

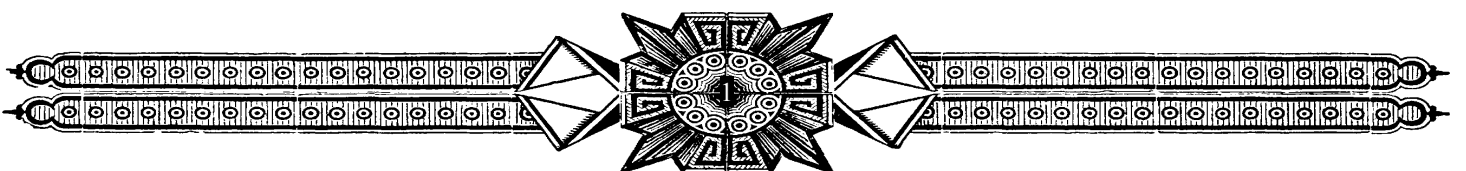
Invincible Hench

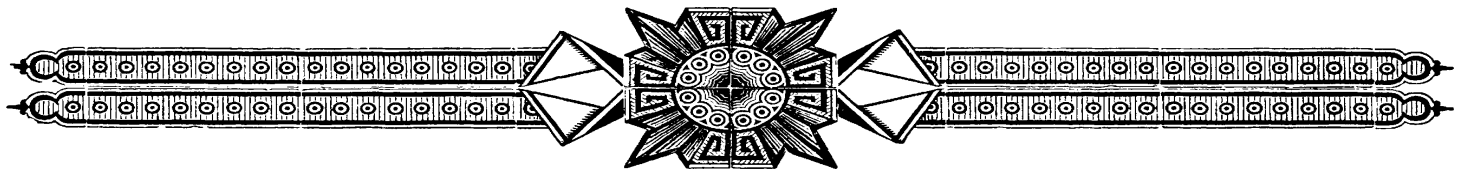
a game of Victorian Villainy

A Roleplaying Game by Matt Cowens

**Created for the 2005 Game-Chef Challenge
May 21st to May 29th**

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INTRODUCTION

In *Hench*, the players take on the roles of villainous henchmen working for W.I.N.E., the Wrongdoers International Nefarious Empire. WINE is a coalition of international criminal masterminds, working to overthrow the governments of Britain, France, Germany, China and Japan. Prominent members include the inscrutable *Fu Manchu*, the fiendish *Professor Moriarty*, the black-hearted *Madame Lutrec*, the indescribably violent *Johan von Breck*, and the delightfully fatal *Miss Yoko Nakamura*.

A session of play will include one or more missions, which the characters must carry out. Each mission will begin with a briefing, be carried out (with varying degrees of success), then will end with a summing up of and dealing with the consequences of the mission. The consequences are calculated by the GM and players based on a number of factors in the final mission phase, the *accuser* phase.

In order to gain membership of WINE, and to prove their commitment to the Empire's cause, each leader has sent their finest operative to a secret base in London. Here they have been joined by the greatest henchmen and henchwomen

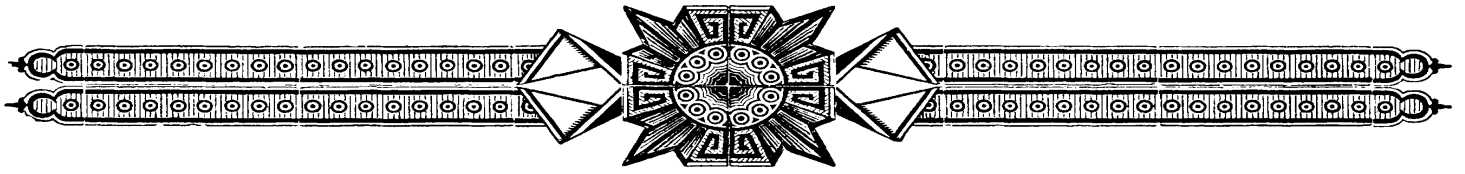
in the British Isles, to form the elite squad, *Invincible Hench*. Together the squad carries out the wishes of WINE, existing in a state of sometimes uneasy cooperation.

KARMA

The life of a henchman or henchwoman is not an easy one. Though they may be masters of some arts, the universe seldom likes to see a henchperson succeed without cost, or indeed to see them fail without some redeeming factor. In *Hench* this is represented by Karma. At the beginning of the game the GM will decide how long and how difficult the mission the squad is about to undertake will be. Based on this, each player will start with between 3 and 6 Karma. Each point of Karma represents one stunning success, and one dismal failure. These *must* be spent during the game to create effects that the player narrates.

To represent Karma, each player needs two 6-sided dice, one red and one white. The red die will represent failures, the white die successes. Both dice will begin on the number assigned by the GM for the mission. As players spend their good or bad





Karma to create in-game effects, they simply turn the appropriate die over to the next lowest face to keep track of their current Karma.

FURTHER KARMA COMPLICATIONS

Players may use their Karma to effect others. Their good or bad luck may rub off on their friends or enemies. It is important to remember when doing so that the outcome will be either *beneficial* or *detrimental* to the player spending the Karma - this will determine which of his or her dice should be used.

Certain actions are in keeping with a henchperson's place in the universe. Such actions are good, in that they are in keeping with that person's Karma. It is possible for a character to gain good or bad Karma through play, at the discretion of the GM. It should be noted that this can function as a reward or punishment in game, or can simply be used as a way to ameliorate failure or undercut success.

SYSTEM

Hench uses a very simple conflict resolution system. Each character

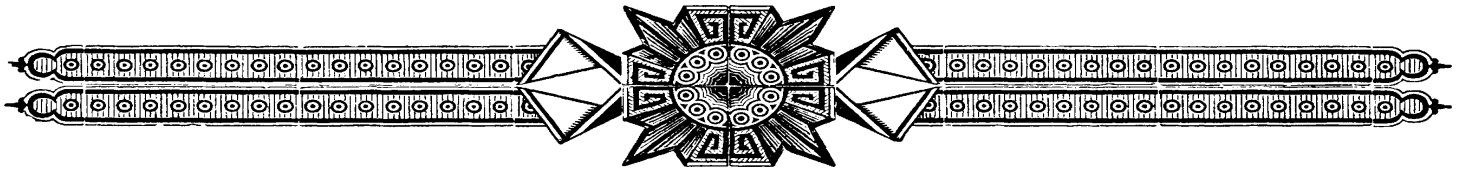
has three stats, *Brains*, *Brawn* and *Bluff*. Any challenge that the players must undertake will have a difficulty assigned by the GM from 1 (anyone can do it) up to 20 (virtually impossible, even for a team of trained experts). In order to succeed, the players must pool stat points *equal to or greater than* the difficulty rating.

Some actions or conflicts will be limited in terms of how many characters can contribute their efforts. For example, picking a lock is an individual action, while push-starting a car is (usually) a group effort. This is left to the discretion of individual GMs.

The effects of any conflict must be narrated by the GM and players. If the players have succeeded in besting a squad of Bobbies, they may narrate the exact nature of their victory. If the players are able to exceed the difficulty rating of a task by a large margin, they may have greater licence to narrate the outcome, and to add beneficial consequences.

The *Hench* team is indeed *invincible*. Character death should never come from the GM. Though henchmen and women work in a dangerous area, their deaths are not part of this game. If a player wishes to have





their character die during play, they may do so, but the dangers, though severe, should never *require* the death of a character. Incarceration, disability, disfiguring and traumatising are all perfectly acceptable.

The simple nature of the system assumes a high level of trust between players and GM. It is not possible to rules lawyer, as there are no rules to appeal to. It is left to the discretion of potential GMs to decide whether this is an approach that is suitable to their group of players.

ITEMS & PREPARATIONS

At the discretion of the GM, certain **items** or **preparations** may convey a bonus to a character's efforts. There is a vast range of possibilities, but a few suggestions would include:

Tasks Using Brains

- A **pistol** used in a ranged attack: +5 to brains
- A **glass** to listen at a door would give a bonus of: +2 to brains
- A **dictionary** used to translate a note written in a foreign language: +3 to brains

Tasks Using Brawn

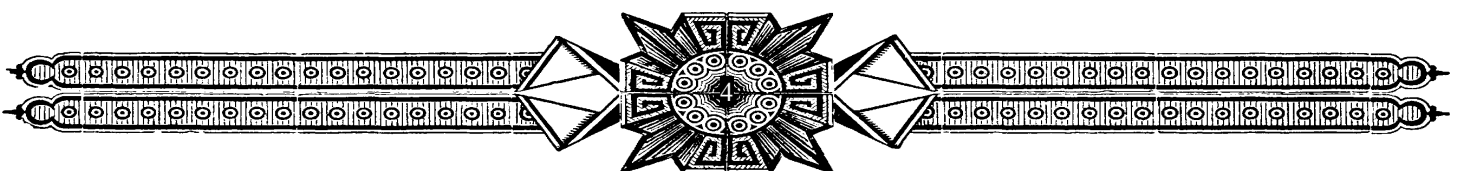
- A **crowbar** used to help open a window: +2 to brawn
- A **club** used to attack a victim: +2 to brawn
- Doing **stretches** before trying to jump from one rooftop to another: +1 to brawn

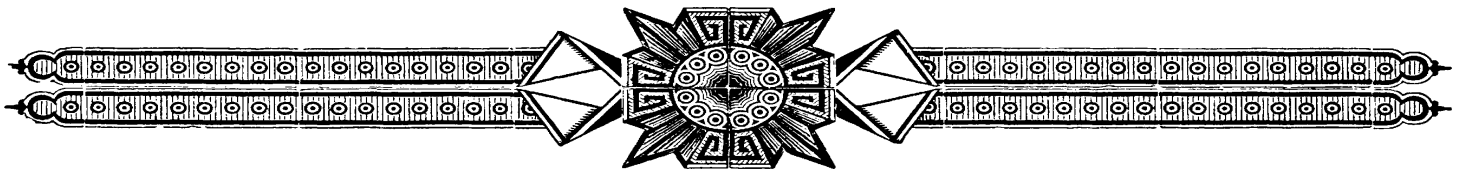
Tasks Using Bluff

- **Intimidating a Witness** Prior to Questioning: +1 to +5 to bluff, depending on method
- A **disguise** used before impersonating a Police Officer: +3 to bluff
- A **bribe**, such as buying a bookie a drink before pumping him for information: +2 to bluff

THE CAST

Invincible Hench has a limited cast. The team is comprised of ten main members, with some support personnel. Enterprising GMs may wish to create their own team members as replacements or alternatives, and should use the provided characters as inspiration for this. Character sheets may be found on pages 9 - 11.





The current team consists of:

The Irish Strangler, Danny O'Hooligan.

The Japanese Sumo, Tetsuo 'the Hammer' Yakimoto

The German Nihilist, Franz Goerhardt

The French Femme Fatale, Yvette Pardeau

The Chinese Assassin, Little Min Jao

The Japanese Geisha, Precious Jade Blossom

The Chinese Monk-Gone-Bad, Devastating Iron Monkey Fist III

The French Baker, Monsieur Allain du Baguette

The English Explorer, Lady Amelia Davenbrook

The German Sausage Baron, Herr Wilhelm Kransky

The players or GM will select a set of characters from among these options to carry out whatever missions are required.

MISSIONS

Games are divided into missions. A single evening's play may comprise one or more missions, though to

keep the pace and light-hearted nature of the game it is not recommended that missions extend beyond one session of play.

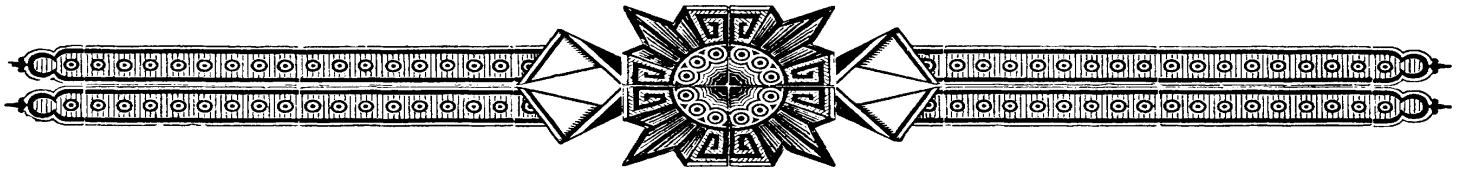
MISSION STRUCTURE

Missions begin with a *briefing* or *notification*, where the characters find out what it is they're supposed to be trying to achieve. The characters will then have to visit a number of *locations* (usually 3-6), where they will meet NPCs, gather information and resources, and cause havoc. There is then an *accuser phase*, during which the consequences of their actions are calculated. Finally, the mission ends with a *debriefing* where the characters report on what they have done, and what they have achieved.

BRIEFING / NOTIFICATION

A mission will always begin with **notification** or a **briefing**. This is where the parameters of the mission are set, goals established, and the chain of command firmly reinforced. A typical **notification** will involve a slimy courier delivering a message to *Invincible Hench HQ*. The message will be delivered either in writing or verbally, and the team will be left to respond as they see fit. A **briefing** has the advantage of being run by an NPC, generally someone above the





PCs in the hierarchy. There is comedy value to be had in the briefing agent being lowly ranked but self important. The following tables may be of use in generating both missions and methods of initiation:

Nature of Mission	
1	Obtain an item
2	Confront a rival
3	Eliminate a witness
4	Kidnap (multiple) victim(s)
5	Deliver a Message
6	Collect What's Owed

Once the nature of the mission has been determined, a number of **locations** should be established. Each **location** will feature a challenge of some kind. It is recommended that one mission should take place in around 3 to 6 locations. These will be the places that the characters *have to* visit in order to be successful. There will likely be other locations that characters choose to visit for their henchly shenanigans.

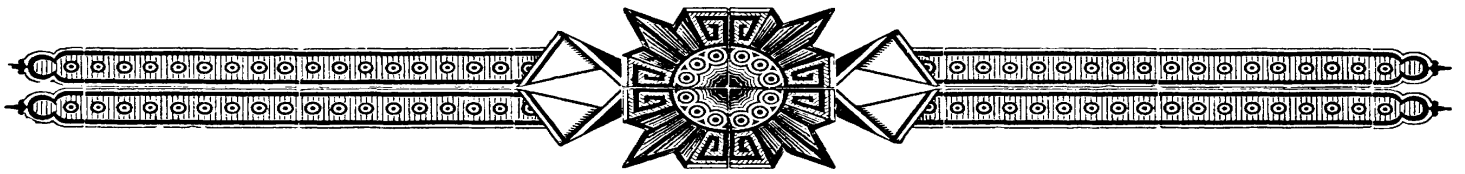
LOCATIONS

Each location listed should conjure a clear image in the mind of both the GM and players. Some locations

will also suggest NPCs and challenges that are likely to occur there. GMs are encouraged to add to this list as they see fit.

Locations	
1	The Seedy Pub
2	The Sinister Morgue
3	The Misty Docks
4	The Police Station
5	The Eerie Graveyard
6	The Gentlemen's Club
7	The Seamstress's Factory
8	The Dignified Home
9	The Tenement
10	The Quite Hamlet
11	The Moors
12	The Rustic Farm
13	The Gambling Den
14	The Opium Den
15	The Tearooms
16	The Bordello
17	The Army Barracks
18	The Ancient Monument
19	The Train Station
20	The Schoolyard





CHALLENGES

Each location in a mission will feature a key challenge, plus several minor challenges. There are many different kinds of challenges that can be incorporated, with difficulty numbers assigned by the GM. Each must be classified as either a *Brains*, *Brawn* or *Bluff* challenge. Some more complex challenges may require a combination of two or even three stats. Remember that players will be spending Karma to succeed or fail spectacularly, so it's important to include opportunities for inventive use of Karma.

Listed below are some suggested challenges, numbered to allow random mission generation.

Challenge	
1	Brains – find a clue
2	Brains – detect a lie
3	Brawn – fisticuffs!
4	Brawn – chase!
5	Bluff – charm an NPC
6	Bluff – impersonate an NPC

Once the characters have accumulated enough successes, be it by gathering clues, persuading NPCs to cooperate, or causing enough collateral damage, the mission can

move into the *accuser phase*, where the consequences of the characters' actions are calculated.

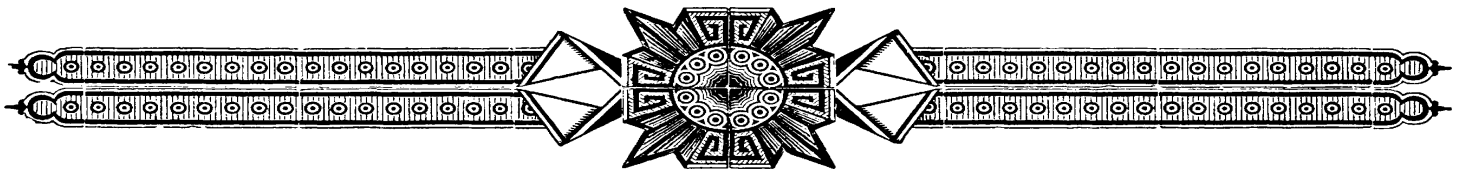
ACCUSER PHASE

In some cases, this phase will be very short. In others, it may take more time. The purpose of this phase of the mission is to work out how successfully the team has 'gotten away with' their crimes. Any underground criminal organisation will wish to keep its activities hidden from the constabulary, and WINE is no exception.

To work out how secret the activities of the PCs have been, it is important to consider 3 things:

1. The NPCs dealt with in the mission. Did the PCs commit crimes in front of any NPCs? Did they create enemies who are likely to go to the police? Did they leave anyone alive?
2. Public Acts of Villainy. Sometimes PCs will do things which are both very, very naughty, and very, very public. If the PCs burned down a teahouse in broad daylight, and gunned down any survivors who





managed to stagger out of the flames, then it is unlikely that their actions remained discreet, no matter how vigorously they attempted to suppress any potential witnesses. *Someone* will have seen *something*, even if it's just little Jimmy who was feeding his pigeons on the roof.

3. Unused Karma. If players have not spent their Karma during the game to have their character succeed or fail notably, their Karma will effect the accuser phase. All players must pool their Karma, with positive and negative canceling each other out. Thus, if several characters have spent their good Karma to overcome obstacles, but have not spent their negative Karma, there are likely to be dire consequences for the team, and the characters in question in particular. As a rough guide:

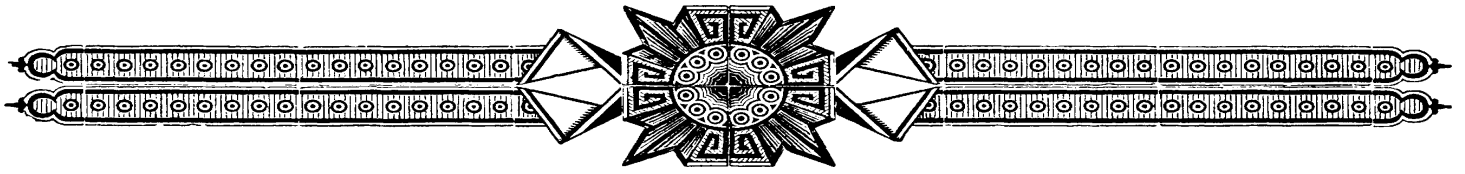
Unused Karma	Effect
1-5	Minor consequences only.
6-10	Some serious fallout – a short prison sentence or some time ‘on the run’ for negative, a promotion or commendation for positive

10+	The Universe Abhors a Vacuum – neither good nor bad can exist without the other. Characters should be serving hefty sentences, be chased out of the country, or be permanently maimed. If positive Karma is due, then the ‘victims’ of the team may be ordered to pay reparations for bruising their knuckles, the team may acquire newer and better lodgings, or they may be assigned sub-henchmen and women to serve their needs.
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The important thing to decide is whether there is anyone who is likely to accuse the PCs of a crime. If so, then the PCs need to deal with it.

GMs may choose to play out the accuser phase, or they may merely narrate the actions of the NPCs, and allow the players to narrate how they deal with it. It is intended to act as a deterrent for heinous acts of villainy – though the Hench team is invincible, they do sometimes have to spend a little time behind bars.





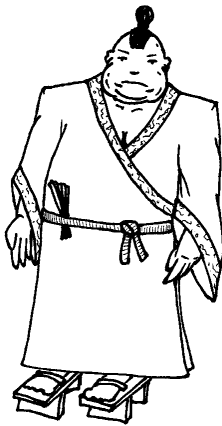
Danny O'Hooligan
The Irish Strangler
Brains: 1 Brawn: 3
Bluff: 2

I frained for years, crushing the life out of
potatoes. Now, give 's your neck!



Franz Goerhard
The German Nihilist
Brains: 3 Brawn: 1
Bluff: 2

I believe in nothing, ja? Vot do *you* believe in?



Tetsuo 'the Hammer' Yakimoto
The Japanese Sumo
Brains: 1 Brawn: 3
Bluff: 2

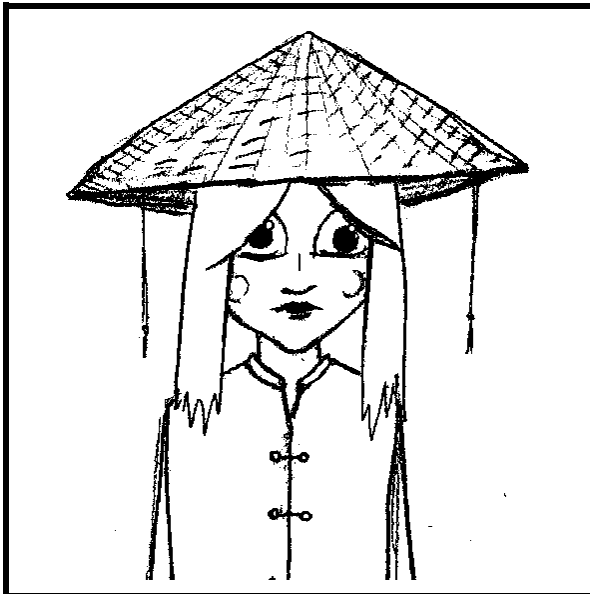
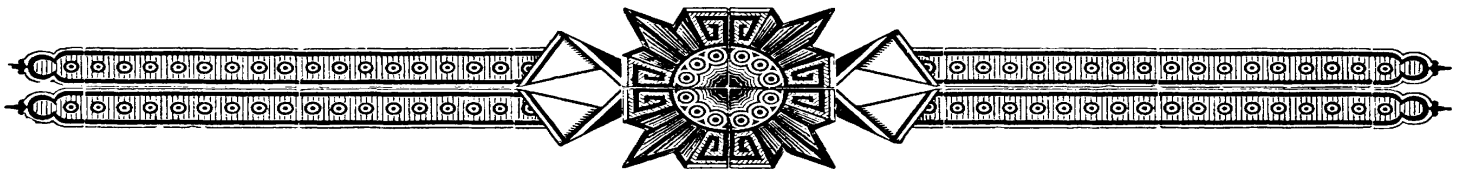
Wooden shoe make big impression on your ass.
Nobody push me around!



Yvette Pardeau
The French Femme Fatale
Brains: 2 Brawn: 1
Bluff: 3

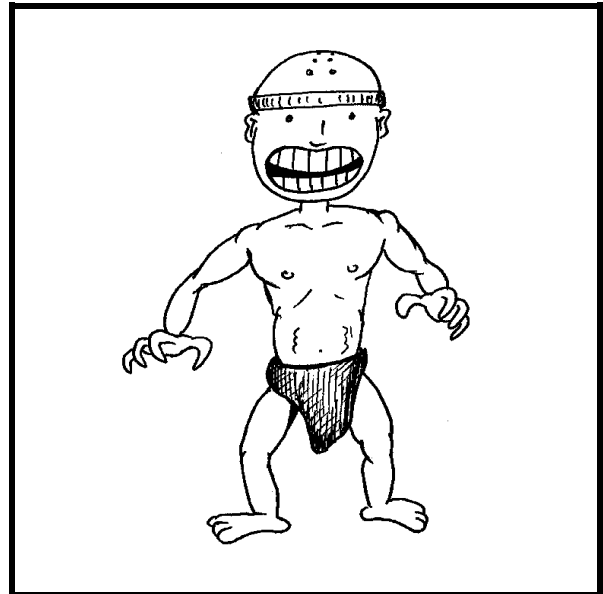
I poisoned my first 5 husbands. Would you like a
drink?





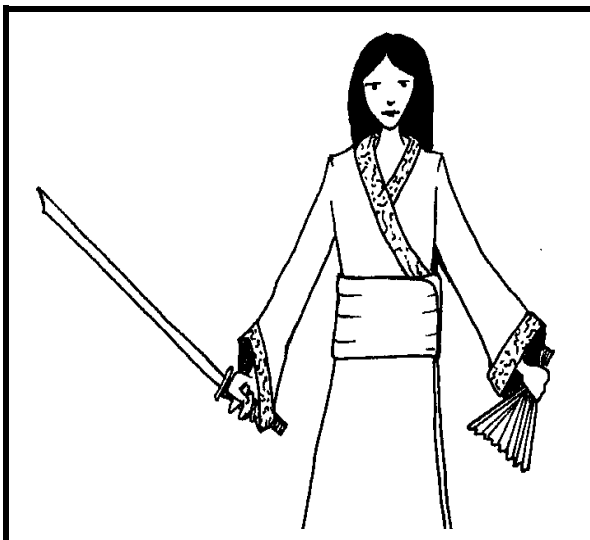
Little Min Jao
The Chinese Assassin
Brains: 2 Brawn: 3
Bluff: 1

You listen to the People's Glorious Voice! You no listen, I crush you like bug! LIKE BUG!



Devastating Iron Monkey Fist III
The Chinese Monk-Gone-Bad
Brains: 2 Brawn: 3
Bluff: 1

Confucius say your mewling kitten stance is no match for my ferocious horny monkey attack!



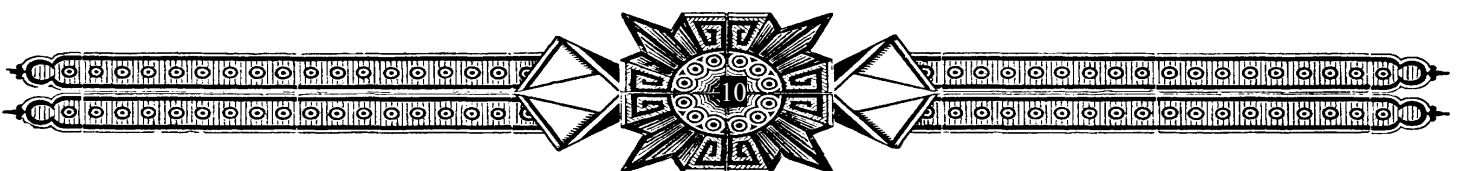
Precious Jade Blossom
The Japanese Geisha
Brains: 3 Brawn: 1
Bluff: 2

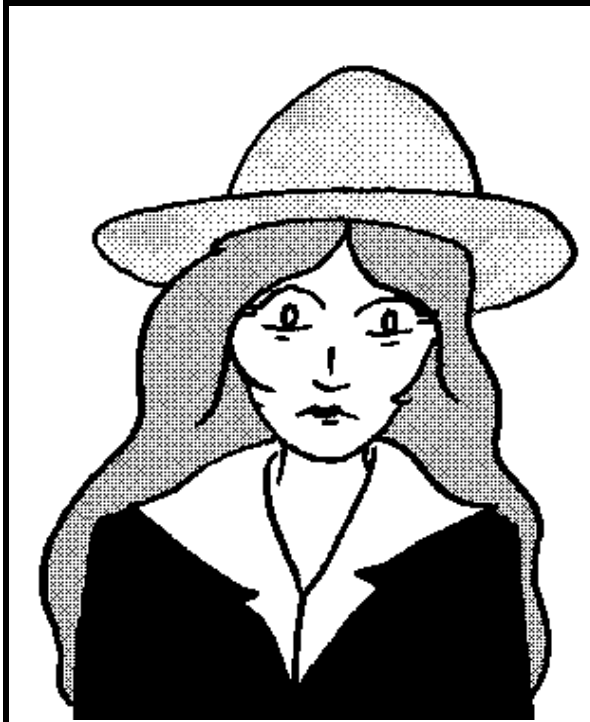
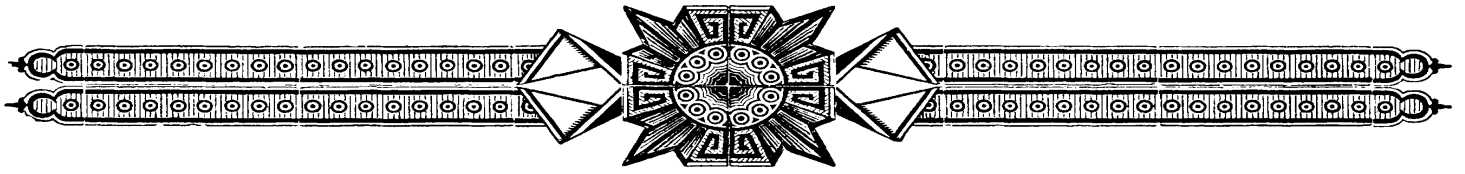
The movement of light on the water is as calming and as graceful as a sword-stroke.



Monsieur Allain du Baguette
The French Baker
Brains: 3 Brawn: 1
Bluff: 2

Monsieur, you will face the wrath of my bread-products and tremble. My plans are never 'alf-baked, and my cake always rises!





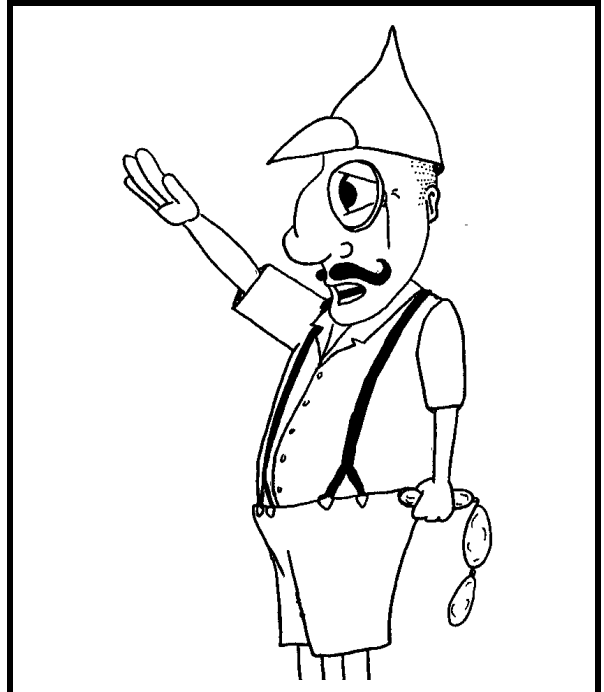
Lady Amelia Davenbrook

The British Adventuress

Brains: 3 Brawn: 2

Bluff: 1

I say, is that a tarantula in your pants, or... yes, it is a tarantula, and I put it there. Haha!



Herr Wilhelm Kransky

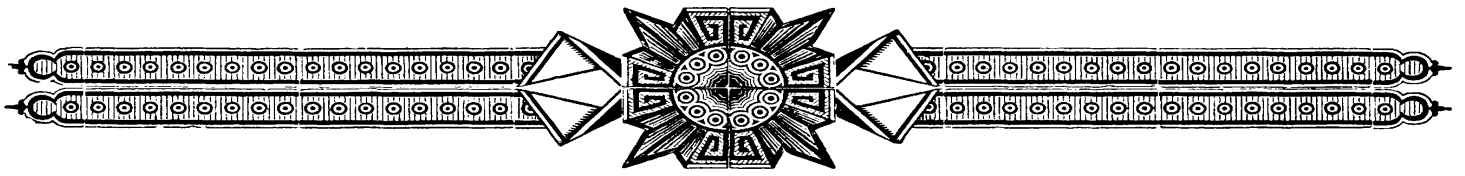
The German Sausage Baron

Brains: 1 Brawn: 3

Bluff: 2

**Zese are ze greatest zauzages in ze world!
Everyone knows zat ze zauzages make a man
strong, brutal and very, very efficient!**



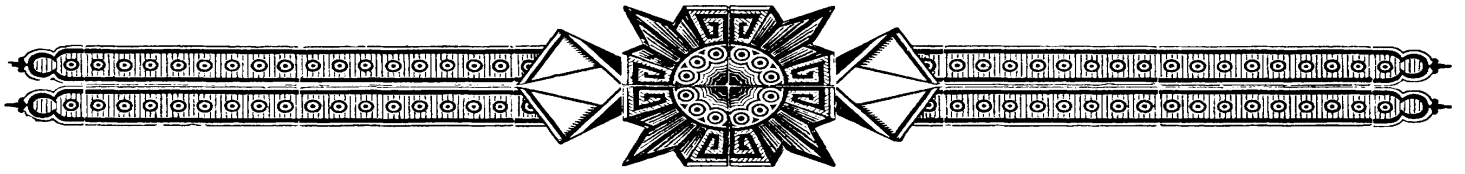


Possible NPCs

Again, GMs are encouraged to add to or modify this list as they see fit.

Name and description	
1	Simon Schuller , a rotund, bearded man in his 40s. Successful but brusque.
2	Allistair Wilson , a diminutive, weaselly man with a slight facial tick.
3	Madeline Shanks , a stocky, sturdy woman with many children. Proudly Catholic, strongly disapproving of virtually everything.
4	Stilton Corpsewright , Undertaker. Tall, gaunt, impeccably dressed. Likes children, and cake.
5	Patricia Woods , a well mannered and attired legal secretary.
6	Sleazy Sally , an optimistic, opportunistic prostitute.
7	Hennessey Rouse , a red-nosed, violent police sergeant.
8	Sam Pageant , an impresario of low morals and low hygiene. Owner of a brothel.
9	Douglas Oglesby , a slow moving, slow talking cabbie of middle age.
10	Cuthbert Thatcher , an aspiring cub reporter with a weakness for toffee.
11	Madame Bolivia Mysteria , an eccentric gypsy with 'psychic' powers.
12	Hung Man-Lee , elderly, bearded owner of the Dragon's Mouth, an opium den. Small, inscrutable, talks like a fortune cookie.
13	Jack Standproud , a massive, rugged Union boss. Dark haired and dark tempered.
14	Harold Nelson , a young, cynical green-grocer.
15	Margaret Naysbee , a dauntless vicar's wife and active community fundraiser
16	Sebastian Fuller , a beadle with superior powers of thrift and condescension.
17	Lydia the Tattooed Lady , a circus performer covered in religious tattoos.
18	Jojo the Dog-faced Boy , a circus performer who looks like a dog. Jojo is highly intelligent and widely read, and is an expert on the paranormal.
19	Councillor McKlennan , a backhander and a filibuster with a love of cheese.
20	Stephen Wolf , a bookie who works in cheap bars and cheaper hotels. Mr Wolf always wears the same beaten up overcoat, carries a worn case, and whistles to himself as he walks.





EXAMPLE MISSION

GMs may use this as an introductory mission, to get a feel for the game. Further missions may be randomly generated, or meticulously planned, depending on the time constraints and desires of individual GMs.

The Briefing

The characters are at their leisure in the underground HQ of *Invincible Hench*. Have the players each select a henchperson to play, and get them to describe what they think their character would be doing on a Tuesday morning, at approximately 10am.

There is a furtive knock at the door. A messenger stands outside, his collar turned up, his thin face covered in a sheen of sweat despite the winter cold. He gives his name as *Jenkins*, and says that he has "a message from F".

Once admitted, he proceeds to tell the team the following:

"F has asked me to, like, come 'ere and give you this. 'S a picture of a geezer, a geezer what knows too

much about what F 'as been doing down at the Docks. 'E might be talking to the coppers, like? F says you're to go... sort it out? Real tidy like, so's 'is business stays quiet. Geezer's name is Joyce."

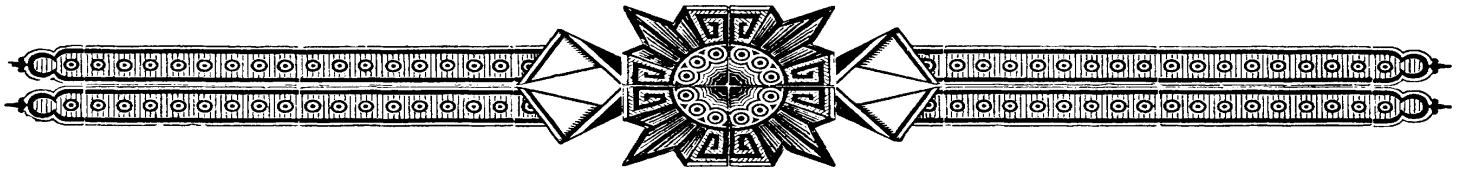
Jenkins will offer any details asked of him, though he doesn't know much about the situation. He thinks that Joyce has been talking to the local police, maybe selling out information about smuggling. He knows that there's a body or two in the morgue that Jenkins has talked about.

Locations

The Docks

At the docks the characters must succeed in two challenges – a *bluff* challenge of difficulty 8, to which only 2 characters may contribute, and a *brawn* challenge of 12, which any number of characters may assist in. Suggested challenges: convince a local 'lady of the night' to share her clients' pillow talk. Her clients include police constables, dock workers, and Joyce himself; fend off the aggressive intervention of the lady of the night's pimp and goons, or a group of concerned unionists.





The Police Station

At the police station there are several officers who know of Joyce. He is in fact an informant, and has been supplying information about smuggling operations, in exchange for drugs. Joyce has an opium habit that has almost landed him in jail for lewd behaviour.

The player must succeed in: a bluff challenge, difficulty 6, a Brains challenge, difficulty 8, and a brawn challenge, difficulty 3.

A Dosshouse

Joyce lives in a squalid dosshouse, filled with drunks and thieves. Characters may learn of his drug habit, his whoring, and any other details the GM sees fit to include. There is also an amateur protection racket going on based out of the dosshouse. Characters may choose to ignore, close down, or tax the racket. This could require: Brawn 12, Bluff 7, Brains 15.

The Morgue

Stilton Corpsewright, the Mortician, has been examining two bodies identified by Joyce as being involved in smuggling. They appear to be Russian, and each had a small packet hidden in their sternum (placed there after they died). It looks like it might be a morgue-to-morgue jewel smuggling ring, using corpses as couriers. Stilton is very proper, but

can be intimidated (Bluff 6) or bribed (Brains 3 if the price is right). Characters trying to examine the bodies will need to pool Brains of 10.

NPCs (to track for Accuser phase)

Jenkins the messenger, Joyce the informant, Vincenzi the plod, Corpsewright the mortician, Sleazy Sally the prostitute, Violent Jim the Racketeer.

Suggested Outcomes

- Joyce is betraying a Russian jewel smuggling ring, to fund his drug habit. If the PCs can learn this, and report it to their superiors, then WINE can try to incorporate or eliminate the Russian consortium.
- Joyce is betraying WINE, as the jewel ring is operated by WINE. The PCs will have to eliminate Joyce before he can spill any more beans.
- Joyce is lying to the cops to keep them off his back. He can be used to plant false information as penance for talking to the cops.

Accuser Phase

Remember to take account of all NPCs, player actions and remaining Karma.

