy's plans will be in tatters and it's time to close out that fight in a dramatic fashion. That ending is called the encounter's denouement.

Character Creation

The first step in creating an Air Patrol character is to sit down with the person running the game (hereafter referred to as the GM) and the other players and talk about the kinds of character you would be interested in playing, as well as the type of game the GM will be running. This is important, not only to make sure the character idea you pick fits the game that is going to be run, but also to make sure the character has a role in the group.

You must also decide who will be playing the leader. The leader has a role slightly different than that of the other characters. The other characters have areas of expertise that make them good at what they do. Very good at what they do, as the Air Patrol picks its members from the best available personnel. If your character is a skilled shooter, it is their job to make sure their shots count in a fight. If their focus is interrogation, they use that skill to get useful information for the group. The leader's responsibility is making these people, with their different specialties, work together efficiently and effectively, particularly during a confrontation's denouement. They get to make the plans and direct the assignments. It's nice to be in command, but it has its responsibilities. The leader is more likely to focussed on making things work and less likely to be hot-dogging around. More on that later.

Skills

Once everyone has figured out what kind of character they want to play and where they fit into the group, and the GM has made sure they fit into the type of game they want to run, it is time to start working with the numbers. Pick up a character sheet and look at the skills section. There are eleven skills listed on the sheet. Those are the **basic skills**. Every Air Patrol officer has those skills to one degree or another. Below the base skills are several empty spots. Those are for **pick-up skills**. Pick-up skills are skills your character has that not everyone in the group will have. Things not taught in basic training.

The basic skills are:

Alertness: Noticing what is going on around you.



Athletics: Climbing, running, jumping, and so on.

Brawling: Fighting with fists, feet, and hand to hand weapons. Includes throwing things at a target.

Charm: Getting people to do what you want by getting them to like and trust you.

Driving: Driving cars, trucks, and motorcycles.

Education: General knowledge of history, geography, math, and such. A high Education may also indicate knowledge of other languages.

Flying: Piloting jetpacks and aircraft, both small and large. *Interrogation*: Getting information out of someone

through manipulation, coersion, and force of personality.

Resistance: The character's ability to resist being coerced or controlled.

Shooting: Skill in hitting targets with ranged weapons. *Sneaking*: Hiding and moving quietly.

There is no strict list of pick-up skills. A short list of ideas follows, but if you think of one that isn't on the list, and the GM is okay with it, write it down in one of the blanks. I would suggest only taking pick-up skills that may assist in the character's job. If you want a character who knows how to cook, that's cool, but you don't need to spend levels on it in character creation unless a cooking skill is somehow vital to the campaign.

Some possible pick-up skills are:

Alien Knowledge Arcane Knowledge Cryptology Disguise Drawing Engineering First Aid Forensic Techniques Psychology Swimming

Each character starts with one of their basic skills, called their primary skill, at level 4. The skill should be different for each character. This skill is usually the reason your character is on the team. The character gets another of the basic skills at level 3, and the rest of them at level 2.

Next, each player gets 10 skill levels to spend on levels in new skills or increasing levels in skills they already have. The only restriction on how they are spent is that the primary skill can be raised to 5 with one of these levels, but all other skills are limited to no higher than level 4.

Notable Abilities

In addition to skills, each character has certain abilities or advantages based on their personal history, position in society, genetic disposition, or just interests they have had. You have 6 points to buy abilities with. Abilities can have one or two points spent on them. Buying the 2 point level of an ability also gives you it's 1 point level ability, if it has one. Some abilities are listed as Unique. Unique abilities can only be taken by one character in the group. The players and GM should discuss the abilities to make sure the ones that they want to take will fit what the GM wants to run and to settle any potential disputes over who gets a certain unique ability.

The possible abilities are:

Brutal Fighter: 1 point: The character does 1 extra damage with hand to hand or melee weapon attacks. 2 points: The character can choose to have their hand to hand attacks do normal damage instead of fisticuffs damage, if they want. The decision must be made before the skill check is made.

Chosen Item: 1 point: The character has an item they use so often that they are particularly good with it. When using it, they get +1 skill level with appropriate skill rolls. 2 points: When using it during a denouement, their attempts to stop the enemy's plans cost 1 less Hero point than normal.

Cold Read: 1 point: The character has +1 skill level when trying to discover something about another character by interacting with them socially. 2 points: The character needs only a minute or even less to do this.

Famous: 1 point: The character is well known and liked (or feared, if you prefer) by many people. The character gets +1 skill on appropriate social rolls.

Fast Reactions: Unique. 1 point: After initiative has been determined, you may spend one of the character's Hero points to make your total 1 point higher than the current highest initiative.

I Know Someone Who Can Help Us: 1 point: Once each session, the character can call on an informant or ally for information about something applicable to the case. The person may want payment or a favour, however. 2 points: When the character calls on someone for information, they may spend a Hero point. If they do, the person they call owes them for something earlier and will help them as much as possible and without payment.

I Need a Rush on This: 1 point: The character knows the ins and outs of legal and crime scene procedures and is able to get their requests taken care of first. Analyses and tests are finished within a day instead of a week or more.

I've Heard About This: Unique. 1 point: Once per session, the character gains level 3 in a knowledge-type skill (not 3 additional levels). This lasts for the rest of the session, but only applies to the situation that brough it up originally. That is, if this is used to answer a queston about a cult, it will give the character the cult knowledge skill at 3 for the rest of the session, but only for knowledge about the specific cult in question.

Intuition: Unique. Your character has good intuitive hunches. 2 points: At any time you can ask the GM a yes/no question and spend a Hero point. They must answer truthfully.



Iron Will: 1 point: If someone is trying to control your character through intimidation, magic, or psychic powers, you may spend a Hero point to completely resist for the scene.

Jury Rig: Unique. 1 point: The character must have Engineering or another appropriate skill at level 2 or higher. You may spend a Hero point to have them quickly get a device working again. It lasts at least until the end of this scene (unless destroyed), and may last even longer (exactly how much longer is up to the GM).

Lying Eyes: Unique. 1 point: The character can spend a Hero point to know for certain if someone is lying or not. If they are not lying, the character gets the Hero point back.

Pushing the Envelope: 1 point: The character is able to get just a little better performance out of a vehicle. Their maximum speed in 20% higher and if it is important to the scene, they accelerate much faster. 2 points: When the character is trying to pull off a crazy stunt in a vehicle, you may spend a Hero point to have them automatically succeed. You may even spend this after rolling and failing, which turns it into a 1 point success.

Rank: Police rank is Unique, social rank is not. 1 point: Your character has a higher than normal social or police rank. If it is social, they are upper class. If it is police rank, your character is the head of the department rather than just head of their unit. 2 points: Your character has both types of rank. Your character must be the group's leader to have this affect their police rank.

Rich: 1 point: Your character is fairly well off. They can buy expensive meals daily and may live in a nice house or large apartment. They can have a few expensive minor items to start with for free. Buying a new car would tax their income for a few weeks, but less expensive items can be bought fairly often. 2 points: Your character is extremely rich. They likely live in a large house or a huge apartment suite. It would take buying a luxury car or small boat to tap out their income for a few weeks.

Runner: 1 point: The character is almost impossible to outrun or catch up to. They can maintain this pace for quite a while.

Silver Tongued: 1 point: If the character is in a social situation, reduce any complications they generate by 1 point.

Sniper: Unique. 1 point: The character ignores the first two points of range penalty when firing a gun or other ranged weapon.

Special Item: 1 point: The character has a very useful, but uncommon item, like a ray pistol. 2 points: The item can be something large, expensive, and rare, like a personal dirigible. For either level of this, if the item is lost or stolen, it can be easily replaced by the character before the start of the next adventure. If they spend a Hero point, it is replaced before the end of the session, if possible.

Tactical Genius: Unique. 2 points: At the start of a fight, if your character is present and able to communicate a battle plan to the other characters, they each gain a temporary Hero Point. If this Hero point is not spent before the end of the fight, it is lost.

Two-Gun Fighter: Unique. 1 point: The character has practiced using a weapon in each hand such that they can use both at

the same time. If both weapons are used on the same target the character's Shooting skill is increased by 1 to reflect the target's difficulty in avoiding multiple bullets.

What Does This Do?: The character must have an Engineering skill of at least 2 to take this. 1 point: The character only needs 30 seconds or so to figure out what a device does. 2 points: Once they've figured out what the device does, they know everything about how it works and how to control it.

Won't Go Down: 1 point: Your character takes 1 less damage from attacks. 2 points: Your character takes 2 less damage.

Weakness

Every hero has their weakness, and yours is no exception. Pick one that you think would be interesting. Something that will make problems for the character, but not make them too difficult to play or cause too much tension in the group. It should be something the character is known for, even if it's only behind their back.

If the character is in a situation where their weakness could cause them a significant problem, you may decide to use the character's weakness. If you do, the character fails in some way. You decide (and roleplay) how the character fails, and the GM will decide the consequences of failure. This can only be done once during each session, and can only be done in a situation where it will have a definite negative consequence for your character and their allies.

You're probably wondering why you would choose to fail at something significant. Here's why: When you use a weakness in this way, you immediately gain a Hero point. This is a way in which a player can make their own Hero points, albeit only one each session. That's why it should be something that they character is known for, since it may well happen to them every session.

Oh, and the GM can trigger it too, if it hasn't already happened during the session. If they do so, it causes some sort of failure for the character in the current scene, and they get a Hero point. Make sure the character's weakness is something you won't mind roleplaying.

Sample Ideas: Angry, Easy Mark, Greedy, Addicted to Gambling, Loves a Pretty Face.

Finishing Up

This is the last step. You know what the character's areas of expertise are, what their special abilities are, and what their biggest weakness is. Now, who are they, really. What do they look like. How do they act in public or while on a case? Do they have any enemies? Any friends outside of work? How about family? What are their relationships like with the other characters? If they are the group's leader, how do they lead?



General Rules

Making Skill Checks

Making skill checks is easy. You find out the difficulty of the task, subtract it from your character's appropriate skill, add in any modifiers, and if your character has at least one skill level left, they have succeeded. If you need to know how well they succeeded, the remaining number of skill levels is the number of successes they obtained.

Example: Officer Locke is trying to shoot at a target on the firing range. He has a Shooting skill of 4. The difficulty to hit that particular target is 2. There are no other skill modifiers for the shot in this situation. Locke gets 2 successes on his shot (4 skill - 2 difficulty). The combat section details how these successes may be spent, but for now we see that Locke has gotten at least one success, so he hits the target.

Difficulty Ratings

There are four standard difficulty ratings, though the GM may choose a number in between two of the listed ones if they feel it is appropriate.

The standard difficulties are:

Easy: 0. This is the sort of thing that is so easy even a beginner won't usually have any trouble with it.

Moderately Difficult Action: 3. This is something an everyday person would find a bit difficult, but not too hard to do if they exerted themself.

Very Difficult: 6. This is something even a well trained person will have a hard time with.

Extremely Difficult: 9. This is the sort of thing only the most skilled person could have much of a chance at, and even then it would be hard for them to pull off.

Difficulty Modifiers

Sometimes things aren't quite so simple as in the example above, and the GM will apply a modifier to the skill check based on any distractions, cover, assistance from others, or anything else that may make it harder, or easier, to succeed on the skill check. There is no complete list of the various difficulty modifers. Some are listed in specific parts of this book, but in many cases the GM will have to look at the situation and come up with the modifier themself. The general rule is that if it is a minor but noticeable penalty, give a -1. A major penalty would be a-2. An extreme penalty would be a -3 or possibly more, though that should be rare.

Assisting Others

If your character is trying to help another character do something, they must spend their whole action doing so. This gives the other character a bonus equal to half your character's applicable skill level, rounded up. If you want to, you may even add in risk dice to try to boost the bonus you give them, though this may lead to complications that end up making things all the harder.

Risk Dice

Risk dice are regular six-sided dice. If you want to improve your character's action attempt, you may choose to roll one or more risk dice. In fact, if combat, you must roll at least one risk die on any attack or defence attempt.

The possible results on a risk die are:

- 6: +2 levels.
- 4 and 5: +1 level.
- 2 and 3: No skill modifier.

1: No skill modifier, 1 complication point.

You cannot roll more than 5 risk dice on any action. You can roll risk dice on a defense, even though you are not initiating the action.

Success and Successes

If your roll is successful and you need to know exactly how successful it was, you use the number of skill levels that remained after any roll modifiers were applied and the difficulty was subtracted. The more skill levels your character had left, the better they did. Each such skill level becomes a success that can be spent to improve the results of the action. Some success costs are listed specifically in various sections of this book. Other costs must be decided upon by the GM. Remember that the character will need to keep one success left over to succeed at the action in the first place.

Example: Officer Locke got 2 successes left. In order to hit the human-shaped target in general, he just needs to have succeeded. To hit the small area in the middle of the chest representing the target's vital organs, he needs to spend one of his successes. He decides to do so and his shot hits the target's "vitals," a good shot. He could not hit the target's head, though, since he would need to spend 2 successes for that, which would not leave him enough successes to have hit the target. The combat section lists the success costs for hit locations.

Example 2: Officer Locke is trying to pick a lock and succeeds,



getting 3 successes in the end. He wants to get the lock picked faster than normal, so he asks the GM if he can spend 2 of the successes to do it in half the normal time. The GM feels that is acceptable, so Locke is left with 1 success, enough to still successfully pick the lock.

Complications

Complications are the result of over-extending the character's abilities or the character just getting unlucky. If one or more complications comes up on a roll and the GM has an idea for what to do with them, they tell the current active player what the effects of the complication are (or will be once the action is done if the effect happens in response to that). If the complication level is 2 or higher, the GM must give that character a hero point in order to trigger the complication. This hero point cannot be used to negate the complication (see the next sub-section).

The following paragraphs list a few general ideas for complications of different levels:

1 point: The character gets a -1 penalty to their current action; While crawling through a hedge, the character puts their knee down in something smelly; The complication is something that irritates the character, but doesn't make things too hard for them.

2 points: The character gets a -2 penalty to their current action; The character gets a -1 penalty to all of their defense checks until ther next action; The character, while trying to tail a suspect, sees someone they know across the street; This is something that is a major distraction to the character, but not terribly dangerous.

3 points: The character gets a -3 penalty to their current action; The character successfully sneaks in through the skylight, only to turn around and see a puzzled janitor looking at them; This represents a major problem for the character.

4 points: The character gets a -4 penalty to their current action; The character gets a -2 penalty to all of their defense checks until ther next action; The character's attack hits, but they make a noise that alerts nearby guard dogs; At this level, the complication could be quite dangerous for the character and maybe even thier allies.

5 points: The character gets a -5 penalty to their current action; The character trips after taking their action and ends up hanging by one arm over a vat of molten metal; This complication is extremely dangerous for the character and possibly their allies.

Hero Points

Hero points, as mentioned before, are a way for the character to affect what's going on in certain ways other than making a skill check. Your character gains a hero point at the start of any session if they do not already have at least one. Your character also gains a hero point if their Weakness is used. Lastly, the GM can give a character a hero point if the character does something the GM and play group find very cool or dramatic.

Hero points can be spent in a number of ways:

1) Some character abilities require the character to spend a hero point to use the ability.

2) A player can spend a Hero point after a roll results in a complication to negate all the complication points from the roll.

3) A player can spend a Hero point to add 1 to their skill level for a particular task.

4) When a confrontation's denouement is triggered, all involved players can spend hero points to affect the course of the ending. This is detailed in the combat section.

Villains, Henchmen, and Mooks

There are three levels of opposition. The most powerful enemies are the Villains. Skilled, hard to kill, and prepared with death traps and escape routes, villains are the main target of your group of characters. Henchmen (and henchwomen) are the midlevel enemies. Tough and skilled, they are not as well prepared as the villains they serve, and are much easier to take down. Usually encountered with a group of mooks. Mooks are the least powerful enemies your group will meet. Tough enough to threaten ordinary civilians, they must still use numbers to take on a player character. While it is possible for a group of mooks to take down a player character, it is uncommon.

Creating Enemy Characters

Let's start with mooks. Mooks are the easiest characters to create. They have simplified stats in comparison to player characters because the mooks are meant to be a minor challenge, unless they greatly outnumber the characters. A mook generally only has a couple of skills. Usually brawling, shooting, and resistance. Specific types of mooks may have specialist skills. Usually mooks only have level 2 or 3 in their skills. Mooks have one special disadvantage as well: if they ever get a damage result on a player character that would ordinarily kill the PC, the result is instead cnahged to a wound and a knockout.

Next up the chain of command are henchpeople, the special agents for the villain. Henchpersons have normal skill sets like player characters, and can have skills up to 4 or even 5. Damage from henchmen is treated normally, unlike that of mooks. Henchpeople should be made as detailed as a player character, preferably with a cool name, an iconic look, and lots of stuff that will make the players love or hate them. These are the people the players will run into most often, since the villain is usually only seen near the end. Lastly, henchmen get something that will be detailed more on the next page, a villain ability. Villain abilities come into play during the denouement of a confrontation and may allow the



henchperson to run away to fight another day if the rating of the ability has gotten high enough.

The biggest bads are the villains. They should be made up like a player character, with skills, abilities, and a weakness, but their skills are more likely to be in the 4-5 ranges with maybe a skill of 6 in their specialty. They should be a major threat to the player characters, with resources and servants enough to provide the group with a challenge. They should also be memorable. In addition to the normal character abilities, villains have special villain abilities, one for each player in the game. These represent plans and preparation the villain has done in case the players get too close, and are used during the denouement. They cover escape plans, death traps, false bodies, and destruction of evidence. The setup for villain abilities is detailed later on in this section, while their handling during the denouement of a fight is explained in the combat section. The last special note for villains is this: They cannot be killed or knocked out before the denouement of a fight. To defeat them, you must defeat their plans, then take them down.

Handling an Investigation

Air Police characters are a kind of combination between police detectives and a SWAT team. In an Air police game, the end will likely come in a confrontation of some kind, likely a violent one, but before you can confront them you have to find out who is responsible for the and where they are. This requires investigation.

The fist thing that happens is a crime of some sort that the players are called in to investigate, usually something the regular police aren't able to handle. The clues you give to the players depend on what's going on, but I would suggest giving them a few things to get them started on lines of inquiry. I would suggest not making them roll to find clues, as a failed roll can stall out a game session if you haven't planned a different way to get the players the clue they just missed.

At the beginning of the investigation, you determine the ratings of the various villain abilities possessed by the villain and his or her henchmen. Henchpeople get one point in their ability. Villains get a number of points equal to the number of players to split between their abilities. During the investigation, the players should run across the villain's henchmen and mooks (and possibly the villain themself), as they try to carry out parts of the villains plan. Each time the villain's forces manage to successfully carry out part of the plan, increase the rating of one of the villain's abilities by one. Each time the players stop part of the plan, reduce one of the villain's abilities by one. At the end of each session where the villain or henchperson remains free, increase each of their villain abilities by one.

It may be tricky to do, but the idea is to keep the villain's ability ratings somewhere nearby the players' hero point totals. If one side is getting very far above the other, you may want to give the players more chances to stop parts of the villain's plans, or make the villain's forces tougher and harder to stop. You know your players. Work to make the game as fun for all of you as you can.

The Prognosticator and the Whisperers

The Air Police have access to a couple of devices that help them to conduct investigations. The first is the Prognosticator. The only one of it's kind, it announces when a notable crime has been connected. It usually gives little more than the address and some idea of what happened, but it is better than nothing. It may also come up with vague pronouncements about the future of the city.

The other item of note for investigations is the Whisperers. each character has one attached to their uniform. It not only acts as a radio and a beacon in case the character is lost or shot down, it also has a connection to the Prognosticator. More specifically, it can give the characters clues that aren't normally obvious to them, usually only a couple words whispered directly to the character, though in the case of a particularly powerful crime the whisperers may talk in unison, something that should creep out the characters a bit. This allows you to give the players indications of a clue they should be looking out for.

If a player is feeling particularly lost, they can spend a hero point and ask you to have the Whisperer give them a more obvious clue. If this happens I would suggest you help them out. A stalled game is no fun, particularly if the mission is interesting.

Tracking the Villain Down

While investigating directly, the players may also want to set aside some of their hero points into a tracking pool. This does not directly affect them finding the villain, but instead reflects them sharing information with headquarters and involving HQ with the search. Some villains have an ability called *It Wasn't Really Me*, having a group from HQ also trying to track down the villain separately can counter this ability. Points put into the tracking pool cannot be used for anything else, however, and if it turns out the villain does not have (or does not use) that ability, the pool could be wasted.

Experience and Improvement

I want some sort of improvement system in the game, but I haven't figured out one that feel right. Maybe it'll be there in time for the beta version.



Combat Rules

Initiative

At the start of each round of action, each player rolls a sixsided die. The higher the result, the better. Characters with a skill at 4 or higher get +1 to their roll if they declare now that the skill is the main one they will be using for their action this round. They cannot change to a different skill later in the round.

The Combat Round

As in many games the combat round is a short period where each character gets to take an action. The first character to act is the one with the lowest initiative total. The second one to act is the next lowest, and so on. At any point, any character with a better initiative total may interrupt (though they must wait until any active skill checks finish resolving before doing so) and take their action instead. A character with a low initiative total cannot interrupt someone with a higher total. Once everyone involved in the combat has had a chance to take an action, the round ends. If a character wants to, they can pass as their action and do nothing. They cannot, however save their action until later on in the round.

Attacks and Defenses

Attacks are handled like any other opposed skill check. The attacker and defender decide how many risk dice they're going to roll. Because combat is a chaotic thing, they must always roll at least one risk die on every attack and defence check. Both sides total up their skill, adding in any appropriate modifiers, then subtract the defense total from the attack total, just like an attempt to beat a difficulty level equal to the defence total. If the attack total is reduced to 0 or below, the action fails. If the attacker has at least 1 skill level left, they succeed and the remaining levels become successes. The successes can then be spent to hit a specific location on the target, to raise the damage of the attack, or to have a special effect happen from the attack, such as knocking the target down or disarming them.

The two most commonly used defence skills are Brawling (against hand to hand attacks) and Athletics (against ranged attacks).

Cover

Cover is the most effective way to avoid getting hit and gives a +1 defense bonus as long as you are mostly behind it. If you attack

a target that is under cover, you have two choices. The first option is to ty to hit the part of the target not under cover (if there are any). That is handled as a normal attack, spending successes to hit the exposed location.

Alternately, you can try to hit a covered area. If the location you want to hit is under cover, but you can still see the target, or part of them, you can still try to hit area you want, but the cost to hit it is raised by one. Your attack must also penetrate any armour the cover is giving. Armour examples: 0 for a bush, 1 for a car door, 2 for a cinderblock wall.

If the target is completely protected by the cover and you can't tell exactly where they are in it, you can't hit them.

Surprise

If the target is surprised and did not expect the attack or did not see it coming, their defence skill is reduced to 0 before risk dice and other modifiers are added.

Hit Locations

If you successfully hit the target, you must pick where on the target your attack landed. Smaller areas are harder to hit, but some areas have specific effects, such as knocking the target out or even killing them.

The success cost to hit specific locations on a person are as follows:

Non-vital areas of the torso: 0. Limb: 1 Torso, vital area: 1 Head, hand, or foot: 2.

If you are aiming at something other than a person, the GM will base the success cost on the size of the area you want to hit. A headlight is about the same size as a hand, so it would require 2 successes to hit it. The headlight probably won't be defending, though, making the attack potentially quite easy.

Damage

There are two types of damage, normal damage and fisticuffs damage. The only difference is that fisticuffs damage cannot kill the target, no matter where it hits them.

When an attack hits something, first subtract the level of any armour on the area hit from the attack's base damage. If there is no damage left, the armour stopped the attack and no damage is sustained. Special attack effects (see the next page) cannot be used,



except for knockdown. If any damage does get through the armour (or there was no armour), consult the injury chart below.

	Damage	Effects
	1 or less	The character is staggered and gets -1 to their next skill check during this fight.
	2	The character takes 1 wound. Wounds are subtracted from all appropriate skill checks until healed. If the attack was to the head, the character is knocked out until the end of the fight.
	3 or more	The character is killed if the attack hits the head or vitals and was normal damage. Otherwise the character takes 1 wound.

Special Attack Effects

Sometimes you want to do more than just hurt a target, you want to disarm them, knock them down, or knock them back. The cost of these effects is dependent on the situation, but is usually 1 or 2 successes.

Example: Officer Locke has shot Guns Moran in the leg. Moran is on an angled roof and holding a big bag of money. The GM decides that, given the location of the hit, the weight of the package Moran is holding and the unstable footing, that the cost is 0. Moran takes a fall if Locke's player wants him to.

Example 2: Moran has just hit Locke in the arm with a club and wants to disarm him. There are no extenuating circumstances, so the judge decides it will cost 1 success.

Example 3: Moran tries to do the same to the rifle Locke's teammate O'Mally is holding. The GM decides it will take 2 successes, since O'Mally is holding on strongly with both hands.

Denouement

At the beginning of every fight (and possibly some non-violent confrontations if you want to handle them this way) the GM writes down the goal of the force the characters will be facing. If this goal is made unattainable during the fight, finish up the current round, then begin the confrontation's denouement phase (Author's note: I'm probably mis-using the term denouement here, but I haven't found a better one yet). What this means is that the characters have succeeded, even if they didn't know what the villain's goal was. A goal could be 'steal the money from the bank's vault,' 'fire the death ray at the city after it finishes charging,' or 'take down the player characters,' whatever the villain wants to happen.

The denouement is a way to acknowledge that the players are going to win, and give them a chance to be really cool. It is still possible for the villain or henchmen to get away, or for them to do some harm before they get taken down, but the players still manage to keep them from getting what they wanted.

When the denouement phase starts, everyone puts down their dice. Skill checks and special abilities got them here, but it's hero points that run the denouement. Spending hero points is how the players will stop the villain from getting away, setting off a bomb, or destroying evidence.

The denouement is roleplayed, with the villainous forces realizing they're not going to win. The players' aim should be to bring them in alive (they are police heroes, after all), but it's the villain or henchperson who gets the first move. Looking at the villain abilities present, the GM picks one and describes that character attempt to carry it out. Then one of the player characters tries to stop it. The player, without knowing the rating the enemy character has in that ability, spends as many of their hero points on blocking the attempt as they want to. Then the GM reveals the score the enemy had. Reduce the ability's rating by the number of hero points spent. If the ability was reduced to 0 or below, the player character stops the villain or henchman from carrying it out. The player should describe their character's action in as cool and dramatic a fashion as possible. If it was really cool, feel free to give them a hero point back for it.

If the villain ability was high enough that it still has points left, then the villain might get away with it. This is where the leader's special ability comes in. They may spend some of their hero points immediately to reduce the villain ability to 0. If they do not, the villain ability goes off. If they do, they can describe part of their plan that was ready for this, either by having one of the other characters get to do something cool or doing it themselves.

If all of a character's villain abilities are stopped by the player characters, then the players win and the villain is defeated in whatever cool and awesome way the players want to describe.

If one of them succeeds, then the players still win, but the villain may get away, destroy evidence of their wrongdoing (but still be charged with resisting arrest/attempting to kill a police officer), or do harm to the player characters. Exactly what happens depends on the ability.

Villain ability effects:

Escape Plan (type of escape): A villain may have more than one escape plan. The type of escape should be mentioned with the ability on the villain's sheet. If this succeeds the villain gets away and ends the denouement, but only just barely and without whatever they were after. A villain may also take this plan to cover a chosen underling, perhaps one of their children who may come back later for revenge.

Death Trap (single target, type of lethal attack): A villain may have more than one kind of death trap available and the ability should describe the kind of trap. If this ability succeeds, then the player who tried to stop it is poisoned, injured, burned, or something similar. This ability does not end the denouement, but forces on of the character's allies to spend as many hero points as the villain



ability had remaining points in order to get the injured character out alive. If they do not, the character will die (the injured character may spend a hero point to take 4 wounds instead and pass out).

Death Trap (area of effect): If this trap succeeds the denouement ends and each character takes a number of wounds equal to the number of points remaining (maximum 4). The villain dies in the trap unless they also had It Wasn't Really Me.

Destroy the Evidence: If this ability succeeds, the villain manages to destroy some of the evidence of their plot. They will still be looking at jail time, or worse, but it won't be as much as would otherwise have been the case.

It Wasn't Really Me: A favourite of mastermind villains. This ability is not opposed by any of the characters at the confrontation. Instead it is automatically opposed by the Tracking pool, if the players set one up. If the tracking pool was enough to defeat the ability, then the players find that the villain they're confronting isn't really the villain, but, thanks to the players' earlier work, HQ was able to track down where the villain really was and bring them in. If this ability succeeds, then the villain gets away because they weren't really there. Usually they will taunt the player characters with this by remote televisor screen or radio. I would suggest not using this ability too often as it can be annoying to the players. Also, even if the ability doesn't work, the players may feel cheated by not being able to get the villain themselves.

Healing

A wounded character heals (removes) 2 wounds between each story arc or mission.

Equipment

Some sample equipment to give you an idea what things would be like. This will be filled out more in the next version.

Weapons:

Close range equals about 10m/30 feet. Long range equals about 30m/100 feet. Very long range equals about 300m/1,000 feet. The range modifier is the penalty to hit something within that range.

Ordinary Pistol: Ranges: Close: +0; Long: -2 Damage: 3 Shots: Depends on the model. Most have 5 to 7.

Ordinary Rifle: Ranges: Close/Long: +0; Very Long: -2 Damage: 4 Shots: Depends on the model. Most have 5 to 10.

Tommy Gun:

Ranges: Close: +0; Long: -1

Damage: 3

Shots: 20 for a normal clip; 50 for a drum clip.

Burst: The Tommygun can fire 10 rounds in a burst. This increases the attack's damage by 1 and allows the attacker to spend extra attack successes to hit additional targets beyond the first. They still get a defense. If their total defense is higher than the original defense you were faced with you miss them unless you spend successes to make up the difference between the original defence and the new higher defence.

Tesla-Westinghouse Projector Pistol Ranges: Close: +0; Long: -1 Damage: 4 Shots: 20. Can be attached to a Tesla generator or a Zephyr flight pack for unlimited shots.

Winchester Beam Rifle: Ranges: Close/Long: +0; Very Long: -1 Damage: 5 Shots: 15.

Other attacks: Fist attacks do 1 damage. Melee weapon attacks do 2 damage.

Author's Notes

Thanks

Thanks again to Ron for holding this design event. I can't wait to see what everyone else has done.

Weak Areas and Worries

I was trying to do a traditional style game with a few new tweaks, such as a way to make the end of a fight reliably cool, but I'm not sure it's meshing right.

I also wanted this game to be very much about working together as a group, rather than everyone doing their own thing, but I wasn't able to come up with anything to really reinforce that other than talking about. I wanted a cool way for one character to pass the spotlight to another and help them set up a cool scene, but I couldn't think of how to do it.

I'm not entirely sure I got the themes of Wings and Whispers worked in a deeply as I should have. I wanted to add more about the Whisperers as elements of investigations and a part of the setting that the Air Patrollers don't exactly trust, something mysterious in nature and possibly supernatural. I just don't have time to finish it, though.

I wanted to have a character sheet done up, but I'm running low on time, so I don't think it's going to make it.

Other than that, though, I like much of it.

Where to go from here

I could fill out the world more or make it more of a sandbox game, but I'm not sure that's the way to go, given it's focus specifically on action/investigation pulp stuff. It could use more work fleshing out the different types of villain groups and I could probably do some work on alternate types of games using this system and setting. Maybe a military unit instead of police or civilian PIs ratehr than goverment. Or federal G-Men fighting against spies and mobsters.

I was hoping to do more with this, but the limited time means I have to focus my work. I like the art I got into the book, but I probably should have used that time for more world work instead.

Pat Gamblin